*MAUNDY THURSDAY 2023*

*Maundy comes from the Old French mande, which comes from the Latin mandatum novum, a “new commandment” associated with John 13:34: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you.” Holy Communion is an important element, and other options may be included as well, such as foot washing or a reflection on the Seder meal. It should also include an opportunity for expressions of love and reconciliation between people.*

*CALL TO WORSHIP*

Leader: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**All: And also with you.**

Leader: This is the day that Christ, the Lamb of God, gave himself into the hands of those who would slay him.

**All: This is the day that Christ gathered with his disciples in the Upper Room.**

Leader: This is the day that Christ our God gave us this holy feast

**All: Help us to enter the spirit of the Upper Room, that we may be confronted by your presence and the depth of your love for us.**

Leader: Taste and see that the Lord is good.

**All: Happy are all who take refuge in him.**

*READING OF THE WORD*

*Consider dividing the reading among many people, covering as many of the following passages as you are able. If you have someone in your group who could lead music, perhaps songs like “In Christ Alone,” “Come to the Altar,” or “The Wonderful Cross” interwoven with the Scriptures:*

John 13:1-17   
John 13:18-30   
John 13:31-38  
John 14:1-6   
John 16:31-17:5   
John 18:1-14

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION*

Clear your way in us to see what is important.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Lord, we give to you our resentment and our grudges.

**Lord, have mercy.**

We know that our spirit has not been that of Christ.

**Lord, have mercy.**

We have sown seeds of hate, bitterness, and resentment.

**Lord, have mercy.**

We have been disobedient and ungrateful.

**Lord, have mercy.**

We have listened to the powers of darkness.

**Lord, have mercy.**

We have missed or neglected opportunities to share your love.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, the suffering and humble servant, forgive us, we pray, and renew us in his power.

**Amen.**

*You could allow space for silent personal confession. It may be helpful to invite people to write their sins on cards and burn them (safely outdoors!) as a sign that when they confess their sins before God, the sins are gone and they are forgiven.*

*WORDS OF ASSURANCE*

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, nailing them to the cross. God is the God of perfect forgetfulness. God forgives *and* forgets. Get on with living as God intended you to live in the first place. God is the God of second chances, and tonight yours has begun. Amen.

*COMMUNION*

*Maundy Thursday marks the night on which Christ instituted the Lord’s Supper in his sharing the last meal with his disciples, and it is important to remind ourselves of those profound connections. It may also be appropriate to add foot washing following communion.*

*A LITURGY FOR FEASTING WITH FRIENDS*

LEADER: To gather joyfully is indeed a serious affair, for feasting and all enjoyments gratefully taken care are, at their heart, acts of war.

ALL: **In celebrating this feast we declare that evil and death, suffering and loss, sorrow and tears, will not have the final word.**

LEADER: But the joy of fellowship, and the welcome and comfort of friends new and old, and the celebration of these blessings of food and drink and conversation and laughter are the true evidences of things eternal, and are the first fruits of that great glad joy that is to come and that will be unending.

ALL: **So let our feast this day be joined to those sure victories secured by Christ,**

LEADER: Let it be to us now a delight, and a glad foretaste of his eternal kingdom.

ALL: **Bless us, O Lord, in this feast.**

LEADER: Bless us, O Lord, as we linger over our cups, and over this table laden with good things, as we relish the delights of varied texture and flavor, of aromas and savory spices, of dishes prepared as acts of love and blessing, of sweet delights made sweeter by the communion of saints. May this shared meal, and our pleasure in it, bear witness against the artifice and deceptions of the prince of darkness that would blind this world to hope.

ALL: **May it strike at the root of the lie that would drain life of meaning, and the world of joy, and suffering of redemption.**

LEADER: May this our feast fall like a great hammer blow against that brittle night, shattering the gloom, reawakening our hearts, stirring our imaginations, focusing our vision

ALL: **on the kingdom of heaven that is to come,**

LEADER: on the kingdom that is promised,

ALL: **on the kingdom that is already, indeed, among us,**

LEADER: For the resurrection of all good things has already joyfully begun.

*(everyone now lift up your glass/cup)*

LEADER: May this feast be an echo of that great Supper of the Lamb,

ALL: **a foreshadowing of the great celebration that awaits the children of God.**

LEADER: Where two or more of us are gathered, O Lord, there you have promised to be.

ALL: **And here we are.**

LEADER: And so, here are you. Take joy, O King, in this our feast.

*BENEDICTION*

Go now in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: not tentatively, but boldly; not cynically, but hopefully; not sadly, but joyfully—because tonight we have met again with the One who creates, forgives, and redeems. Amen.

*“A Liturgy for Feasting with Friends” comes from Every Moment Holy, Volume 1, by Douglas Kaine McKelvey, the rest of the service adapted from The Covenant Book of Worship*