

MAUNDY THURSDAY - NOTES AND RESOURCES

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The service on Maundy Thursday is the first part of the Three Days to Easter (*Triduum*) celebration.

Although communion services in the evening are now commonplace, for many hundreds of years this service was the only time in the church year when the eucharist was celebrated after noon. The timing in the early evening was intended to draw worshippers' attention to the fact that this night is 'the night on which he was betrayed'.

LITURGY

SENTENCE

Jesus said: 'A new commandment I give to you:
Love one another, as I have loved you.' (*John 13:34*)

OR

Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body,
for we all partake of the one bread. (*1 Cor 10:17 NRSV*)

SERMON

Instead of a sermon at its usual place, the service may begin with a brief sermon. If so, the sermon not only expounds the message of Maundy Thursday, but also takes the opportunity to explain to worshippers what will happen in this service and over the next three days.

Alternatively, the sermon may be given directly after the gospel or, after the creed.

CONFESSION OF SINS AND ABSOLUTION

In ancient times, penitents were absolved and received back into the church on Maundy Thursday, in order that they might receive communion on Easter Sunday. The emphasis on absolution following the penitential period of Lent is preserved in the rite for Maundy Thursday. A responsive reading of some verses from Psalm 51 may begin the confession and absolution.

GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST

There is long tradition (mainly medieval) which says that this hymn of adoration should be used at the celebration of the Lord's supper on this day, although modern liturgical scholars do not agree. It leaves the decision up to you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY (COLLECT)

Traditional

O Lord Jesus Christ,
since you have left us a memorial
of your suffering and death
in the mystery of your holy sacrament:
Grant that we may so receive your body and blood
that the fruits of your redemption
may continually be revealed in us;
for you live and reign
with the Father and the Holy Spirit,

MAUNDY THURSDAY - NOTES AND RESOURCES

one God, now and forever.

Amen.

OR, modernised traditional

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have left us a memorial
of your suffering and death
in your holy sacrament.
Nourish us with your body and blood,
so that our lives may show the fruits
of your redemption.
For you live and reign
with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.

Amen.

OR, alternative

(Let us pray to receive life through the body and blood of Christ. *[silence]*)

Heavenly Father,
your Son instituted his holy supper
as our passover feast,
and gave his life for us.
Unite us all by faith in him,
so that we who eat his body and drink his blood
may pass with him from death to life,
and serve one another.
We ask this through your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.

Amen.

OR, new

(Let us pray for strengthening through Christ's body and blood. *[silence]*)

Jesus Christ our Saviour,
thank you for giving your followers your holy supper
to commemorate your suffering and death.
Through your body and blood,
revive our faith in you
and increase our love to others.
For you live and reign
with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.

Amen.

FIRST READING

Exodus 12:1-4(5-10)11-14 The institution of the Passover

PSALM

Psalm 116:1,2,12-19

Antiphon:

www.churchnewsireland.org

MAUNDY THURSDAY - NOTES AND RESOURCES

I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.

(Ps 116:13 NRSV)

OR

Our blessing cup is a communion in the blood of the Lord.

(based on 1 Cor 10:16)

SECOND READING

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 The institution of the Lord's supper

VERSE

A verse may be said or sung before the gospel.

As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup,
you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. *(1 Cor 11:26)*

GOSPEL

John 13:1-17,31b-35 Jesus washes his disciples' feet

PRAYER AFTER THE GOSPEL

This is the gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ (, Lamb of God).

Lord Jesus, thank you for loving us

and giving your life in service for us.

Help us to love and serve one another.

Amen.

SERMON SOURCES

There are three sermons in an accompanying posting on CNI

FOOT-WASHING

If the foot-washing ceremony is enacted, the way it is done will affect the message it conveys. There are two historical traditions to this ceremony. The first arose in the monasteries, where on Maundy Thursday the abbot would wash the feet of *all* the members of the community. The second comes from the cathedral worship, where the bishop would wash the feet of twelve beggars (representative of the disciples), and give them charitable donations.

