

HOLY THURSDAY MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Preparation for Ministers of the Word

ATTEND

Ask the Spirit for help in hearing God's message

BREAK OPEN THE WORD

Ask what the passages say about who God is, what your relationship is, and what God is saying

CONNECT

How will you respond this week to what you have read or heard?

GOSPEL

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John (11:1-45)

It was before the festival of the Passover, and Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to pass from this world to the Father. He had always loved those who were his in the world, but now he showed how perfect his love was.

They were at supper, and the devil had already put it into the mind of Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray him. Jesus knew the hour that the Father had put everything into his hands, and that he had come from God and was returning to God, and he got up from table, removed his outer garment and, taking a towel, wrapped it round his waist; he then poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel he was wearing.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus answered, 'At the moment you do not know what I am doing, but later you will understand.' 'Never!' said Peter 'You shall never wash my feet.' Jesus replied, 'If I do not wash you, you can have nothing in common with me.' 'Then, Lord,' said Simon Peter 'not only my feet, but my hands and my head as well!' Jesus said, 'No one who has taken a bath needs washing, he is clean all over. You too are clean, though not all of you are.' He knew who was going to betray him, that was why he said, 'though not all of you are.'

When he had washed their feet and put on his clothes again he went back to the table. 'Do you understand' he said 'what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord, and rightly; so I am. If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you.'

FIRST READING

A reading from the book of Exodus (12:1-8. 11-14)

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, 'This month is to be the first of all the others for you, the first month of your year. Speak to the whole community of Israel and say, "On the tenth day of this month each man must take an animal from the flock, one for each family; one animal for each household. If the household is too small to eat the animal, a man must join with his neighbour, the nearest to his house, as the number of persons requires. You must take into account what each can eat in deciding the number for the animal. It must be an animal without blemish, a male one year old; you may take it from either sheep or goats. You must keep it till the fourteenth day of the month when the whole assembly of the community of Israel shall slaughter it between the two evenings. Some of the blood must then be taken and put on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses where it is eaten. That night, the flesh is to be eaten, roasted over the fire; it must be eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. You shall eat like this: with a girdle round your waist, sandals on your feet, a staff in your hand.

The feast

Genuine love binds a family together and is shared at special meal times, whether a barbecue or at some special holiday during the year. On this night Jesus showed us the kind of love that binds Christians together: self-giving service. Before his death on the cross on that first Good Friday he showed us another way to die – to spend ourselves for the sake of others.

When Jesus asked, 'Do you realise what I have done for you?' he was inviting disciples to enter into the mystery of his dying and rising. He washed feet; so must we. He gave his body and blood; so must we. He 'loved ... to the end'; so must we. He was readying himself to 'pass from this world to the Father'; so must we. He was embracing the paschal mystery of his dying and rising; so must we.

Jesus' question, 'Do you realise what I have done for you?' isn't a question we can answer with a few words off the top of our heads. It is a question whose answer requires a lifetime of self-giving, a lifetime of loving, a lifetime of service. The model he gave us and that we celebrate this Holy Thursday evening is that self-giving, loving, and service are three ways to describe one mystery – that of conforming ourselves to Christ so we can share in his inheritance. It is a question we answer by embracing the paschal mystery rhythm of dying and rising.

Begin with solemnity, then carefully and formally pronounce the details of date and animal.

When the details are expanded, emphasise them and use pauses.

Increase the pace a little here; convey the tension, urgency and approaching climax of the Passover meal—build up to it.

You shall eat it hastily: it is a passover in honour of the Lord. That night, I will go through the land of Egypt and strike down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, man and beast alike, and I shall deal out punishment to all the gods of Egypt, I am the Lord. The blood shall serve to mark the houses that you live in. When I see the blood I will pass over you and you shall escape the destroying plague when I strike the land of Egypt. This day is to be a day of remembrance for you, and you must celebrate it as a feast in the Lord's honour. For all generations you are to declare it a day of festival, for ever.”

Reflect the punishment and gravity of the death of the first-born.

Conclude a little slower, sharing the joy and triumph of God saving his people.

Pronunciations

Eliab ee-LIE-ab
Jesse JEH-see

SECOND READING

A reading from the first letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians (11:23-26)

This is what I received from the Lord, and in turn passed on to you: that on the same night that he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread, and thanked God for it and broke it, and he said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this as a memorial of me.' In the same way he took the cup after supper, and said, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Whenever you drink it, do this as a memorial of me.' Until the Lord comes, therefore, every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are proclaiming his death.

Bring light and clarity to the details of this passage.

Pause and make obvious with a change of tone the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup.

Emphasise the final sentence.

Key words and phrases in the scriptures

Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to pass from this world to the Father.
He then poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet.
Do you understand what I have done to you?
If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet.
I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you.
Our blessing-cup is a communion with the blood of Christ.

To the point of the scriptures

Jesus, on the evening before he died, shared a festive supper with his most intimate friends and taught us two things about his loving us 'to the end' – he gave his own body and blood 'in remembrance of' him (second reading) and gave us a 'model to follow'. In these acts he redefined love as self emptying for the life of others. So must it be for us, his disciples who wish to share his inheritance.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

R. Our blessing-cup is a communion with the blood of Christ.

How can I repay the Lord
for his goodness to me? (Psalm 115)
The cup of salvation I will raise;
I will call on the Lord's name. R.
O precious in the eyes of the Lord
is the death of his faithful.
Your servant, Lord, your servant am I;
you have loosened my bonds. R.
A thanksgiving sacrifice I make:
I will call on the Lord's name.
My vows to the Lord I will fulfil
before all his people. R.



FOR THE USE OF MINISTERS OF THE WORD IN OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL PARISH, WENTWORTHVILLE