**Maundy Thursday, March 28, 2013, The Rev. Mary S. Trainor**

Tonight, the night of the Last Supper before Jesus was arrested, we focus on two events: when Jesus washed the feet of the apostles and when Jesus instituted the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. Both of these are profound events. As I pondered these two events, I saw that they have in common the action of "**pouring**." Think about the word "pour" and "pouring":

- In preparation for Holy Communion tonight, I will pour wine from the pitcher into the chalice, and will pour water from the little pitcher into the chalice of wine.

- The altar guild has prepared a bowl and sponge for me to use at the end of this service to wash the empty altar, and before I wash it I will pour.

- We heard in the Gospel tonight that Jesus, " ***got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciple's feet."*** Back in Jesus' day in the Middle East, before concrete and asphalt, people's feet were really dusty and dirty when they came from the street into a home. So, the servant of the home washed the guests feet. This was not a fun job, and only the servants did it. But here, on this night, Jesus (the Master, the Messiah, the Lord) was doing this lowly job.

- We pour coffee, water, juice or milk to drink every day.

The word "pour" is not normally a meaningful word for us -- but, this is a actually an important word; it is found 45 times in the bible! To pour, not only means ***'***to dispense from a container,' it means: 'to supply freely, to shed, to bestow liberally.' Jesus poured Himself out for us on the cross. On this night, at the Last Supper recorded in Matthew 26:28, Jesus says, " ***This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."*** Romans 5:5 says, "***God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."*** Paul said in 1st Timothy 1:14, ***" The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus."*** Pouring out is what God did for us, and this makes life worth living.

The new pope, Pope Francis, understands about Jesus' outpouring for us. People from his own country, Argentina, there call him "**Papa villerro,**" which means "slum pope." It turns out that over the past 20 years, he spent a huge amount of time in the slums of Buenos Aires. These slums are not only horribly poor, rife with disease and no sanitation; but they are dangerous places, full of drug dealers. One day, a reporter followed him into the slums -- and he saw the new pope (then a cardinal) not only greeting people and listening to them, but he also witnesses Pope Francis washing the feet of 12 young men at a rehab center--a Catholic priest I know said they were AIDS patients. People who are in rehab centers, for whatever reason, are not only suffering emotionally and spiritually, they are suffering physically. They are not proud to be there, they feel terrible about themselves, and are wondering if they can make it. They are so aware of their shortcomings that their dirt is all they can see. Having their feet washed this day showed them that they are people who matter. We all matter to God, dirt and all. Jesus said, “***So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to*** ***wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.”*** We are to receive this poured out love from Christ, and share it. Jesus said, "***love one another; even as I have loved you that you also love one another***.”

It is in the Holy Eucharist, Communion, that we can begin to grasp this poured out love from Jesus. Jesus instituted Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper, right before He was crucified -- the timing of Him leaving us with this profound sacrament was intentional. Jesus said these words (that you hear each week and were from tonight's reading from St. Paul), ***"This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me...This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."*** Jesus poured Himself out on the cross for us.  When we think about pouring, there is always something left in the pitcher. Here, there is nothing held back; Jesus gave us and is giving us His all. He still pours Himself out.  And He shall evermore pour Himself out. He empties Himself, that we may be full.  He pours out his blood, that we may know His abundant life.  He is himself the banquet.  He is himself the bread and wine of all eternity.  We are the vessel that holds the outpouring of love from Jesus; we are the chalice, the cup. A morsel of bread and drop of this wine is the same as an ocean full.  It holds all light, all love. All things visible and invisible.  Jesus' pouring washes you as white as snow and fills you with His love. And what substance does He use to do this? He uses His blood. His blood wash away our sins. What an awesome Savior we have. On this night, be an open vessel for Jesus' outpouring. Tonight, as you receive Holy Communion be filled with Jesus.

On this special night in the church, immediately following Holy Communion, all consecrated bread and wine will be consumed and there will be no Holy Communion until Easter Sunday. This reminds us of when our Lord was taken away from us, betrayed, arrested and killed.

The only remaining presence of Christ, in one piece of consecrated bread, will be carried from the church to the altar of repose, in the chapel. There you are invited to pray in the chapel as He begged His disciples to do: “***Stay awake with me, watch and pray***.” Then the altar will be stripped -- all symbols and reminders of Christ’s presence in His church here – will be removed. This culminates in the washing of the altar, in which every memory of Jesus’ presence is symbolically washed away, and we begin three dark days of remembering the Jesus' death, contemplating what our lives would be like without a risen Jesus. Our darkness will be broken Sunday morning by the glorious light of his resurrection.

Let us then prepare with joy to eat this bread and drink his cup, which we will not enjoy again until his resurrection. Amen.