It is important to consider therefore whether the feet of the whole congregation will be washed - which is the most inclusive way of conducting the ceremony, but may be impractical in a large congregation - or just twelve people (or a smaller representative group).

- * If everyone is invited to have their feet washed, then they will need to have been warned beforehand that they will be invited to participate, so that they are able to wear shoes that are easily removed. Women in particular will find it hard to have their feet washed if they are wearing stockings. There must be no pressure on anyone to participate if they do not wish to do so. Seating will have to be specially arranged to enable the minister to come to everyone in their seats.
- * If only the feet of twelve persons are washed, consider well the choice of the group. The group may either be representative of the whole congregation, or perhaps the newest members of the congregation, but there should be a clear reason why the

MAUNDY THURSDAY - NOTES AND RESOURCES

group has been selected, which does not cause jealousy or misunderstanding among the worshippers. Seats will need to be arranged near the front of the church.

Before the service, prepare a bowl, a towel, and a jug of warm water. After the sermon or the creed (whichever comes last), the minister takes off his (chasuble and) stole, representing the way in which Jesus took off his outer garment, and washes and dries the feet of the people in turn. He may also put on an plain apron, but avoid using fancy or patterned aprons; a sturdy butcher's apron gives the right idea. Only the called pastor or pastors of the congregation should do the actual foot-washing, although assistants may help to carry the jug and bowl, as the action is supposed to convey the servant nature of the pastoral ministry.

It will be necessary for the celebrant to wash his hands before handling the bread and wine of communion. This is best not done immediately after the footwashing itself (it gives the impression that the washing of the feet has been a distasteful job), but immediately before the preface at the time when the bread and wine for the sacrament are brought forward. This is, in fact, the traditional time for the presiding minister to wash his hands. It should be done publically so that all can see that the minister's hands are clean before handling the food for communion.

In America, there have been attempts to modify this rite and make it into a hand-washing, but this tends to convey unfortunate images of Pontius Pilate's abdication of responsibility.

During the foot-washing, it may be appropriate for the congregation to sing one or more hymns.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

The prayer of the church is optional because the services of all Three Days are regarded as one service, and the Good Friday service has extensive intercessions in the bidding prayer. However, if a prayer of intercession is desired, the following may be used.

Call to prayer

Here at the table of the Lord, let us pray for all who hunger and thirst for righteousness, and for the body of Christ throughout the world.

The regular response, OR:

Lord, not our will,
but yours be done.

Suggested intercessions

- * for all clergy and bishops, that they may live and serve according to their ordination vows
- * for the whole body of Christ, the church, broken and divided, that the unity which God gives may become visible
- * for all Christians, that they may not betray Christ by word or deed
- * for those who do not join us at the Lord's table: those who have excluded themselves from our fellowship; those whose hearts are hardened and unrepentant; those who are separated from us by reason of doctrine or practice
- * for leaders of the church throughout the world
- * for leaders of this country, especially our prime minister and government
- * for the poor and those who cannot afford to buy enough food for themselves and their families

MAUNDY THURSDAY - NOTES AND RESOURCES

- * for refugees fleeing from their homeland
- * for those divided by feelings of hatred
- * for the housebound who cannot come to celebrations this week.

Concluding prayer

Forgive the sins of all who call upon you, Lord. And as we gather to celebrate your supper, may the bread we break and the cup we drink free us to live lives of love and obedience to the gospel of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

OFFERING AND OFFERTORY

The normal offering for the congregation is not taken, but a special offering may, in keeping with ancient custom as indicated by the name of the day, be received for the poor. Perhaps this special offering may be for Bishops' Appeal, Christian Aid or a final collection for the local Lenten appeal.

The offertory 'What can I offer to the Lord' from Psalm 116 is most appropriate for this service, since it comes from the psalm for the day.

