



HYMNAL Highlight

Holy Thursday

Why the name change from Maundy Thursday to Holy Thursday?

(This Hymnal Highlight is intended primarily for worship leaders—to assist them in answering questions that might arise.)

One reason is that many people no longer understand the meaning of the word Maundy (from the Latin *mandatum*, referencing the new command Jesus gave his disciples on this day; see John 13:34). So numerous denominations have replaced the designation “Maundy Thursday” with “Holy Thursday.” The Missouri Synod hymnal, *Lutheran Service Book* (2006), made this change in its church year calendar.

An even stronger reason is that our primary focus that day is on the institution of Holy Communion, which isn’t directly tied to the new command. *Commentary on the Propers, Year A* includes this:

The Anglican term for this day, “Maundy Thursday,” derives from Jesus’ command in Latin: Mandatum novum do vobis. “A new command I give you . . .” (John 13:34). In the CW lectionary, the Gospel with this maundy command only occurs in Year A—hence, Holy Thursday is the name for this occasion.

The service for us has always been far more about the **new covenant** than the **new commandment**. See discussion in *Commentary on the Propers, Year C*, page 137. The Year C First Reading is Jeremiah 31:31-34. The commentary on that reading ends with these words: “This is the covenant whose terms were put into effect on the day that begins tonight. This is the covenant whose blessings are wrapped up and delivered to us in the meal we celebrate tonight.”