TABLE LITURGIES

for use before meals

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Table Liturgies

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For all Companions of Cleopas
Lk 24:13-35

And their eyes were opened!
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INTRODUCTION

This collection of Table Liturgies is intended for those who wish to use a Grace before meals that recalls the meals Jesus celebrated with his followers. Some will regard them as Agapes; others will understand them as Eucharists. When we eat bread and drink wine in memory of Jesus, we are doing what he asked us to do. These liturgies have all been used by small groups of Catholics in the UK over the years and modified as necessary.

Before the meal begins and all are seated, it is desirable that a small piece of bread be prepared on a small dish, which can be broken and passed round, as well as some wine, which can be poured into individual glasses at the appropriate moment if this has not already been done.

These short celebrations work best when each numbered item is said by a different person rather than the proceedings being dominated by one person.

Some are very brief and ancient, such as FROM THE PSALTER and THE JEWISH BLESSINGS. Others belong to the first century of the Christian era, such as COME JESUS SAVIOUR and BROKEN BREAD. The liturgy AT TABLE, comes from the 1984 Vatican De Benedictionibus [Book of Blessings, ET 1987] and others have been written by modern-day Christians.

These liturgies therefore make heavy use of the work of others, ancient and modern, and some of these are listed in the bibliography at the end of this booklet in OTHER RESOURCES.

Simon Bryden-Brook

1 November 2011
This is a slightly shortened form of grace before meals proposed by the bishops of the Catholic Church in the USA and is based on a model proposed by Rome in its Book of Blessings of 1984.

[When all are seated, begin with the sign of the cross. Each numbered item is said by a different person, moving clockwise round the table.]

**ALL**  In the name of God, Source of all Being, Eternal Word and Holy Spirit. Amen

1  Blessed are you almighty God, who gives us our daily bread.  
   Blessed is your only begotten Son, who continually feeds us on the word of life.  
   Blessed is the Holy Spirit, Who brings us together at this table of friendship.

**ALL**  Blessed be God for ever.

[Bread may be lifted up and broken by the person saying:]

2  Blessed are you, God of all creation;  
   You bring forth bread from the earth.

**ALL**  Blessed be God for ever.

[A glass of wine may be lifted up by the person saying:]

**ALL**  In the name of God, Source of all Being, Eternal Word and Holy Spirit. Amen

3  Blessed are you, holy God, who have given us the way to eternal life.

   Blessed is the Most Holy Trinity, Who brings us together at this table of friendship.

**ALL**  Blessed be God for ever.
3 Blessed are you, God of all creation;
Creator of the fruit of the vine.

ALL Blessed be God for ever.

4 God of all goodness,
through the breaking of bread together
you strengthen the bonds which unite us in love.
Bless us † and these your gifts.
Grant that as we sit down together at table
in joy and sincerity
we may always grow closer in the bonds of love.
We ask this through Jesus, the Christ.

ALL Amen

5 May your gifts refresh us, O God,
And your grace give us strength.

ALL Amen

A CHRISTIAN TABLE BLESSING

This simple grace before meals seeks to use the prayers which it is likely Jesus used at table with his disciples. It includes the words which Jesus added at the Last Supper.

[Each numbered item is said by a different person, moving round the table.]

[Each basket of bread is lifted up by the person nearest to it and held over the table, as someone says:]

1  Blessed are you, God of all creation,
   You nourish the whole world
   with goodness, tender love and mercy.
   Through your goodness we have this food,
   which earth has given and human hands have made.
   Jesus said, “This is my body!”
   May it become for us the bread of life.

ALL  Blessed be God for ever.

[Bread is broken and shared from each basket.]

[Wine is poured into each glass if this has not already been done. Then, everyone takes their glass of wine and holding it up over the table, someone says:]

2  Blessed are you, God of all creation;
   You have made us a royal priesthood,
   a consecrated people.
   Through your goodness we have this drink,
the fruit of the vine and the work of human hands.
Jesus said, “This is my blood!”
May it become our spiritual drink.

ALL  

Blessed be God for ever.

[Wine is drunk.]

[Then a third person says:]

3  Blessed are you, God of all creation,
    We remember with gratitude our redemption
    and we wait in joyful hope
    for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus the Christ.

ALL  

For the realm, the power and the glory are yours, now
and for ever!

