

Being a bit of the love story

A new commandment I give you: that you love one another. As I have loved you, so too must you love one another. By this all will know you are disciples to me, if you have love for one another.

Greetings, on this, the first day of the Triduum (trid-you-um), the 3 most holy days in our Christian Calendar. For as the Lord said, it was evening, and it was morning, the first day. And this first day we call, “Maundy Thursday”. Why? Well, maundy is an Anglo-French word that comes from the latin “*mandatum*,” which means “commandment.” So, in our liturgical time, our *kairos* time, we have located ourselves in the first day of this most Holy of times with a commandment. And this comes as we are at the end of what has been called the greatest love story ever on this earth. And as with any story, all of us will have bits that we remember more than others.

Because it depends which Gospel you read as to how you might interpret what commandment we are to recall. In John, who we read tonight, we hear the words we carry with us, “A new commandment I give: love one another as I have loved you.” If we had read the other Gospels this evening, we would have heard the commandment: “This do in remembrance of me,” that we hear shortly in our service. In any case, the call, the commandment, is and always will be one of practicing radical love, radical hospitality.

On this night, the call to remember is more than mindfulness, it is an embodied remembrance - we are asked to put our whole selves into these acts: a shared meal commemorating the Passover, the washing of feet, and the consuming of the Eucharist, which literally means thanksgiving. We are called to give thanks for the gift of love and aloneness that our God has shown for us, even if we cannot do so together in person.

Our God, who asks this of us, is not so haughty - Our God shares meals, washes feet, sits an enemy - one who is to betray Him, at the table, and goes with us to the wilderness. Can we say we do as we were asked? Do we love one another and our enemies always? Or, like all that goes on in this evening, is it too much to contemplate? Indeed, were we in person, this putting together all the bits of this evening's service is quite complicated, like an intricate dance.

However, if we take a long view, instead of focusing on the bits to remember and to try and 'get right', we can have a sense of freedom and space in living out the love we were called to practice, and not think the call is "too much".

If we pause and step back, look at the entirety of what we are recalling this evening, we can see that this love story goes back to before time, before the first day. Let us consider Jesus as Christ, who was before all worlds, whose walk did not end with the walk of Jesus on earth. We, who know the end of the story of Jesus the man, are literally invited to *be* his walk and work here on earth, to take his place in the story as his disciples. And we can each do a 'bit', and take one step.

As Bishop Ken Untener of Saginaw wrote in memory of departed priests: "The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts: it is beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is the Lord's work. We cannot do everything. This enables us to do something, and do it very, very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a step along the way."

And if we each remember, in mind and body, that we *cannot* do everything, but do *something*, we may become the people who love and respect each

other's bits in the story, and appreciate that, and have love for one another as a community. Together, we may be disciples.

There was another request this evening, not a command, a request. This God, this man, Jesus, also asked the disciples to sit with Him, as He sits with us in grief and pain. Yet they did not. And they, like us, were loved anyway. On Maundy Thursdays in the past, some of us would keep the watch, for an hour or two, covering the whole night unto morning, to say yes to the request to sit with Him. That is something we can all do well, or try, even for a few minutes. So, tonight, on the first day, I invite you to be still, listen for God, even for a few minutes, in thanksgiving for being part of the love story that does not end.

Valear Howsam

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