**What shall I offer to the Lord
for all his goodness shown to me?
I will lift up salvation's cup,
and call upon the name of the Lord.
I'll keep my promises to him
among his people gathered here.**

OFFERING PRAYER

The following prayer may be used at the presentation of the offering.

Loving heavenly Father,
lead us to follow the example of humble service
given by your Son.
Strengthen us through his body and blood
to give ourselves to you
and to those in need.
Amen.

SEASONAL PREFACE

It is indeed right and good,
Lord God, holy Father,
that we should at all times and in all places
give thanks to you,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
On the tree of the cross he gave salvation to all,
so that, where death began,
there life might be restored,
and that the enemy,
who by a tree once overcame,
might by a tree be overcome.
And so, with angels and archangels,

MAUNDY THURSDAY - NOTES AND RESOURCES

and with all the company of heaven,
we adore and praise your glorious name:

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We give you thanks, almighty God,
that you have refreshed us
through this healing gift;
and we pray that through it
you would graciously strengthen us
in faith toward you
and in love toward one another.
We ask this through your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.
Amen.

OR

Lord our God,
pour out your rich blessing on us
as we remember
the suffering and death of your Son.
Grant us pardon and comfort,
so that we may be assured
of our eternal salvation.
We ask this through your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

BLESSING

This service is not concluded with a blessing, because strictly speaking the service does not end here. It continues with the celebration of the second day of the Three Days to Easter celebration tomorrow (Good Friday). Instead of the blessing, the service moves to the stripping of the altar immediately after the prayer after communion has been said.

STRIPPING OF THE ALTAR

The ceremony of stripping of the altar involves the progressive removal of the appointments and cloths covering the altar. This is done either during silence or during the reading of Psalm 88 or Psalm 22:1-11 or Psalm 22:1-21.

Originally the stripping was done on Maundy Thursday in order that the cloths and the altar might receive their once-a-year wash in preparation for Easter, but these days symbolism, rather than pragmatism, calls for the ceremony to be observed. The stripping of the altar table is seen as a symbol of the way in which Christ was stripped of his clothing and his dignity before his crucifixion. The rite points ahead to the second day of the Three Days to Easter celebration, Good Friday.

MAUNDY THURSDAY - NOTES AND RESOURCES

The sequence of removal of objects and cloths should be carefully planned beforehand. The assistants will need to be selected and trained, and, unless the cloths and objects are taken out of the church immediately, a small table must be prepared on which they may be placed once they have been removed. It perhaps works best if the celebrant and one other assistant do the task of actually removing the cloths and other objects, and they then hand them to other assistants standing at the altar rail, who then put them away in the place prepared.

While the altar is stripped, the psalm may be sung or read. This is best done by a solo cantor or reader. An antiphon, Psalm 22:18, may be read at the beginning and the end of Psalm 88. The 'Glory to the Father . . .' is not used at the end of this psalm, nor with any psalms of the Three Days to Easter celebration.

If the lights are to be progressively dimmed, that should be well regulated, since a sudden darkness will take worshippers by surprise. A small light or candle needs to be provided for the person reading the psalm.

The rite suggests that the congregation may kneel and 'remain for a time of silent meditation'. In fact, worshippers are often reluctant to do so since they feel uncomfortable in this 'nothing'. One thing that may encourage worshippers to avail themselves of this opportunity for meditation is to use this time for a Taize-style meditation (see '[Taize songs suitable for Maundy Thursday](#)'), but the use of silence should still be encouraged.

The service ends with the celebrant(s) and congregation leaving in silence.

CHILDREN

Worshiping with Children, Holy or Maundy Thursday, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown
<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2014/02/year-holy-or-maundy-thursday-april-17.html>

Celebrating Holy Week with Kids, Christine Sine, Godspace
<http://godspace-msa.com/2015/03/25/celebrating-holy-week-with-kids-resources-for-2015/>

Childrens Sermon, Maundy Thursday, Faith Formation Journeys
<http://faithformationjourneys.blogspot.co.uk/2012/03/childrens-sermon-maundy-thursday-year-b.html>