

HOME WORSHIP FOR THE THREE DAYS

Maundy Thursday | Good Friday | Vigil of Easter

April 9–11, 2020

Dear people of God,

What follows here are resources for you and those with whom you live to use for praying together on the three central days of the Christian year.

While Easter is every Sunday, these Three Days are like one great annual Sunday. But because of the pandemic, we cannot do these important services together in church. While Easter is a joyful festival, we keep it now in a time of difficulty and worldwide sorrow. Still, we believe that Christ is with us in his word, by his Spirit drawing us together as one before God. And we believe that the gospel of Christ gives us strength amid distress and comfort in the face of our sufferings.

These three services are really one event, stretched over three days. As a sign of our unity you might consider using these three resources for prayer on each of the three nights at nightfall, or the time at which you would have ordinarily gathered for worship.

On each occasion you will need to set out one or more physical symbols: first, a bowl of water and a clean towel; then a cross; and finally a bowl of water and a candle.

After the last prayers on Saturday evening, do celebrate. It is Easter. Have a piece of chocolate or something else you love.

Christ is risen!

These resources for worship at home on the Three Days were developed by Gordon Lathrop and Gail Ramshaw for Resurrection Lutheran Church, Arlington, Virginia, and are offered for ecumenical use.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

April 9, 2020

Set out a bowl of water and a clean towel.

Sit with them before you and begin with these texts.

First, remember God's forgiveness:

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ.

By grace we have been saved.

Our sins are forgiven in the name of Jesus Christ. Almighty God strengthen us with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in our hearts through faith. **Amen.**

Then pray the prayer for this night:

Holy God, source of all love, on the night of his betrayal,

Jesus gave us a new commandment, to love one another as he loves us. Write this commandment in our hearts, and give us the will to serve others as he was servant of all, your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Then read or pray the following.

FIRST READING: Exodus 12:1–14

PSALM 116

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 11:23–26

GOSPEL: John 13:1–17, 31b–35

After the readings:

Word of God, Word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

Having read these readings, think of this:

This word about the love of Jesus is always the beginning of any time. By remembering the Passover and the Last Supper and the footwashing, we are not trying to get back to an old time. In the face of the suffering and death with which the world is filled, our trying would not come to much. But God's word comes to us now. To our time. Even when we cannot meet for the holy supper together, this word—which takes these three nights to say—comes to us: Jesus Christ is our forgiveness. He is the Lamb whose blood marks the doors of our houses and bodies. In the power of the Spirit, he has washed our feet and our lives. And he turns us toward our neighbors. In this word—and in the cross proclaimed tomorrow and the resurrection proclaimed on Saturday night—Easter comes out to hold us already.

Here you may wash your hands, using the water in the bowl, recalling Jesus washing his disciples' feet.

Then you may pray together these intercessions for our church and world:

United with Christians around the globe on this Maundy Thursday, let us pray for the church, the earth, our troubled world, and all in need, responding to each petition with the words:

Your mercy is great.

Blessed are you, holy God, for the church. Gather all the baptized around your presence in the Word. Strengthen the body of your people even when we cannot assemble for worship. Grant our presbytery and congregation faithfulness and creativity for their ministry in this time and accompany those preparing for baptism. *A brief silence.* Hear us, holy God. **Your mercy is great.**

Blessed are you, bountiful God, for this good earth and for the flowering of springtime. Save dry lands from destructive droughts. Protect the waters from pollution. Allow in this time the planting of fields for food. Make us into care-givers of your plants and animals. *A brief silence.* Hear us, bountiful God. **Your mercy is great.**

Blessed are you, sovereign God, for our nation. Inspire all people to live in peace and concord. Grant wisdom and courage to heads of state and to legislators as they face the coronavirus.

Lead our elected officials to champion the cause of the needy.

A brief silence.

