



What is an Agape Feast?

An Agape Feast has a long history in our Christian faith. They are mentioned both in Paul's letters and in the Letter of Jude in the New Testament.

A modern translation of the words would be "Fellowship Meal," as the literal translation - "Love Feast" could imply something very different these days. The Agape Feast is comparable to the Jewish "Shabbat Meal" held every Friday evening in Jewish homes.

At the heart of this simple celebration is the way bread, grapes/fruit, and water/drink can act as powerful symbols to remind us of the way all of life can be seen as a Gift from God.

What do I need to celebrate an Agape Feast?

Originally an Agape Meal was quite a large and extravagant meal, like a dinner party for instance. But as St Paul commented in 1 Corinthians, and the author of the Letter to Jude does the same, the problem was that those involved soon got more concerned with the extravagance of the food rather than the meaning behind it. So, by the 3rd Century it had become a much simpler affair.

In the way we have been celebrating an Agape Feast as part of being 'Church' during this period of Lockdown and as we emerge as a new community, you will need:

1) A Candle – this can be a tealight or something bigger. (Obviously, care needs to be taken with candles and children)

The Candle has always been a powerful symbol of the presence of God in the here and now amongst us – "Jesus is here, by His Holy Spirit." As Jesus said on so many occasions and in so many ways throughout His life on earth, "I am 'the true light that gives light to everyone' and have come into the world." (John 1:9)



2) Bread in some form (obviously allowing for people who may have wheat or other intolerances) – we have tended to use Homemade "Flat Bread"* or Pitta Bread.

* N.B. It can be a fun activity to make your own Flat Bread – it is very simple and a great activity which can involve children. Here is a link to a BBC recipe:

https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/recipes/quick_flatbreads_43123



The Bread acts as a symbol to be thankful for all food and for good company with whom to share it. Even if we live on our own, by sharing in an Agape Feast we are joined with not only other members of our Church family, but indeed with the worldwide Church in many different countries – approximately a third of the world believe and follow the ways of Jesus.

2) Grapes or Fruit of some kind – we have used grapes both red and green, Medjool Dates, or anything else which helps you to glimpse the wonder and the beauty of the ‘fruit of the earth.’



The Grapes or Fruit act as a symbol of God’s goodness. It is so easy to take life for granted and just to keep our heads down. By “tasting and seeing that the Lord is good” as we take time to eat a single grape or a piece of fruit, or whatever, we can see how God blesses us in our daily lives so much more than we may think through the simple things - the sunshine, the rain, the colour, the wind etc.

If this ‘relational’ way of seeing daily life inspires you, there is a famous poem by Francis of Assisi that may you wish to look up called “the Canticle of the Creatures:”

<http://www.appleseeds.org/canticle.htm>

3) Water or something else to drink: We have tended to use either water or Grape Juice, but you could use whatever you feel appropriate.



The water or drink acts as a powerful symbol of God’s gift of the Water of Life, the ‘Living Water’ that heals our hurts, that refreshes our soul, that helps us to discover how God sees us.

Like someone in a “dry and weary land,” receiving the gift of simple water can transform our lives.

Like with the other gifts of the meal, it can be good to eat and drink them slowly to fully appreciate their goodness.

Who can celebrate the Agape Feast, and who can attend?

Anyone. Although a Christian meal, it has always been a meal open for all to be invited to partake for Christians believe God shares His love with everyone. The same with who can celebrate it and can lead the prayer. One of the most memorable times is when a child feels able to share the prayer in the midst of the rest of their family.

One small piece of advice, is to encourage the reader to savour the words and read slowly, that way allowing their full meaning to breath. Imagine you are actually speaking these words to God right here and now – that way we may well say/pray them differently.

Words of the prayer for the Agape Feast:

(We say together the words in **Bold** type.)

LIGHTING OF THE CANDLE

(we light our Candle)

Leader: Alleluia! Christ is risen.

All: He is risen indeed Alleluia!

**All: Heavenly Father,
accept the prayers and praises of your Church,
and grant that this candle may make our darkness light;
for Christ the Morning Star has risen never again to set,
and is alive and reigns for ever and ever. Amen**



AGAPE PRAYER

Leader: We are all invited to a common table to share in an Agape Feast. At this table we come as brothers and sisters in the Family of God. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

Leader: As we share this bread, as we pour out this water, we thank you, God, for our daily bread for the food which delights and nourishes us and for the companionship that sustains us.

Leader: We thank you, too, for water to quench our thirst and for the Living Water with which you surprise and enrich and transform our lives.

We give thanks for this feast at which all are welcome and can share, a foretaste of your heavenly Kingdom.

Amen.

The bread, the grapes (or fruit), and the water (or drink) are passed to one another.

At the end...

**All: Living God,
bless all who have gathered round this table.
May we know the fullness of your presence
at every meal and in all our sharing. Amen.**

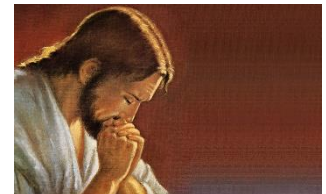
THE LORD'S PRAYER *(we share the Lord's Prayer together)*

**All: Our Father, who art in heaven
hallowed be Thy name.
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

BLESSING

**All: May the Father,
who so loved the world that he gave His only Son,
bring each of us by faith to His eternal life. Amen.**

**May Almighty God bless us, and keep us,
May His face shine upon us, and be gracious to us,
May He look kindly upon us and give us His peace. Amen.**



(Numbers 6:24-26)