

St. Thomas's Episcopal Parish  
Newark, DE  
Maundy Thursday – April 13, 2017/Year A  
Exodus 12:1-14; Psalm 116:1, 10-17; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-17, 31b-35  
The Reverend Paul W. Gennett, Jr.

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*May my words reveal the greater glory of God.*

AMEN

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*Tell me, what will you do with your one wild and precious life?* A simple line, the question that ends Mary Oliver's poem **The Summer**. This question was the inviting phrase for me to enter this Lenten Season past on Ash Wednesday. It called to my life in a new way on this same day which comes along in our journey of faith, year in and year out.

*Tell me, what will you do with your one wild and precious life?* As I came to this year's Ash Wednesday remembrance, I came with the truth of this being another of those "last one with you" moments. So as I marked the sign of the Cross in ash on each forehead over the three services that day, I said outwardly, "**Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return**" while inwardly I asked myself, and you, "*Tell me, what will you do with your one wild and precious life?*"

Now on this Maundy Thursday night, the entry into our **Three Holy Days**, the **Triduum**, I enter another "last one with you" moment. On this night, **two symbols** emerge that bind my heart to each of you in this parish family, and bind my heart to ALL those I have sought to serve in God's love these now 25+ years. The symbols emerge in the thread of the vows of my ordination as priest that I renew with colleagues in ministry every year on Tuesday of Holy Week.

The first symbol is expressed in these words at the ordination of a priest – "**You are to preach, to declare God's forgiveness, to pronounce God's blessing, to share in the administration of Holy Baptism and in the celebration of the mysteries of Christ's Body and Blood ...**" Italian Bishop Tony Bello, who died of cancer at the age of 58, dictated a pastoral letter from his deathbed to the priests of his diocese on Maundy Thursday 1993. He called on them to be bound by "**the stole and the towel.**" **The stole** I wear in worship symbolizes my intention of being in union with Christ in the Eucharist, and being in common-union with all whom I serve and share in this sacrament for life, for life eternal.

The second symbol, **the towel**, is expressed through these words at ordination – "**You are to love and serve the people among whom you work, caring alike for young and old, strong and weak, rich and poor ... In all that you do, you are to nourish Christ's people from the riches of his grace, and strengthen them to glorify God in this life and in the life to come.**" **The towel** represents solidarity with humanity through service. Bishop Bello encourages the

priest to live into this call being united with the Lord in the Eucharist and with the people we serve **as their servant**. Along with **the towel** also comes **the bowl** on this night in which we wash the feet of one another. We do this in remembrance of Jesus doing this among us then, and we do this with each other, now.

*"This is my body given for you ... This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this in remembrance of me ... I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another."* **Two intimate "last one with you" moments** in Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday. **Two promises** at my ordination, **to serve and to feed**. **Two symbols** of this journey of life for me to you, and by you for me – **this stole ... this towel and this bowl**.

*DO THIS in remembrance of me ... Tell me, what will you do with your one wild and precious life?*

**AMEN**