

# Maundy Thursday

## St. James Episcopal Church



God bless you on this holy day! Maundy Thursday, and the Triduum with it, are beautiful, holy, and deeply spirit-filled parts of our tradition. Most years, we take part in these traditional forms of worship at church, but many of them can be done at home as well. Before we get to these, however, here's a bit of information on the Triduum, Maundy Thursday, and the approach to Easter.

### What is the Triduum?

Maundy Thursday is the first night of the Triduum (pronounced trih-doo-um), but what's the Triduum? These are the **three days before Easter** (tri = three, like

**triple** or **triplets**) where we prepare ourselves fully for the most holy day of our lives as Christians. They're the crunch time, when we take all the wisdom, reflection, and hope that we gained through the penitence of Lent and turn more and more fully to God. More specifically, they're the three days when we remember and take part in the betrayal, passion, death, and burial of Jesus Christ.

**Wow, interesting. So then what's Maundy Thursday?**

Maundy Thursday is the first day of the Triduum, and so its job is **to start us off and focus us**. And it does this by bringing us close to Jesus and to Jesus' new commandment (Maundy comes from *mandatum*, which is Latin for "commandment") that **we love one another**. It's a very personal time where we come right up alongside Jesus, but, because of this, it's also a time of grief as our beloved is betrayed by Judas Iscariot.

Our gospel readings for Maundy Thursday focus on the events around and during the Last Supper. Our tradition pulls three themes from this time in Jesus' life, and they are: the institution of the Eucharist, the washing of Jesus' feet, and the commandment to love one another. The Church's liturgy focuses on each of these themes.

**Good to know. Okay, so what do we do on Maundy Thursday?**

Traditionally, there are **three parts** to the Maundy Thursday liturgy: the agape meal, washing of the feet, and the stripping of the altar. The first two of these can easily be done at home, and there are ways to observe the third as well.

**This sounds good, but I feel weird not doing all this with a priest or with the congregation. Is it okay if I do it with just my family or even alone?**

It's always best, of course, to pray and worship with the whole Church, but during these times of physical distancing, we're not able to gather. That said, the Church the whole world over will be praying with you during this time (and especially during this time!). Know that you aren't alone as you're praying and worshipping. You've got the whole Church lifting their eyes and hearts to God with you!

**I'm ready for Maundy Thursday, but I miss Lisa and the organ! Can you suggest some music?**

Of course! There are some links to music at the end of this document and some suggestions on when to play it.

## The Maundy Thursday Liturgies

### The Liturgy in the Book of Common Prayer

Everything here is from the Book of Common Prayer, the Hymnal 1982, and what's called the Book of Occasional Services. If you have a BCP with you, the liturgy is on page 274. You can also find it by clicking on this link: <https://www.bcponline.org/SpecialDays/thursday.html>

### How do I begin?

Begin with a prayer, either from your own heart or the following (it's one of the best in the Prayer Book, by the way!):

Almighty Father, whose dear Son, on the night before he suffered, instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood: Mercifully grant that we may receive it thankfully in remembrance of Jesus Christ our Lord, who in these holy mysteries gives us a pledge of eternal life; and who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Then, read from one of the readings below. Any translation of the Bible is just fine. Whatever you read, make sure to end with one of the readings from the Gospel. You can click on the links or use a printed Bible, whichever you prefer.

Old Testament    Exodus 12:1-14a

Psalm        78:14-20, 23-25

Epistle        1 Corinthians 11:23-26(27-32)

Gospel        John 13:1-15,    or Luke 22:14-30

### Foot Washing

Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, and his own feet were washed with expensive perfume. Both were acts of humility and love, and it is in these acts that we see hints of God's deep and sacrificial love for humanity. Jesus asks us to be similarly humble, and so we practice foot washing on Maundy Thursday as well.

You can easily do this at home with your family or loved ones. All you need is a bowl and some towels. Fill the bowl with warm water and set it before a chair. Then take turns dipping one another's feet into the bowl, washing them with a small cloth, then dry them off. You don't need to scrub the person's feet, but wash them lovingly and gently. It's often good to listen to some music in the background, too. Then, when everyone has finished, spend some time in prayer, hold one another's hands, or just talk about Jesus and his love for us.

Here are some suggestions for music. Click on the titles below:

- [Go to Dark Gethsemane](#)
- [Now, my Tongue, the Mystery Telling](#)
- [I heard the voice of Jesus say](#)
- [Bless the Lord my Soul](#)
- Or use a hymn that you yourself love.

## Agape Meal

Just as Jesus shared a final meal (the "Last Supper") with his disciples, Christians often gather for a agape meal (or "love meal"). Many Christians eat a simple, meatless meal for dinner on Maundy Thursday. Appropriate foods include soup, cheese, olives, dried fruit, bread, and wine. Table settings should be sparse. It's often good to light the table with candles instead of electric lights, too.

The following service comes from the *Book of Occasional Services 2018* and was adapted by the Rev. Dr. James Farwell and Dr. Lisa Kimball for use in our current coronavirus quarantine. You are free to adapt them to your needs.

+ The Blessings +

*At the time appointed, all gather around the table, standing as able.*

*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, the seventeenth chapter of the gospel of John is read.*

*A simple hymn can be sung.*

*The following psalm is then said. If there is more than one voice, it is 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.

Leader: The Lord be with you

**Others: And also with you**

Leader: Let us pray

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.

## Stripping the Altar

When we hold Maundy Thursday at our church building, we usually end with what's called the "stripping of the altar." At this time, a small group of parishioners (usually the Altar Guild) removes everything from the altar and leaves it bare. If the Eucharist has been celebrated, what remains is placed either on the altar or in the sacristy. This is an austere time when we reflect on Jesus' passion and grief in Gethsemane.

Few of us have altars in our own homes, but you can take part in this act of worship as well. Remove everything from your kitchen table and, until Easter, keep it pretty clear. You can also take pieces of art down from the walls (especially if they're religious art).

## Vigil

It is traditional to hold a vigil throughout the whole night from Maundy Thursday until the night of Good Friday. In this, we join with Jesus, his disciples, and all those who loved him as they themselves waited in vigil before his crucifixion. Often, churches hold vigils together, where each hour of the night is held by a different person. In this way, while no one is up all night, someone is always waiting with Jesus in his grief.

While you certainly can stay up all night if you want, consider taking a bit of time this night to sit in vigil. Turn off the electric lights, light a candle, and sit in prayer. You might read some of the psalms or one of the gospels straight through. If you have a rosary, you can pray the prayers associated with bead-praying. Whatever the case, keep your focus on Jesus.

## Music

Music for Maundy Thursday is calm and quiet. Here are a few ideas of appropriate songs. There are many versions of these songs on Youtube, so if you don't like the ones Father Tim likes, feel free to search for a few of your own! Also, remember that our Hymnal 1982 has a section for Maundy Thursday songs. Most songs from the section on "Holy Week", from 158-173, would work just fine.

- Ubi Caritas
- Go to Dark Gethsemane
- Now, my Tongue, the Mystery Telling
- I heard the voice of Jesus say
- Bless the Lord my Soul (Taize)
- Nada de Turbe (Taize)
- Jesus, Remember Me (Taize)
- Or you can visit our [YouTube Maundy Thursday List](#)