

Agapé for Maundy Thursday

The celebration of festal meals is not appropriate during Holy Week. In Christian tradition such festivities take place only after the Lenten fast has been completed by the celebration of the Great Vigil — which is the Passover Feast of Christians — and the reception of Easter Communion.

If it is desired to share a meal after the Maundy Thursday Eucharist, the following order may be observed.

A meatless meal is to be preferred. The setting should be austere and the foods sparse and simple. Appropriate foods include soup, cheese, olives, dried fruit, bread, and wine. It is suitable that the bread and wine for the meal be brought to the Altar at the time of the Offertory (along with special offerings for the hungry), and after the service taken to the room where the meal is to take place.

The following blessings are recited by the Presider at the beginning of the meal, all standing.

Over Wine

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe. You create the fruit of the vine; and on this night you have refreshed us with the cup of salvation in the Blood of your Son Jesus Christ. Glory to you for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Over Bread

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe. You bring forth bread from the earth; and on this night you have given us the bread of life in the Body of your Son Jesus Christ. 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, King 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.*

During the meal or toward its close, a person appointed reads the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel according to John.

The agapé concludes with a psalm, such as Psalm 69:1-23, or with a song, or with a prayer, or with a blessing or dismissal.

If an agapé is held, the ceremony of stripping the Altar is deferred until after the meal.

The form for the agapé given above may also be used in private homes on this night.