

MAUNDY THURSDAY 2021

Well, we have gathered here, albeit virtually, on this Maundy Thursday to remember and honor Jesus' last night before his crucifixion. Now not everyone will have joined us tonight. Many want to go straight from the "Hosanna's" of Palm Sunday to the "Hallelujah's" of Easter. For the accusations and arrest, the betrayals and denials, the beating and the suffering, the execution on a cross are all too painful for many to bear. It's easier just to avoid the events of Maundy Thursday or Good Friday. Especially when we know that it is our sins, our failures that are responsible for putting Jesus on the cross. Because who wants to be told we're sinners. But as Bishop Robert Barron reminds us, "The whole life, preaching, and mission of Jesus are predicated upon the assumption that all is not well with us, that we stand in need of a renovation of vision, attitude and behavior. A few decades ago the book *"I'm OK – You're OK"* appeared. Its title, and the attitude that it embodies, are contrary to Christianity." Yet, this book was on the New York Times best seller list for almost two years. "The fact of sin is so often overlooked today. Granted, no one has ever savored being accused of sin, but especially in our culture now, there is an allergy to admitting personal fault." And we see this all the time don't we – people justifying their behavior, or shifting the blame to others.

But as Barron says, "A salvation religion makes no sense if everything is basically fine with us, if all we need is a little sprucing up around the edges. True Christian saints are those who can bear the awful revelation that sin is not simply an abstraction or something that other people wrestle with, but it is a power that lurks and works in them. Theologian Henri de Lubac refers to sin as this mysterious limp. It is a deformation, a corruption within us. And when we lose sight of sin, we lose sight of Christianity, which is a salvation religion."

So tonight we come face to face with our need for salvation. We will share in the meal Jesus instituted for us to remember him and his great sacrifice. And we will consider our sins that put Jesus on the cross. But remember, we go through this night, not with despair, but with hope. Because we are on our way to Easter, where we will be assured of Jesus' words, "Because I live you will live also."

MAUNDY THURSDAY 2021 – LITURGY OF THE NAILS

1. Nail of Humility – Luke 22:24, 26; John 13: 4-5, 14-15

BETTY: As they were eating the Passover meal, the disciples began to argue about who would be considered the greatest among them. Hearing this, Jesus got up from the table, wrapped a towel around his waist and poured water into a basin. Then he knelt down and began to wash the disciple's feet, drying them with the towel he had wrapped around him. After washing their feet, he sat down and told them, "In this world, the kings and great men lord it over their people. Among you it will be different. Those who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant. Since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you."

REBECCA: The nail of humility. Are we willing to humble ourselves and serve others, to put others first? Or do we let our pride decide who is 'worthy' of our help. Do we judge whether another's circumstances warrant our time and energy, or do we humbly put ourselves in another's shoes, seeing their need for help. And remember that Jesus, knowing what would happen, washed even the feet of Judas. Would we willingly serve even those who have, or might hurt us? The nail of humility. Is it your nail?

2. Nail of Indifference – Mark 14:32 – 41

BETTY: When they arrived at Gethsemane, Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took Peter, James and John and said, "I am deeply grieved, even to death, stay here and keep awake." He came back and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour?" And again he went away and prayed. And once more he came and found them asleep and they did not know what to say to him. He came a third time, again they were asleep and he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough!"

REBECCA: The nail of indifference. How many times do we fail to "keep awake" to the needs of those around us? How easily do we "fall asleep" to the injustices in our society that cause so many of God's people to become "deeply grieved" over their situations – homelessness, unemployment, poor health, lack of education, the future. Or we "fall asleep" to those who feel lost, confused, and desperate. Yes, how often do we fail to 'be with' those who are grieved, as we sit content and comfortable. The nail of indifference. Is it your nail?

3. Nail of Denial – Matthew 26; 31, 33-35; 60-75

BETTY: Jesus told his disciples, ‘Tonight all of you will desert me.’ But Peter declared, ‘Even if everyone else deserts you, I will never desert you.’ Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, Peter – this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny three times that you even know me.” Later, Peter was in the courtyard when a servant girl came to him and said, “You were one of those with Jesus the Galilean. But Peter denied it in front of everyone. Later, another servant girl noticed him and said, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” Again Peter denied it. In the distance, a cock crowed once. A little later some other bystanders came over to Peter and said, “You must be one of them; we can tell by your Galilean accent.” Peter swore, “A curse on me if I’m lying – I don’t know the man!” Immediately the rooster crowed again. Peter remembered Jesus’ words and wept bitterly.

