

AN AGAPÉ MEAL:  
Liturgy for the Maundy Thursday



St. Paul's Episcopal Church  
March 28, 2024, 6 pm

The word *agapé* is the Greek word used in the New Testament for the highest and broadest kind of self-giving Love, the kind of Love that is our source, our true life in this life and our eternal reality. We have no word capable of describing the God who is Love in any language, but agape seems to come the closest to approximating the limitless and overflowing fullness of Divine Love.

An Agapé Meal, or “Love Feast” as it is also called, is an ancient tradition of table fellowship. The practice of holy hospitality precedes the Church, going back to the hospitality Abraham showed to his three unknown visitors (Genesis 18). In the early Church, agape meals were a time of fellowship for “People of the Way” as the earliest Christians were called. The Eucharist, our Christian sacramental celebration instituted by Jesus at the Last Supper, was often a part of these meals, but they are not same thing. Probably between the late 1st century and the mid-3rd century AD, the two feasts became separate. Its use has waxed and waned over the centuries, but “Love Feasts” enjoyed a revival in the 18th century in the Methodist Church with the Wesley brothers, particularly in America and partly because of a lack of ordained ministers to celebrate Holy Communion in the New World.

An Agapé Meal is a ritual meal that does not require an ordained person and yet acknowledges our “koinonia,” which in Greek means community and sharing. Such meals seek to strengthen communal bonds and foster a spirit of harmony, goodwill and congeniality. They usually include an opportunity to acknowledge our need for forgiveness, especially if some sort of reconciliation among members of the community is warranted. The meal is another way of living out Jesus’ *mandatum novum* or new commandment that we love one another with the same self-emptying love, mercy and forgiveness with which he has loved and still loves us. (We get the term “Maundy Thursday” from the Latin *mandatum*, which comes from the Gospel reading for that service.)

“Agape Meal for Maundy Thursday” is adapted by St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Woodbury, from *An Iona Prayer Book, A Prayer Book for Australia*, published by the Anglican Diocese of Perth, and from the *Book of Occasional Services*, Church Publishing, Inc.

*Cover art by Brother Martin Erspamer, O.S.B. Brother Martin Erspamer, O.S.B., is a monk of St. Meinrad Archabbey in southern Indiana. He is a well-known liturgical artist and liturgical consultant. Erspamer works in a wide range of media, including pottery, stained glass and wood, and is nationally known for his illustration of sacred themes. His many commissions include the Liturgical Press edition of The Roman Missal. Br. Erspamer is identified with several styles, and it was his work in Contemporary Romanesque mode that made him a natural choice to illustrate the life of this ascetic saint of the Middle Ages.*

## WELCOME & GATHERING

*Please find a place at the table, and join in the singing before the meal begins. Some of the music for this service is found pages 10-11, at the end of this leaflet.*

*All are invited to stand (in body or in spirit) behind their seats at the tables.*

Leader We come as different people to serve the One God, who calls us to unity as the family of God. Welcome to this meal, in the name of Christ. We come to share in God's love and give God thanks and praise for the abundance we are given through God's Spirit.

All **Holy God, we thank you for this home, remembering those who are homeless. We thank you for our health, remembering those who are ill. We thank you for our friends, remembering those who are lonely or friendless. We thank you for all these gifts and ask you to bless those who do not have them. Amen.**

### Call to the Feast

Leader Out of darkness came light;  
All **And the power of God was revealed in the running wave and the flowing air, in the quiet earth and the shining stars.**

Leader Out of the dust came life;  
All **And the image of God was revealed in the human face and the gentle heart, in the warmth of flesh and the depth of soul.**

Leader Out of justice came freedom;  
All **And the wisdom of God was revealed in the need to grow and the will to love, in the chance to know and the power to choose.**

Leader And God looked at the creation,  
All **And Behold, it was very good.**

### CONFESSION

Leader Giving God, you blessed us with saltiness,  
All **But we became bland.**

Leader You trusted us with your Word,  
All **but we did not keep it.**

Leader You lit a flame in our midst,  
All **but we smothered it with our fears.**

Leader God, in your mercy:  
All **Forgive us.**

*Silence*

Leader Forgiven God, we believe that you have called us  
All to be salt and light;

Leader and that you offer us time and space and strength  
All to begin again.

*Silence*

Leader Giving and forgiving God,  
All We thank you.

