

Education & Enlightenment

*A Special Committee of
The Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry of Canada*



The Rose Croix lights of Easter



One of the most frequent images relevant to Maundy Thursday, observed by Christians in preparation for Easter, is Leonardo da Vinci's "The Last Supper" picturing the last time Jesus of Nazareth gathered with his disciples. It is interesting to note the original is a fresco on a monastery wall in Milan, Italy. Made my mixing color, usually ground minerals, with wet plaster, the fresco, completed in 1498, took over six years to execute. This means it was started about the time Columbus sailed for America.

In Latin, Maundy means commandment. It was during the Last Supper that Jesus of Nazareth gave his disciples an additional commandment, "to love one another as I have loved you." It is fitting we, as Masons, pause to reflect that almost 2,000 years ago this voice was silenced; yet the words of Jesus and their central teaching remain relevant today to all humankind. On what we now call Good Friday, the day after Maundy Thursday, Jesus was crucified and the world, according to tradition and symbolism, was plunged into darkness.



Masonry teaches us that man before being brought to light must endure darkness. Masons symbolize this on Maundy Thursday by extinguishing the lights one by one in memory of our departed Brethren. For two days following the crucifixion, the world remained spiritually in darkness until the dawn of the third day when a glorious light burst forth indicating the arrival of Easter and the risen Christ.

The Christian ceremony of the Lord's Supper has a similarity with the Hebrew Passover, for it was at a Passover dinner that the Master and his disciples gathered in an upper room. It appears the disciples arrived at the table before Jesus, and he found them arguing among themselves as to who was the most important among them and who would, consequently, sit at his side. Disturbed, Jesus said, "I come as a light unto the world that whosoever believes in me should not abide in darkness. I give you a new commandment that you love one another as I have loved you."

Then he demonstrated what he meant by washing their feet, teaching them in this manner that no matter how important the person may be, he must be willing without hesitation to help another. To us as Masons, Maundy Thursday represents a time of deliverance. The guiding light brought to us from the upper room and the epic story of the exodus are assurances that light will prevail over darkness, freedom over tyranny, knowledge over ignorance, humility and charity over pride and self-interest.



On Easter morning, we reignite the lights in a noble ceremony and so renew our commitment as Masons of whatever faith to the basic doctrines that unite all humankind—faith, hope, and charity—ever mindful that when the heart beats the soul listens and God answers.

Let us at the Symbolic Relighting of the Lights, dedicate ourselves to duty, renew our vows, so often repeated in our Rite, and lead the Life of Love, one to another, that our light will shine among men in the world, that we may be known truly as men and as Masons who mean eternal truths learned in our Rituals and who, by our personal acts and conduct, portray those meanings to their ultimate fulfillment.