

Maundy Thursday || April 17, 2025 || 7:00 pm St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Hanover, MA || The Reverend Amy Whitcomb Slemmer, Esq.

**Maundy Thursday Homily** *“Do This in Remembrance of Me”*

Let the words of my lips and the meditations of our hearts draw us closer to you our Lord, our strength and our redeemer, Amen+

Tonight is a night unlike any other. It calls upon us to engage all of our senses so that we might fully experience this sacred time. Tonight is tender. It is intimate. It is deeply holy. sacred, exquisitely beautiful and heartbreaking.

We gather not just to remember the Last Supper but to live into it.

To sit with Jesus. To see him with his friends. To hear his words. To abide by his wishes. To feel the basin of water. To taste the bread. To drink the cup.

**Maundy** comes from the Latin *mandatum*—meaning “commandment.”

Because on this night, Jesus gives us one: “A new commandment I give you, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” (*John 13:34*)

And how does Jesus show that love?

Not by preaching a sermon. Not by calling down angels. Not by showing off a sparkly liberation miracle.

But by kneeling. With a towel at his waist. Washing feet. Feet that will betray. Feet that will deny. Feet that will flee from the horror to come. His friend's feet that had NEVER known a shower. Feet that were the primary source of transportation. Dusty. Calloused. Ordinary. Silly Old well-worn Human Feet.

Can you imagine the shocked or surprised silence that greeted this act? The Son of God... doing what only servants would do.

If you are debating, or seriously committed to taking a pass on the traditional foot washing, you can relate to Peter, who is so wildly uncomfortable with this whole idea that he blurts out, "You'll never wash my feet!" Hear Jesus' loving rebuke to Peter and to any of us who think that we'd rather not offer up our smelly, human feet:

Jesus says, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me."

Jesus is urging us to practice this ancient ritual. To humble ourselves. To make ourselves wildly uncomfortable and do as he did. To have our feet washed, and to wash another's regular old feet. Jesus is telling Peter and us – that on this heartbreaking night, as his death is drawing closer, and his time as one of us is running short, Jesus says - “this is what my love looks like.”

As our Lord, this is who Jesus is – demonstrating what he means by love. This isn't loving in theory, or loving from far away, this is what his new commandment looks like – to love up close, on our knees, with a towel and basin of water. With humility, we love one another as he loves us.

The second gift of this sacred night is Christ's gift of the Eucharistic table – he gives us his Body and Blood which we celebrate each Sunday at our gorgeous altar. Tonight we remember both the sacrament of Communion and the gift of love in the form of service.

Both are needed. And here in this community, we have been gathered for nearly 300 years in Christian witness lived out loud. Poured out in service in bread and wine and in love made tactile in the washing of one another's feet.

The altar and the basin.

The sacrament and the service.

Both are sacred.

Both are necessary.

So tonight, as you come to the table, and perhaps kneel to have your feet washed remember – Jesus loves you. Feel, see, hear, smell, taste – **sense** how Jesus loves you.

Let Jesus love you. Let him serve you. And let him show you what love looks like—so that you can go and do likewise. Not just tonight. But always.

And after supper, we will clear the table in the heartbreaking and deeply moving act of stripping the altar.

Just as Jesus will be stripped, humiliated and excoriated tomorrow. We will remove any decoration that represents or serves as reminders of Jesus' extravagant love. Please sing the Taize chant as you are comfortable, because we need each other for that sacred and beautiful sound. Piece by piece, the sacred elements of the altar are removed until it stands bare, vulnerable... exposed.

And isn't that what Jesus became?

Stripped.

Abandoned.

Given over to the night.

It's beautiful. And it breaks your heart.

Because it *should*.

This is love that costs something.

This is a Savior who loves us to the end.

And yet, even in that silence—even as the altar is left bare—there is still **love in the room**.

Love that lingers like the scent of bread and wine.  
Love that cannot be taken away.

Because nothing—not betrayal, not the cross, not even death—  
can undo the love that Christ gives us tonight.

So tonight, receive the bread.

Let your feet be washed.

Watch as the altar is stripped bare.

And know that **this love—this Christ—will not leave us, even in the darkness.** In the name of the humble Christ, who serves, and feeds, and loves us still.

**Amen.**