

Tonight is a night about remembrance. All of our readings are crucial in the formation and identity of communities both historic and contemporary. We have the institution of the Passover observance in our reading from Exodus. We have Paul's account of the institution of the Lord's supper, a new twist on the Passover for a community deeply rooted in that seminal tradition. And finally in John we have the amazing account of Jesus washing his disciple's feet and then commanding them (hence the Maundy in our Thursday - from the latin Mandatum) to love one another.

Remembering certain places, events, songs and even smells have a way of thrusting us back in time. More importantly, though, they bring us together, forming a common bond that transcends time and space, often forcing us to move well beyond ourselves into the greater reality of our connectedness. This is what tonight is about.

While it's true that even small things can trigger memories, sometimes it takes something big or completely out of the ordinary to jar us back to a time or place. That's what is going on in today's gospel. Although John is much more generous towards Jesus' disciples than the other gospel writers in terms of their understanding, they still were not ready for what Jesus was about to do.

Interrupting their meal abruptly by standing up and beginning to disrobe, it wouldn't have taken long for his disciples to notice that something was amiss. Peter couldn't take it any longer, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" You can hear the amazement and confusion in his exasperated tone. Why in the world would the Messiah of God stoop himself to the position of a slave? His disciples could in no way fathom the fact that right before their eyes, their savior, who they were beginning to believe to be God's Son was washing their feet. Everything that Jesus contained, the very fullness of God, the embodiment of love, the firstborn of all creation, was now busying himself with their dusty, calloused feet. Even today, it is hard to make sense of it if you think about it.

And maybe that's the point. I think it would have been hard for Jesus' disciples to make sense of His commandment to love one another without doing something outrageous to drive the point home. What the disciples needed to see was something they wouldn't forget but also remember that they could, and should, for that matter do themselves. For Jesus to express love in this humbling way speaks volumes, especially when you consider he was washing the feet of those who would soon deny Him, desert Him, and even betray Him. It didn't matter.

What Jesus showed his disciples was a lesson that would never be far beyond reach. In fact, it would become the measuring stick for all they did in His name from this point forward. The same holds true today. Jesus shows us that love is not coerced, not condescending, or unequal. The only measure we can judge our love for one another is by the measure of Jesus, the Son of God, kneeling down and washing his disciples dirty feet. Of all people, the Son of Man, the Prince of Peace, the King of Kings, showed love by stooping down to do the work of a slave.

Sometimes, the biggest lessons are the simplest. Can you imagine the disciples ever forgot that moment? In this day of internet stardom and viral videos it can often seem as though the things we do in our daily lives don't matter for anything. That isn't true. Think for a moment when someone showed you an incredible gift of love or service. Was it newsworthy? Probably not. Have you forgotten it? I would venture to say no. "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Jesus didn't say make sure you become the next internet sensation or feature story in some feel-good compensation for all the awful news segment on the local news. It isn't about recognition or honor bestowed, it's about

humbly serving our Lord as we humbly serve our neighbor. Even small moments of grace and love can have lasting impact. That is our measure. We love. No questions asked, no strings attached, no hope for repayment or recognition. It's how Jesus loved, how can anyone forget? In turn, with this charge before us, how will we be remembered?