

Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2018 - Maundy Thursday  
Year B  
Exodus 12:1-14  
Psalm 116:1-2,11-18  
1 Corinthians 11:23-26  
John 13:1-17,31b-35

**In the name of the Trinity; Creator, Redeemer, and Life-Giver...**

“Do this, in remembrance of me”. These words are at the centre of our Eucharistic liturgy this evening, and, indeed, every time we gather around the table. And we do this because as Jesus shares the last meal with his friends, he is recorded as saying, first with the bread, and then with the cup - “every time you do this, remember me.”

“Remember me”... Now, maybe you have always known and understood this, but I see a powerful irony here in Jesus’ words. Because although we do not readily use it in this way, the word remember does have an opposite in the English language (and it is not “forget”) - the opposite of remember is, in fact, *dismember* - to take apart; to divide up.

And it seems to me that Jesus’ command to his disciples, and to us also to *remember*, is that as we celebrate the Communion, we are, in a way, putting Jesus back together - we are celebrating the story, commemorating the actions of Jesus, doing these things so that the life and ministry of Jesus may come alive for us again, afresh, renewed within us.

This has a particularly sharp focus on this occasion tonight - because following the Last Supper, the actions of the disciples seem to be dis-membering Jesus. They fall asleep as Jesus prays, unable to even stay awake as their friend is in anguished prayer and pleading with God. Judas brings a horde of soldiers and guards to arrest Jesus, tempted by the offer of wealth to betray the Son of God.

The disciples run away in fear, not willing to stand by Jesus, or to offer their support or testimony in his defence. And Peter denies that he even knows “this man”. Everything they do tears apart the loyalty they promised. In their actions, the layers of friendship and comradeship are stripped away as surely as Jesus is stripped of his clothes by the mocking soldiers.

Jesus knows all that is to happen. So, as he breaks bread and shares wine with the twelve, he reminds them that they must, when all of this is done, have a way of re-membering; of putting back together their loyalties; of recalling Jesus’ words of light and life. And they are to do this, not once or twice, but every time they gather to share the simple meal that Jesus instituted. Bread and wine - ordinary elements of everyday life. And yet, in the way in which they are set apart and shared, they become the powerful action that re-members Christ.

And remembering is a powerful thing, isn’t it? It certainly was for the Jewish people. They still carried on the remembrance of the Exodus Story, it was still fresh in their minds even though the generations had come and gone since. And Jesus knew that those who were with him that night would also go, to be replaced by new generations of followers. So, with the echoes of the Passover Meal in their hearts and minds, Jesus gave them a new way of re-membering.

By our gathering in worship tonight; to commemorate, to remember actively the redemptive works of God we are called to gracious acts of justice and mercy. Like the Prophet Micah’s call to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with our God, we remember our redemption, our salvation.

In all of our liturgies, but especially this poignant time this evening, we seek to enact and remember. And we are called to recognize the close link between worship and the events of our redemption - how each is a participation in the other and how worship is itself a 'yes' to the God who wishes life and liberation for all creation, and a 'no' to those powers which would seek to break the spirit for life.

There is an invitation to make these events 'our own', so to speak, to be nourished in our faith journey by remembering them and to think of them as 'our story' too and not just those of our forebears in faith. There is also the challenge to see whether our faith and worship does indeed delve into the private and personal areas of life.

Tom Wright makes this powerful observation about the Meal that we share tonight. He says: "sharing this meal - with Jesus, the meal in which he gives himself to his people, and enables them to eat and drink all the meaning of his forthcoming death, is an event so full of meaning that the words run out long before it's done."

This is not about words, even though we will say many this night - it is not about words, but about re-remembering...

Our sacramental life in the church is a physical remembrance of God's redemptive acts. Remember, you are baptized... Remember, you have made the Exodus journey, having passed through the sea to safety... Remember that you are part of God's beloved creation... And remember - "Do this in remembrance of me," as we feast on Christ in faith.

During this Holy Week as we celebrate our Exodus from the dominion of sin and death, we remember our Lord's passion. May such remembering yield acts of mercy and justice and fill our hearts with hope.

In the name of God, Amen.