

**Homily offered by the Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea,  
Gibson Island, Maryland, Maundy Thursday, April 18, 2019.**

This past Sunday, we noted the high drama of Jesus entering Jerusalem to the shouts of Hosanna. It was evident that the three converging forces – the people, the authorities and Jesus – were about to butt heads. Things were on a grand scale.

Tonight, the scale is not so grand, but it is equally important. Jesus doesn't gather with hundreds or thousands. He meets with his twelve disciples and a few friends. It is a strategy session of sorts. Not to consider how to overthrow or how to escape, but how to serve. It's a remarkable evening, which Jesus understood as the first of many suppers, not a last supper.

Oh yes, it was the last supper before his crucifixion, but the first supper of a new Era, which you and I are part of thousands of years later. This is special for you and me.

It is not something we invented. It is rather something that we obey. It carries the title of Maundy Thursday. Maundy means mandate, command, order, directive. And the source of this mandate is Jesus himself. He told us how to conduct the supper and he explained what the supper means. And then he said, "Do it." "Do it" not only in remembrance of me, but as a gift to the world."

On this night we probably feel closer to Jesus than at any other time. As fascinating as the birth of Jesus was, and as dramatic as the crucifixion was, and as remarkable as the resurrection was, it's not easy to see ourselves actually part of these events. But a supper is different. We can see ourselves at table with Jesus. We can feel the unease and sadness that permeated that evening in the Garden. And we can taste the bread and wine as it is passed around the table.

This is an intimate event, and we observe it in an intimate setting. We are blessed tonight and every time we gather for this special supper.

The menu is simple. But the message is profound. Jesus tells us that he will be with us in this meal. We can argue about what "with us" means. But we can't deny the presence of our Lord when we obey the mandate. And we can't deny

the clarity of our Lord when he tells us that serving is more important than being served.

We don't always understand these words. We hear them, but implementing them is another matter. This contrast, this conflict, is nothing new. It existed at the supper we remember tonight. Judas was in agony about what he should do. He loved Jesus, but he was worried sick about where Jesus was taking the people. All those people who welcomed Jesus as the Messiah. They were going to be really disappointed. Judas needed to think about them too.

I don't believe Judas betrayed Jesus for the money. I think he felt an obligation to save a lot of people even if it meant putting his friend at risk and perhaps himself.

But we don't know what was in the mind of Judas. What we do know is what was in the mind of Jesus. He told us that night. Focus on serving others, not being served. And continue to gather, not only in remembrance of me, but in support of one another and in thanksgiving for all the Lord's blessings.

"Do this" Jesus commanded. Tonight we obey. Amen.