

Family Maundy Thursday Feast

1) Decide What You Want to Eat for Dinner

- a. The point is not to re-enact a Seder meal or the last supper, but to have a meal, together. Eat what you'd like.
- b. Consider making bread as a family project as a remembrance of communion

2) Set the Table

- a. If you have access to candles or tablecloths or other special table decorations, add them to your table.

3) Gather Around the Table

- a. Set the mood by having everyone take a few deep breaths
- b. Light some candles to use as a centerpiece for the table if you have them. If using candles is unwise, or aren't available, just take some time to be quiet in God's presence.

4) Talk Together

- a. After a while, invite everyone to share their favorite memory that involves a meal. It could be a favorite dish from childhood, a special event that they attended, or even a perennial meal they enjoy. What do they enjoy about it? Why?

5) Pray Together

- a. Invite someone to offer a prayer with these, or similar words.
 - i. Note: The prayer should both give thanks for the gift of shared meals and food and acknowledge that we too often ignore the hungry around us
- b. Prayer:
 - i. "Gracious God, you give us good things to eat and invite us to share with one another. Thank you for the many ways you feed our minds, feed our hearts, and the very real ways you feed our bellies each day. We also know that we do not share our food, our minds, and our hearts in the ways that you would have us. For the ways we don't give of ourselves and our resources, we ask you forgiveness. And for the many ways you sustain us, we give you thanks. On this holy night when Jesus shared his last meal with his friends, we remember the great gift it is to eat and spend time with one another. Thank you for this meal, for this holy night, and for all your gifts. Amen."

6) Wash Each Other's Feet or Hands

- a. Invite everyone to be seated with their chairs facing outward, away from the table.
- b. Have a bowl of substantial size nearby, like a mixing bowl, a pitcher or larger cup of warm water, and a towel for drying.
- c. Invite someone to read John 13:1-17, the story of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples.
- d. After you've read the story, say the following (or something like it):
 - i. "On this night we have heard our Lord's commandment to love one another as he has loved us. We 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 this night."
- e. Then invite each family member, in turn, to wash one foot of another member of the family, carefully drying it.
 - i. Notes:

1. Only one foot is necessary
 2. If foot washing is not preferable, you can do hand washing instead
 3. If you're performing this ritual with children, it's natural for them to laugh and giggle during this. This is OK! This night should be about enjoyment as much as it is about sacred acts.
- f. After foot washing, you can invite people to wash their hands if they'd like and turn their chairs to face back toward the table for the meal.

7) Eat Together

- a. After everyone is seated and ready, enjoy the meal!
- b. Invite people to share reflections about their day, or perhaps ask them what they liked or didn't like about the foot washing.
- c. You can ask those gathered what love means, how they like to best express love, and what the most beautiful act of love they've ever seen was.

8) Tell the Story Together

- a. Toward the end of the meal, but before you're completely done, invite everyone to quiet back down as you tell the story of the meal portion of the last supper.
- b. During this part, I encourage you not to lift up any bread or wine, but if there is bread on the table, or a drink, you can reference it as a reminder of the meal.
- c. Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, recalling Jesus' last supper.
- d. Then say these words, or something similar:
 - i. "Tonight we have participated in a supper like Jesus' last as his disciples gathered together around him. The Gospels tell us that after supper Jesus and his disciples sang a hymn together and went out to the Mount of Olives. You'll be given a few minutes to eat just a bit more and have another few sips, and then we'll begin cleaning up quietly, without any loud talking, taking any dishes to the kitchen sink, wiping down tables, and sweeping up. Everyone gets to help. After we clean up, we're going to stay pretty quiet the rest of the night to honor this holy night."

9) Clean Up

- a. Invite everyone to clean up quietly.
- b. If you lit candles or set a beautiful table now is the time to put all of that away
 - i. Note: On this night where it's tradition to strip the altar and take everything out of the sanctuary, you may want to take your clean up a little farther by sweeping the whole room, washing down the tables and chairs and counter tops, and even keeping the table free from adornment like table cloths or candles. Make everything bare.
- c. After the clean-up is done, invite everyone back around the table for a final prayer saying these words, or something similar:
 - i. "I'm glad we got to share this time together tonight! As we remember Jesus' last meal, let's keep honoring it by spending some time together. But before we do that, let's pray, 'Thank you, God, for this most holy night, and for Jesus' example of love. Help us to love each other, and ourselves, as you love us, and may we always remember the deep love shown through Jesus, a love that will do anything for us. Give us a holy rest tonight, a sweet sleep, so that we may rise to praise you in the morning. Amen.'"

10) Enjoy a Quite Night Together

- a. Then decide on a family how you will spend the rest of the night! You can read quietly together, or maybe read aloud all from one book. You can play a family game together, listen to music, or if it's getting late for young children, a bath and story-time is very appropriate.
- b. In these days of shelter-in-place when screen-time has probably been at a premium, this is a perfect night to keep all screens off and keep visual distractions to a minimum, including phone distractions.