



Why this table liturgy for Easter Day?

These are extraordinary times. On Easter day we would normally gather together in large groups to celebrate and participate in the glorious news that the Divine's life is stronger than all our hate and death-dealing. We would sing and shake hands, pray and eat together, and share in the crucified and Risen One's feast. None of this is possible this year. This table liturgy seeks to honour this reality. It is not trying to be a 'fake' eucharist or 'Eucharist lite'. Instead, it is a liturgy grounded in John's Gospel.

In John, there is no account of the last supper with bread and wine. While the disciples gather with Jesus for a meal, Jesus does not take bread and wine and say 'this is my body or blood'. Instead, Jesus takes a towel, and washes the disciples feet, taking on the role of tender servant and revealing what Divine power really looks like (John 13.1ff).

The reasons why the author of John chooses not to include these words will likely be debated until kingdom comes. However, I think we get a clue a little earlier in the gospel. While there is no last supper liturgy in John's gospel, in this gospel, in the midst of Jesus' ministry, after feeding 1000s of people out of scraps, Jesus says these shocking words: 'I am bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty' John 6.35. Much later, Jesus also says: 'I am the vine, you are the branches, those who abide in me and I in them, bear much fruit' John 15.5.

I wonder if, perhaps, for this author a significant concern was to underscore that Jesus' shocking words about being the bread and vine were not limited to understandings of Eucharist services or even of the cross.

Instead, as reflected in John, Jesus is the bread of life and the true vine not just on the night Jesus is betrayed and not just in the cross. For the author of John, Jesus is the bread of life and the true vine in the incarnation; in the Divine Word becoming flesh; in Jesus' ministry and teaching; in Jesus' feeding and nourishing; in Jesus' healing and liberating, in Jesus' cross and resurrection and in Jesus' ongoing presence.

This liturgy is offered for Easter Day. While it has the options of bread and juice it is grounded in John's gospel, and does not offer a recount of the last supper. This is not a Eucharist liturgy. Instead this liturgy draws from John 21 in which the risen Jesus appears to the disciples on the beach at a fire with fish and invites them to come and have breakfast. It is designed to be used over a meal - possibly breakfast - on Easter Day as a form of worship and celebration- just as earliest Christians worshipped over meals.

If there are two or more people in your home, decide who will read the non-bold words (you could alternate). Everyone is invited to read words in bold. You will need a candle, bread/hot cross buns, fish (if this is a celebratory food for you), juice, small candles if you would like to light these in intercession, and you may like to choose 2 Easter songs.

Please use and share the liturgy as you would like to, acknowledging that I have written it. With every blessing in these strange times.

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A table liturgy for Easter Day Grounded in John's - Gospel April 2020

A Table Liturgy for Easter Day in Isolation

Christ is risen!
Christ is risen indeed!

This Easter Day we greet you Blessed God
Holy Mystery, Holy Word, Holy Flame

a candle is lit

**Your life is stronger than death
 Your love is stronger than hate
 Your peace is stronger than all our violence**

Source of all our endings and beginnings
We praise you

Jesus, our crucified and risen healer
We praise you

Spirit holy, our truth and our freedom
We praise you

a moment of stillness

While the disciples were still weighed down by fear and dismay, Jesus stood by a fire on the beach and called out to them:

'Come and have breakfast'
John 21.12

Our God meets us in our fear and our faith our doubt and our hope – so rest in Divine love:

a moment of stillness

Jesus says: 'I am the bread of life: whoever comes to me will never be hungry'. John 6.35

**Jesus, Bread of life,
 we praise you for your nourishment and healing**

bread or hot cross buns are shared

a song or hymn may be sung

We give thanks too, for the gift of food we will now share.

We pray that the day will soon dawn when all will live in justice and mercy so that there is enough food for everyone. Please strengthen us to work with you for this.

*Enjoying the feast together
 -you may wish to include fish in your feast*

You may like to read John 20.1-18 or John 21.1-14 and discuss your reactions, thoughts, questions and insights.

You may like to reflect on recent experiences of the presence of God in your life, or experiences of resurrection in your community.

Jesus says: 'I am the vine, you are the branches, those who abide in me and I in them, bear much fruit' John 15.5

**Jesus, the true vine,
 may your divine life cascade in ours,
 growing us up in love**

juice is shared





We pray for our world, naming those people and places that are aching for healing and hope.

prayers for the earth are shared

candles may be lit

Holy One – Sacred Three we praise you
for coming among us in Jesus
embodying your beauty, truth and grace
in healing, teaching and feasting,
in serving, dying and rising
and for your ongoing presence
with us this day
**we praise you with the communion
of saints**
we praise you with angels
we praise you with all things.

a moment of stillness

a song or hymn may be sung

As we leave this table,
we know that you go with us

And so we bless ourselves
and one another with your blessing:

May Blessed Trinity be with us all:
May the Source of all be upholding you
May radiant Christ be infusing you
May Spirit Holy be guiding you
Every step that you take
in this stormy world.
In the name of Christ. Amen

Written by Rev Dr Sally Douglas
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