REBECCA: The nail of denial. How often do we pretend we don’t know Jesus and deny him because we are so concerned with our self? Deny him when we make decisions that promote our own position or well-being rather than promote the kingdom of God. Deny him when, because we’re not sure how we will be perceived, we fail to talk about our faith, say a prayer in public, or even mention God or Christ in our everyday conversations. Deny him when our actions are contrary to his teachings. The nail of denial. Is it your nail?

4. Nail of Blame – Luke 23: 1-2; John 18:37-38; Matthew 27: 20-24; Mark 15:15

BETTY: The Jewish council took Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor. They began to state their case: “This man has been leading our people astray by telling them not to pay their taxes to the Roman government and by claiming he is the Messiah, a king.” Pilate said to Jesus, “So you are a king?” Jesus responded, “You say I am.” Meanwhile the leading priests and elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas to be released. Pilate responded, “What should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?” They shouted back, “Crucify him!” “Why?” Pilate demanded, “What crime has he committed?” But the mob roared even louder, “Crucify him!” To pacify the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He sent for a bowl of water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood. The responsibility is yours!”

REBECCA: The nail of blame. How often do we not want to admit we erred in judgment, or that we made a mistake, or that something was actually our fault? How many times do we wash our hands of a situation because it’s easier to blame someone else. The nail of blame. Is it your nail?

5. Nail of Conformity – Luke 23:13-Mark 15:16-20

BETTY: Then Pilate called together the leading priests and religious leaders, along with the people, and he announced his verdict. “You brought this man to me, accusing him of leading a revolt. I have examined him thoroughly on this point in your presence and find him innocent. Herod came to the same conclusion and sent him back to us. Nothing this man has done calls for the death penalty. So I will have him flogged, and then I will release him.” Then a mighty roar rose from the crowd, and with one voice they shouted, “Kill him, and release Barabbas to us!” Pilate argued with them, because he wanted to release Jesus. But the mob shouted louder and louder, demanding that Jesus be crucified, and their voices prevailed.

REBECCA: The nail of conformity. Earlier in the week, the crowds were shouting “Hosanna!” By the end of the week, they were shouting “Crucify him!” Why did the crowds change? They listened to the authorities, and were swayed by false arguments, they got caught up in the crowd mentality, and they didn’t want to go against the popular culture. How often do we just go along with the crowd, because it’s easier than thinking for ourselves? Or because we might experience rejection, criticism, anger. Whose acceptance are we seeking? Aren’t we often more concerned with what others think of us than what God thinks of us? The nail of conformity. Is it your nail?

6. Nail of Cruelty – Mark 15:16-20

BETTY: Pilate ordered Jesus flogged with a whip, then turned him over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified. The soldiers took Jesus into the courtyard of the governor’s headquarters and called out the entire regiment. They dressed him in a purple robe and they wove branches with large thorns into a crown and put it on his head. They mocked him and taunted, “Hail, King of the Jews!” They struck him with a stick, they spit on him and they dropped to their knees in mock worship. When they were finally tired of insulting him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him again. Then they led him away to be crucified.

REBECCA: The nail of cruelty. How often do our words and actions cause hurt or anger or sorrow in someone? How often do we talk about other people, and in the process, our gossip or hurtful words malign them? How often do we treat those who serve us with an attitude of aloofness or superiority or lack of respect? The nail of cruelty. Is it your nail?

7. The Death of Jesus – Luke 23:44-48

BETTY: By this time it was noon, and darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. The light from the sun was gone. And suddenly, the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn down the middle. Then Jesus cried out, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." And with those words he breathed his last. When the Roman officer overseeing the execution saw what had happened, he worshiped God and said, "Surely this man was the Son of God." And when all the crowd that came to see the crucifixion saw what had happened, they went home in deep sorrow.