

## Maundy Thursday

St Philip's Anglican Church, O'Connor

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The story of the crucifixion, the torture and crucifixion, of Jesus reveals to us something deeply disturbing and confronting about ourselves. It reveals our humanity with all its weakness and sin. Jesus whole life was a revelation and in Holy Week we reflect on the most fundamental elements of that revelation.

Tonight there is the story of the Passover meal, the traditional meal the Jewish people remember each year, that celebrates the Exodus from Egypt, the meal where a lamb is killed and eaten. This is the same meal that Jesus ate with his friends the night before he died. There are powerful messages here tonight about Gods love and faithfulness and about the integrity of Jesus, his Son. In Jesus you have a person who was the epitome of integrity. The simple definition of integrity is doing what you say you are going to do—Jesus practiced what he preached. He spoke about love and service and he touched the unclean and washed his friends' feet.

When Peter is horrified that Jesus, his Rabbi and master, is going to wash his feet, Jesus says to Peter, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me". Here is where the rubber hits the road with service—and I mean accepting love and loving service from others, not washing someone else's feet but allowing others to tend to us and touch us in love. Christians, by and large, are pretty good at loving others and engaging in acts of service. We all know Christian friends who are wonderful servers of others. They are following Jesus command to follow his example of humble service. But he also tells his disciples that they must allow him and those that act in his name to serve them. As followers of Christ we need to be prepared to not only love others in practical ways but to accept love and help as well. I think for Christians this is a much harder thing.

For one, it makes us vulnerable, it suggests we are not strong and capable, it suggests we are not as independent as we think we are and it puts us in the position of least control and power. Admitting that this is the case is difficult for us humans—we like to be in control, we like to keep the walls up and the barricades in place, we like to keep our shoes and socks on!

Maybe it is because of these barriers we put up and maintain that Jesus goes on to say that if we do not allow ourselves to be loved in practical and real ways, we can have no part of him. How can we be close to God if we have walls up and this huge edifice that protects us from the challenges of love? How too can we accept the wondrous gift of the cross and resurrection if we do not acknowledge our need of God's grace and be open to the transforming power of his love? How can we be truly close to others?

But we know that Jesus loving service, his gentleness and patience are a stark contrast to the events of Good Friday. The light and love of Jesus is swamped by the violence and horror of Friday. Violence is something some human beings live with constantly. Who knows how many have died through war and civil conflict over the last 24 hours? In conflicts, that we in Australia have either been part of condoning or exacerbating or turning our backs on. There is blood on all of our hands, there is enough guilt to pass around and still have leftovers. Every time we pick up the cup and the bread of communion we are reminded that we have blood on our hands. We crucified Jesus. Humans killed Jesus, not a pack of wild dogs or a winter storm or disease, and certainly not God the Father. We did. We tried to extinguish his life and his message. We killed a perfectly innocent human being, a person who showed what love was

like, a person of love and integrity. We justified it to ourselves like we justify all killing. But the promise in the Eucharist is that God will not retaliate against us. The promise in the Eucharist is that loving service, service that Jesus fulfilled completely on the cross, overcomes our death dealing acts.

As we go through the darkness of these next few days, as we confront our own suffering and death and the suffering of others, remember to keep your heart open for the love and touch of God that leads us to new life. Through the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus we know that we can be as close to God and others as we will allow ourselves to be. We have the assurance that love just is and waits for the embrace.