### **BLESSING OVER THE MEAL**

Leader How very good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in harmony!  
We are all invited to the common table to share in an Agape Feast. We come as siblings in the Holy Family of God.  
Together let us pray:

**As we share this bread,  
as we pour out this water,  
we thank you, God,  
for our daily bread  
for the food which delights and nourishes us  
and for the companionship that sustains us.**

**We thank you, too, for the water to quench our thirst,  
and above all, for the Living Water  
with which you enrich and transform our lives. Amen.**

### **MEAL - THE FIRST COURSE**

*Soup and bread are served.*

*When all are served, the meal begins in quiet.*

### **Scripture: John 13:1-17**

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"

Jesus said to him, “One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you.” For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, “Not all of you are clean.”

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord--and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”

*Quiet*

**Reflection:** “The Holy Thursday Revolution” by Diana Butler Bass

*Quiet*

#### **MEAL – THE SECOND COURSE**

*Plates of fruit and cheese are passed around the tables.*

#### **Reading: John 13:31-35**

When Judas had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

*Quiet*

**Reading:** “Perhaps the World Ends Here” by Joy Harjo

#### **INTERCESSIONS**

**Presider** Let us pray for the whole state of Christ’s Church and for all people according to their need.

**Intercessor** Father, on this, the night he was betrayed, your Son Jesus Christ washed his disciples’ feet.

We commit ourselves to follow his example of love and service.

Lord, hear us.

**People** And humble us.

Intercessor On this night, he prayed for his disciples to be one.  
We pray for the unity of the church.  
Lord, hear us.

**People** And unite us.

Intercessor On this night, he prayed for those who were to believe through their message.  
We pray for the mission of your church.  
Lord, hear us.

**People** And renew our zeal.

Intercessor On this night he commanded them to love, but suffered rejection himself.  
We pray for the rejected and unloved.  
Lord, hear us.

**People** And fill us with your love.

Presider And now as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say:

**People** 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,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

## THE FOOTWASHING

Presider Fellow servants of our Lord Jesus Christ: On the night before his death, Jesus set an example for his disciples by washing their feet, an act of humble service. He taught that strength and growth in the life of the Kingdom of God come not by power, authority, or even miracle, but by such lowly service.

Therefore, I invite you who share in the royal priesthood of Christ to come forward, that we may recall whose servant we are by following the example of our Master. Come remembering his admonition that what will be done for us is also to be done by us to others, for “a servant is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.”

*Music during footwashing: see next page.*

## Ubi Caritas/Live in Charity

U - bi ca - ri - tas et a - - mor,  
Live in char - i - ty and stead - fast love,

u - bi ca - ri - tas De - us i <sup>3</sup> - bi est.  
live in char - i - ty; God will dwell with you.

The musical score is written for piano in 2/4 time, featuring two staves. The melody is in the right hand, and the accompaniment is in the left hand. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first system covers the first two lines of lyrics, and the second system covers the next two lines. There are some decorative markings like dashed lines and slurs in the original image.

Setting: Jacques Berthier, from *Songs and Prayers from Taizé* © 1991 GIA Publications, Inc.  
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## GREETING OF PEACE

**Presider** Christ is our peace. He has reconciled us to God in one body by the cross. We meet in his name and share his peace. The peace of the Lord be always with you.

**People** And also with you.

## The Eucharist

*Wine, juice, and bread are placed on the tables.  
Please remain seated during the Eucharistic prayer.*

**Presider** The Lord be with you.

**People** And also with you.

**Presider** Lift up your hearts.

**People** We lift them to the Lord

**Presider** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**People** It is right to give our thanks and praise.

**Presider** Loving God, we thank you for this world of wonder and delight. You have given it to us to care for, so that all your creatures may enjoy its bounty.

**People** Lord our God, we give you thanks and praise.

Presider We thank you that when we turned away from you, you sent Jesus to live and work as one of us, and bring us back to you. He showed us how to love you, and set us free to love and serve one another.

People **Lord our God, we give you thanks and praise.**

Presider We thank you that on the cross Jesus took away our sin, all that keeps us from each other and from you. He frees us from hate and fear, from all that destroys love and trust.

People **Lord our God, we give you thanks and praise.**

Presider And so with everyone who believes in you, with all the saints and angels, we rejoice and praise you, saying,

*All repeat sung lines after the cantor:*

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name, hosanna in the highest, in the name of the Lord.**

Presider And now we thank you for these gifts of bread and wine; may we who receive them, as Jesus said, share his body and blood.

On the night he was betrayed, *this very night*, he took bread and gave you thanks. He broke the bread and gave it to his friends, and said, "Take and eat. This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup and gave you thanks. He shared the cup with them and said, "This is my blood poured out so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in remembrance of me."

