



APRIL 9, 2020

Prayers for unity in a dispersed land

Liturgy at Home



ST. THOMAS
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

CONCERNING THE SERVICE

This Maundy Thursday liturgy was adapted from one created by our neighbor, The Rev. Josephine Robertson, from All Saints Episcopal Church in Bellevue. It's designed for use in the home, around the dinner table (whatever shape that takes) and has been modified for our current situation.

On this night, we sit down to feast with God and for that reason, we are invited to bring our best. If, in these peculiar days, your best is a folding table or takeout containers, God will be as honored by that as by fine silver and crystal! As you are able, plan to set your table with the best your house has to offer. Perhaps that will include a tablecloth, flowers, or your best place settings.

This liturgy is drawn from the Eucharistic tradition, but this is not a sacramental meal. We call it Eukharistía: in Ancient Greek (εὐχαριστία), meaning “gratitude, giving of thanks”. All Christians are called to bless, and this service includes blessings of the food, drink, and the people gathered. When the service refers to bread, use any bread available to you. Similarly, the service mentions wine, but you may use whatever beverage makes sense in your home. In the ancient world, wine was safe (when the water was not) and was a staple. Use any beverage that is a staple of your dinner table. This liturgy surrounds an evening meal so please use whatever dinner food works for you and those eating with you.

The service is written so various parts may be shared between those present. Some parts are read by one person while other parts are read together by everyone. This is indicated with “ONE” or “ALL.” The “ONE” part may be shared - a single leader is not required. While this service assumes a gathering, it may also be completed by an individual who, while physically alone, is gathered in spirit with the rest of the church tonight. If you have it available, place one candle (of any sort) on your table to serve as the Christ candle which will be lit at the beginning of the liturgy.

I Wonder: What do you think is the most important part of this night?

PREPARATION

All We begin by washing, as we were washed in our baptism. We cleanse our hands [and our feet] as we were cleansed in the waters of new birth. We do this not because we are afraid, but because we were commanded to love: to cleanse ourselves and gather in spirit is how we love the vulnerable whom Jesus loved. May we be instruments of love. May the sacrifices we make be for the good of our human family near and far.

Each person now washes their hands thoroughly with soap and water. You may also choose to wash each other's feet. Once washed, each person helps set the table. Place the food for your meal in the middle of the table along with bread to share and a carafe/bottle of wine [or other beverage.] When all is ready, everyone takes a seat at the table and the liturgy begins.

Light the Christ candle.

One As Jesus traveled, he spread light wherever he went, light that could not be extinguished. Tonight, I light this candle in honor of this great journey that still lives among us.

One Beloved(s) tonight is a holy night. We join with Christians around the world to remember the last night our Lord spent with his friends. We gather around a table, and with all those who remember. Though we are dispersed, we are together, in spirit and in truth.

BLESSING OF THE MEAL

This blessing can be used anytime Christians share a meal. It follows the shape of the last supper and will sound familiar to the Eucharist Prayer.

The ONE who blesses the bread takes the bread and holds it where all may see it.

One On the night that Jesus gathered with his friends he took bread and he blessed it and shared it with his friends. Our God who loves us, feeds us. As God's people ate manna in the wilderness and were satisfied, so we share this bread with Christ, and with one another. May it be for us bread from heaven, strength for our bodies, balm for our souls, and may it empower us to be Christ's body in this world.

The bread is passed around the table for all. The one who blesses the [wine] then takes the bottle or carafe and holds it where all may see it.

One On the night that Jesus gathered with his friends he took wine and he blessed it and shared it with them. The God who made us, delights in us, and gives us good gifts to delight our tongues and give joy to our souls. As Jesus offered the Samaritan woman water that will not fail, so Jesus offers us the same. May this [wine] be for us the holy drink of heaven and may it wash us of sin and quench the thirst of our souls.

The [wine] is then poured out into each person's cup, a generous amount!

The whole company together then blesses the rest of the meal, saying together:

All We praise you, God our creator, for your good gifts to us and to all of humanity. We thank you for the friendship we have in Christ; and for the promise of your coming kingdom, where there will be no more hunger and thirst, and where all will be satisfied by your love. As this bread was once seed scattered on earth to be gathered into one loaf, so may your church be joined into one holy people, who praise you for your love made known in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SHARING THE MEAL

As feels appropriate, the following stories may be read by members of the gathered group while you enjoy your meal together. These stories can be scattered throughout the meal as seems appropriate. Conversation and questions are encouraged. This is a gathering of friends.

