

9th April 2020

And so we come to Maundy Thursday, the first of the great three days of the Easter Triduum.

Normally on Maundy Thursday there is a gathering of Clergy from all over the Diocese, our Bishops and Archdeacons along with our brother and sister lay workers as we renew our vows. Holy oils are blessed and dispersed to the parishes to be used in our ministry for blessing and anointing, throughout the coming year. It's a wonderful occasion and I shall miss it very much.

Bishop Stephen has arranged to conduct this service online via Zoom so that we may, at least in a reduced manner, still join with him in this important ceremony. Oils will still be blessed and we shall be able to collect them at a later date.

In the evening there is a Eucharist, which usually incorporates the washing of feet, where, after the example of Jesus, parish priests wash the feet of representatives from their congregations. An act of love and service, which I have always found very moving. It reminds the priest that, above all things, she or he is called to be the servant of others and that is important.

At the end of the service the Altar Servers and clergy strip the Sanctuary of every ornament and decoration, leaving it stark and bare. Then we gather at the Altar of Repose where the remaining bread that was blessed in the Eucharist is placed in a garden, representing the garden of Gethsemane and where we keep watch with Jesus. At AwAS we always end this part of the service from 11.30pm to midnight with the readings from Tenebrae, which means darkness. There are six readings and after each one some of the candles on the Altar of Repose are extinguished. Then at midnight after the last reading, the final candles are put out and we leave.

This year we shall move straight from the Eucharist to a simple Garden of Repose and the service of Tenebrae, you may wish to keep some form of private vigil at home until midnight.

I attach pictures of our Tabernacle at the High Altar, stripped and open and the Altar of Repose ready for the Watch.

Sent by Canon Tom Page
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