

(Yr B) MAUNDY THURSDAY

(APRIL 1<sup>ST</sup>, 2021)

**Readings:** *Exodus 12: 1 – 8, 11 – 14; Psalm 115 (116): 11 – 16; 1 Corinthians 11: 23 – 26; John 13:1-15.*

The readings for today's mass set before us three aspects of the events which took place on the night in which our Lord's passion began.

The reading from Exodus provides the Passover background to the Passion. Just as the Jews celebrate their deliverance from slavery in Egypt and the protection given by the blood of a spotless lamb, so we are celebrating our deliverance from evil, sin and death through the death of Jesus, the *Lamb who takes away the sin of the world*. As we shall hear in the Passion reading tomorrow, the fourth evangelist teaches that Jesus died at the time the Passover lambs were being killed in the temple.

The reading from Paul's letter to the Christians of Corinth is the earliest written record of the Last Supper. It was probably written about AD 57, just over twenty years after the event, and refers back to Paul's receiving the tradition still earlier. The reading contains the important word 'memorial' to describe the Church's regular celebration of the Eucharist. It means much more than doing something *in memory* of a past event or person. It means bringing the past event and the present moment into a unity. At mass we are not just remembering the Last Supper and the events which followed it, we are doing what the Lord commanded to bring ourselves into unity with him in his death and resurrection. So, by the working of the Holy Spirit, Christ is present, crucified and risen, at mass tonight and each time it is celebrated.

Saint John does not tell us about the institution of the Eucharist, presumably because he could assume that his readers not only knew about it but celebrated it regularly – at least on every Lord's Day. Instead he tells us about our Lord's washing of the feet of his disciples. The words Jesus speaks indicate two aspects of his action in taking on the role of a servant. First, he says to Peter: *If I do not wash you, you can have nothing in common with me*. So his washing the disciples' feet is a sign of their unity with him. And, secondly, he says to them all: *Do you understand what I have done to you? The foot-washing is an example so that you may copy what I have done to you*.

We are united to Christ and bound to *love one another* as he has *loved* us.

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