

Home Worship for the Three Days



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April 1-3, 2021

Dear people of God,

What follows here are resources for you to use for praying together with others 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 the way we are used to. 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. You are encouraged to use them to pray together with others in your household and/or those with whom you are connected on social media. If you are on your own, consider this as an intimate time for you to connect with God through Jesus Christ. Either way, as a sign of 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 be invited to set out one or more physical symbols: for Maundy Thursday, a bowl of water and a clean towel, followed by a meal or snack (preferably including bread of some kind and something to drink); For Good Friday, a cross; and for Holy Saturday, a bowl of water and a candle. You will also want to have a Bible handy for each service.

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!

All Saints Lutheran Church
Phoenix, Arizona

**You can also find an introductory video for Maundy Thursday, a service including the Passion Reading for Good Friday, and an Easter Sunday worship service online at www.allsaintsphoenix.org and [Facebook.com/ASLCPHXAZ](https://www.facebook.com/ASLCPHXAZ).*

Maundy Thursday

April 1, 2021

Set out a bowl of water and a clean towel near the area where you will be eating. 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.

Pray aloud the following prayer or another with similar words:

Gracious God, you have gathered me and all your people this night to experience your love through the Holy Scriptures. May the stories come alive through sight, sound, touch, and taste. Grant that I may find myself caught up in your word of hope and grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Read aloud from the gospel:

John 13:1-17, 31b-35.

Word of God. Word of Life. Thanks be to God!

Prepare the bowl of water and towel, if not already prepared. Read the following words:

On this night, I have heard our Lord's commandment to love one another as he has loved us. All who receive God's love in Jesus Christ are called to love one another, to be servants to each other as Jesus became our servant. Our commitment to this loving service is signified in the washing of feet, following the example our Lord gave us on the night before his death.

Begin the footwashing ritual by washing your feet or hands and drying them with a towel. If you are gathered with others, consider taking turns washing one another's feet. Conclude the footwashing with this prayer or similar words:

I give you thanks, O Christ, for the gift of your presence in this place and in every home this night. In you we are loved, and through you we love one another. I ask that

you bless all your people with the gifts of humility and compassion, now and always. In your name I pray. Amen.

Set the table for the meal. Light a candle if you wish. Consider singing a table grace:

Be present at our table Lord. Be here and everywhere adored. These mercies bless and grant that we may strengthened for thy service be.

Bless the meal with these or similar words:

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King 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 forever. Amen

During the meal, share with others or reflect upon how you have seen God at work in this season, and over the past year. As the meal is concluding, read these words from Scripture:

I Corinthians 11:23-26

Save something to drink for the end of the meal. Bless it with these or similar words:

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe. You create the fruit of the vine; we thank you, O our Father, for the holy vine of David which you have made known to us through your Son Jesus. Glory to you for ever and ever. Amen.

Spend some time in prayer for the church, the world, and all those in need. Conclude with these words:

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.

Extinguish the candle. Clear all items from the table in silence. If you have a cross, place it on the table after all items have been removed.



Good Friday

April 2, 2021

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:

Isaiah 52:13—53:12

Psalm 22

John 18:1—19:42

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.

We pray for the church throughout the world . . .

we pray for our synod, our pastors, 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, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. 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 3, 2021

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.” (If you are using this resource for Easter morning worship, simply substitute “day” for “night.”)

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.**

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 Old Testament readings or read all three:

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.

After the Old Testament readings, read the Gospel:

John 20:1–18

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

About this Gospel: Mary weeps; so do we. But the Risen Christ calls each of us by name. And remember the other readings: he is for us 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.

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. Personal prayers may be added.* 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.

Finally, we pray: **Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. 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!**