

Holy Thursday Family Supper

These pages offer suggestions on how you can have a special family experience of the Last Supper. Choose from the various options based on what is the best fit for your family.

The Menu

You do not have to serve any particular menu, but if possible serve bread (as a full loaf, not sliced) and grape juice. If you do not bake bread yourself (see below), whole wheat pita bread would be a great option.

Baking Bread

Have your child or children help you make fresh bread. If this is something they have never done before, they will probably be very engaged and excited to do so.

If you do not want to deal with a full recipe from scratch, start with refrigerated pre-mixed dough that can be found in many grocery stores.

Setting

Indoor Picnic

Make this meal special by making this a picnic meal in your living room floor. Spread out a large blanket or quilt. As described below, this will make it more like the Last Supper, since people at Jesus' time did not sit in chairs to eat. Have children sit comfortably or lay on their sides, propped up by their elbows.

At Table

If you choose to eat at your normal table, have your children set the table in a way that will make this meal a special one, such as:

- Light some candles and/or lower the lights.
- Display some flowers.
- Use place mats or a table runner.

Before You Begin

- Turn off the television, the internet, and the phones during the meal.
- Play some quiet music in the background to facilitate a sense of celebration.

Meal Blessing

Choose someone to serve as the leader. You can take turns being leader.

Meal Blessing

Leader: Let's quiet ourselves now for prayer.
We begin:

**All: + In the name of the Father, and
of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

*Go around the table, taking turns praying the lines of
this prayer.*

Leader: God of Love, we pray that we may be
truly grateful for the many, many good
things that we enjoy here today.

Person 1: We are thankful for the air we breathe,
the fresh water we have to quench our
thirst, and the beauty of this world
where we live.

Next Person: In the world around us there are many
who are hungry.

Next Person: Many people are homeless or are
suffering health problems.

Next Person: Many live with the fear of war,
violence, abuse, or neglect.

Next Person: A lot of people are lonely and don't
have families or friends to support
them.

Leader: Jesus teaches us to reach out beyond
our own door to help those who are
poor or vulnerable.

*Everyone at the table now raises one hand over the
food to bless it.*

Leader: Bless us, Oh Lord, and these thy gifts...

**All: Guide and protect those people who
give their time and money to help
hurting people everywhere.**

Leader: Bless us, Oh Lord, and these thy gifts...

**All: May this food give us the strength
to help the hungry, thirsty, and
homeless.**

Leader: Bless us, Oh Lord, and these thy gifts...

**All: May our love here at this table
increase as we share this meal.**

Leader: Bless us, Oh Lord, and these thy gifts...

**All: May those who are not with us here
at this table today know how much
we love them.**

Leader: We ask your blessing on the food
that has been prepared for us. Thank
you for the hands that have prepared
it. Help us to have faith in all that is
good. May we be worthy of your love.

All: Amen. Let's eat!

Sharing the Story

Soon after you have started your meal (but before you have served the bread or juice), have family members read the following background out loud (as re-told by Tracey Herzer):

Jesus had been teaching for almost three years. He had healed the sick and done many miraculous things. Lots of people had heard Jesus talk about God. They saw his kindness and they wanted to be around him. They loved him as a teacher and wanted to learn more from him. But some of the rulers and the priests in Jerusalem didn't like the things that Jesus taught and they wanted him to stop. They didn't think Jesus should say he was the Son of God and they were angry that so many people followed Jesus. They wanted to get rid of Jesus.

It was the time of year when Jewish people celebrate Passover. Passover is an important holiday when Jews remember the ways God has taken care of them and how Moses led them out of Egypt to the Promised Land. Since Jesus was Jewish, he needed a place where he and his friends could share a Passover meal. So Jesus sent Peter and John into the city and told them to watch for a man carrying water. He told them to follow the man home and they would find there an upstairs room that they could use for their Passover meal. Peter and John went to do as Jesus said and get everything ready.

Stop here to explain that the Last Supper was probably just a somewhat normal meal for Jesus and his friends. Tell them that in Bible times a lot of people would lounge on low couches and eat food from low tables or food placed on blankets on the floor – like an indoor picnic.

When it was time, Jesus and his friends gathered in this “Upper Room”. They told the story of the Passover and listened again to the story of Moses. But as they were eating, Jesus did something unusual. He held up the bread and said, “Take, eat: This is my body, which is given for you. Do this and remember me.”

Talk about how bread is common food in almost every culture and it is something that sustains life. Then have someone hold up the bread, tear off a

piece to keep, and pass the loaf around the table. (We've found that many kids just *love* the chance to tear pieces off a loaf.) As they do that, ask them to say, “When you eat this, remember Jesus.” Then they can eat their piece of bread.

Then he took a cup of wine, gave thanks, and shared it with his friends saying, “Drink this, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant. Whenever you drink it, remember me.”

Now pass the juice around the table saying, “When you drink this, remember Jesus.”

Then they all stood up, sang a hymn together and left the room.

Every Sunday when we gather together in church, we remember the Last Supper that Jesus shared with his friends. We remind ourselves of the words Jesus said about the bread and the wine. We remember how Jesus died on the cross and then rose from the dead three days later. We remember that before Jesus left the earth, he promised us that he would not leave us alone. When we gather together for communion and retell the story of Jesus' life, he is right there with us, in our midst and in our hearts.

Discuss

Talk about the ways in which what you just shared together is like the sacrament of communion and the ways in which it is different.

(Be sure it is clear by the end that when a priest does this during a Mass that the bread turns into Jesus' body, but that in this meal you are just remembering what Jesus did.)

What are we really saying in the Eucharist? What are we remembering?

Talk about things we do to help us remember – strings around the finger, notes on the refrigerator, post-it notes, to-do list apps, treasure boxes, looking at pictures or scrapbooks, etc. Talk about how telling stories is also a way we remember things. We tell stories about family members or past events as a way of keeping the memories with us always.

Closing Prayer

After the meal ends and before everyone dashes off to other activities, pause for just a moment to savor the food, and then close with this brief prayer.

Leader: Bless us, Oh Lord, and these thy gifts...

**All: Thanks for {name who it was} who cooked this meal for us today.
THANKS, _____!**

Take a moment to look around the table, looking everyone in the eye.

Leader: Bless us, Oh Lord, and these thy gifts...

**All: {addressed to everyone at the table}
Thanks for all of us who shared this.
Thanks for being here and thanks for your love.**

Leader: Bless us, Oh Lord, and these thy gifts...

**All: Thanks for being with us, Jesus.
Thanks for teaching us how to love. Thanks for leading us to love and take care of all those who are suffering. We love you and we promise to love all your children, whoever or wherever they may be.
Amen.**

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