

**A Gift of Invitation**  
**Maundy Thursday April 1, 2010**  
**Luke 22:14-30**  
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*May these words, spoken in Love, be heard in Love  
and lived in Love to your glory and for your kingdom, O God. Amen.*

Welcome to the Triduum – the three days of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. It is a busy and holy time for Christians as we remember the last days of Jesus' life on earth, and seek to join him on his journey to the cross, the grave, and ultimately into new life. A lot happens during these three days, and a lot of different stories and traditions are connected even with just Thursday's events alone. So much so that we do not even try to commemorate them all in one service – tonight we will not focus on footwashing as many congregations may be doing. Instead we hear the story of the Last Supper, witness the stripping of the altar, and experience Tenebrae – or darkening shadows, as we hear the readings of betrayal, arrest and trial.

It is a busy night, and one that can seem complicated and disjointed, if we forget the overriding message – which is of course spelled out in our Sequence Hymn tonight – Charity and Love. God is Love, even through temptation and betrayal, through loneliness and desolation, through crucifixion and death. God is Love, not in spite of death, but through it – by turning the source of our biggest fear into an instrument of reconciliation and redemption. So just as these three days are to be experienced together, let's try to keep the seemingly disparate pieces of this night – this busy, holy, emotional, dramatic night within the context of a loving God who always reaches out to us in love, to invite us into new life.

God's invitations to new life come in many forms – in individual promises made between God and the saints, in covenants made to cement a people to God, in the call of prophets to return to the Lord's way, in the calling of disciples (ancient and modern), in parables, miracles, warnings, and instruction. God calls us to new life, to life in God. And I believe he does so in the institution of the Lord's Supper as well.

With Jesus' celebration of the last supper with his disciples and his instruction to participate in remembrance of him, Jesus gives his followers (both then and now) a gift. His gift is a way of remembering him and an invitation to new life through walking with him on the way. The Way of Jesus does lead to the cross, and he desires that we walk with him the whole way. But not because he desires death for us; quite the opposite – he desires new life for us, which is accessible by moving with him through death into life.

So this way of remembering him is different from usual gifts of remembrance. Unlike my grandmother's brooch, which my mother gave to me to wear on my wedding day, the gift of the last supper is an action. I love my grandmother's brooch, and it holds sentimental value for many in my family. I hope to give it to my daughter someday to help pass on a family memento. But

ultimately, it is simply an object, made dear to me because of its previous owner. There is only one, and if I lose it, it cannot be replaced.

The Lord's Supper is different because it involves action. It involves our engagements, our commitment, our answer to the invitation. Despite the legends and movies through the years that surround and romanticize the Holy Grail or cup that Jesus used at the Last Supper, we do not actually worship an object – we are invited to engage in an action of remembering that is more than sentimentality – it involves a way of life for us. We are not merely witnesses or bystanders to this amazing action, we are fully engaged in the process, and thereby transformed by it. This act of faithful remembrance and recommitment can be performed anywhere with any bread and any cup. It is in the action, the participation, the engagement of our very selves, which make this a different way of remembering.

And this re-remembering is different from a sentimental romp down memory lane. We do much more than simply tell again a story from the past. Like the Passover Seder, the Lord's Supper is an act of anamnesis, or "loss of forgetfulness." In this process of re-telling the Story, we become a part of the Story, and the Story becomes a part of our identity. So for the Jewish people, the re-telling of the Passover becomes a re-living of the Exodus out of the bondage of Egypt, and into a new covenantal relationship with the God who liberated and liberates them. It blends the telling of history, with the engagement of the present, and the promise for the future.

Likewise, in the Eucharist, we perform the act of sharing bread and wine in remembrance of Jesus, but in it we are invited into walking the way of Jesus, and are promised new life. When we accept the invitation to bread and wine, we accept the invitation to become a part of the Story – not just the story of the last supper in the upper room, but also the footwashing, the prayer in the garden, the arrest, trial and crucifixion, and the resurrection and spread of the good news to the entire world. We answer the call to live God's way – a way of justice, servant leadership, and love. We become people of the Way. It shapes our identity.

So this gift that Jesus leaves us – this way to remember him – is not an object, which must be carefully protected and kept out of sight – this way to remember him is to live his way, the way of the cross and empty tomb – the way of love extended to everyone, the way of discipleship that leads to new life. By accepting the invitation to the altar, by eating and drinking in remembrance of Jesus, we do much more than tell an old story. We become that Story so that others may know of God's love. Welcome to the Triduum, to the Great Three Days. Welcome to the Table. Welcome to the Way. Amen.