

Fr Tom's homily for Mass of The Lord's Supper Maundy Thursday 2020

First Reading: Exodus 12: 1-8, 11-14
Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26
Gospel: John 13:1-15

Sometimes you get a song stuck in your head and it won't go away. Today I am having that problem. The song that I have in my head is by Andrew Lloyd Webber and the song is 'Love Changes Everything'. As I sat in front of the tabernacle pondering on what to write for Maundy Thursday that seemed to be the answer. Tonight (Maundy Thursday), tomorrow (Good Friday) and Saturday evening (The Easter Vigil) is the greatest love story ever told – and it is a story that changes everything.

Tonight we would normally have gathered in St Gabriel's for Mass, the priest would have washed the feet of twelve, we would have processed to the hall where the Altar of Repose would have been and we would have watched with the Lord. All those actions flow from Love – our love of The Lord.

But in this evening's Mass and readings, we encounter Love in Action. We see Jesus washing the feet of his disciples, giving an example of how we should love one another. In fact it is more than an example, it is a commandment – but one that comes out of a lived experience with Jesus. Jesus has taken an ordinary action but changed it through love, because it is he who has taken the form of a servant. That example should be held before us today. The question to ask is "How are we loving and serving our neighbour"? In these present times, the way we might be serving our neighbour is by staying at home and stopping the spread of the virus. But our love cannot leave us in isolation, we can be united to others by prayer and simply by picking up the telephone to see how someone is doing.

For many Catholics, not being able to attend Mass is difficult, but this could actually deepen our love for the gift of the eucharist. It can be so easy for us as Catholics to take receiving the sacrament for granted, (we turn up late, we leave early, we don't really prepare ourselves). But in this period of only making Spiritual Communions, our longing to be reunited with Our Lord in the Sacrament can deepen our understanding and love of the Eucharist. I was chatting with someone recently to see how they were coping and they spoke of the difficulty of not meeting up with their friends at Mass each week. I could understand that feeling, but then I came across some words of Pope Benedict which made me think.

The Eucharist is not a meal among friends. It is a mystery of covenant. "The prayers and the rites of the Eucharistic sacrifice make the whole history of salvation revive ceaselessly before the

eyes of our soul, in the course of the liturgical cycle, and make us penetrate ever more its significance" (Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. We are called to enter into this mystery of covenant by conforming our life increasingly every day to the gift received in the Eucharist. It has a sacred character, as Vatican Council II reminds: "Every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of His Body which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others; no other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree ". In a certain way, it is a "heavenly liturgy," anticipation of the banquet in the eternal Kingdom, proclaiming the death and resurrection of Christ, until he comes.

Have we realised the gift of the heavenly banquet that we are invited to? Do we realise what love is poured out on the altar day by day for us? In this present time, are we making use of the ability to watch Mass online or on TV? Or listen to it on the radio? It may be a very different way of experiencing Mass, but if it is done in love, then we will be changed by it. This period gives us the opportunity to give more time to Mass, to listen to the words, to pray them in the places where we are. We enter in the mystery of the Eucharist as Pope Benedict tells us by conforming our lives to the gift we receive from it.

That gift is Love, if we conform our life to Love, then our lives will be changed because "Love changes everything" – especially when that love is the powerful love of Christ.