

## Maundy Thursday Stripping the Table *by Jerusalem Greer*

### Why is this faith practice important?

Many of us long to make Holy Week more meaningful in our households. We desire more than waiting for fancy new clothes, gorging on candy, and stressing about creating the perfect Pinterest-worthy tablescape. But where do we start? And how do we make time in a busy week?

Stripping the altar (removing all ornaments, linens, candles, flowers, etc.) is an ancient church custom. Congregations mark the way Christ's life was stripped from him by stripping the altar of all signs of life and beauty during a special service. Bringing this tradition into the home is a special way to observe Maundy Thursday.



### What materials are needed for this practice?

- Bible or Prayerbook
- Storage box or bin
- Dark cloth
- Towels and cleaning supplies.

### How to do it

**Read scripture:** I recommend Psalm 22. Read the whole psalm, or just the first few verses if attention spans are short (see selected verses on next page).

**Explain:** Discuss the custom of stripping and washing the altar and what it symbolizes.

**Gather and remove:** Go through the house to gather all icons and religious symbols that can be easily moved (crosses, statues, candles, prayer beads, etc.). Ask everyone to work silently as a sign of respect for the task. Pack these items away in the storage bins. Use dark cloth to drape any other items that are too large or permanent to pack away.

**Wash the table:** Finally, remove all items from your dining or kitchen table and together wash the table thoroughly.

**Wait:** Leave the table bare until Easter morning.

## Resources for this Practice

### Psalm 22:1-5

- 1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
Why are you so far from saving me,  
so far from my cries of anguish?
- 2 My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,  
by night, but I find no rest.
- 3 Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;  
you are the one Israel praises.
- 4 In you our ancestors put their trust;  
they trusted and you delivered them.
- 5 To you they cried out and were saved;  
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

## Additional Ideas

After all the icons have been packed away or covered, and the table has been washed, take a moment to notice how your home looks and feels. Help children make the connection between a home without these beautiful and meaningful items and a life without Christ.

Saturday night, after everyone is in bed, do your best to unpack and uncover all of the religious items, so that when the family wakes up on Easter morning there will be more than just Easter baskets to celebrate!

## About the author

*Jerusalem Jackson Greer is a writer, speaker, nest-fluffer, novice farm-gal, and author of A Homemade Year: The Blessings of Cooking, Crafting and Coming Together. She is also the Minister to Children, Youth, and Families at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Conway, Arkansas. Jerusalem lives with her husband and two sons on a little farm in Shady Grove, Arkansas. As a family, they are attempting to live a slower version of modern life. For more information on Jerusalem's Faith@Home workshops or to read about faith-filled daily living, visit her blog at [jerusalemgreer.com](http://jerusalemgreer.com).*