

Agapé Meal for Maundy Thursday

*As you prepare for the meal, the setting should be austere and the foods may be sparse and simple.
Appropriate foods include soup, cheese, olives, dried fruit, bread, and wine.*

Maundy Thursday:

This is Maundy Thursday – ‘Maundy’ coming from the Latin word ‘*mandatum*,’ which means ‘commandment.’ In John’s Gospel, while Jesus was gathered with his disciples at the Last supper, he said, “*I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another*” (John 13:34). Perhaps the heart of Jesus’ revelation of God, through the example of his life, is the way Jesus makes God’s love ‘visible’ to us. This commandment to love – to love God and love our neighbor – is not new. It appears early in the Old Testament and is quoted in all the Gospels. But it may be that Jesus is trying to move us – from an intellectual understanding of love for each other to a more living and breathing understanding of love for each other. And so, he ‘*commands*’ us to love.

The gift of love is present and the focus for today. The emphasis is found in Jesus’ institution of the Holy Eucharist, the law of love symbolized in the washing of feet, and the beginning of the celebration of the Passion and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ. Normally, we end our service with the stripping of the altar and leaving in silence. In the sanctuary of the church, we strip the altar of all ornaments including the candles and cloths on the altar (the frontal and fair linen). In your home, if you have a space you keep for prayer or a prayer table, you may also practice the stripping of your altar and setting up a wooden cross in preparation for Good Friday. As the beginning of the sacred three days of the celebration of the Passion and Death (called the Triduum), tonight initiates a time of watching, waiting, and contemplating. After completing the Agapé meal that focuses on Jesus’ gift of love and self-giving servanthood, read and reflect on Jesus’ Gethsemane Prayer.

*If you live as part of a household have one person serve as the presider to bless the meal,
and others share in the readings.*

+ *The Blessings* +

*At the time appointed, all gather around the table, standing as able.
After a time of silence, the presider offers the following blessings.*

Over Wine

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe. You create the fruit of the vine; and you refresh us with the cup of salvation in the Blood of your Son Jesus Christ. May the time come quickly when we can share that cup again, even as you are with us now in our very thirst for you. Glory to you for ever and ever. ***Amen.***

Over Bread

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe. You bring forth bread from the earth; and you have fed us on our way with the bread of life in the Body of your Son Jesus Christ. Let us be fed again soon with that bread of life. And as grain scattered upon the earth is gathered into one loaf, so gather your Church in every place into the kingdom of your Son. To you be glory and power for ever and ever. ***Amen.***

Over the Other Foods

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe. You have blessed the earth to bring forth food to satisfy our hunger. Let this food strengthen us in the fast that is before us, that following our Savior in the way of the cross, we may come to the joy of his resurrection. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, now and for ever. ***Amen.***

+ *The Meal* +

The meal is now eaten. If several are gathered, they first serve one another, then dine.

The last supper was an opportunity for Jesus to share a meal with his friends, the disciples. In this time of quarantining and self-isolation, we still live in community. Call, Facetime, or Zoom with one or more friends, relatives, or friends from church. Just say hello, ask how they are doing, and tell them why you are calling (sharing an agapé meal).

The Agapé Meal:

The word agapē (ἀγάπη) comes from the Greek for love. It describes the selfless, sacrificial love, embodied by Christ, and what all Christians are called to share with one another. The Agapé Meal developed as an early Christian household practice of gathering for a meal to remind us of Jesus' last meal that he shared with his disciples. This meal originally involved the partaking of communion, but over time, a separate weekly gathering practice developed that did not include a meal. On the night before Jesus' death, he speaks of agapē love – the love present between Jesus and God the Father and the love that unites all of us with God and one another.

+ *The Word and the Prayers* +

At the end of the meal, the following readings and meditation are read – read it aloud if more than one person is present. If desired, a hymn may be added.

Jesus Prayer at the Mount of Olives – Luke 22:39-46

Jesus came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. When he reached the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not come into the time of trial." Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done." Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground. When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial."

Meditation – The Rev. Walt Kindergan

Here we are in the olive grove on this steep hillside opposite Jerusalem. I have been here many times before. It is a place Jesus likes to come when he needs to get away and to pray – which he does often. And sometimes we come with him.

He has taught us to pray too – to 'our Father in heaven.' It is not common among our people to pray directly to God. Normally, only the prophets, patriarchs and priests lead us in prayer. But Jesus is so different – in every way.

I can see Jerusalem – the silhouettes of the temple and the city walls across the valley dimly lit in the moonlight. It seems quiet and peaceful there and it is quiet and peaceful here too.

