

The Events of Holy Week: Maundy Thursday (4/9/2020)

There is debate about where the term *Maundy Thursday* came from. Some theorize the name arose from the “maundsor baskets” or “maundy purses” of alms which the king of England distributed to certain poor at Whitehall before attending Mass on that day. More likely it comes from the Latin word *mandatum*. On the night before his death Jesus said, “A new commandment (*mandatum novum*) I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.” (John 13:34-35)

How could Jesus say that the commandment to love one another was new? Didn’t Moses write 1500 years earlier, “Love your neighbor as yourself?” (Leviticus 19:18) So how could he say this commandment is new? He wasn’t talking about this commandment being new in time, but new in kind. He was giving them a new kind of commandment. What made it new in kind? The extraordinary manner in which he would display this new kind of love. This kind of love is a selfless, self-sacrificing love. It’s a love that acts on behalf of others who don’t deserve it. It’s a love that gives others the exact opposite of what they deserve. Because of our sin, we deserved to be tossed into the bowels of hell forever. But what did Jesus do? He loved us who were unlovable. He loved us so much that he willingly allowed the burden of a world’s guilt be heaped on his perfect, innocent shoulders. He loved us so much that he willingly carried that guilt to the cross. He loved us so much that on the cross he willingly endured the full fury of God’s wrath over our sin, being tossed into the bowels of hell in our place. He loved us enough to allow himself to be slowly drained of life so that we can have life, and have it to the full—knowing we are at peace with God today and forever in heaven. Jesus displayed that his is a saving love by rising from the dead on the third day.

Now he says, “A new commandment (*mandatum novum*) I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.” Jesus wants us to love others with the same sort of selfless, self-sacrificing love that he displayed for us. We will be willing to serve one another out of love for the One who loved us first. We will be willing to do acts of kindness toward all people, even those who have not acted kindly toward us. We will be willing to go out of the way for others, and inconvenience ourselves for others, even if they only look out for themselves. No doubt during these trying times, there are all sorts of opportunities to put Jesus’ love on display.

By doing so, we are letting others know we are Jesus’ disciples. That will give us an opportunity to tell them about Jesus’ love for them. John wrote, “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” (1 John 4:9-11)

Love in Christ is strong and living, Binding faithful hearts in one;
Love in Christ is true and giving—May his will in us be done!

Love is patient and forbearing, Clothed in Christ’s humility,
Gentle, selfless, kind, and caring, Reaching out in charity.

Love in Christ abides forever, Fainting not when ills attend;
Love, forgiving and forgiven, Shall endure until life’s end.

After sharing this devotion with your family, take the time to read John Chapters 13-16.

Pastor Zuberbier