**Solidarity with Sisters’ Communal Prayer**

**Holy Thursday – April 6, 2023**

Jesus *loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end.* John 13:1

**HELLOs** and then **Betty mutes** everyone.

**WELCOME and SETTLING IN (Betty Thompson)**

* Welcome, Everyone!
* Introductions - people who haven’t been here before?
* **Reminder about cup and bread for our celebration.**
* Thanks to Ann Jelen and the Cavanaughs who prepared tonight’s communal prayer, building on the Holy Thursday prayer that was first prepared in 2020 by Suzie and Betty.
* Thanks to Reggie Ott and Linda Donaldson for leading our music.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer tonight: Maria Desjardins, Sister Jacqueline Quinn, Ann Jelen, Tim Brown, Kathleen Cross, Mia Brown, Judy Sholes, Mary Dolmage, Cecilia Estrada, Peg Duchesne, Maryann Dolan, and Sr. Marie McCarthy.

**( Betty Thompson )**

Holy Week began on Palm Sunday. Now we will walk with Jesus through Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. We will recall with solemn rituals the major events that precede Jesus’ Resurrection. Tonight we will join Jesus and his friends in their celebration of the Last Supper. Then we will journey with Jesus into the darkening night as he begins his suffering at Gethsemane.

Throughout this time of meditation and prayer, we will pause in sacred silence rather than posing our usual questions and group sharing. We will consider what the words mean to us **personally,** without our usual practice of sharing reflections. Our prayer time together will end in silence, with subdued singing, and finally we leave in darkness. We will end the gathering without conversation.

So let us begin our journey with Jesus by taking one collective breath together - in and out. Let your breath carry away tensions from your body and distractions from your mind. In and out. Now let’s take three breaths: one to be here …. one to be together …. and one to create space for Jesus to be with us tonight as he was in the upper room with his friends. Now Reggie Ott will lead our opening song.

**MUSIC ( Reggie Ott )**

*Let Us Be Bread*  by Thomas J. Porter

Refrain: Let us be bread, blessed by the Lord,

broken and shared, life for the world.

Let us be wine, love freely poured.

Let us be one in the Lord.

I am the bread of life, broken for all.

Eat now and hunger no more. [Refrain]

You are my friends if you keep my commands,

no longer servants but friends. [Refrain]

See how my people have nothing to eat.

Give them the bread that is you. [Refrain]

As God has loved me, so I have loved you.

Go and live on in my love. [Refrain]

**CALL TO WORSHIP ( Maria Desjardins)**

We come together tonight to celebrate that God embraces us as the body of Christ.

For the last two to three years, because of the pandemic, we couldn’t share a Eucharistic celebration of Holy Thursday in person. Tonight, **we choose** to share our faith in this holy time with this community because we want to be together.

We can break bread in the fullness of the tradition of Agape gatherings.

St. Francis of Assisi, who was not a priest,

used to bless and break bread, and share it with his brothers.

This practice is ancient, going back to the hospitality that

our ancestors Abraham and Sarah showed to visitors.

It’s not the full celebration of the Eucharist, but there is a relationship,

in much the same way that blessing with Holy Water is a reminder of our Baptism.

On Palm Sunday we entered Jerusalem with Jesus and began this journey. During this week we continue to accompany Jesus into his Passion and death – being with him in risk and in trust.

We remember that before tonight’s Passover meal, his disciple Judas went to the chief priests and accepted 30 pieces of silver for his betrayal.

Tonight we celebrate risk and trust again

In the aching, self-giving love of Jesus’ last Seder with his friends.

He foresaw his betrayal and death, and he offered his entire life

in communion with those who love him.

**GATHERING PRAYER ( Sr. Jacqueline Quinn)**

Jesus, we are with you and for you, as you are with us and for us.

Give us the courage to walk with you.

Help us to let go, and to let come.

Help us to look at everyone without exception

with loving eyes, as you do,

and, with courage, to walk forward into that love,

no matter what.

[Slight Pause, then:] Ann Jelen will introduce our three readings.

**READING I**

**INTRODUCTION ( Ann Jelen )**

Last night, the Jewish Passover began with a celebration of a Seder. Traditionally, the youngest child asks, “Why is this night different from all other nights?” In answer, Jewish families *remember* and retell the story of all God did to save the People of Israel from slavery in Egypt. We recognize our union with the Jewish people as we join Jesus and his disciples in what many believe was their final Seder together. Open your hearts forany words or phrases that have special meaning for you.

**Tim Brown** will read from the 12th chapter of Exodus.

**READING FROM EXODUS 12:1-8, 11-14 ( Tim Brown )**

Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, "Speak to the whole community of Israel and say, ‘On the tenth day of this month take an animal from the flock for each family: one animal for each household. If the household is too small for the animal, join with your neighbor, taking into account what portion each can eat. It must be an animal without blemish, a male one year old; you may choose it either from the sheep or from the goats.’"

