

Maundy Thursday

Agapé & Foot-washing, for observance in the home

This home liturgy consists of three parts:

1. A simple meal as a sign of love (agapé) and fellowship.
2. The washing of feet, to follow the example of our Lord, and as a way of observing his “new commandment” (*mandatum*) given this night, to “love one another, as I have loved you.” (John 13:34)
3. The clearing of the table and reading of Psalm 22, to mark the transition to Good Friday.

Additional notes:

Any member of the house may serve as the officiant.

All three parts of the liturgy may be used, or any part thereof, adapted as desired.

Things to prepare/gather beforehand:

1. a meal, to be eaten at a table simply set, with unlighted candles
2. a large bowl, pitcher, and towels for foot washing
3. Bible and Prayer Book

Part 1 – The Agapé

The Agapé meal, or love feast, was a communal meal in the early church. Distinct from the eucharist, it was a time for fellowship over food and drink, and particularly for reconciliation and bonding. The Episcopal Church's Book of Occasional Services suggests the Agapé as appropriate for observance in the home on Maundy Thursday, noting: “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. (For the Agapé) 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. During the meal, or toward its close, a person appointed reads the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel according to John.”

When it is time for the evening meal, all gather at the table. The room should be dimly lit. The officiant begins
Bless the Lord who forgives our sins.

All: **His mercy endures for ever.**

The officiant reads the following scripture, and leads the Prayer for Light that follows.

Jesus said to them, “The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light.” *John 12:35-36*

Let us pray.

Almighty, everlasting God, let our prayer in your sight be as incense, the lifting up of our hands as the evening sacrifice. Give us grace to behold you, present in your Word and Sacraments, and to recognize you in the lives of those around us. Stir up in us the flame of love that burned in the heart of your Son as he bore his passion, and let it burn in us to eternal life and to the ages of ages. **Amen.**

The candles at the table are now lighted. Other candles or lamps may be lighted at this point, also, to provide the desired amount of light for the evening.

The following hymn is sung or said by all.

O Gracious Light *Phos hilaron*

O gracious Light,
pure brightness of the everliving Father in heaven,
O Jesus Christ, holy and blessed!

Now as we come to the setting of the sun,
and our eyes behold the vesper light,
we sing your praises, O God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

You are worthy at all times to be praised by happy voices,
O Son of God, O giver of life,
and to be glorified through all the worlds.

All say the Lord's Prayer.

The officiant then says the following grace over the meal.

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.**

Part 2 - The Gospel and Washing of Feet

After the meal, but while still sitting at table, John 13:1-15 is read.

The officiant then says

On the night before his death, Jesus set an example for his disciples by washing their feet, an act of humble service. He taught that strength and growth in the life of the Kingdom of God come not by power, authority, or even miracle, but by such lowly service.

Therefore, we who share in the royal priesthood of Christ are invited to follow the example of our Master, remembering his admonition that what will be done for us is also to be done by us to others, for “a servant is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.”

The members of the household wash one another's feet.

For those home alone, spend some time in prayer for those you love. Consider calling them on the phone or reaching out in some other way as a sign of your care for them.

During or after the washing of feet, the following may be said.

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.

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.

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

Part 3 – The Clearing of the Table

As the church's liturgy for Maundy Thursday is customarily followed by the "stripping of the Altar" and sanctuary, consider also treating your own table as a place to observe this transition to Good Friday. All may share together in clearing the table, after which Psalm 22 may be said. Or some may clear the table while others read the psalm.

The table should be quietly and reverently cleared entirely of dishes, centerpiece, table runner, etc. The bare table may then be wiped clean. Keep the table bare through Good Friday and Holy Saturday.

Psalm 22 may be read from any Bible, or from the Prayer Book (p. 610).

Consider setting aside some time between now and the morning of Good Friday to keep vigil with the Lord in prayer. You may also see when other parishioners will be praying through the night by joining the Holy Apostles' prayer vigil [here](#), or see the parish email.