[A fourth person says:]

4  Let us proclaim the mystery of faith.

ALL  

When we eat this bread and drink this cup
we proclaim your death, Jesus,
until you come in glory!

EMMAUS TABLE LITURGY

This modern liturgy seeks to evoke the supper at Emmaus, when Jesus was recognised in the Breaking of Bread.

[Each numbered item is said by a different person, moving clockwise round the table.]

1 Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus
we pause to break bread together.

2 May our eyes be opened,
and in this act of common sharing
may we see the Risen Jesus
in one another.

3 May we see the God of Life in our food,
our conversation,
and lives shared in common.

[Bread is lifted up by one person saying:]

4 Blessed are you, God of all creation;
You bring forth bread from the earth.

ALL Blessed be God for ever.

[A glass of wine is lifted up by one person saying:]
5 Blessed are you, God of all creation;  
Creator of the fruit of the vine.

**ALL** Blessed be God for ever.

6 As we prepare to eat and drink together,  
let us remember:

**ALL** On the same night that he was betrayed,  
Jesus took bread,  
and thanked God for it,  
and broke it,  
and he said,  
‘This is my body, broken for you;  
do this in memory of me.’

*[The bread is broken and shared.]*

*[Wine is poured into each glass if needed but not drunk yet.]*

7 Let us remember now, how after supper  
Jesus took the cup and said:

**ALL** ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood.  
Whenever you drink it,  
do this in memory of me.’
[After a short silence, the following is said:]

8 Let us proclaim the mystery of faith.

ALL When we eat this bread and drink this cup
we proclaim your death, Jesus,
until you come in glory!

9 May the blessing ✝ of God,
God’s peace and love,
rest upon our table.

ALL Amen.

Cf Simon Bryden-Brook (ed), Take, Bless, Break, Share (Norwich, SCM-Canterbury Press, 1998) and Gabe Huck, Table Prayer book (Chicago, LTP, 1988)
SHORT EMMAUS TABLE LITURGY

This modern liturgy, without using the Words of Institution, seeks to evoke the supper at Emmaus, when Jesus was recognised in the Breaking of Bread.

1 Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus we pause to break bread together.

2 May our eyes be opened, and in this act of common sharing may we see the Risen Jesus in one another.

3 May we see the God of Life in our food, our conversation, and lives shared in common.

[Bread is lifted up by one person saying:]

4 Blessed are you, God of all creation; You bring forth bread from the earth.

ALL Blessed be God for ever.

[A glass of wine is lifted up by one person saying:]

5 Blessed are you, God of all creation; Creator of the fruit of the vine.

ALL Blessed be God for ever.
[After a short silence, the following is said:]

6  Let us proclaim the mystery of faith.

ALL  When we eat this bread and drink this cup
     we proclaim your death, Jesus,
     until you come in glory!

7  May the blessing + of God,
    God’s peace and love,
    rest upon our table.

ALL  Amen
COME JESUS SAVIOUR

This liturgy is taken from the Didache, a very early Christian text, perhaps as old as the canonical Gospels. It does not appear to associate the meal with the Last Supper or Jesus' death and resurrection.

[Each numbered item is said by a different person, moving clockwise round the table.]

1 We give you thanks, God, for your holy name, which you have caused to live in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and everlasting life which you have revealed to us through your servant Jesus

ALL Glory to you for ever.

[Bread and wine are held up.]

2 You created everything, almighty God, for your name’s sake. You have given food and drink to everyone for them to enjoy, that they might give you thanks. But to us you have graciously given spiritual food and drink and everlasting life through your servant Jesus. Above all, we thank you because you are almighty.

ALL Glory to you for ever.
3 Remember your Church.
   Deliver it from all evil;
   perfect it in your love;
   gather it, sanctified, from the four winds
   into the kingdom you have prepared for it.

   **ALL** For the realm, the power and the glory are yours,
   now and for ever! Amen.

4 Let grace come and the cares of this world pass away.

   **ALL** Hosanna to the God of David!

5 Those who love God:

   **ALL** Let them come!

6 Those who do not:

   **ALL** Let them turn to God!

7 Come, Jesus, Saviour.

   **ALL** Amen.
This liturgy from the Didache, a very early Christian text perhaps as old as the canonical Gospels, does not appear to associate the meal with the Last Supper or Jesus' death and resurrection. With its reference to 'broken bread, once scattered over the hills' it seems to recall the feeding of the five thousand with loaves and fishes and other feeding stories of Jesus in the Gospels.