"You must keep it until the fourteenth day of the month when the whole assembly of the community of Israel will slaughter it at twilight. Some of the blood must then be taken and put on both door-posts and the lintel of the houses where it is eaten. That night, the flesh must be eaten, roasted over the fire; it must be eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.”

“This is how you must eat it: with your loins girt, sandals on your feet and your staff in hand. You must eat it hurriedly like those who are in flight: it is a Passover of the Lord.”

“That night, I shall go through Egypt and strike down all the first-born in Egypt, human and beast alike, and shall execute justice on all the gods of Egypt, I, Yahweh! The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are. When I see the blood, I shall pass over you, and you will escape the destructive plague when I strike Egypt.”

“This day must be commemorated by you, and you must keep it as a feast in Yahweh's honor. You must keep it as a feast-day for all generations; this is a decree for all time.”

[Slight Pause]

**(Betty:** Share Slide 1**.)**

**ENTRY INTO SILENCE ( Kathleen Cross )**

In silence, let’s take a little time to reflect on this story. When we take the Passover as our model for Eucharist, we are challenged to *remember* and to be willing to proclaim our faith in public, to hold lightly to our comforts, and to be ready for the next step, “loins girt” – even though we don’t know what that step will be. How might you respond to the question “Why is this Holy Thursday night different for you?“

**COMMUNAL SILENCE** (**Betty**: Time 2:00. Sound chime. Stop slide.)

**READING 2**

**INTRODUCTION ( Ann Jelen )**

In our next reading, we also celebrate a night different from all others. With awe and gratitude, we *remember* the night that Jesus entered his passion. The night “he loved us to the end.” (John 13:1) Paul says in the first letter to the Corinthians that he received from Christ what he is *passing on* to them. From whom did you receive the story of the Eucharist? As **Mia Brown** reads from Paul, pay attention to what resonates for you tonight.

**READING FROM CORINTHIANS (1 Corinthians 11:23-26) ( Mia Brown)**

Brothers and sisters:  
What I have passed on to you. I received from Christ:

that our Savior Jesus, on the night he was handed over,  
took bread, gave thanks,  
broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you.  
Do this in remembrance of me.”

In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying,  
“This cup is the new covenant in my blood.  
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”  
For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup,  
you proclaim the death of Jesus until Christ comes.”

[Slight Pause]

**(Betty:** Share Slide 2**.)**

**ENTRY INTO SILENCE (Kathleen Cross)**

In silence, I invite you to take what resonated with you into yourself. Repeat it to yourself, allowing it to interact with your inner world much as the Eucharist nourishes our spiritual life. See what rises in you – a feeling... a word… a prayer….

To whom have you passed this story of the Eucharist ?

**COMMUNAL SILENCE** (**Betty**: Time 2:00. Sound chime. Stop slide.)

**READING 3**

**INTRODUCTION ( Ann Jelen)**

“As we grow as people, as a beloved community, as a church, we are continually called back to Holy Thursday. We are called back to Jesus’ decision to wash the disciples’ feet. And in that action we discover and re-discover again and again who Jesus calls us to be in our church and in our world. The call to be a beloved community, to be a people of mercy….is incredibly difficult because we live in a world of inequality. On this Holy Thursday, we celebrate and *remember* the day when Jesus showed us the beloved community in which we are all bound together by love and mercy.” Consider the movement of the story from the bewildering washing of the feet by Jesus to his final words “that as I have done for you, you should also do.”

[Pause.]

**Judy Sholes** will read from the Gospel of John, chapter 13.

**GOSPEL (FROM JOHN 13) (Judy Sholes)**

Before the feast of Passover,

Jesus rose from supper and took off his outer garments.  
He took a towel and tied it around his waist.  
Then he poured water into a basin  
and began to wash the disciples’ feet  
and dry them with the towel around his waist.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him,  
“Teacher, are you going to wash my feet?”  
Jesus answered and said to him,  
“What I am doing, you do not understand now,  
but you will understand later.”  
Peter said to him, “You will never wash my feet.”  
Jesus answered,  
“Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me.”  
Simon Peter said to him,  
“Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well.”

When he had washed their feet,Jesus said to them, “Do you realize what I have done for you?  
You call me ‘teacher’ and ‘master,’  and rightly so, for indeed I am.  
If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet,  
you ought to wash one another’s feet.  
I have given you a model to follow,  
so that as I have done for you, you should also do.”

[Slight pause]

**(Betty:** Share Slide 3**.)**

**ENTRY INTO SILENCE (Kathleen Cross)**

In silence, notice that when Jesus says “do this in memory of me,” he’s talking about washing each other’s feet. “If I have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. As I have done for you, you should also do.” Let’s take a little time to ask ourselves, What does this mean in my life?

**COMMUNAL SILENCE** (**Betty**: Time 2:00. Sound chime. Stop slide.)

(Brief pause)

Ann says: **Mary Dolmage**  will lead our Prayers of the Community.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY ( Mary Dolmage )**

We have just heard the story of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples and then sharing his body with them as bread and wine. He asks them to “do this in remembrance of me.”