BUT I AM NOT AT PEACE – NONE OF US ARE. We are all worried and I'll admit even afraid. We are not sure what is going on.

Just a short while ago, we were at the Passover with Jesus – in a home just across the Kidron Valley. We all thought it would be a festive occasion, a special meal like many we have shared in the past, with good food and wine and camaraderie with each other and with Jesus. We were all there, except that Judas left early – I guess he had an errand to run, since he keeps the purse.

Jesus said he REALLY wanted to have this meal with us before he suffered – but he said he would not eat and would not drink again until the "*kingdom of God comes*."

I wonder what he meant by that – he has so often told us about the coming of the kingdom and even given us examples of what it is like – but I don't think we have ever really understood him.

And, of course, he knows us all so well – it's almost like he can see through us – and so he knows we mostly don't 'get it.'

And yet just to be in his presence – to listen to his sermons and stories – and to see how he loves the people – to see how many he has healed, and cured, and inspired, and restored – is almost as if we REALLY ARE in a kind of heaven here on earth sometimes.

And he loves us – he ALWAYS lifts us up, ALWAYS encourages us, ALWAYS sees the best in us, and ALWAYS forgives us when we disappoint him.

Lately, he has been talking as if his life and ministry are drawing to a close soon but none of us have really understood what he has meant by that.

At supper this evening, he took the bread and broke it and gave it to us and said it was his body, given for us – and that we should eat it in remembrance of him.

And THEN he took the cup of wine and said it was poured out for us as the 'new covenant' in his blood.

And then Jesus said that one of us would betray him – and almost as soon as we began to ask each other about this we started arguing with each other over who would be regarded as the greatest.

Jesus had to remind us that the one who is greater is the one who serves another.

And then Peter – possibly foreseeing that something bad was about to come, told Jesus he would go with him *"to prison and to death."* But Jesus said Peter would even deny he knew him – and he would do this THREE TIMES before the cock crowed.

All this is so confusing to me. What is happening? Why is Jesus talking like this?

And now here we are on the mountain – it is quiet – and it seems a bit chilly tonight.

Jesus asked us to pray that we *"may not come into the time of trial."* I guess he means we should pray that when we are tested, we will not run away or not be in denial of him or who we are. But HOW will we be tested?

Jesus has gone off a short distance to pray by himself. I can see his outline in the moonlight and he seems very agitated. Maybe HE'S not even sure what is happening.

We are all tired and worried and we keep falling asleep, instead of praying for strength like Jesus asked us to do.

Jesus came back just now and scolded us for sleeping – and told us to *"get up"* and again told us to pray that we *"not come into the time of trial."*

Jesus is serious – and tense – his face shows his anguish – almost as if he was 'sweating blood.'

I'm feeling very guilty for letting Jesus down.

Jesus is clearly upset and I guess I just haven't grasped the seriousness of what is happening.

I'm awake now – I'll try to concentrate now – I'll try harder to pray.

Wait!

I hear someone coming!

It sounds like a whole crowd of people. And I can hear the clanking of soldiers uniforms.

OH, MY GOD!

WHAT IS HAPPENING?

The following psalm is then said. If there is more than one voice, it is said in unison.

Psalm 63:1-8

- 1 O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you,
as in a barren and dry land where there is no water.
- 2 Therefore I have gazed upon you in your holy place;
that I might behold your power and your glory.
- 3 For your loving-kindness is better than life itself;
my lips shall give you praise.
- 4 So will I bless you as long as I live
and lift up my hands in your Name.
- 5 My soul is content, as with marrow and fatness,
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips.
- 6 When I remember you upon my bed,
and meditate on you in the night watches.
- 7 For you have been my helper,
and under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice.
- 8 My soul clings to you,
your right hand holds me fast.

The Lord be with you

And also with you

Let us pray]

O God of the crucified and risen One, from whom no trial or trouble can separate us:
you feed us with your Word and soothe us with your Spirit, closer to us than breath itself.

Make us glad this night for the life of your servant Jesus;

Make us servants of all for the sake of Jesus;

who for our sake gave his life for the salvation of all.

In the Name of Jesus, your Son, our Lord.

Amen.¹

¹ This liturgy was adapted from the *Book of Occasional Services, 2018*, by The Rev. Dr. James Farwell and Dr. Lisa Kimball, of the Virginia Theological Seminary and by Christ Church Parish, Pensacola, Florida, for home use when Maundy Eucharist is not possible. Appropriate additional adaptations for illness in the household may be made.