

INSTRUCTED EUCHARIST (RITE II)

READER We have gathered today to give thanks to God — to make Eucharist, a Greek word that means “thanks.” We have come as Christ’s people to do this together: to proclaim, to re-hear, to re-present, to make new the Lord’s life, death, and Resurrection. We meet, like the ancient Church, to (in the words of the Book of Acts) “devote ourselves to the apostles’ teachings and fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers” and to praise God with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

We have come together to let God take us, set us apart, and make us instruments of grace. In this action we join with Christians everywhere, through all ages, in celebrating God’s great and gracious gift to us. Everything else — the words we use, the gestures we make, the personal needs we satisfy — all are secondary to our act of celebration and thanksgiving to God.

What we do here today is one of the oldest customs of Christianity. The Words of Institution which we will hear in the Prayer of Consecration during Holy Communion have their earliest witness in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. The action of the Eucharist is thus almost 2000 years old. This simple pattern that traces its heritage to Jesus’ Last Supper with his disciples has been elaborated and added to, according to the Church’s needs and history, but the central pattern, including Jesus’ words, has remained the same.

Our service today is really two services, two parts under the inclusive title: THE HOLY EUCHARIST. The whole is frequently called a liturgy, and so it is. For the word “liturgy” explains what we are about. “Liturgy” comes from two Greek words meaning “the work of the people”. It is our work, therefore, to praise and thank God in this service.

The first part, known as the LITURGY OF THE WORD, has its focus in the Bible. It is a service of prayer, scripture reading, and preaching — in which the living Christ speaks to the assembled people, expounding the meaning of his life and death and promised presence. This is the most variable part of the service, with the Scripture readings varying according to the day and season of the Church Year. Usually certain themes will carry through the lessons and prayers of the day and church vestments and appointments will reflect the color that matches the season of the church year—green, white, purple or red.

In the second part of the service, the LITURGY OF THE TABLE, Jesus makes himself known to us in that act which he instituted and which ever since has been the central act of the Church on the Lord's Day—Holy Communion. In this part we celebrate how Jesus makes present to us, through the power of his Resurrection, all that he accomplished for us until his second coming. While the presence of scripture is not as obvious in this section as in the LITURGY OF THE WORD, one of the beauties of Anglican worship is that the great eucharistic prayers are infused with Scripture, which we will see as we proceed. Now, let us begin.

ALL *Bell rings, Deacon proclaims and all sing the Opening Hymn*

READER It is always difficult to know how to begin something, and beginning worship is no different. From earliest times, it was customary to begin the service with a mutual salutation between the clergy and people. In our service, the Opening Acclamation accomplishes this while also adding an initial note of praise to the service. The acclamation calls the congregation to worship, and indicates that all God's people are to have an active role in the liturgy taking place. Following the Acclamation, the community prays the *Collect (or prayer) for Purity*, which was originally part of the priest's preparatory devotions. This prayer calls us to self-examination, reminding us that we should always strive to open ourselves to God's healing touch through the power of forgiveness.

ALL *Acclamation and Response followed by the Collect for Purity*

READER Then, on some Sundays and especially on festal days, the *Gloria in Excelsis* follows. The *Gloria*, is an ancient hymn from the Eastern Church. It is not, however, the only option allowed; other hymns of praise are also provided in the Prayer Book. The hymn of praise draws the congregation together in an act of thanksgiving at the beginning of worship.

ALL *Gloria in Excelsis*

READER After the Gloria (or when the Gloria is not sung) the celebrant moves directly to praying on behalf of the congregation in the *Collect of the Day*. The Collect and the appointed Scripture readings form what are known as the "Propers" — prayers and readings that focus our attention on one main aspect of Christian life or, as is often the case, on one noteworthy occurrence or individual in Christian history.

PRIEST *Collect of the Day*

READER We now sit to be instructed (*pause while all sit*). Here readings from the Hebrew Scriptures—or Old Testament—and Christian Scriptures—or New Testament—amplify and deepen our understanding of the Christian life. Each lesson may be followed by a psalm, a hymn, or an anthem. In this part of the service, we acknowledge our debt to our Jewish heritage, for much of this pattern came from the Jewish synagogue service.

LECTORS *First reading; Psalm; Second reading: Gospel Hymn & Gospel Acclamation*

READER The custom in the early Church was to carry the book of the Gospels from the altar to the pulpit or into the midst of the congregation — symbolizing the coming of the Good News of God in Jesus Christ. At this point in the service, the Congregation stands out of reverence for the presence of Christ in “the Word” and faces the Deacon. The Deacon always faces the front door of the church symbolizing the duty of all baptized Christians to proclaim the Gospel to the outside world and the Deacon’s role in encouraging those efforts.

