

The **Easter Triduum** begins with the Mass of the Last Supper on **Maundy Thursday** night, continues through **Good Friday** before culminating in the **Easter Vigil** and **Easter Day**. It is the most solemn festival of the Church Year. The Triduum is enacted in powerful, vivid liturgical drama drawing us, spiritually and imaginatively into the story of our redemption.

Maundy Thursday is so named from the Latin *Mandare* meaning command. On Maundy Thursday Jesus gave His followers a new commandment: *Love one another as I have loved you*. Maundy Thursday is a multi-layered feast. Jesus demonstrated his love for the twelve – his chosen band by washing their feet. In this way He demonstrated that His leadership was grounded in humility. He is the ‘Servant-King’. *Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord – and you are right for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and teacher have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet...I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you.*[Jn 13:13-14, 34]. This action is at the heart of all ministry, all Christian living but is focused in the ordained life. At The Last Supper Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist

and said to his apostles ‘Do this in remembrance of Me’. As the foot washing encapsulates the diaconal calling to serve so the institution of the Eucharist also inaugurated the priesthood. This is why bishops, priests and deacons gather on the morning of each Maundy Thursday at a special Eucharist called the **Chrism Mass**, presided over by the Diocesan Bishop. At this Eucharist all who are ordained renew their ordination vows. It is called the Chrism Mass because the Bishop blesses the holy oils: Oil of the Sick, Oil of Catechumens to anoint those preparing for Baptism and Oil of Chrism to anoint those receiving the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders.

At the Holy Eucharist of the Last Supper, the Church remembers Jesus’ gift of His continuing presence among us and within us in the Sacrament of the Altar. At the altar, the priest is ‘in persona Christi’ and through the action of the Holy Spirit is empowered to make Christ present. As the feast of the inauguration of the sacraments of Holy Eucharist and Holy Orders, Maundy Thursday is a joyful celebration. White vestments, the colour of celebration are worn to express our joy and thanksgiving for Jesus’ gift of himself, His sacrifice on the

Cross which Eucharist enacts and makes present. The Gloria is sung to accompaniment of continual bells. The bells are then silent until the Great Proclamation at the Easter Vigil. The bells may be replaced with a clapper during the Eucharistic Prayer to mark the Sanctus, the Consecration, the Minor Elevation and the invitation to receive Holy Communion.

The Serving Ministry: As those who are in Holy Orders renew their vows at the Chrism Mass, so all who serve at the altar and administer the chalice are commissioned/re commissioned in these ministries during this Eucharist.

The Foot washing: This is a solemn moment in the liturgy. The priest removes the chasuble and assisted by the deacon washes the feet of those who choose to come forward. This is a reminder of our commitment to love and serve the Lord and each other in obedience to Jesus’ command. Participating in the foot washing can be confronting - how easy to identify with Peter - ‘Don’t mess with *my* feet.’ Yet it is a powerful symbol of God’s call, received at our Baptism to be servants of the servants of God. This sign points to that reality. Jesus’ response to Peter’s objection in John

13:8 is salutary: *Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.*

Procession of the Blessed Sacrament: At the conclusion of Holy Communion, the Ciborium containing the Reserved Sacrament is carried to the altar of repose. This may be accompanied by the hymn *Sing my tongue the Saviour's glory*. The altar of repose represents the Garden of Gethsemane where later the Watch of the Passion will take place.

Stripping of the Altar:

The priest and deacon remove outer vestments and replace white stoles with purple. Together with the altar servers they remove all ornaments, altar linens, and furniture from the sanctuary, leaving only the bare altar. Where there is an aumbry or tabernacle, the Blessed Sacrament is removed to the altar of repose prior to the stripping and the door is left open. The stripping of the altar is a powerful symbol of Jesus' coming humiliation, abandonment and desolation. He is stripped of His garments and deserted by His friends.

Watch of the Passion: The church is plunged into darkness remembering the words from St John's Gospel 13:30 *And it*

was night. The altar of repose is lit with a single candle which may be the remnant of the old Paschal Candle. The altar is simply laid with corporal, candle and ciborium and sometimes some simple greenery to symbolise the garden. At the Watch we remember Jesus' struggle in the garden, wrestling with the dread of the trial to come and praying: *Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done.* Luke 22:42. We recall his loneliness, his desolate appeal to the apostles: *Could you not keep awake one hour?* [Mark 14:38]. We remain with Jesus in vigil. We watch and pray with Him as we reflect on what is to come. The Watch is a period of quiet reflection. It may be punctuated by scripture readings and may begin with the Taize Chant *Wait for the Lord.*

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Tracts for our Times

The Church Year:

Times and Seasons



The Easter Triduum 1

Maundy Thursday

"I give you a new commandment"