Hear us, sovereign God. **Your mercy is great.**

Blessed are you, faithful God, for you accompany suffering humanity with love. Abide wherever the coronavirus has struck. Visit all who mourn their dead; all who have contracted the virus; those who are quarantined or stranded away from home; those who have lost their employment; those who fear the present and the future. Support physicians, nurses, and home health aides; medical researchers; and the World Health Organization. *A brief silence.*

Hear us, faithful God. **Your mercy is great.**

Blessed are you, gracious God, for you care for the needy. We beg you to feed the hungry, protect the refugee, embrace the distressed, house the homeless, nurse the sick, and comfort the dying. Especially we pray for those we name before you now.

A brief silence.

Hear us, gracious God. **Your mercy is great.**

Blessed are you, loving God, that your Son knelt before us, your unworthy servants. Preserve our lives, comfort our anxiety, and receive now the petitions of our hearts. *A longer period of silence.* Hear us, loving God. **Your mercy is great.**

Blessed are you, eternal God, for all who have died in the faith, especially the martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whom we commemorate today, and those whom we name before you here. *A brief silence.*

At the end, bring us with them into your everlasting glory. Hear us, eternal God. **Your mercy is great.**

Receive, merciful God, our prayers, for the sake of Jesus Christ, the host of our meal of life, who died and rose that we might live with you, now and forever. **Amen.**

Finally, remembering Jesus going to his arrest and his death, the events from which all the mercy that fills this night flows, pray this psalm.

PSALM 88

The Three Days continue tomorrow with the service for Good Friday.

GOOD FRIDAY

April 10, 2020

Sit before a cross.

Begin with this prayer.

Almighty God, look with loving mercy on your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, and to be given over to the hands of sinners, and to suffer death on the cross; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

Amen.

Then read or pray the following:

FIRST READING: Isaiah 52:13—53:12

PSALM 22 GOSPEL: John 18:1–19:42

After the readings:

Word of God, Word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

Having read these readings, think of this:

Jesus Christ is a root out of dry ground. By his wounds we are healed. These paradoxes of Isaiah are echoed in the account in John about his death: he is arrested, yet when he speaks the soldiers fall down; he is tried, yet he is King and Son of God and Man; he is thirsty and dying, yet he is the source of the Spirit and of water and blood to heal us; finally he is buried, but it is in a garden. All of this means to tell us that God shares our sorrow and need and death and yet transforms it to life and salvation and hope. More than just a root out of dry ground, his cross is the great tree of life in which we all may shelter. You may shelter there today. And all those things in all the world that we pray for today, God holds together in him.

THE BIDDING PRAYER

A brief silence follows each intercession.

Dear members of God's family:

we pray for the church throughout the world . . .

we pray for our presbytery, our pastor, and all servants of the church . . . we pray for those preparing for baptism . . .
we pray for the Jewish people, the first to hear the word of God . . . we pray for those who do not share our faith in Jesus Christ . . . we pray for those who do not believe in God . . .
we pray for God’s creation . . .
we pray for those who serve in public office . . .
we pray for those in any need . . . and we pray for all afflicted by the coronavirus . . .
Finally, we pray:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Conclude with these words:

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

By your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

The Three Days continues tomorrow with the Vigil of Easter.

VIGIL OF EASTER

April 11, 2020

Sit before an unlit candle and a bowl of water. Light the candle, saying: The light of Christ, rising in glory, dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds. **Thanks be to God.**

Then read this “Easter Proclamation” Rejoice, all heavenly choirs of angels!

Christ has conquered; the risen Savior shines upon you.

This is the night in which the true Lamb is slain. This is the night: **this is the night.**

This the night in which the children of Israel were led through the sea. This is the night: **this is the night.**

This is the night in which all who believe in Christ are renewed in grace.

This is the night: **this is the night.**

The holiness of this night restores joy to those who mourn and humbles earthly pride.

Therefore this night, O God, receive our praise for the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

May Christ, the Morning Star, rising from the grave, shed light on the whole human race.

