

Exodus 12.1-14

People eat meals together for many reasons. Travellers might share the same table with those they come across on a stop during their journeys. Some of us might regularly share a table with people we work with. And families regularly get together to share food and fellowship on special occasions. Every time we come to Mass, we become partakers in the Last Supper. And this celebration, ordered by the Lord during the days before he suffered, echoes the orders of God to Moses to institute a meal in remembrance of great deeds that the Lord was to do to liberate his people. As the Passover story helps to mould the Jewish people into a nation, so the Last Supper and celebrations of Mass are central to moulding the Christian family together. Remember as you approach the altar today, and indeed every time that you received Communion, to give thanks for your invitation to play a part in this remembrance.

Saints & Heroes

The Saints and Heroes of Maundy Thursday?

It's difficult to consider who might fit into the category of 'Saints and Heroes' on Maundy Thursday, mainly because many of the candidates turn out to be complete disappointments. Peter promises on this night to never leave Jesus' side. Judas Iscariot exercises the leadership he seems to have among the twelve by taking a foolish decision, which says little about Jesus and much about Judas. Even those defensively drawing their swords are told to resheathe them and recede. And from initial impressions, it looks rather as if even the meal the twelve share is doomed to certain failure: the fellowship lasts but a few hours beyond the washing of feet and the institution of the Eucharist, before the party scatters and the twelve are found hiding and attempting to obscure their association with the soon-to-be condemned Jesus from the chattering classes. The truth is, of course, that the Eucharist wins. The gospels do not relate whether the bread and wine remained on the table, as they retreated to the Garden, but I have often wondered about those elements remaining there as the paschal events unfold, only to be discovered and disposed of once the feast has passed. A garden with a cross; a watch at a meal that everyone has already left. And yet as the words 'Do this in remembrance of me' still hang in the air, there is the Eucharist, the enduring presence of Jesus always to remain in the church.

From the Fathers

'Christ is present. The One [Christ] who prepared that [Holy Thursday] table is the very One who now prepares this [altar] table. For it is not a man who makes the sacrificial gifts become the Body and Blood of Christ, but he that was crucified for us, Christ himself. The priest stands there carrying out the action, but the power and the grace is of God, "This is my body," he says. This statement transforms the gifts.'

From 'Homilies on the Treachery of Judas' by St John Chrysostom (c. 344-407, bishop, theologian)

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Maundy Thursday

Now my Tongue the Mystery Telling



In the great hymn of Eucharistic Devotion – 'Now my tongue the mystery telling' of Thomas Aquinas – we sing the line 'gives himself with his own hand.' This line takes us to the heart of the events that unfold over the Triduum. When Jesus seems to be utterly helpless and without any power he is 'giving himself with his own hand.' From the preparations for the Last Supper, so carefully and secretly, to the means of his death, to the borrowed tomb, Jesus 'is giving himself with his own hand.' By his own hand Jesus is writing the history of our salvation, he is writing it for us not with words, but in bread and wine, in water and blood, in the wood of the cross and the stone of the tomb. All this is the work of his hand. What he asks of us is that we reach out and take hold with our whole being all that he is giving us of himself, all of which is held in the glorious mystery of the Eucharist.