All **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

Presider You have gathered us together to feed on Christ and to remember all he has done for us. Fill us with your Spirit that we may follow Jesus in all we do and say, working for justice and bringing your peace to this world that you have made.

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Blessing and honor and glory and power are yours for ever and ever. Amen.**

*The pastor breaks the bread.*

Presider As this broken bread was once many grains, which have been gathered and made one bread, so may your Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.

The gifts of God for the people of God.

Holy things for Holy people.

*Those seated at each table communicate each other.*



## CLOSING PRAYER

*Leader* Let us pray.

Living God, our loving parent;  
you cherish your creation and we praise you.  
With earth, air, water, fire:  
in our element as your children, we praise you.  
With our lips, with our lives,  
in all our diversity, each one made in your image,  
We praise you.

Because, in Jesus, you came to share our human lives,  
our sorrow and joy, we praise you.  
Because your Spirit is at work today:  
encouraging, enabling, surprising us,  
We praise you.  
Source of life and love,  
you give us meaning and purpose and we praise you.  
Amen.

*Presider* Father of all, we give you thanks and praise that when we were still far off you met us in your Son and brought us home. Dying and living he declared your love, gave us grace and opened the gate of glory.

May we who share Christ's body live his risen life, we who drink his cup bring life to others, we, whom the Spirit lights, give light to the world.

*People* Keep us in this hope that we have grasped, so we and all your children shall be free, and the whole earth live to praise your name.

## Blessing

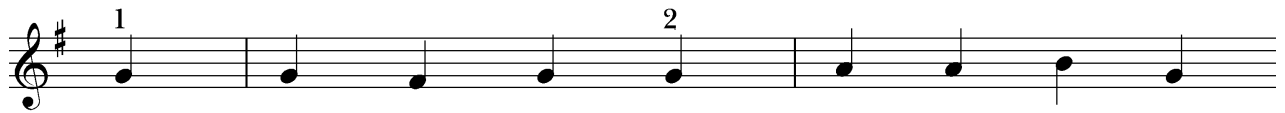
*Leader* Loving God,  
bless all who have gathered round this table.  
May we know the fullness of your presence at every meal  
and in all our sharing.

*Candles are extinguished.*

*All move into the sanctuary for the stripping of the altar.*

*As the ministers strip the altar, the people read Psalm 22 in unison, found on page 610 in the Book of Common Prayer.*

## O Gracious Light



1 O gra - cious Light, Lord Je - sus Christ, in  
 2 Now sun - set comes, but light shines forth, the  
 3 Wor - thy are you of end - less praise, O



you the Fa - ther's glo - ry shone. Im - mor - tal, ho - ly,  
 lamps are lit to pierce the night. Praise Fa - ther, Son, and  
 Son of God, Life - giv - ing Lord; where - fore you are through



blest is he, and blest are you, his ho - ly Son.  
 Spi - rit: God who dwells in the e - ter - nal light.  
 all the earth and in the high - est heaven a - dored.

*This hymn may be sung unaccompanied as a four-part canon at a distance of one measure.*

## Let the Broken Ones be Healed



Let the brok-en ones be healed. Let the lost be found and fed. Let the grace of God roll on. Let the



ri - ver rise and spread. Step in - to the stream with me. Let God's gra-cious pur-pose be!

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 Music: Sandra Gay, © 2006 by Sandra Gay, ASCAP. Used by permission.

## Come and fill

Con - fi - te - mi - ni Do - mi - no  
Come and fill our hearts with your peace.

quo - ni - am bo - nus. Con - fi - te - mi - ni  
You a - lone, O Lord, are ho - ly. Come and fill our hearts

Do - mi - no, Al - le - lu - ia!  
with your peace, Al - le - lu - ia!

Text: Psalm 137, *Give thanks to the Lord for he is good*; Taizé Community, 1982  
Tune: Jacques Berthier, 1923-1994  
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## Holy Week with St. Paul's

March 29	Good Friday	Good Friday Liturgy, <i>spoken</i>	8:00 am
		Ecumenical Good Friday Service	7:00 pm
March 30	Holy Saturday	Easter Vigil <i>with the Lighting of the New Fire</i>	7:00 pm
March 31	The Sunday of the Resurrection: Easter Sunday	Easter Day Holy Eucharist	10:00 am
		Easter Egg Hunt, Brunch & Celebration	11:00 am



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*Scan the QR code with your phone to  
add or update your contact information*



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