

### INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The service on Maundy Thursday is the first part of the Three Days to Easter (*Triduum*) celebration. The notes here relate to the service as given in *Church Rites* on page 270; the parts of the service are numbered accordingly. Further commentary and notes on this service are given in *Church Rites* on page 354. This material is supplementary to what is contained in *Church Rites*. Note that this order of service is also included on the disk and print-out of the *Approved Worship Services*.

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'.

*Note - numbers are included to enable decision-making in a team planning situation.*

### 1. SETTING OF THE SERVICE

Note that the service as it is given in *Church Rites* is a modification of the Service with Communion on page 6 of the *Supplement to the Lutheran Hymnal*. The wording of the liturgy (eg the 'Glory to God in the highest' and the 'Holy, holy, holy') is therefore the traditional LCA wording which may be sung to the setting on page 6 of the *Supplement*. If another setting is used, for instance, the Service - Alternative Form or one from *Sing the Feast*, the wording (and in some cases, the structure) will need to be altered accordingly.

## LITURGY

### 2. SENTENCE

See the document 'General notes and resources', under 'Sentence', in the 'General and seasonal' folder for suggestions on using a 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*)

### 3. SERMON

The notes in *Church Rites* suggest that, 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, as it is in *Church Rites*, after the creed.

### 4. CONFESSION OF SINS AND 5 (INDIVIDUAL) 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 given in *Church Rites*.

*Church Rites* suggests that a responsive reading of some verses from Psalm 51 may begin the confession and absolution. This follows the pattern in the Order for Confession and Absolution on page 32 of the *Lutheran Hymnal with Supplement*.

Following the general absolution, the rite gives the option for an individual absolution. When worshippers are invited to come forward to the altar, most will find it less confusing if they are simply asked to come forward as if for holy communion. Whether the people kneel or not, the pastor places both hand on each person's head, saying to each person individually words along the lines of one of the following.

- \* (N,) I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- \* (N,) I forgive you all your sins in the name of Jesus.
- \* (N,) in Jesus' name, your sins are forgiven.

Whether the shorter or longer forms are used may depend on the size of the congregation and on time considerations. If there are other ordained ministers assisting in the service, they may assist with the individual absolution.

The tone of the note on page 355 in *Church Rites* suggests that people may be reluctant to come forward for an individual absolution. This is, in fact, the only reason why the rite directs a general absolution to be given before the worshippers are invited to come forward for the individual absolution. Once this practice has found acceptance in a congregation, however, it would be clearly redundant to give a general absolution if the whole congregation is

## MAUNDY THURSDAY LITURGY

once again going to come forward for the individual absolution. Pastoral discretion may therefore lead to the general absolution being omitted in favour of individual absolution for all worshippers.

### 6. PEACE

The 'Peace' at this point belongs to the end of the absolution formula, as in the usual absolution. It should therefore be used as a dismissal of those who have come forward for the individual absolution, rather than the beginning of an exchange of the peace between congregation members, which is probably more fitting after the 'Peace' at rubric (25), before communion. In any case, the observation of the exchange of the peace at this point might conflict a little if the following optional sections are omitted and the service continues immediately with the greeting at (10).

### 7. HYMN

Note the suggestion at this point that the communion vessels and elements be brought forward in procession during the singing of the hymn or the 'Glory to God in the highest'. Doing this at this point, rather than at the usual point during the offering or the hymn before the preface, would emphasise the nature of the entire service this night as a celebration of Christ's institution of the sacrament.

### 8. LORD, HAVE MERCY

The 'Lord, have mercy', as well as the hymn (7) before and 'Glory to God in the highest' (9) after, is optional. Note that this means that if all of these are omitted, the service could move directly from 'The peace of the Lord be with you. **Amen.**' to 'The Lord be with you' before the collect, which would sound strange. To avoid this, use at least one of the optional parts in between.

### 9. 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. The service order in *Church Rites* leaves the decision up to you.

### 10 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,  
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

## MAUNDY THURSDAY LITURGY

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.**

### 11. FIRST READING

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

### 12. PSALM

Unfortunately the service in *Church Rites* omits a psalm between the first and second readings - and indeed at any point in the 'Liturgy of the word'! The following psalm is the one given in the Revised Common Lectionary.

#### **Psalm 116:1,2,12-19**

*Antiphon:*

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*)

### 13. SECOND READING

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

### 14. 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*)

### 15. GOSPEL

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

### 16. 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.**

### 17. SERMON

The sermon may, of course, be preached before the Nicene Creed (15), especially if the Service - Alternative Form or *Sing the Feast* settings are being used.

### 18 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 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

## MAUNDY THURSDAY LITURGY

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 pastor 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 of the following songs.

### 19 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 pastors of the LCA, and for the national and District presidents, 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

## MAUNDY THURSDAY LITURGY

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
- \* 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.**

## 20. OFFERING AND OFFERTORY

*Church Rites* (page 355) notes that 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 the Bishops' Appeal or a final collection for another Lenten appeal.

The offering may be collected during the hymn before the preface (20). Rather than having the communion elements on the altar table from the very beginning of the service, the bread and wine may be brought forward during the singing of an offertory, or during the offering hymn. Until this point, the elements (and vessels) for communion may be placed on a small credence table at the entrance of the church or sanctuary, covered, as usual, with a white cloth. Children from the congregation may be asked to bring these elements and vessels forward at the appointed time. They hand them to the presiding minister, who places them on the altar table, uncovered, ready for use.

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.



## MAUNDY THURSDAY LITURGY

Note: If using the *Worship Today* setting for holy communion, the following verse (paraphrase by David Schütz) may be sung to the tune given in the *Worship Today* order Modern Vespers for the Song of Mary (pages 36, 37).

**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.**

See 'Offertory' below (under 'Hymns and songs') for other suggestions for the offertory.

### 21. 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.**

### 22. SEASONAL PREFACE

The preface given in the order of service is the preface for Lent as it appears in the *Service with Communion* in the *Supplement to the Lutheran Hymnal*. The seasonal preface below is a modernised text for Holy Week recommended for use by the Department of Liturgics with all forms of the liturgy.

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

### 23. 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.**

### 24 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. However, for circumstances that require it, a brief optional blessing is provided in the service.

### 25. STRIPPING OF THE ALTAR

As the notes to the rite suggest, 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.

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 pastor 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.