

Holy Space at Home

The early Christians gathered together in homes. They came together on Sundays to celebrate the presence of Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord, with them in Word and Sacrament.

The Word part of their celebrations consisted of reading portions of the Bible together, discussing and reflecting on Holy Scripture, affirming their faith in the words of the Creeds, and praying together. If it sounds familiar, it is. The Word portion of our daily Sunday worship is very similar.

The Sacrament part of their worship (and ours) was the celebration of the Holy Eucharist together, likely part of an Agape Feast – where all members of the community brought food and drink to be blessed and shared among the whole community. Sacraments are an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual grace, given by Christ as a sure and certain means by which we receive that grace.

Word and Sacrament are ways we know Jesus is present with us. One is not more important than the other. The Gospel of John tells us that the Word (Jesus) was made flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus is as present with us when we read Holy Scripture and when we pray, just as Jesus is present with us in the Body and Blood of the Eucharist.

Because of the realities of Coronavirus, we as the Church are re-discovering worship with the Word, reading Holy Scripture with intent, praying (and leading these prayers for ourselves), and being present to Jesus in the many ordinary things in our lives that are extraordinarily holy because they, too, are outward and visible signs of God's love for us.

For this time of being healthy and holy at home we, like our ancestors in the faith, remember our homes are holy spaces, filled with God's love for us. This is a time for new ideas for our own prayer life and our own discipleship to be lived.

To prepare your Holy Space at Home, you might consider a few things.

First, find a space that will be your altar. This sacred space is a place set apart for prayer, for reading and reflecting on Holy Scripture, and for worship. Here are some suggestions from various sources for creating a sacred space:

- If available, find a place that is out-of-the way and quiet, that you will use regularly. Place a table there that will serve as your altar.
- If you don't have a separate space available, that's okay. Just use a small table, a shelf, or even a portion of a table.

- If you have children in your home, let them help find the space. When they find an area, ask them, “Why here? What about this feels special?” and let them share their thoughts and ideas of things to put on the altar.
- Put a cloth on the surface. This may be a small white linen cloth, or it could be a lovely scarf you never wear (or maybe a favorite one). Mtr. Laurie uses a welcome mat woven out of blankets and life preservers used by refugees fleeing Syria - which is to say, any cloth that is beautiful or meaningful is perfect.
- Gather symbols that are important to creating your sacred space. A Bible, a Book of Common Prayer, a candle (battery powered is okay, especially if you have small children), an icon, and a cross may be basic items. Items can be added during particular times - a small bowl of water on the anniversary of our baptismal vows or a crucifix on Fridays (the traditional day of praying for those who have died), for example. You may also want to place items of special significance for you - your rosary or prayer beads, a vase for flowers, a special image. This is your sacred space God is creating with you - so follow your soul as you create it. Your altar, however, should not be too crowded. Simplicity is a good thing.



Now you have your Sacred Space!

Second, why don't we say prayers of blessings and thanksgiving for our homes?

Right now, our homes are helping us and others stay safe and healthy. They are the places we are learning, we are living, and we are lamenting. We live in a time when we are all asked to stay healthy at home.

After you've found your Sacred Space, gather there. Light a candle and take some moments of silence. Then, after a time, one person begins, saying: The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**
Presider Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, grant to this home the grace of your presence, that you may be known to be the inhabitant of this dwelling, and the defender of this household; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

If you live alone, you can call or FaceTime someone in to join you in your prayers or pray them alone.

After the prayer, read aloud this portion of the Gospel of Matthew 6:25-33:

Jesus said, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Then, pray this prayer.

Let us pray. (*Silence*)

Visit, O blessed Lord, this home with the gladness of your presence. Bless all who live here with the gift of your love; and grant that *she/he/they* may manifest your love to all whose lives they touch. May *she/he/they* grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of you; guide, comfort, and strengthen *her/him/them*; and preserve *her/him/them* in peace, O Jesus Christ, now and for ever. **Amen.**

You’ve just led a Service of Thanksgiving for your home!

Also, get creative! Take your candle and process around your home, recalling a time when that room was meaningful to you, and say a prayer thanking God. Say a prayer for those who don’t have a home. Draw a response to the Gospel reading and put the pictures up in windows. And those are just a few ideas.

Each day we offer intentional time with God is a starting point for you to engage in the Word, the living presence of Jesus in our lives. Journal your thoughts each day.

Draw a picture. Explore the Book of Common Prayer and add additional prayers to the services that you want to pray. Invite friends to join you virtually – email or Facetime them and pray together virtually.



St. Michael's Episcopal Church

Called by Christ to be a welcoming community of love and hope

Other Resources for setting up a Sacred Space:

<https://www.cgsusa.org/wp-content/uploads/HowToSetUpPrayerTable.pdf>

Altar Image from BuildFaith.org