

**Homily Preached  
by Doug King  
Maundy Thursday  
April 8th 2004  
Exodus 12:1-4, 11-14**

As Jesus and his disciples gathered in that upper room that evening it was the time of Passover. The liturgical holiday when the Jews remember how God protected them from harm and liberated them from the slavery of Egypt. It was a time of remembering a past event, just as Jesus tells us to remember these powerful symbols of bread and fruit of the vine as his very body offered up to provide us with liberation.

I just wish that in our remembrance of the Last Supper we spent a little more time remembering the Passover as well. Sometimes I fear that our reenactment of that supper in the upper room is a bit too static. Sometimes it seems a tad too warm and cozy and nap inducing. Of course we know that Jesus was not allowed to drift into the land of nod after the dishes were cleared. The postlude to this meal will be soldiers, and arrest, and accusations as we hurtle our way to the cross.

But our ritual fails to capture any of that imminent motion. Perhaps we should borrow some of the imagery of the remembrance of the Passover. We heard earlier from our reading in Exodus how that meal is to be celebrated. "This is how you shall eat it; your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly." I am not so sure we need to hurriedly wolf the elements down. And I do not want to even begin to comprehend how we would girding our loins. But I believe it would be wise for us to celebrate this meal with the metaphoric sense of having our traveling sandals on our feet and our staff in our hand. Every time we gather around this table it should be with the understanding that in one way it serves as a destination point but that it also functions as a starting point for a brand new journey.

This communion meal of ours nourishes and nurtures us as we set off into the world and on further in our faith journeys. Unfortunately, participating in this ritual

brings no promise that the journey will be an easy one. It certainly was not for Jesus. Neither was it easy for the liberated Israelites. They may have achieved freedom from slavery but their difficult days did not end with their liberation. Their forty years of wandering in the wilderness were fraught with more than their share of doubts and fears, turmoil and troubles.

This meal of ours does not guarantee an easy road but just as the passover meal does, it offers a road of liberation. This meal reminds us of just how closely God is present in our lives and how far God is willing to go to free us from the sin and failure of our lives that bind us up. Jesus' very body and blood offered up that we might find freedom.

As we approach the table this night, let us do so with our traveling sandals on our feet and our staff in hand. Let us be nourished and nurtured that we might journey out into the world unburdened of sin and guilt and fear. Freed to know that God loves us more deeply than we could ever possibly love ourselves. And in this freedom let us go out into the world to offer freedom to others. Once we have been fed let us recognize that we must feed others.

When Jesus gathered the disciples around the table this night he was instructing them on how to be the church when he was gone. Just as Jesus served those disciples around the table, the church is called to serve the world. As Westminster continues on its journey to discover what its next big mission project in this city will be let us remember our table manners. Let us reach out into this city and to those in need by treating people with dignity and respect making sure that all are fed and cared for like we would for anyone sitting down at our table for dinner. Come to the table with your walking sandals on and your staff in hand, the journey has just begun. Amen.