GATHERING

A fellowship hall space is lit with many, many candles and dim lighting, if possible. People sit around tables with the main table where the six dramatists sit, in the center. As people come in, musicians are already playing a set of Taizé chants or meditative music, if another musical genre suits your congregation better. On each table are the elements, the symbols that we will encounter along this way.

A small bowl with a dollop of scented oil.
A glass basin of water big enough to wash your hands. Hand towels or paper towels.
A cup of grape juice (or wine, depending on your tradition) and a small loaf of bread big enough to serve the number of people at each table for communion.
A red cloth about one yard long and one foot wide.
Each table is covered with a blue colored cloth.
Christmas-eve-like small candle, one for each person.
(There should be at least one pillar candle lit at each table to light the smaller candles from when it is time)

Note: it is a good idea to train one person at each table as a “table host” who will know about each ritual action ahead of time and can begin each one at their table so the instructions from the leader can be kept to a minimum.

Welcome
Leader: With Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem, he set in motion a series of events that would change the world. His notoriety had spread in three years of teaching, miracles, flying in the face of established authority when he felt people were suffering. He was beloved by many, but misunderstood, hated and feared by some... and some who were in power. We stand at the precipice in this moment of a week that changed the world. It was a week of things poured out for us. Yes, God’s love poured out for us. But as we read the scriptural accounts of this week,
we encounter some very tangible elements poured out that will offer us a glimpse into the drama of that week.

Tonight we encounter six people who had front row seats in this incredible real-life drama. Sometimes this story feels only like a story to those of us who have heard it so many times. But it was real. It was painful and rich and life-changing for generations and generations of Christians after it, but how much more so for those who lived then and loved this man named Jesus. They will share with us about all the ways that God poured out God’s self through Jesus in those final days.

*Song: (suggestion) “Jesus Draw Me Close”* FWS 2159

**OIL**

*Read Scripture reading: John 12:1-11*

**Mary, friend of Jesus:**
I was in the middle of the marketplace that day and it hit me like an overwhelming wave of feeling... I loved him so much. It was a love beyond anything I’d ever known. Not romantic, not like a sibling, certainly like family but he was so much more to me... he was teacher, he was priest, he was wise one, he was hope itself.

And for the first time, in those days before the Terrible Thing happened, I felt he might not be invincible. He had told us, he had warned us, he had been saying this could happen all along but I just couldn’t imagine it. He was so eternal, it seemed. Like nothing, not even God, would dare to take him away from any of us. But the tension was building. I will beg him, I thought, to not go to Jerusalem—just go back to Galilee. Go to the hills. Go to Nazareth, go anywhere but Jerusalem right now. But even as I thought it to myself, I knew that he wouldn’t go. This is where he was supposed to be. With all these people gathered for Passover Jerusalem is where he had to be. And I knew he might never leave.

I suddenly became aware that I was still standing stock-still, oblivious to all around me here in this marketplace and I began to double over with fear. But just as I did my eyes came to rest on the stall to my right. A jar, a most beautiful jar of anointing oil. The seller offered it to me for a price that seemed outrageous and I didn’t care. No price could compare with the price I now had a sudden feeling that my teacher, my master, would pay. And so I bought it. Whether in life or in death, my beloved friend would need it.
[She picks up the jar of oil and hugs it to herself. She then goes to each table during the song and pours a bit of oil into a small dish (unless you have too many tables, then oil should already be in the dish on the table)].

*Instrumental of “Jesus Draw Me Close” begins for the ritual action (or whatever song you are using)*

**Leader invites to anointing:**
Mary’s anointing of Jesus belonged to the tradition of honoring someone with sweet-smelling oil made of a combination of many herbs. This was used at the investiture of royalty and also as anointing for burial. In this one act, Mary offers signs of love and honor. The early Christians then used this same scented oil as part of their baptismal and confirmation rites to emphasize their new identity with Christ (which also means “anointed one”). So tonight, inspired by Mary’s act, we anoint each other’s foreheads, as those early Christians did, with a sign of the cross and the words, “You are God’s Beloved Child.”

*Reprise “Jesus Draw Me Close” when all are finished with the ritual action.*

**End of excerpt... the evening continues with scripture, monologues, music, choral anthem and ritual action related to these characters and elements:**

Mary, friend of Jesus - Oil  *[anointing Jesus’ feet]*
Simon Peter, disciple of Jesus - Water  *[Jesus washes his feet]*
Judas, betrayer of Jesus - Wine  *[Jesus’ shares the cup at the Last Supper]*
Roman soldier, executioner of Jesus - Blood  *[the crucifixion]*
Mary, mother of Jesus - Tears  *[at the foot of the cross]*
Salome, follower of Jesus - Light  *[an empty tomb at dawn]*

*This resource, as well as 35 other worship series templates are available through a subscription to the Worship Design Studio with Dr. Marcia McFee*

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