FIRST STORY

The Wedding at Cana *John 2:1-11 (THE MESSAGE)*

From Water to Wine

Three days later there was a wedding in the village of Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there. Jesus and his disciples were guests also. When they started running low on wine at the wedding banquet, Jesus' mother told him, "They're just about out of wine." Jesus said, "Is that any of our business, Mother—yours or mine? This isn't my time. Don't push me." She went ahead anyway, telling the servants, "Whatever he tells you, do it." Six stoneware water pots were there, used by the Jews for ritual washings. Each held twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus ordered the servants, "Fill the pots with water." And they filled them to the brim. "Now fill your pitchers and take them to the host," Jesus said, and they did. When the host tasted the water that had become wine (he didn't know what had just happened but the servants, of course, knew), he called out to the bridegroom, "Everybody I know begins with their finest wines and after the guests have had their fill brings in the cheap stuff. But you've saved the best till now!" This act in Cana of Galilee was the first sign Jesus gave, the first glimpse of his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

**┌ I Wonder: Have you ever experienced a time when someone
asked you for help before you were ready? ─┘**

SECOND STORY

Feeding the Five Thousand

Matthew 14:13-21 (NRSV)

Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." And he said, "Bring them here to me." Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

I Wonder: Have you ever experienced a time of abundance and plenty like this?

THIRD STORY

Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

John 18:1-11 (THE MESSAGE)

Jesus, having prayed this prayer, left with his disciples and crossed over the brook Kidron at a place where there was a garden. He and his disciples entered it. Judas, his betrayer, knew the place because Jesus and his disciples went there often. So Judas led the way to the garden, and the Roman soldiers and police sent by the high priests and Pharisees followed. They arrived there with lanterns and torches and swords. Jesus, knowing by now everything that was coming down on him, went out and met them. He said, "Who are you after?" They answered, "Jesus the Nazarene." He said, "That's me." The soldiers recoiled, totally taken aback. Judas, his betrayer, stood out like a sore thumb. Jesus asked again, "Who are you after?" They answered, "Jesus the Nazarene." "I told you," said Jesus, "that's me. I'm the one. So if it's me you're after, let these others go." (This validated the words in his prayer, "I didn't lose one of those you gave.") Just then Simon Peter, who was carrying a sword, pulled it from its sheath and struck the Chief Priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. Malchus was the servant's name. Jesus ordered Peter, "Put back your sword. Do you think for a minute I'm not going to drink this cup the Father gave me?"

I Wonder: Where are you in this reading, or what part of the reading is about you?

PREPARE TO WAIT

After you finish your meal, but before you clear the table, read the following:

- One* Our dinner is over, the waiting begins. Tonight, Jesus was alone, under arrest, and awaiting his death. Tonight, his friends were alone with their guilt, shame, and fear.
- One* Tonight, we are missing our normal routines, our communities, and friends. Many are alone, isolated and afraid. Jesus waits with us all tonight. Jesus knows what loneliness feels like. He knows the heartbreak of being alone when we want most to be with people we love. Tonight, we hold vigil with the sick, the fearful, the lonely, and with all who risk their own lives to protect and care for ours.

Now everyone, as able, participates in clearing the table. (Leave only the Christ candle which may remain lighted.) Wipe the table with a clean damp cloth and then dry it. When the table is cleared and cleaned, gather for one person alone, or everyone all together, to read the scripture below, then conclude with a final prayer and the invitation to keep vigil.

FROM PSALM 51 *BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER, 1979*

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your lovingkindness; *
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.**
- 2 Wash me through and through from my wickedness *
and cleanse me from my sin.**
- 3 For I know my transgressions, *
and my sin is ever before me.**
- 11 Create in me a clean heart, O God, *
and renew a right spirit within me.**
- 12 Cast me not away from your presence *
and take not your holy Spirit from me.**
- 13 Give me the joy of your saving help again *
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.**

One Holy One, draw near to your people tonight, wait and watch with us; for our hearts are heavy. Send your holy angels to watch over the sick, and to guide the hands of those who tend to them. And God, please comfort us as a Mother soothes her beloved children. May we watch, and wait, strengthened by your presence.

***All* Amen.**

If desired, bring flowers, plants, beloved objects, and/or additional candles to place on the table with the Christ candle. These objects together create a place to watch with Jesus (a reminder of the Garden of Gethsemane.) You may spend time here at any point tonight, reading scripture, praying, or simply keeping silent vigil.