

The Sacred Heart of Christ

John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Maundy?

We are gathering tonight to remember Jesus Christ and his love for all humanity. We call this worship service Maundy Thursday worship service. Do you know the meaning of “Maundy” as in “Maundy Thursday?” It’s certainly not a commonly-used English word. We are unlikely to hear this word outside the context of Easter. The term “Maundy” comes from the Latin word *Mandatum* and the literal meaning of *Mandatum* is “commandment.” While Maundy in English often refers to the ceremony of foot washing, the root meaning of this word is “commandment” and so the center of today’s worship service is not foot washing itself, but Jesus’ new commandment.

After washing the feet of his disciples, Jesus gave them a new commandment saying, “Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another. This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other.” (John 13:34-35)

I hope that we can experience this divine love of Christ during this time of worship and communion and practice this new commandment to love and serve one another through the ritual of foot washing or hand washing.

The Sacred Heart of Christ

Can you see this Icon? It is the icon of the Sacred Heart of Christ. The Heart of Christ is represented burning with love for humanity most vividly manifest in His suffering and sacrifice on the Cross. A circle of thorns around the heart represents the crown of thorns that was placed on Jesus’ head. A cross represents the Crucifixion. Light surrounding the heart signifies the divine light of love. The fire symbolizes the passionate love of Christ for us. Thus, the sacred heart of Christ is the symbol of divine love and mercy for us. It also shows the heart of Christianity, which is the divine love of Christ for all humanity. Jesus showed and embodied the love of God and his mercy, and taught us how to love one another through his words, and actions.

In today’s scripture, from the beginning to the end, we can witness the abundant love of Christ for his disciples. “Jesus knew that the time had come to leave this world to go to the Father. Having loved his disciples, he continued to love them right to the end.” He loved them right to the end! The sacred heart of Christ is revealed in his act of serving by way of washing the feet of his disciples. His sacred heart of mercy was revealed when he lamented upon the betrayal of Judas Iscariot, not blaming him. His sacred heart of love was revealed when he gave the bread and wine as the symbol of his sacrifice and love for all humanity. We are saved by his sacred heart of love, mercy and humility. We are saved because our Christ implanted his own sacred heart of love into our heart.

Sacred Heart of Christ Transplanted to Us!

During the week, I reflected on the sacred heart of Jesus and his suffering and death, and our salvation. How could Jesus Christ save us through his suffering and death? Then, the image of heart transplant surgery came to my mind. The heart is one of the most important human organs that directly relates to human life. If someone collapsed, what would you do first? You

would call 911. At the same time, you would check the person's breath and pulse. Without a pulse, the person would soon be dead. Thus, the heart is an essential organ for human life.

For patients with end-stage heart failure, a heart transplant is the only way to save their lives. But finding a heart donor is extremely difficult because giving one's heart means the death of the donor. No one could give their heart to another without sacrificing one's own life.

Relating this image to the sacrifice of Jesus and our salvation, our human hearts are severely damaged by sin and there is no cure. To save humanity, Jesus Christ gave us his own sacred heart. Through his sacrifice on the cross, the sacred heart of Christ has been implanted in us and this heart of love makes our heart continue to beat in our chest. The sacred heart of Christ, that is filled with abundant love, is now in you and me. So let us love one another. As Jesus said, "Love one another. In the same way Jesus loved us, let us love one another."

To love one another, we need to see the sacred heart of Christ in each one of us. Our bishop Sudars Devadhar introduced the clergy to the way of greeting in his home country, India. While we say, "Hi" for greeting, in India, people greet each other saying "Namaste." Namaste simply means "Hi" but it also has a deeper meaning. It means "The light in me sees the light in you." I think this is a good greeting. Isn't it? A Christian version of Namaste could be "the Sacred heart of Christ in me sees the sacred heart of Christ in you."

Be Saints!

See the sacred heart of Christ in each one of us and love one another as Christ loved us. The more we love, the more we will be able to be shaped by the love of Christ. We call people who live with the heart of full love, saints. I know that it is hard to love all people all the time. I love Juhee very much but sometime we have quarrels. I know that I am supposed to love all, but I still sense negative prejudices toward other people in me. Can we really be saints?

My friend told me how his Anglican priest gave his children a good night blessing. Every night right before bed time, the priest says to his children, "Good night all you saints!" Are his children saints? Just like us, sometimes they are, but mostly they are not. But there are moments when we can be saints. Although it can be only temporality, we can be saints when we love one another. We can be saints when we gently care for each other and humbly serve each other. When we love each other as Christ loved us, we become saints in love at that moment. You may be able to be a saint for five seconds when you say "I love you" to your family. You may be a saint for 10 minutes when you serve other people during a fellowship meeting. You can be a saint for an hour when you help people living on the street. How long have you been a saint each day? 1 minutes, 10 minutes? That's o.k. Let us try to extend the period of time being saints... minute by minute every day. Then, one day, we will be saints as well as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ who radiates the divine light of love to people.

The starting point is to receive the love of Christ and share it with others. We are going to do foot washing or hand washing. As you do this ritual at home, remember Jesus' love and his sacred heart that is transplanted into us. See the sacred heart of Christ in your brothers and sisters and love one another as Jesus Christ our Lord loved us. Amen.