

John the Evangelist writes:
*Now before the festival of the Passover,
Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world
and go to the Father.*

*Having loved his own who were in the world,
he loved them to the end.*

What does it mean to love someone to the end?

What does it mean on this night of nights,
the night before Jesus died?

As the Passover was being prepared,
Jesus was under the strain of deep and profound emotion.

Only Christ knew what lay immediately ahead,
but perhaps even he did not fully anticipate
the depth of pain to which he must go.

In the midst of this meal and such thoughts,
Christ quietly arose,
girded himself as a slave or servant would,
and knelt to wash the Apostles' feet.

This small circle of believers
in this scarcely founded kingdom
were about to pass through their severest trial.

So Jesus sets aside his own increasing anguish
in order that he might yet once more
serve and strengthen them.

It does not matter that no one washed his feet.
In transcendent humility he would continue
to teach and to cleanse them.
He would to the final hour
—and beyond—
be their sustaining servant.

As John wrote,
who was there and watched the wonder of it all,
“Having loved his own which were in the world,
he loved them unto the end.”

So it had been, and so it was to be—
through that night,
and through the pain, and forever.

He would *always* be their strength.
No anguish in his own soul
would ever keep him from that sustaining role.

In the moonlit silence of that Near Eastern night,
every acute pain,
every heartfelt grief,
every crushing wrong and human hurt
experienced by every man, woman, and child in the human family
was to be heaped upon his weary shoulders.

But in such a moment,
when someone might have said it to him,
he rather says to us,
“Let not your heart be troubled,
neither let it be afraid.”

Life has its share of some fear and some failure.
Sometimes things fall short, don't quite measure up.
Sometimes in both personal and public life,
we are seemingly left without strength to go on.

Sometimes people fail us,
or economies and circumstance fail us,
and life with its hardship and heartache
can leave us feeling very alone.

But when such difficult moments come to us,
I testify that there is one thing
which will never, ever fail us.

One thing alone will stand the test of all time,
of all tribulation, all trouble,
and all transgression.
One thing only never fails—
and that is the pure love of Christ.

Christ's love sustains us through all the joys of life
And its storms,
Through the high points
And especially in the low points.

Twenty years ago today
Devastating tornados struck St Peter and Cmofrey.

In the process the chapel at Gustavus Adolphus College
Was heavily amages-
Walls of windows blown out and steeple toppled.
The cross at its spire was found later far away- twisted and wrecked.

Today that same cross holds a place of honor in the chapel gathering space.
Its broken twisted form
Reminds all who pass by
That the faithful love of Christ outlasts all.

In that love we build
In that love we endure the storm.
In that love we rebuild.

So,
This night of night is the Feast of that Love,
the remembrance of that Love,
the celebration of that Love.

This is a love stronger than fear,
Stronger than failure,
Stronger than death.

Let us live in strength of that love,
Tonight and always.
Amen.