



“ANYTHING BUT NORMAL” MAUNDY THURSDAY AN AT-HOME LITURGY

THE BIG IDEA: As we prepare for Holy Week, let’s resist the temptation to try to make it normal. It’s not. We are all under shelter-in-place restrictions of some kind. Our communities are being dramatically reshaped by pandemic and economic distress, by anxiety and loss. Nothing about this Holy Week is normal. But then again, that’s what Holy Week is: it’s an abnormal story, a very empty story, a lonely story. It’s a story of presence wrapped up inside of absence. This Thursday, let’s practice presence wrapped up in absence, and rest in the loneliness of this story.

What You Will Need: 1. A copy of this liturgy 2. A candle, and a lighter 3. A Bible 4. A cross to place at the center of the table 5. Bread and a meal to share 6. A Bible

PART 1: SETTING THE TABLE As you set the table, put out the plates and knives and the salt, place a Bible, a cross, and a candle at the center.

If you are praying in solitude, pray both the leader and response. If you are praying with others, the leader prays the words in plain text and the people respond with the words in bold. Begin with light and then with prayer.

LIGHTING THE CANDLE: (Light the candle against the growing darkness.)

Light and peace in Jesus Christ. **Thanks be to God!**

CONFESSION AND PARDON: My sisters and brothers, Christ shows us his love by becoming a humble servant. Let us draw near to God and confess our sin in the truth of God’s Spirit.

Most merciful God, We, your Church, confess that often our spirit has not been that of Christ. Where we have failed to love one another as he loves us, Where we have pledged loyalty to him with our lips and then betrayed, deserted, or denied him, forgive us, we pray; and by your Spirit make us faithful in every time of trial; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Who is in a position to condemn? Only Christ. But Christ suffered and died for us, was raised from the dead and ascended on high for us, and continues to intercede for us. Believe the good news: In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!

Glory to God. Amen.

GOSPEL WORD: Read aloud John 13:1-17, 31-35

Blessing the Meal: Be present at our table, Lord: Be here and everywhere adored; Thy creatures bless and grant that we May feast in paradise with Thee.

WASHING OUR HANDS: In this time where handwashing has taken on new importance, we wash our hands to be ready to share this meal. As you wash, say the Lord's Prayer. Quite beautifully, the Lord's Prayer takes about 20 seconds to recite (the recommended length of time for effective handwashing).

SHARING THE MEAL: Passing the Bread As the bread is shared, each person shares what Love is leading them toward today.

Feasting Together: As you feast together, reflect on the Gospel reading: When was a time you chose love this week? When was a time you found it difficult to love this week? When was a time you felt loved by someone this week?

Prayer after the Meal: For these, and all of your mercies, God, may your holy name be blessed and praised; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Benediction Say together, as you are able: May Jesus Christ, who for our sake became obedient unto death, even death on a cross, keep you and strengthen you this night and forever. Amen.

Disconnect with any friends or family outside of your home after you share in this blessing together, as you prepare to strip the table and end the evening in silence.

PART 3: STRIPPING THE TABLE: *This work is the central work of the night. After you have disconnected, work to clear the table and clean up the meal. Wash the dishes by hand, dry them, and put them away. Package up any leftovers and put away the condiments, the salt, and the pepper. Empty your table of anything, save the cross and the candle.*

If you can, strip your home a little, too. Take down some pictures, leaving the empty nails. Remove enough things so that your home feels a bit more bare, a little more stark for what is to come.

Return to the table together. Sit with Silence Linger at the empty table, in a silence filled only by the light of the candle. As you leave the table, blow the candle out.