

## TUESDAY COMMUNION

### Hymn:

**Reading:** Mark 14. 12-16

### Prayers:

When we read Mark's Gospel  
we need to keep remembering that Mark was almost certainly  
not a witness to the events about which he is writing.  
He depended upon what is called the "oral tradition",  
the frequent repetition and retelling of stories  
lovingly recalled in the days of the early church.  
Some parts of this tradition may even have been written down  
and been available for Mark to us.

We remember this because our reading  
raises the question about whether the Last Supper  
was also Passover Meal.  
For Jewish People the Passover is probably  
the greatest of all the feasts.  
It is the annual remembrance of God's mighty act  
in bringing the Israelite slaves out of Egypt  
so that they could live as a free people.  
For Jewish people it is the annual reminder  
of the ways in which God has acted to "redeem" his people.

Some parts of Mark's account tie in with such a Passover meal:

- the late hour,
- the wine rather than the more common water,
- the hymn sung at the end of the meal.

However there are other aspects of a Passover Meal  
which are completely lacking:

- the Passover lamb itself
- the bitter herbs
- the explanation which is always given about the occasion

What is more, in John's Gospel, the Last Supper is placed  
the day before the Passover festival.  
Jesus actually dies at the time and on the day  
when the Passover lambs were being killed in the Temple.  
One of the Problems with Mark's dating  
would be that it would mean that Jesus' trial and crucifixion  
took place on the day after the Passover,  
one of the holiest days of the years.....

Many people now prefer to accept John's dating than Mark's,  
though clearly Mark believed that it was a Passover meal.

In the end, it probably doesn't make too much difference  
for whether the meal was a Passover Meal  
or was a meal on the day before the Passover,  
it was certain that thoughts of the Passover  
dominated the atmosphere.  
It was the reason so many pilgrims had come to Jerusalem  
from all the places where Jewish people now lived.

For Jesus there was clearly an awareness  
that the last Supper had a link  
with the activity of God in saving his people  
and giving them true freedom.

Freedom is one of those words that is banded around  
and can mean very different things to different people.  
If we link the term "freedom" to our understanding  
of what God wants for this world and its people,  
then, **first**, it is a freedom he wants all people to enjoy.  
There is always a danger that when we talk of freedom  
it is freedom for me to do what I want  
without regard to others.

The freedom God gives us is for us to be free  
to live life to the full in a community of free people,  
**Secondly**, it is a freedom from the power of darkness  
which keeps us in fear and inaction,  
prevents us from acting with generosity and love,  
and takes away the joy and wonder of life.  
God-given freedom is often linked with forgiveness  
and the freedom to live as his daughters and sons  
and to be witnesses to the rich possibilities for life  
that God is giving us.

As I look at a crucifix,  
and I believe that they can often have great spiritual power  
I'm often reminded of two things.

**First**, the outstretched arms of Jesus on the cross  
are like the embrace of love God gives to the world.

It is in the love of God,  
his total commitment to our wellbeing,  
that our freedom begins.

**Secondly**, the crucified Jesus draws from us  
all that is dark, false and life-denying  
and releases light and love.

We are saved,  
given the possibility of life in all its fullness,  
through the one who releases us from living for ourselves  
and enables us to live as the children of God.