

Maundy Thursday
April 1, 2010
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The crowds will come on Easter morning. And that is appropriate - for the resurrection of Jesus is the keystone of the Christian Faith. This is what the crowds are seeking: an answer to the question of life and death, the meaning of existence, and the hope for the reign of God.

But, if you want to know what the Church is all about, if you want to understand its role in God's plan, if you wonder why it should be an important part of your religious/spiritual journey; then it is better to come tonight on Maundy or Holy Thursday. For tonight is about the purpose of the Church and our participation in it.

The Church is first a community, a fellowship of those who seek to find and to follow Jesus. And the glue that holds this community together is the sacrament of Holy Communion, which was first celebrated by Christ and his disciples on this evening. The Church's teaching is clear on this matter, as is stated in the Catechism one of the benefits which we receive when we partake of the Lord's supper is "the strengthening of our union with Christ and one another." It is this simple yet profound ritual of receiving bread and wine that brings us into the presence of the Risen Christ, and through him binds us to all our sisters and brothers who come with us to place out our hands and to receive the gift of Christ's oblation of himself for the whole world.

Tonight Jesus commands us to keep this covenant:

This is my body that is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.
This cup is the new covenant in my blood.
Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

So the Church is a community where people of all colors, ethnicity, and nations people of widely varying temperaments and dispositions, people of wealth and the poorest of the poor, you and you and you and I come together as one people redeemed by the body and blood of Christ. Earthly distinctions fade, and our common humanity as children of God is revealed and lived out.

If tonight's first teaching about the Church is its radical communal nature, the second teaching concerns the purpose of the Church as a community. It is called together by God that it may be an agent in the world of God's love. We who are the Church are called to serve others, to give of our wealth and time and talents for the benefit, not of the Church itself, but of others, of all who are in need of comfort, caring, shelter, healing,

learning - the list could go on and on. The Church is called to be a servant in the word, not a master of the world.

Jesus said “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord – and you are right for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example that you also should do as I have done to you.

And then comes that great statement of Christian purpose and life

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

Thus on the Maundy Thursday evening the very essence of the Church is laid here for all of us to see and to comprehend: we are a community rooted in Christ through Christ to one another, by the sacrament of Holy Communion. And we are a community that realizes its purpose in service, not to ourselves but to others.