

Light a Candle Virtual Prayer Vigil
Maundy Thursday
April 9, 2020

- I. Welcome, friends!** We are strengthened by your presence and the desire that has compelled you to be here this evening. Tonight is the fourth week of our Prayer Vigil and just happens to fall on Maundy Thursday.
- A. Tradition tells us that the word Maundy originates from the word “mandate” and refers to the new commandment that Jesus gave his followers in John 13:34 – to love one another even as Jesus had loved them. And so in that same spirit, we intend tonight to hold vigil and love one another by offering ourselves and our prayers to God.
- B. On Maundy Thursday, some traditions hold what’s known as a Tenebrae service to mark the descent of the Son of Man into the shadows of death.
1. The word Tenebrae means “gloom” or “darkness” or “shadow.”
 2. These words seem to be a particularly apt description for these days we live in right now.
 3. During the service, the altar is stripped bare and each of the 12 altar candles are blown out, one at a time.
 4. And so as we keep vigil this evening, we want to do so with the soberness of where we find ourselves in Holy Week and this moment of our collective history.
- C. During our prayer vigil, there will be two movements:
1. First movement--Light the candle
 2. Second movement—we will follow a prayer litany framed by several verses from Psalm 107.
- II. Light a Candle**
- A. Let’s begin with a minute of silence before you light your candle.
1. Consider who it is or what it is that you particularly want to lift-up to God tonight
 2. Once you have named this person, or this need/desire, light the wick.
- B. Now consider the flame: See how bright it burns?
1. The flame reminds us of how bright the light of Christ burned in the world as Jesus walked among us—a light that was snuffed out because of greed and envy and fear.
 2. The flame also reminds us of Christ’s light that was reignited through resurrection and is in us now even in our shadows of death.

II. **Second Movement: Let's now begin a litany of prayers from Psalm 107:**

- A. Some drifted around in the desert and found no place where they could live. Their bellies growled with hunger; their mouths were dry with thirst; their souls grew weak and weary. (4-5)

We pray for...

- Those already displaced by wars and famines, who drift by necessity and find no place to live.
Lord, we sit in darkness even as we look to you.
- Those who lack basic necessities of food and clean water.
Lord, we sit in darkness even as we look to you.
- Those who despair of their life circumstances, having no hope and have given up.
Lord, we sit in darkness even as we look to you.

Together: In our distress, we call out, God save us from our misery.

- B. Some people were *locked up* in dark *prisons*, confined in gloom *as bleak as death*. They were captives bound by *iron* chains and misery. All because they had rebelled against the directives of the True God and had rejected the wisdom of the Most High. So they suffered the heaviness of *slave* labor; when they stumbled *and fell*, there was no one to help *them up*. (10-12)

We pray for...

- Those who are confined by choice or by edict, cut off from loving connections, having lost many freedoms
Lord, we sit in darkness even as we look to you.
- Those who close their ears to wisdom during this time of confusion
Lord, we sit in darkness even as we look to you.
- Those who are forced to continue to labor and work, even when they are anxious and frightened
Lord, we sit in darkness even as we look to you.

Together: In our distress, we call out, God save us from our misery.

- C. Some people became fools infected by their rebellious ways, and sickness followed because of their sins. *Afflicted and weak*, they refused any sort of food as they approached the gates of death. (17-19)

We pray for...

- Those who suffer from addictions and whose lives are spiraling toward the brink of collapse

Lord, we sit in darkness even as we look to you.

- Those who are suffering sickness and in desperate need of sparsely available health care

Lord we sit in darkness even as we look to you.

- Those who are nearing the moment of death, no matter what their life has been like up to this final moment

Lord, we sit in darkness even as we look to you.

Together: In our distress, we call out, God save us from our misery.

- D. Some set out to sea in ships, traveling across mighty seas in order to trade *in foreign lands*. They witnessed the *powerful* acts of the Eternal, *marveled at* the great wonders He revealed over the deep *waters*. For He spoke and summoned a violent wind that whipped up the waves of the sea. *Relentless* waves lifted *the ships* high in the sky, then drove them down to the depths; the sailors' courage dissolved into misery. They staggered and stumbled around like drunkards, and they had no idea what to do. (23-27)

We pray for...

- Those who continue their attempt to keep economies, communities and nations afloat

Lord, we sit in darkness even as we look to you.

- Those with medical and research skills who are overwhelmed and dismayed by the strength of the coronavirus

Lord, we sit in darkness even as we look to you.

- Those among us who possess the needed capacities to serve, to give, to employ and to lead

Lord, we sit in darkness even as we look to you.

Together: In our distress, we call out, God save us from our misery.

III. **One last time, look at the flame of your candle.**

- A. We take so many things for granted, and maybe most of all light.
1. Now blow it out. Sit a moment in the darkness. In the shadows.
 2. Even in the gloom of this Holy Thursday.
- B. Take a moment to pray this prayer for yourself: ***"Lord, I, too, sit in darkness even as I look to you. In my distress, I call out, God save me from my misery." Amen.***