[Each numbered item is said by a different person, moving clockwise round the table.]

[Taking some wine:]

1 We give you thanks, God,  
for the vine of your servant David,  
which you have made known to us  
through your Servant Jesus.

ALL Glory to you for ever.

[Taking some bread:]

2 We give you thanks, Father,  
for the life and knowledge you have revealed to us  
through your Servant Jesus.

ALL Glory to you for ever.

[Breaking some bread (others do the same) and passing it round:]

3 Just as this broken bread,
once scattered over the hills,
was brought together and became one loaf,
so may your Church be brought together
from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.

**ALL** For the realm, the power and the glory are yours,
now and for ever! Amen.
FROM THE PSALTER

*From Psalms [103] 104 and [144] 145, as used before meals in many Benedictine monasteries for centuries.*

*[Each numbered item is said by a different person, moving clockwise round the table.]*

1 The eyes of all hope in you, O God.

ALL And you give them food in due season.

2 You open your hand

ALL And every creature is filled with your blessing.

3 Blessed is God in his gifts

ALL And holy in all his works.
THE JEWISH BLESSINGS

Known as Berakoth, these prayers may well have formed the basis of the table blessing used by Jews in Jesus' time, and thus familiar to him. In modern times they have been restored to our Eucharists in Church.

[Each numbered item is said by a different person.]

[Holding a piece of bread for all to see:]

1  Blessed are you, God of all creation
    for you bring forth bread from the earth.

[The bread may be broken and passed round.]

[Then taking some wine and holding it up:]

2  Blessed are you, God of all creation
    creator of the fruit of the vine.

[The wine may be passed round.]
A TRADITIONAL JEWISH BLESSING

A celebration that unites us with our Jewish brothers and sisters and reminds us of the context in which our Christian Eucharist arose.

[Each numbered item is said by a different person, moving clockwise round the table.]

1 Blessed are you, God of all creation
   for you feed the whole world with your goodness,
   with grace, with loving kindness and tender mercy.

2 You give food to all creatures,
   and your loving kindness endures for ever.

3 Because of your great goodness
   food has never failed us.

4 May it not fail us for ever and ever
   for the sake of your great name.

5 You nourish and sustain all creatures
   and do good to all.

ALL Blessed are you, O God,
   for you give food to all.
FROM THE APOSTOLIC TRADITION

Attributed by some to Hippolytus of Rome (early third century of the Christian era) this liturgy was discovered only in the nineteenth century and scholars still debate its origin and significance. It links us to the very early years of the Church.

[Each numbered item is said by a different person, moving clockwise round the table.]

1   Lift up your hearts.

ALL   We lift them up to God.

2   Let us give thanks to our God.

ALL   It is right to give God thanks and praise.

[Bread and wine are held up.]

3   We praise you God for all these gifts and for all the blessings you gave us when you adorned the whole creation with such a variety of gifts through your Child Jesus.

4   Through him your glory will come to you throughout the unending succession of ages

ALL   Amen.
FOR LENT

A modern liturgy based on Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25. It reminds us that we need to recognise God not only in the Eucharist but also in others.

[Each numbered item is said by a different person, moving clockwise round the table.]

1 I was hungry:
   ALL And you gave me food.

2 I was thirsty:
   ALL And you gave me drink.

3 I was a stranger:
   ALL And you welcomed me.

4 I was naked:
   ALL And you clothed me.

5 I was ill:
   ALL And you comforted me.

6 I was in prison:
   ALL And you came to visit me.

7 Jesus our brother and our saviour, may our Lenten fasting turn us toward all our brothers and sisters.
who are in need.

[Holding bread and wine so all may see:]

8 Bless this table,
our good food and ourselves,
and send us through Lent with good cheer.

ALL In the name of God, +
Source of all Being,
Eternal Word and Holy Spirit. Amen

Cf Simon Bryden-Brook (ed), Take, Bless, Break, Share (Norwich, SCM-Canterbury Press, 1998) and Gabe Huck, Table Prayer book (Chicago, LTP, 1980)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
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