

SERMON - MAUNDY THURSDAY - 1 APRIL 2010  
St. John's Anglican Church, Greensboro, North Carolina

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1 Cor. 11:24-26 (KJV)

*And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. [25] After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. [26] For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*

Tonight, we are gathered here, again, to celebrate the institution by our Lord of the Holy Eucharist. We are here to remember that event that provides for us Christians a living memorial of our Lord each time we come together to celebrate the Holy Mass.

There are particular and significant words and terms that are included in Paul's reminder of why we gather that echoes Luke's version of the Last Supper.

The first of these is *this do in remembrance of me*

This do in remembrance of me. In remembrance, the Greek word used here and in Luke's Gospel is *anamnesis*, a word indicating the act of bringing one's memory to the present, to invite that person to the present time. In Jewish theology, one's memory is part of their immortality. So when we use this term, anamnesis, we are in fact invoking, inviting the immortal Jesus to come and be with us. This is not just a "memorial service" and we are not just remembering the happening of that Last Supper with his disciples, we are actually sending Jesus an invitation to come and be with us. Jesus then comes to us in the Real Presence of His precious Body and Blood.

The other significant words are the ones used by our Lord himself; *this is my body* and *This cup is the new testament in my blood.*

When Jesus made these pronouncements as the God the Son he was in fact changing the natural elements of the bread and the wine truly into his own flesh and blood, no more than and no less than when God created the universe by His Word.

Genesis 1:3-4 (KJV) *And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. [4] And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.*

And Genesis 1:6-7 (KJV) *And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. [7] And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.*

And, again, Genesis 1:9 (KJV) *And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.*

Why should it be any less so when, Jesus, God the Son, said, *this is my body* and *This cup is the new testament in my blood.*

Why do we doubt the word of God?

Until the reformation, there was no question as to the Real Presence of Jesus at the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, the Holy Eucharist, the Holy Mass. It is only with the innovations and the rejection of anything “Papist” that the concept of holding a “Memorial” of the Last Supper came into being.

Paul, himself, strongly addressed the need to believe in the Real Presence in order to receive communion 1 Cor. 11:29 (ESV) *For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.*

For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. In other words, if we take communion without discerning, without recognizing

that this is truly the Body and Blood of our Lord, then we are bringing judgment on our self.

We, as Anglicans, do not try to explain “How” this happens. It just does. It is a mystery. It is a mystery of God. It is a mystery that God performs and we couldn’t understand it if we knew how.

That is why we are much more like our Orthodox Christian brothers and sisters on this matter.

We may not understand how the Real Presence happens but it does and each time we come together here at St. John’s or wherever the Holy Mass is celebrated, Jesus is physically present with us.

And tonight we remember the First Holy Mass celebrated by our Lord himself.

Amen.