

A Homily for Maundy Thursday given at St. Matthew's Anglican Catholic Church in Newport Beach, CA on 2 April 2026 by Dcn. Andrew Masters

+In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.+

The term Maundy comes from the Latin word *mandatum*, which is the root word for mandate and commandment. There are two commandments we remember tonight. The first is the command to “take, eat...” the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist, a perpetual memory of Jesus’ sacrifice on Good Friday. The second command is the New Commandment Jesus gives to his disciples, to love one another sacrificially, that is, in a way that is becoming of the sacrifice Jesus gave on Good Friday.

We know Jesus’ ministry lasted three years because St. John records what Jesus did over three consecutive occasions of the Passover feast. In the first mention of the Passover, Jesus was in Jerusalem, and it was at this point he flipped over the tables of the money-changers, pronounced condemnation on the religious authorities, and foretold of the destruction of the Temple. In purifying the Temple, Jesus became a beacon to those true worshipers seeking to worship the Father in spirit and in truth. This event caught the eye of a Pharisee named Nicodemus, who met with Jesus one evening in Jerusalem and was told the famous phrase, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, to the end that all who believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) It is difficult to pick up on the word “gave” in this phrase, only in hindsight do we see that Jesus was foreshadowing the sacrifice he would give two Passovers from then, but also that that sacrifice was given for love of the creation and for the life of the world. We begin to get a glimpse of the sacrificial love that Jesus has towards his people. This action also drew the eye of potential danger. In purifying the Temple, Jesus made himself a beacon for the faithful but he also made himself the enemy of the religious elite, the same people who would conspire with Judas to kill Jesus.

A year later, at the second Passover of Jesus’ ministry, we find our hero not in Jerusalem, but instead in Capernaum, next to the Sea of Galilee. The events of this Passover are recorded in John chapter 6, where Jesus, in a veritable wilderness short on food, feeds a crowd of 5,000. This was our Gospel reading three Sundays ago. In this account Jesus takes the bread, gives thanks for the bread, distributes the bread to the disciples, who gives the bread to the people. It is the same actions mentioned in our Epistle this evening, “[Jesus] took bread: and when he had given thanks, he break it...” and gave it to the disciples to eat.

What follows the feeding of the five thousand is one of the most theologically significant sermons given by our Lord. “I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” (vs. 51) and “Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.” (vs. 54-55)

Jesus' plan to restore life to the world becomes a little bit clearer, at this point his disciples know it will require bread and it will also require the Body and Blood of Christ. Perhaps the disciples did not yet understand what that meant, but all the pieces are there. We just saw what happens to bread in the hands of God: He takes, blesses, breaks, and gives the bread. And like as he does with bread, Jesus does with his Body. Jesus, takes on our humanity from Mary his mother, through his sinless life and ministry, Jesus blesses and sanctifies our humanity. But there will come a point where his Body will be broken for us so that his Body can be given to us as nourishment for our souls. These actions are entirely sacrificial, all done in service for the disciples and all done in service for us.

In response to Jesus' command to eat his flesh and drink his blood, many of Jesus' disciples began to murmur aloud, "This is a hard saying. Who can understand it?" (v. 60) Many of these disciples, fed in this wilderness by God, could not bear his commandments, and turned away from him so close to the Promised Land. We are told at the last moments of John chapter 6 that Judas was one of those murmurers who turned away from our Lord in his heart, and for the next year brooded on our Lord's commandment to eat the Bread and to drink from the cup that would be given to him. And at last, when he finally did partake of the communion a year later, it was so repugnant to him that he went through with his demonic plan to betray our Lord. St. Peter responded differently. When asked if he would turn away from our Lord also, St. Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also, we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (vs. 68-69) St. Peter is beginning to realize what Judas did not, that "the world is passing away, and all the lusts thereof, but he who does the will of God, abides forever." (1 John 2:17)

This brings us to the third and final Passover of our Lord's ministry, to the upper room in Jerusalem on the eve of his passion. Older translations begin the event with "And supper being ended..." However, this is an unfortunate mistranslation of the Greek. The phrase should read, "during supper." So in the middle of the first communion, our Lord stoops down to wash the feet of his disciples. An act of unfathomable grace that clearly made some of them uncomfortable. This action happening during the Last Supper links the humility and grace shown in the foot washing with the humility and grace of Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross and on the Altar. This grace and humility of Jesus' Good Friday sacrifice is jarring to us as well. It is an uncomfortable reality that we must confront, and that we will confront tomorrow in an enhanced way as we commemorate that sacrifice Jesus made on Good Friday. This sacrifice demands a response. Our Lord provides us with the response: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13: 34-35)

For three years Jesus has been laying the groundwork for this dramatic revelation, and tonight, on the night in which he was betrayed, Jesus reveals to us the essence of our religion: That is we receive from our Lord and God all the benefits of his holy life and sacrifice, and that in response

we sacrifice our own selves for the benefit of others. Immediately after this revelation, Jesus entered into his Passion to make that sacrifice and to show us how to love others as he loved us.

Loving sacrificially means that we take up our cross and bear it. It means that we start with the Eucharist and the right worship of God. Over the span of years of having received that grace, the eternal life we receive from the Eucharist begins to break through. Eternal life doesn't just start at our death, eternal life starts now in the form of our sinful-self dying continuously through a consistent practice of prayer, repentance, and confession. The new man, our righteous true-self grows stronger, bearing the fruits worthy of repentance. Over the years, we notice that we sin less and as we look back, we see the miracle of a changed life God wrought in us. But at a certain point, our rich prayer life is no longer satisfied with the wonderful state God has brought us to. Satisfaction now only comes in service to others, but this only comes when our motivation to act is borne out of a genuine desire to will the best for the other, selfish motives will only hinder us and they must be purged. This is important, that the telos of our spiritual journey is not solely our own individual inward spiritual strength, but that strength we have been given actually is the means for which we are able to love each other the way Christ loved us. This is how the Kingdom of God will spread. "By this All will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13: 25)

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