

11.4.58 (Thurs.)

E (Frasconi)

Ave Verum (Byrd)

That hymn, very well known in other ^{musical} settings, is in praise of, and a ~~with~~ greeting to Christ present in the Eucharist. It was originally an acclamation to be sung immediately after the consecration at Mass. So today, the Thursday of the Lord's Supper, it's a fitting introduction to our Midday Prayers. Today we celebrate the beginning of Christ's Passover, the beginning of the New covenant He established in His own blood shed for us on Good Friday. At His last Supper, as a sign of His great love for us, as a bond to keep His disciples together and united with Him, as a living reminder and memorial of what He ~~did~~ ^{was doing} for us and the service and love He wanted us to show our brethren, He changed bread and wine into His body & blood about to be given for us. Because today we celebrate this living memorial, which is the Eucharist, it's a day of joy, joy for the whole community of His disciples, a joy which is expressed in the colour and light and sound of His evening's liturgy.

→ Three themes mark today's celebration, all of which derives its force and meaning from the events of Good Friday & Easter morning - love, service, unity. Of course, we talk a lot about these three things nowadays: so did Christ at his last Supper - but

perhaps we're in danger, as Jesus certainly wasn't, of forgetting how intimately their achievement is linked with His suffering, death & resurrection which we must share with Him to belong to Him. So today is the time to see these with His vision. Love: Christ's love for His Father and everything His Father wants of Him, even to the agony of Gethsemani and the abandonment of Calvary. And Christ, the image of His Father, loving us with His love and care, wanting, but not forcing, us to be with Him. So great and earnest a love that it brought Him to the suffering & pain of his last hours and death, willingly undertaken for us. Then, the love and obedience in faith He looks for from us - not just a comfortable faith, but a real love patterned on His own love for His Father and which will bring us to follow in His footsteps, even to sharing His anguish and death. A love which must express itself in service to Him, and to other men, for it's there we'll find Him. Love among ourselves, because He loves each of us and in the sacrament, sign of His love, the Eucharist, shares His life with all the Christian community He has gathered together, to be for the whole world the sign of God's plan for creation and his loving care for humanity. Service: the carrying out of Christ's new commandment that we love one another as He loves us - at His last Supper He dramatically gave a sign of what He meant (and some of His closest friends, including Peter didn't understand) by

himself washing the disciples' feet. This action is repeated liturgically in our celebration today — it's called the Mandatum (from which the English name of this day is taken), which is the Mandatum, the order, commandment of Christ ~~to~~ ^{to} love and so serve each other. He who was called "Nestor" made himself the servant of all; and that's just what He wants us to be too. A servant — not in the mere external action of what we do, but in what we are: and this is not easy for human nature: without the light and understanding of Christ's passion, it so easily becomes "do-gooding". |

And unity: among all Christ's disciples through love and service of one another, symbolised and gradually being brought about in the sharing of the one bread of the Eucharist. The body of Christ: a sign and an instrument through which eventually, in God's plan, the unity of all men in the one family of God will be achieved. The unity expressed in the sharing of the Paschal meal together by Jesus & his apostles; by our sharing the Eucharist together at each Mass but especially today's one celebration; a unity which is not automatic — even at the last Supper the apostles were arguing — but which we've got to help achieve by our love of Christ and service to Him in His last member.

The most beautiful hymn of today's service is "Ubi caritas" — where charity & love are, there is God ...

PRAYER (Cant. Pt. 261 ff)

Don Ven
Gebicki

Byrd.