

Holy Thursday

Readings: Matthew 26: 26-29 & John 13: 1-15

Meditation:

What is it like for a condemned prisoner the day before his execution? There are final sad visits by family. A clergyman comes to talk with him. He's offered a last meal of his own choosing (the most popular choices happen to be cheeseburgers and chili). The condemned man's lawyer may make frantic telephone calls to the governor hoping for a last-minute reprieve. Sometimes there are crowds outside the prison protesting capital punishment. Everything seems to be centered around the man who is about to die.

How different were the events on the day before Christ's death! Jesus and the disciples shared a Passover meal together, in what Jesus knew would be his last supper. During that meal, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it into pieces, and passed it around to the disciples, telling them to eat it, for the bread was his body. Next, he took wine, gave thanks, and passed it around for all to drink, explaining that it was his blood "of the new covenant" which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. And Jesus announced that he would not drink it again until he drank it anew with them in God's kingdom.

What does this all mean? Jesus was giving the disciples, and all of us, a way to share. A way to share in his coming sacrifice. A way to join together in one body, among ourselves and with God. A way to offer our own sacrifice, every time we celebrate the Divine Liturgy, in remembrance of Christ's sacrifice for us.

Jesus also gave us a means of forgiveness. Through his sacrifice (his blood being poured out for us) and through the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion, our sins are forgiven, we are reconciled with God, and start anew.

Jesus gave us a new covenant – a new agreement – with God. In the old covenant, the Jews had to follow many laws and make animal sacrifices. With the coming of Christ and his sacrifice for us, the old covenant was gone. We were offered a new agreement with God: God would forgive our sins if we accepted the sacrifice Christ made for us. And

From: "My Lenten Journey"

Jesus gave us hope. Hope of life together with him and the Father in the kingdom of God.

Jesus did something else extraordinary that night. During the meal he removed some of his clothes, took a towel and a wash basin and washed the disciples' feet, one by one. In those days people wore sandals and the streets were dusty and dirty; feet became especially dirty. Washing them was the job of a servant. Here was a man who had already done so much, who was about to give up his life for others, and yet chose to perform an act of utmost humility to give us an example of service.

Jesus' actions confused Peter who did not want his feet washed by his master. Yet Jesus insisted, to demonstrate that to be a leader, you must also be servant to those whom you lead. Much later, when the disciples started their own ministries, they would indeed become servants of God and of the people to whom they took the word of God.

Prayer

*Jesus, on the night before you died,
You showed us again how great is your love.
Through giving us our body and blood,
You gave us a way to be one with you and with each
other
In washing the disciples' feet, you gave us yourself as
an example of humility and service.
Jesus, you gave us so much!
What can we give back to you?
Our faith, our service, our love*

For Reflection

Am I willing to follow Christ's example of serving? How?

Whom I can serve today?

Did you know . . .

The ritual of Washing of the Feet was established by Catholicos Krikor Vgayaser in the 11th century and was originally conducted in the church narthex, or vestibule, where the celebrant would wash and bless (with oil) the feet of all the faithful.