And we pray, O God: preserve and protect your church, giving us peace, in this time and forever. **Amen.**

Then pray:

O God, you are the creator of the world, the liberator of your people, and the wisdom of the earth. By the resurrection of your Son, free us from our fears, restore us in your image, and ignite us with your light, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Then choose among these five Old Testament readings.

FIRST READING: Genesis 1:1—2:4a

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

About this reading: Especially now, we long for an ordered world. In spite of death and sorrow, the resurrection of Jesus Christ contains the promise of a new creation. Baptized into his death and resurrection, we are made witnesses to God's new creation, and it is very good.

SECOND READING: Exodus 14:10–31; 15:20–21 Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

About this reading: We long for freedom from fear and confusion, sin and death. The resurrection of Christ brings us through the sea to new life, and baptism has enacted that exodus.

THIRD READING: Ezekiel 37:1–14

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

About this reading: We are the dry bones. The Spirit of God, poured out from Christ's death and resurrection, makes us alive together with him, a whole people standing together in new life, even when we are separated from each other.

FOURTH READING: Jonah 1:1—2:1

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

About this reading: We have often run away from our vocation as witnesses to new life, hope and forgiveness in Christ. His resurrection, like Jonah coming out of the fish after three days, and our baptism into that resurrection, making us like Jonah, restores us to that vocation.

FIFTH READING: Daniel 3:1–29

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

About this reading: In this difficult time, we are in the fire. But the Crucified and Risen Christ is with us in the fire, and we are saved. And Nebuchadnezzar once again does not get it: no one is to be torn limb from limb! God's mercy is for all.

After the Old Testament readings, read the Gospel:

GOSPEL: John 20:1–18

Word of God, Word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

About this Gospel: Mary weeps; so do we. But do not weep. The Risen Christ calls each of us by name. And remember the other readings: he is rescue from the fire, restored vocation, our dry bones made alive, freedom from slavery and fear, and the very down payment on a new creation. Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Then, in remembrance of your baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, confess the baptismal creed:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Make the sign of the cross on your forehead with water from the bowl.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

On this most holy night, we pray for the church, the earth, the world, those in need, and all the members of God's family, responding to each petition with the words **Hear our prayer.**

We pray, O God, for all the churches around the globe: for their people and leaders; for the newly baptized; for the believers who cannot assemble for worship; for faithful endurance during this time of sorrow and distress; and for a deepening sense of your presence among us. *A brief silence.* O God, you are our Temple: in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray, O God, for the well-being of creation: for the health of seas and rivers and lakes; [for local bodies of water]; and for the will to care for your earth. *A brief silence.*

O God, you are our Rainbow of promise: in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray, O God, for peace and justice in the world: for an end to war and international turmoil; for concord in our troubled society; for the heads of state, legislators, and local civic leaders, that they enact wise procedures to deal with the coronavirus.

A brief silence.

O God, you are our Mighty Fortress: in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray, O God for all who are facing the coronavirus: for all who mourn their dead; all who have contracted the virus; those who are quarantined or stranded away from home; those who have lost their employment; those who fear the present and the future. We pray for physicians,

nurses, and home health aides; medical researchers; and the World Health Organization. Fill the aching in our hearts with your merciful power. *A brief silence.* O God, you are our Everlasting Arms: in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray, O God, for all in need: for those suffering for the faith; for those who are poor, hungry, and homeless; for those who are sick and those awaiting death; and for those we name before you here. *A brief silence.*

O God, you are the Healer of our every ill:
in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray, O God, for the desires of our hearts:

A longer period of silence. O God, you are our Heart's Desire: in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Receive our thanks for all who died in the faith, and bring us at the final resurrection into your everlasting life, where sorrows will be no more. *A brief silence.*

O God, our Beginning and our End: in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

Into your gracious and mighty hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy, through your Son Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Pray the Lord's Prayer:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Pray this prayer and speak these final sentences:

Eternal giver of life and light, this holy night shines with the radiance of the risen Christ. Renew your church with the Spirit given us in baptism, that we may worship you in sincerity and truth and may shine as a light in the world, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
bless us now and forever. **Amen.**

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!