**Holy Thursday 2020 Boarbank Hall**

**Love Remembered) in CoronaCrisis Time**

We probably all feel more comfortable when the word love is used less and the reality experienced more. Generally we are rightly content with courtesy and respect. We scarcely have a right to expect more from most people. We know what love is best of all when we lose it. We experience the aching loneliness, when those we love die, the great silence, no exchange any more, and never will be again. Our relationships are so much a part of our lives they determine our lives. We should never doubt that we are close to our dearest friends. They should not doubt that they are close to us. It should be the same in the family. When we are away and come back we are reinserted where we left off. We can take for granted that we belong; we identify; they are us; we are them. All of that is love. Presents, letters, phone-calls, remembrances, are merely evidence of what is the case. But these instances do not make it the case. Clearly it is pathetic when we offend the persons we really love, and fail their expectations, and deny their standards. If we doubt whether we are loved it is probably because we doubt that we ourselves are loving others. And here forgiveness is fundamental. Personal love normally is the name for just getting along within our circle, with the assurance that everything is absolutely fine, that we are about the same things as those dear to us, and look on life in the same way. And that it will just go on and on

**Love in the Days of Jesus**

It is everywhere attested in the days of Jesus that love is a fundamental part of life. This was clear when the question of death came up. How often Jesus is presented with people in grief. People lose their loved ones. This is not just an economic disaster, like the Widow's son of Nain (Lk 7:11), nor in the case of the daughter of Jairus (Mk 5:35f.). She was a little girl dead in a world not much interested in furthering the life of little girls. Even reference to the final "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Lk 13:28) is reference to the dreadful sense of loss, namely life's purpose lost, not merely a question of having missed out on something desirable.

What about the love community evoked in John's Gospel, and which on Holy Thursday we especially commemorate? Was the community of Jesus so different from every other Jewish community in his day? Was a synagogue not a love community? What is new about the new commandment? Who would know it was new? Such became available for inspection by those outside the community in Jesus' day, by the way he related with all. Afterwards his disciples kept on going to the synagogue. They went to the Temple. Yet they were not such a distinctive group that nobody could join them. The opposite was true. Luke presents an ideal picture of them at Acts 4:34ff.

What bound the Johannine group together? In John's Gospel several had come to Jesus from the circle around John the Baptist. What real relationship did most of them have with each other independently of Jesus? None, seemingly. How mould this group into a community of love, something different from what pertained in the synagogue or in the Baptist circle, or in the Qumran community? In Qumran they had a very specific rule and very severe. To leave that community was the equivalent of death; one was expected not to ask for nor receive help of any kind on leaving. The Sermon on the Mount reflected in John’s Gospel took a much more comprehensive approach, much more humanand realistic.

**Jesus Himself**

Jesus set the standard of love for the community he brought into existence. He asks Peter if he loves him, either more than these other disciples or more than his heretofore livelihood (Jn 21:15). The washing of the feet (13:5) symbolised the loving humility of Jesus in cleansing the disciples’ feet, adumbrating his total humility in accepting willingly an appalling death. Later this historical reality would become a ritual procedure to encourage a right attitude for Christians living together. This washing came to be practised very widely, East and West, by Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants. “At one time, most of the European monarchs also performed the Washing of Feet in their royal courts on [Maundy Thursday](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maundy_Thursday), a practice continued by the [Austro-Hungarian Emperor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austro-Hungarian_Empire) and the [King of Spain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_of_Spain) up to the beginning of the 20th century” (Wikipedia: *Foot washing RC practice).*  The Person of Jesus as God's only Son acting in this loving way creates this loving community. Peter only got the point after his first spontaneous protest. He himself would ultimately go the same way as the Master (21:18). Judas manifests horribly what love is definitely not about. There is very little overt emotion expressed in all of this. But it is surely there. Only in John's Gospel do we find a reference to Jesus actually crying at the death of a friend, for whom everyone was crying. When Lazarus was in the tomb the observers are heard to say of Jesus: See how he loved him (11:36). There is affectivity in John. It is only in John’s Gospel that we hear of a Beloved Disciple.

**Conclusion**

One thing stands out before all else: Christianity is not primarily a philosophy, nor an ideology, nor a political and social programme. It is not a ritual among religions, not a system of organising people's social needs to express their worship of God. Christianity is primarily personal: it is about the personal love of Jesus for those he called to be his disciples and personal love for each other. It is about the head and the heart; it honours the complete human nature of each individual. The supreme expression of it for the believer is the reality of The Eternal Loving Son of the Eternal Loving Father in whose image every single person is made.

Holy Thursday and Good Friday expressed ultimate reality as Love. We are made for love. Those who know they love and are loved say Thanks. Ideally together we make of our lives a Eucharist, creating for each other a world of love. An incomparable Holy Thursday now- with no access to the sacraments. In universal lockdown people experience the need of each other. All the recipients of loving care are saying Thank you.. ..a universal eucharist. Daily examples of the fundamental force of this are displayed before our eyes. We are all human beings in need of love, and able to continue hopefully as we give and receive it. People are taking this very seriously now. May we all have fruitful Triduum.

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