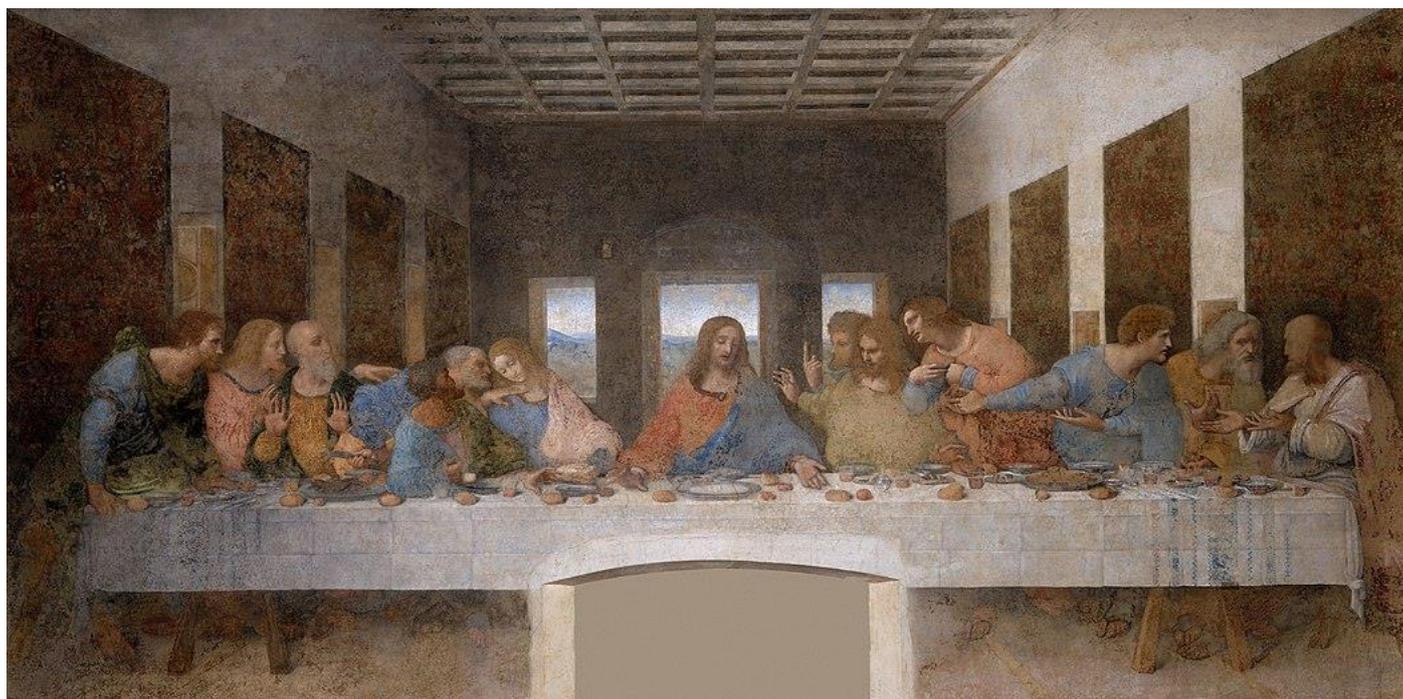


## Maundy Thursday Reflection 2020

Psalm 116

John 13.1-17, 31b-35



Leonardo da Vinci's The Last Supper, 1495-1498

Leonardo Da Vinci's painting of The Last Supper is one of the most recognizable images of art in the world. It covers the end wall of a monastery dining room in Milan and depicts the reactions of the twelve disciples to Jesus' shocking statement that one of them will betray him. It is an image that has been much copied and echoed in works of art that are good, bad and indifferent, in works that are profound, trivial and on occasion offensive (just google Last Supper parodies later and you will see what I mean).

This year Maundy Thursday is very different from usual: we cannot gather in church and recall the events of the night Jesus was betrayed by re-enacting them. We cannot discuss whether or not we should offer foot washing; we cannot do as Jesus commanded and take bread, give thanks, break it and eat it in memory of him; we cannot take a cup of wine, give thanks and drink it in memory of his precious death and passion; we cannot strip the trappings from the church as we watch and pray as Jesus did in the garden of Gethsemane. There is real pain and sorrow in this but, perhaps our inability to do those actions that we would normally do to mark this night might enable us to think afresh about what it means as we feed on God's word rather than the bread and wine of Communion. Perhaps pondering the event through the lens of Da Vinci and those who use his image to speak in new ways, might help us to reflect on the events of Maundy Thursday that John tells us about.

We sometimes use this invitation to Communion:

This is the table, not of the church, but of the Lord.

It is made ready for those who love him and who want to love him more.

So come, you who have much faith and you who have little.

You, who have tried to follow and you, who have failed.

Come, not because I invite you: it is our Lord.

It is his will that those who want him, should meet him here.

Let this be our prayer as we gather around God's word and feast on it:

**Read John 13.1-17, 31b-35**

The events of Maundy Thursday involve all our senses: we feel the water as it falls over our feet; we hear Jesus' invitation; we smell the bread; we taste the wine; we watch as our Lord serves us. So we ask God to use our eyes now to help us to reflect on his gifts of service and Communion:



Rauf Mamedov recreated The Last Supper in 1998 with a cast of people with Down's Syndrome.

Look at the picture? What do you see?

When Jesus washed his disciples' feet, he washed the feet of all of them: he washed the feet of Judas who would betray him. He washed the feet of Peter who would deny him. He washed the feet of James and John who would fall asleep in the garden. He washed their feet and welcomed them to sit and eat with him; he continues to welcome all who would meet with him to his table.

Who is Jesus asking you to serve?

Who is Jesus asking you to welcome to his table?



Adi Nes recreated The Last Supper using serving Israeli soldiers in 1966.

Look at the picture? What do you see?

When Jesus gathered with his friends in the Upper Room, they were a group of young Jewish men coming together to celebrate one of the great festivals of the year. The Passover not only recalled and re-created the meal that the Jewish people had on the night before God freed them from slavery in Egypt but brought the events into the present. It was not just historic re-enactment but a building of a community based on the promises of God in the present. Likewise, when we celebrate Communion, we are not only rehearsing a memorial of Jesus' death and passion but are claiming the promises of Jesus for ourselves, we are claiming them for now.

Which promises of Jesus do you need to remember now?

Which promises of Jesus do those you love need to hear?



Annie Liebowitz recreated The Last Supper with the cast of The Sopranos in 1999

Look at the picture? What do you see?

When Liebowitz recreated the Last Supper with the cast of the Sopranos, a multi-award winning American television series about a mobster family, she was certainly wanting to provoke but it also speaks to us in ways that she may not have intended. At its heart, the Sopranos is about family. A family that is a mixture of good, bad and indifferent. A family that doesn't always get on but which is tied together by love and history. Holy Communion is the family meal of the Church. The meal that draws us closer together. When we take Communion we are saying that we are part of God's family, brothers and sisters who long to draw nearer to God and to one another. We are saying that we are thankful for what Jesus did when he was here on earth and looking with confidence to that day when he comes again.

How is God inviting you to draw nearer to him now?

How is God inviting you to draw nearer to your church family now?

Let us ask God to draw him nearer to us and to one another in these days.

Rebecca Fardell