

Online Communion for Palm Sunday

April 5, 2020

By Maren C. Tirabassi

Please take and adapt to your various online formats.

This is a service for those who want to share Communion in an online community during a time of quarantine // lockdown // shelter in place. I am sure that a number of denominations are creating resources for this occasion and I would like to add to the choices. This liturgy includes the theological premise that lay sharing in the preparation and words of consecration over a table blesses the elements received fully and completely. In other words, there is no need for a clergy person to handle them. This may be uncomfortable for some.

This is a simple service which begins with an announcement on Sunday, March 29 (or during the week prior to April 5) and continues with words of liturgy, to which you can add language, music, gestures and practices. (For example, some churches pour the drink for the shared cup and some do not, some bring elements forward as part of an offertory and some do not, some include a confession and assurance of grace, musical responses or a hymn and others do not. Shape this to be familiar to the congregation but not an exact replica, which leads people to be more aware that they are missing the gathered community. Make it a celebration of the possibility of online connection, not an apology for something that is not-as-good as in-person worship.

Announcement ... “Save the Date” March 29 (or during the following week)

On Sunday, April 5, Palm (and, for some, Passion) Sunday we share together Holy Communion in our online interactive worship.

Before the time of the service you will want to prepare some bread, a slice or a small loaf of any kind of bread. In some parts of the world tortilla, rice cake, cassava are used as

this element which is defined not as a wheat product but as the most common food of the people. Let it be something you alone or you with others in your house may break and share. Prepare a cup or cups of juice -- perhaps grape or cranberry -- or wine, with or without alcohol.

Set these elements in the living room or kitchen where you experience worship electronically with our faith community. Perhaps you want to put them on a lovely cloth or fabric that reminds you of a special time or a person deeply connected with you in the communion of saints. Perhaps you will light a candle or place a flower or plant or the photograph of someone you wish to bring into the circle of faith beside the bread and the cup.

Thank you for your preparation.

Celebration of Holy Communion

(Pause to invite those who have not already prepared elements to do so. Assure them that even an English muffin can become a sacrament, even a cup of water or tea

become a remembrance of God's redeeming love)

Invitation

For Holy Communion this morning,
I invite you to lend Christ your table.

On the first day of Holy Week long ago,
people throughout Judea arrived
at the dusty gates of Jerusalem,
primed with "Hosanna" in their hearts
and Jesus asked to borrow a donkey.

On the Thursday that followed,
Jesus rented or was given
John Mark's mother's Upper Room
to celebrate the Passover with the disciples.

On the afternoon of the resurrection,
Jesus was invited into a house in Emmaus
and used the bread of that hospitality
to break and bless.

Lend Christ your table, your bread, your cup and your heart,
for, as the disciples told the person who loaned the donkey,
"The Lord has need of it."

Prayer of Consecration

Leader: We are one bread, one body, one cup of blessing.

Though we are many throughout the earth
and this church community is scattered,
we are one in Christ.

In your many kitchens, and living rooms,
rest your hands lightly upon these elements
which we set aside today to be a sacrament.

Let us ask God's blessing upon them.

Unison: Gentle Redeemer, there is no lockdown on your blessing

and no quarantine on grace.

Send your Spirit of life and love,

power and blessing

upon every table where your child shelters in place,

that this Bread may be broken and gathered in love

and this Cup poured out to give hope to all.

Risen Christ, live in us, that we may live in you.

Breathe in us, that we may breathe in you.

Words of Remembering

Leader: We remember that Paul the apostle

wrote letters to congregations throughout places

we now call Greece, Turkey and Macedonia,

and they were the first “remote” worship resources.

Our online service has a long heritage.

The Communion words sent to the church at Corinth were these:

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you,

that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed

took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks,

he broke it and said,

“This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

In the same way he took the cup also, 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 Lord's death until he comes.

Sharing of the Elements

Leader: Let us in our many places receive the gift of God, the Bread of Heaven.

Unison: We are one in Christ in the bread we share.

Leader: Let us in our many places receive the gift of God, the Cup of Blessing.

Unison: We are one in Christ in the cup we share.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: Let us pray in thanksgiving for this meal of grace,

rejoicing that, by the very method of our worship,

we have embodied the truth that Christ's love

is not limited by buildings made with human hands,

nor contained in human ceremonies,

but blows as free as the Spirit in all places.

Unison: Spirit of Christ, you have blessed our tables and our lives.

May the eating of this Bread give us courage to speak faith and act love,

not only in church sanctuaries, but in your precious world,

and may the drinking of this Cup renew our hope

even in the midst of pandemic.

Wrap your hopeful presence around all

whose bodies, spirits and hearts need healing,

and let us become your compassion and safe refuge. Amen

Online Communion for Palm Sunday was written by the Rev. Maren C. Tirabassi.

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