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## *Love to the End!*

**A sermon by the Rev. Salmoon Bashir**  
**Maundy Thursday – Year B**

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. Love to the end! By following a new commandment, you should love one another just as I have loved you. Love to the end!

Let me share a story of a 12-year-old Iqbal Masih – a Pakistani Christian boy who became a symbol of resistance against child labor in the developing world. Iqbal's family borrowed 600 rupees from a local carpet business owner. It was less than 6 US dollars. But they were unable to pay it back on time and at age four, Iqbal was put to work by his family to pay off their debts. Iqbal was working more than 16 hours a day, and his daily salary was 10 Pakistani Rupees, which was even lesser than half a cent. However, due to high interest rate, their loan increased every single day. For the next 6 years, day in and day out he worked at that carpet factory with no hope to ever be able to completely pay off his parents' debts or to be free. At the age of 10, Iqbal attempted to escape, but the police caught him and brought him back to the carpet business owners. They tied him and beat him but after a few days, he managed to escape again. And finally, this time, he was reunited with his family and even went to a school. He was so brilliant and hardworking that in just 2 years he passed 4 grades. He wanted to be a lawyer and work to eradicate child labor from the developing world. At the age of 12, he got public attention through many international organizations, and he visited many countries raising voice against child labor and advocating for their freedom. Due to his efforts, thousands of children were freed and brought out of slavery to freedom. On the other hand, for the carpet business owners, he became a thorn in their flesh. It became difficult for them to sell rugs abroad due to increased awareness of child labor and debt slavery.

On early Easter morning, at the age of 12, Iqbal was celebrating resurrection of Jesus with his friends who had also escaped from forced labor and slavery. While riding bike in his neighborhood with his friends, Iqbal was killed, allegedly by the carpet business owners. On the day of resurrection, he was put to death because of his tireless work to free children from slavery. Rather than enjoying his freedom, Iqbal dedicated himself to love others till the end. The Little Hero knew the meaning of loving one another, loving till the end.

Tonight, we behold the incarnate Son of God, tying a towel around himself, pouring water into a basin, and assuming the role of a servant. With all things he knew were coming his way – betrayal, denial, and failure of His disciples – he responded to all this with the most selfless, simple yet profound act of love. Humbled himself to the place of a servant, to the place of a slave, He washed his disciples' feet and through this, he set a perfect example of loving to the end.

This evening is about a new commandment, a new mandate. "Maundy" comes from the Latin word 'mandatum' which means "mandate" or "command." The specific mandate or command that Jesus gave after washing the feet of his disciples during the Last Supper was: "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another. As I have loved you, that you also love one another." This commandment was more personal and limitless at that moment than we might realize. Jesus knew Judas was going to betray him, but Jesus' love was the same for him. Jesus knew Peter was going to deny him, but Jesus loved him the same. All of His disciples, all of them ran away when Jesus was in the hour of need. Jesus knew all this, and He still loved them to the end! And it is about the way He loves all of us as well, us saints and sinners like James and John and Peter and Judas.

So, beloved, we are also called to love one another, to love those who don't think they deserve love, to serve those who won't serve us back, because that's what Jesus does for us. Because friends, Love is not how you

feel about someone. It is how you treat someone despite how you feel about them. The Christ's way and the Christian way of Love is that our love does not and should not depend on how others treat us or feel about us. Because remember, the sole source of such love is God. God loves us no matter how many times we fail or fall short. It does not change based on our behavior and that kind of love is what Jesus is commanding us to have for one another. Love to the end! Selfless Love.

This summit of love, this new mandate, this new command is for us all. It is a personal invitation to us that we not only worship Jesus' journey from the upper room to the cross but also do his journey by loving each other. By not only being religious but also being humans for one another.<sup>[1]</sup> On this Maundy Thursday, on this dark holy night, my prayer for all of us is that may we be like Jesus, may we all know the meaning of loving one another as He loved us. He loved us so wondrously and he loves us till the end.

In a few moments, we will be coming to this altar to receive Christ's body and blood, and we will also be coming to the front to wash each other's feet. May we experience the Divine love by partaking in Christ's body and blood and may we feel the overflowing love for one another through the humble act of washing each other's feet. The love that reaches deep into the shadows of darkness and the love that has the power to change the world. Like young hero Iqbal Masih who found the meaning of Jesus' new mandate, Jesus' new commandment to 'love one another as I have loved you' even to the point to lay down one's life for one's friends. Love till the end! Amen!

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<sup>[1]</sup> Richard Rohr