

**Homily offered by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea,  
Gibson Island, Maryland, Maundy Thursday, March 29, 2018.**

Maundy Thursday. Mandate Thursday. “Do this in remembrance of me”  
Thursday.

Jesus gathers with his close friends, those who accepted his invitation to be fishers of men, those who witnessed persuasive healings and worrisome confrontations, those who believed, at least up to this point and with some reservations, that this Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

They were witnesses to the crowds laying down palms and shouting hosanna earlier in the week. They were also aware of the forces, both secular and religious, seeking to undermine the credibility of Jesus. They weren't sure what to expect in the days ahead. In short, they were on edge. And we can be certain that Jesus was on edge as well.

There was one amongst them who knew what to expect. We can never be certain why Judas betrayed Jesus. We know that he had already been approached by the authorities and offered a reward if he would keep them informed about the plans of Jesus.

There are other theories, however, including that Jesus himself had asked Judas to help. “I need you to do something that will be difficult. I need you to tell the authorities what I am up to and where they can find me. If you love me, Judas, you will do what I ask.”

It was not an easy night for Judas. It wasn't a question of trying to choose between the authorities and Jesus. They may have been on the same page. The authorities wanted Jesus to be turned over. And now Jesus wanted to be turned over. Judas didn't have much of a choice.

Given this climate, what does Jesus do? He gathers his disciples for the evening meal. He offers bread and wine, but with a twist. He begins the meal by washing his disciples' feet, an act of humility and service, an attitude which he expects the disciples, and you and me, to adopt as a way of life. We are here to serve.

Then Jesus breaks the bread and offers the bread to the disciples. Our service of Holy Communion recalls these words: "Take, eat, this is my Body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." Then Jesus takes the cup of wine, and says, "Drink ye all of this; for this is my Blood of a new covenant, a new relationship, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins. Do this as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me."

The meal was not new. But the power of the meal was now very different. From then on, even in his absence, Jesus was present. And not just present, but present with the expectation that those receiving the bread and wine would be nourished for service. "Do this in remembrance of me."

And, two millennia later, we do so. A simple meal of bread and wine. A meal, an experience, a reminder, that Jesus would give his life for the world, and that God would raise Jesus from the dead, and that this whole event would be sustained by the Holy Spirit.

What we do tonight is more than saying grace before a meal. It is bringing to life the Savior of the World. Not in a complicated way, but in a familiar way, a way instituted by the Savior himself. It doesn't matter where this meal is offered - on the battle-field, in a prison or hospital, in a school chapel, in a magnificent cathedral, in a homeless shelter, in a wood-framed church on the Chesapeake, in the living room of a private home. We feel, in a way we cannot explain, that the Lord is with us.

That presence of the Lord himself is what Maundy Thursday is all about. "Do this in remembrance of me," and you will feel my presence. That is his promise, and that is our experience. We're here tonight because each time we share in this meal, we feel closer to the Lord. We feel nourished for service. We feel better-equipped to do what the Lord wants us to do, which no doubt will involve some sacrifice on our part.

Look at the sacrifice that Jesus perhaps asked of Judas. Chances are that we won't be asked for that level of sacrifice, but we can expect some assignment, with the understanding that bread and wine, offered, blessed and received, will give us strength to respond in the affirmative.

Amen.