Picture our processional cross. It might not have the figure of Christ upon it, but imagine you are walking forward to kiss the crucified Christ….

Between the brown hands of a server-lad  
The silver cross was offered to be kissed.  
The men came up, lugubrious, but not sad,  
And knelt reluctantly, half-prejudiced.  
(And kissing, kissed the emblem of a creed.)  
Then mourning women knelt; meek mouths they had,  
(And kissed the Body of the Christ indeed.)  
Young children came, with eager lips and glad.  
(These kissed a silver doll, immensely bright.)  
Then I, too, knelt before that acolyte.  
Above the crucifix I bent my head:  
The Christ was thin, and cold, and very dead:  
And yet I bowed, yea, kissed - my lips did cling.  
(I kissed the warm live hand that held the thing.)

[Wilfred Owen](https://www.poemhunter.com/wilfred-owen/)

Which of these four people are you? The person who kisses the emblem of Christ (Christ in tradition,)..The one who kisses the body (the one who cares for the physical, historical Jesus, ignoring his divinity), Or the person who kisses the silver doll (like a child: a pretty shiny plaything).

Come from your place of distance to kiss the hand who holds Christ in the world today, this afternoon, the flesh and blood, sinew and muscle, blood and bone, of someone who holds Christ in their hand, offering Him to you,, as you I n turn offer Christ to the next person ,the one in front of me.

Tonight, we will begin the Triduum, the three most important days in the liturgical year of the Church.

Today we celebrate a more happy event.

It is the Jewish Passover, (the Last Supper), and Jesus is gathered together with his disciples, Re-membering the way the Israelites prepared to flee Egypt, and the Angel of Death Passed over them) Jesus is also there to tell them how much he loves them, how much he cares for them, and also how he must leave them. And so the great joy of gathering around the great feast of the Passover is tinged with sorrow.

It’s a very strange kind of beginning. You’d think at the celebration of this Mass of The Last Supper, that the Gospel would be about the institution of the Eucharist, and yet Jesus, having told his disciples how much he longed to be with them, takes off his outer garment and he goes outside, and he brings in the bowl with which the servants wash the feet of those who come to the banquet.

Then Jesus comes back with the water and he kneels down in front of each of them and he begins to wash their feet.

As he comes to St. Peter and a pin could drop through the whole dining hall. And Peter, as we know, is an impetuous man and he sees his Lord and master degrading himself in this way and he says to him, “You’re not going to wash my feet.”

And then Jesus says something even more strange. He says to them, he says, “Peter, if you do not let me wash your feet, you will never know who I am. You can have nothing, nothing, to do with me, because you will never understand.” And then Peter, as usual with his ups and downs, cries out, “Not only my feet, but my head and my shoulders and my arms and my whole self,” because if there’s one thing that Peter knows, he does not want to lose the love he feels for this person who has changed his life.

And then Jesus proceeds, one after the other, washing their feet, drying their feet. And finally he goes back, puts on his garment, and he says to them, “Do you know what I have done to you?”

And of course they don’t. And they’re quite silent.

He said, “You call me Lord and master, and that’s what I am. I am your Lord and I am your master, but I have washed your feet.” And then there is a great pause and he says, “I do this, because you will never know who I am until you wash each other’s feet.”

*This is the meaning of the Eucharist. This is the meaning of why he, the Son of God, came down to share our humanity, that we might share in an understanding of the great dignity that God has given us and the great gift that he continues to give us each day*.

*Why and what does it mean? When he kneels down what does Jesus see?*

*He sees the humanity of all of them,*

*and he loves them in a human way. But he also sees the presence of God.*

1. One will betray him. Others will deny him three times, their leader. When the servant girl says, “You’re one of them,” he curses and he swears, “I have never known this man.” And Jesus knows that this is all going to happen.
2. *He knows that each one has been formed individually, particularly, out of the greatness and glory of God. And each one is worthy of respect, because, not for what he is, but what he has become when God created him in His own image and His own likeness.*
3. *And what Jesus is really doing is telling the truth of who they really are. They are not, even near an understanding of the greatness of being the children, the sons and daughters, those made in the image of a loving Father.*

And it is Jesus who pays homage at this time. And that’s why he says, “If you cannot see in me, and what I do here, and why I do it, you cannot be my disciple.” Because what he is saying is: a disciple, in response to the love of God, we serve other people.

*It’s the same story. Each and every one of us, no matter what we have done, or how we behave, or what we do with the treasures that God gives us — use them well or use them poorly — we are indeed the precious children of God. And our dignity and our feeling and the great gifts that God gives us, we must first recognize in ourselves.*

Jesus was trying to tell his disciples.

You’re not fishermen, you’re not just ordinary people, because when I look at you, I see what you really are. I look to the depths of your heart. I know when you weep and I know when you laugh. And I know the storm about your life. I know the troubles you have and I know your ambitions.

And this is what they must understand: he’s sending them out now to look at other people the way he looks at them.

“You have eyes to see, but you’re blind; you have ears to hear, but you’re deaf; you have hearts to love, but you don’t.” *And because of that, the great mystery in each other is lost.*

*What Jesus is saying to them is: when you learn how to serve, you will learn how to live; and when you learn to love others, you will understand what love is; and when you learn to give happiness and joy to people, you will understand what it means to be happy and full of joy.*

And the real meaning of it all is that we will we ever learn to love as Jesus loves, will we ever realize that we’re surrounded by the great mystery and love of God who is with us all our days.

And the way we understand it is by turning to each other and saying, “Let me help you, let me serve you, let me take care of you.”

Whether you are the person who kisses the

The person who kisses the emblem of Christ (Christ in tradition,)..The one who kisses the body (the one who cares for the physical, historical Jesus, ignoring his divinity), Or the person who kisses the silver doll (like a child: a pretty shiny plaything).

Come from your place of distance to kiss the hand who holds Christ in the world today, this afternoon, the flesh and blood, sinew and muscle, blood and bone, of someone who holds Christ in their hand, offering Him to you, as you In turn offer Christ to the next person, the one to you, left or right, next to or in front of you..

Jesus needs you to feel, transmit, perpetuate this love, share it and give it to every other, including the one who has betrayed you or denied you.

We are in His presence. Solemnly we strip the altar, leave afterwards quietly, entering the Easter Triduum, the Passion of our Lord. God be with you this Maundy Thursday.