

## HOME AGAPÉ FOR MAUNDY THURSDAY \*

**In the earliest days of the Church, Christians gathered for Sunday worship around a table for a simple common meal.** Scripture was read and discussed, prayers and thanksgivings were offered, and blessed bread and wine were shared: the Lord's Supper, Communion. They were following the example Jesus gave at the Last Supper. It was called a love-feast, *agapé* in Greek, the word to describe God's love. This practice continued until the early fourth century when Christianity became the official faith of Constantine's empire. At that point, the communal meal fell by the wayside – probably because of the large increase in the number of worshippers. The celebration of the Eucharist (which means thanksgiving) became a stand-alone service in a much larger, less intimate setting.

In the last fifty years or so various Christian groups have begun the practice of holding an agapé meal on Maundy Thursday, whether Communion is celebrated within the context of the actual meal, or directly afterwards as we do at All Saints'.

In our worship this year, the agapé is something that can be done at home. Set the table in a sparse way. **A simple meatless meal is to be preferred.** Appropriate foods include soup, cheese, olives, dried fruit, bread, and wine. The following blessings and readings will be woven into the meal.

The practice of foot-washing as a sign of our servanthood with Christ is included here.

### **Here are the materials you will need for this service:**

- Simple Meal, including bread and wine or grape juice.
- Large bowl or basin, pitcher of water, towel.
- Wooden cross, icon, or other religious artwork.
- Candle and matches.
- Copy of this service for each person.

If there are several persons present, one will preside.

*(Note: Multiple households could prepare for this service and coordinate their celebration of it using a video conferencing platform, alternating blessings.)*

### **+ The Blessings +**

*At the time appointed, all gather around the table, standing as able, ready to begin the meal. 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 Word and the Prayers +**

*At the end of the meal, while still sitting around the table, the Maundy Thursday Gospel is read. It can be read in parts, as indicated, or by a single voice.*

## **A Reading from the Gospel of John 13:1-17, 31b-35**

*Narrator* Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him,

*Reader* Lord, are you going to wash my feet?

*Narrator* Jesus answered,

*Jesus* You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.

*Narrator* Peter said to him,

*Reader* You will never wash my feet.

*Narrator* Jesus answered,

*Jesus* Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.

*Narrator* Simon Peter said to him,

*Reader* Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!

*Narrator* Jesus said to him,

*Jesus* One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you.

*Narrator* For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them,

*Jesus* Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord--and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at

once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' 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.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**Homily** The Rev. Victoria Geer McGrath – *on the website*

### **Foot Washing**

*When observed, the ceremony of the washing of feet appropriately follows the Gospel and homily. Each person takes off one shoe and sock, puts their foot into the bowl. Another person pours water over the foot and dries it. Everyone takes turns washing and being washed. If you are alone, wash your own feet, remembering the Jesus does this for you, as much as he did it for the disciples.*

*Leader* The Lord Jesus, after he had supped with his disciples and had washed their feet, said to them, "Do you know what I, your Lord and Master, have done to you? I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done."

**Peace is my last gift to you, my own peace I now leave with you;  
peace which the world cannot give, I give to you.**

*Leader* I give you a new commandment: Love one another as I have loved you.

**Peace is my last gift to you, my own peace I now leave with you;  
peace which the world cannot give, I give to you.**

*Leader* By this shall the world know that you are my disciples:  
That you have love for one another.

### **Clear and strip the dining table.**

*The following psalm is then 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.

*Move to your home altar or a table. Place a wooden cross, Good Friday icon, or other artwork on it. Light a candle. Say together the following prayer:*

**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.**

*Throughout the evening you may want to spend some time in quiet prayer and contemplation with the candle lighted.*

*\*From the Book of Occasional Services 2018, adapted/edited by the Rev. Dr. James Farwell and Dr. Lisa Kimball for use when Maundy Thursday Eucharist is not possible. Further adapted by V.G. McGrath/. Appropriate adaptations for illness in the household can be made.*