

Holy Thursday – the Last Supper of the Lord – 2020.

A day of festival, of celebration, the feast of the Passover is not just a special type of meal, it is the celebration of Independence Day for the Jews. So that they do not get lost in the ritual, they tell the whole story from the beginning so that each part of the meal has important significance. It is a freedom celebration acted out live. For those of us who are Christian, this is where we come to understand Christ as the innocent, unblemished Lamb brought to be sacrificed – the Lamb of God. The blood of the lamb on the wooden door frames freed the Israelites from the Angel of Death. The blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, poured over the cross freed us from eternal death and won life for us forever. This Passover, this Last Supper of Jesus, was not just an enactment of a past drama or a past victory but a live rehearsal of what would eventually take place the following day. True, this is something we can celebrate today but that meal – the last meal of Jesus with his close friends - was that truly joyful when there was betrayal and denial off friendship in the air? I'm not so sure!

When we look for character in people, we often find it expressed in those, who when they are faced with difficult choices that involve the lives of others, always think of the others before themselves. Jesus does not dwell on what is going to happen to him or get morose or moody. No. He decides to wash the feet of his disciples. Not only was this an expression of his love for them but it was his most vivid example of the importance he gave to *service*. At this meal, Jesus shows us that *service* is both honourable, dignified and reverential. It is a sacred act. Not only is it an honourable act towards others but it brings honour to the one who serves.

Do we show this honour, dignity and reverence to those who serve us our groceries or those who look after us in all areas of the support services? One of the many, many graces of the recent pandemic is the reverence, dignity and honour we are showing to all those in the NHS and rightly so. But we are invited tonight to continue to show that same honour, dignity and reverence in the future – after the pandemic. This particular Holy Night is so special in helping us understand the integral importance of *service* as the very life blood of a person's character. We all want greater justice, mercy, peace and reconciliation in the world, but for this to happen, we must first become people of *service*.

It was said of the first Christian community *"Look how much they love one another!"* which boiled down to *"Look how much they enjoy serving each other!"* Jesus had given us the mission not just to serve our brother and sisters in our families or our parish community or even our town but to show this *service* to all those we meet without exception. Treat all with the same reverence, dignity and honour. In this way people will be inspired to proclaim: *"Look how much those Christians love and serve everyone, no matter who!"*. This is the night Jesus showed us how to do this. Let's make him proud of

us in our service of God and neighbour – and make this Holy Celebration one of true Joy!

Maundy Thursday - *Malcom Guite*

Here is the source of every sacrament,
The all-transforming presence of the Lord,
Replenishing our every element
Remaking us in his creative Word.
For here the earth herself gives bread and wine,
The air delights to bear his Spirit's speech,
The fire dances where the candles shine,
The waters cleanse us with His gentle touch.
And here He shows the full extent of love
To us whose love is always incomplete,
In vain we search the heavens high above,
The God of love is kneeling at our feet.
Though we betray Him, though it is the night.
He meets us here and loves us into light.