We rejoice that Jesus offers himself as bread for the world,

and we know that he really means for us to follow him and do as he does.

He knows the gifts and challenges of human relationships,

the depths of human suffering.

And in this fractured world, on this night, we remember Jesus’ words:

“I have given you a model to follow

so that as I have done for you, you shall also do.”

Now let us pause in silence to see what prayer arises in us. [Pause]

Our response tonight will be: *We ask this in communion with Jesus.*

Great God, open wide our hearts and minds so that in the suffering world, we can take the risk of loving service as you did, for this we pray.

*We ask this in communion with Jesus.*

Great God, embolden us to dare to dream that we can build an inclusive beloved community as you demonstrated at the Last Supper, for this we pray.

*We ask this in communion with Jesus.*

Great God, help us to hear and respond to the cries of the poor, the refugees, the oppressed, the sick, and the lonely by washing their feet, holding their hands, sharing our bread, and welcoming them, for this we pray.

*We ask this in communion with Jesus.*

Great God, help us to be the blessed peacemakers in our world of armed conflicts between countries and between individuals, for this we pray.

*We ask this in communion with Jesus.*

Now for what else shall we pray. (Pause.)

Please unmute yourself as you speak. And mute yourself afterwords Please end your petition with “for this we pray.” We’ll respond with: “*We ask this in communion with Jesus.*”

(Shared Prayers) For each: “*We ask this in communion with Jesus*.”

Great God, you are hearing us better than we are speaking. We offer these prayers in all the Holy Names of God. Amen.

**OFFERTORY ( Cecilia Estrada)**

As Jesus washed his disciples’ feet, let us ask ourselves whose feet we commit to wash.  Whose feet need your touch?  Is it a loved one?  An enemy?  A refugee walking from Ukraine or Honduras?  A trafficking victim standing on a corner?  A soldier caught in danger?  A mother and child in a basement as bombs explode over head? A family in Sudan or India or Russia?  Imagine that person clearly. Silently,  name what you will offer to that person. And ask God’s blessing on them.  (Pause.)

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Peg Duchesne )**

O Great Love, we are humbled and emboldened to know that you trust us

to be your body in this world.

We are part of that body as we let go of all that separates us from you,

and as we embrace one another and your entire creation with merciful love.

We give you thanks for your presence in and among us. [Pause.]

We remember the night before Jesus died.

At dinner with friends, Jesus knew all that would soon be asked of them, and, loving them to the end, Jesus showed them how to care for each other as they went out into the world.

First Jesus washed their feet.

Then he looked at what was in front of them, the bread and the cup,

gifts of Earth and work of human hands, and blessed them.

Join me as we lift up our cup and bread*,* in communion with Jesus and each other. *(Each person lifts their bread and cup. Pause.)*

So let us, too, invite God right now into what is front and center in our lives knowing that God will indeed enter what we offer — and bless it.

Now let us share in our agape meal as we eat and drink what we have blessed.

*(Each person takes a bite of bread and sip of drink.)*

[Pause.]

Let us invite God into ourselves so that we become God’s living presence in our world. [Pause.]

Holy One, you transform us as you nourish us here.

May we nourish others with your presence.

Amen.

**PRAYER OF JESUS ( Maryann Dolan)**

Now let us join our hearts as if we could join hands to pray with Christians throughout the world in the words that Jesus gave us:

Our Father, our Mother who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our living bread

and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,

and do not let us fall into temptation, but deliver us from evil

for the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Sr. Marie McCarthy will read a Holy Thursday Blessing

**A HOLY THURSDAY BLESSING BY JAN RICHARDSON ( Sr. Marie McCarthy )**

As if you could  
stop this blessing  
from washing  
over you.

As if you could  
turn it back,  
could return it  
from your body  
to the bowl,  
from the bowl  
to the pitcher,  
from the pitcher  
to the hand  
that set this blessing  
on its way.

As if you could  
change the course  
by which this blessing  
flows.

As if you could  
control how it  
pours over you—  
unbidden,  
unsought,  
unasked,

yet startling  
in the way  
it matches the need  
you did not know  
you had.

As if you could  
become undrenched.

As if you could  
resist gathering it up  
in your two hands  
and letting your body  
follow the arc  
this blessing makes.

(Pause)

**CLOSING SONG:“ Stay with Me”**  (**Linda Donaldson** **with all, muted)**

(**Betty:** Share Slide 4.)

**“**Stay with me, remain here with me, watch and pray, watch and pray.”

Linda is going to sing the final song 4 times (while the image is up) and then hum it one final time getting quieter and quieter.   Leave the slide up for 10 seconds after the humming stops and then "End meeting."

**(UNSPOKEN)** **Let us continue our silence with no chat or conversation as we accompany the Lord into the darkness.**

**Sources**

Natalie Terry from *Catholic Women Preach.* April 13, 2017

*The Word Among Us.* Lent 2021*. “*Meditation for Holy Thursday,” April 1, page 65

“Stay with Me” by Jacques Berthier, from Taize Community Music