DEACON *The Gospel is read*

READER The Sermon (or preaching of the Word) is the application of the Church’s teaching in the Scriptures. Like the pattern of readings and psalms, the homily, or sermon, has its background in the Jewish synagogue. The homily draws together the Scripture and the situation of the congregation here and now, with the eternal proclamation which is God in Christ. In today’s service, the sermon takes the form of the Lessons and this Instruction.

Following the sermon, we all join together to affirm our faith by reciting either the Nicene Creed — a formulation of the beliefs of the Church that dates from the early fourth century—or some other credal statement. In its place following the lessons and sermons, these credal statements serve to sum up our faith as we have just heard it proclaimed. They also serve to define us as God’s family, with a common heritage.

ALL *The Affirmation of Faith*

READER Having been assembled, having declared our intention to worship, and having heard again the Gospel — the Good News by which God forms us — the Christian family now makes intercessions (or prayers) before God, praying for the world and for the Church; for those in authority, for those in need, and for the dead.

LECTOR *Prayers of the People*

READER Closing our prayers is a confession of our failings, both as a corporate body and through our individual acts. Yet God, who is merciful, grants us

absolution—pronounced through the priest who, like Christ, stands as a visible mediator of God’s pardon.

ALL *Confession*

PRIEST *Absolution*

READER Having been assured of God’s mercy and pardon, the members of God’s family now greet each other in peace — the peace God has granted us through Christ, and the peace with which Christ greeted his disciples after the Resurrection.

PRIEST *The Peace*

READER We now shift to the LITURGY OF THE TABLE, or THE HOLY COMMUNION. This portion of the service is made up of four principle parts: 1) the offering; 2) the Great Thanksgiving; 3) the Breaking of the Bread; and 4) the Communion itself.

As we begin, it is the duty of the Deacon to set the Holy table (or altar) symbolizing the diaconal role of servant ministry. Then, we collect our gifts to be placed on the Holy Table as an offering to God. From earliest times, each worshipper would bring forth his or her gifts of food including bread and wine for the Eucharist, as well as other gifts for the poor and needy. It was not until the fourth century in the Common Era that money began to replace food items as the principle offering. Many ceremonial practices later grew up alongside the practical actions of offering. In most parishes, for example, the priest will wash his or her hands before continuing with the Prayer of Consecration. If you recall that early offerings may have included live animals and dirty produce, the washing of hands may have been more than just a ceremonial nicety symbolizing the purity of the priest.

In most parishes, the monetary offerings of the congregation are brought forward to the priest to be placed on the altar with the bread and wine. Frequently the collection of the gifts is accompanied by the singing of a hymn or anthem by the choir. The music sung by the choir is not a performance, but rather like the material gifts of the congregation, it is another offering in thanks to God for the great gift of Christ.

PRIEST *Offertory Sentence*

CHOIR *Offertory Anthem, followed by all singing the Doxology*

READER Having offered to God our selves through material means and the singing of a hymn, we begin the second part of the Eucharistic action with a responsive prayer, the *Sursum Corda*, or “Lift up your hearts.” Originally part of the

Jewish benediction over the Cup of Blessing, this prayer, as a part of Christian worship, can be traced back to the early third century.

ALL *Sursum Corda*

READER The Preface follows the *Sursum corda*. The Preface brings together earth and heaven in praise and thanksgiving to God. Part of this acclamation is set and praises God as Creator, while another part — the Proper Preface — continues the theme already set by the Collect and lessons for the day and adds the Christological emphasis. The Preface concludes with the *Sanctus*, the angelic hymn heard by Isaiah in his vision of heaven.

PRIEST *Preface*

ALL *Sanctus*

READER At this point, all of the Eucharistic prayers summarize the story of our salvation (although each one does so a little differently). We, through the priest's verbalization of our prayers, thank God for our Creation; acknowledge our Fall into sin; and then, again, give thanks for God's continued call to us through history; and finally the coming of Jesus — His Incarnation, Death and Resurrection — on behalf of all humanity.

PRIEST *Story of Redemption*

READER The oldest element of the Eucharist service follows: the Words of Institution. It is at this point that elements of bread and wine mysteriously serve to become Christ for us, as our Lord promised and commanded. During this part of the prayer, the priest touches the elements, drawing our attention to the transformation of material elements into heavenly food.

This remembrance of the Institution, or *anamnesis*, is more than a calling to mind of what has happened in the past. It is a re-remembering — in some way a participation in the actual event. It concludes with a reference to the eschatological nature of the Lord's supper — that is, an acclamation and acknowledgement that we are sustained by this meal in the "in-between-time" before Christ's second coming as we proclaim that we "remember his death, proclaim his resurrection and await his coming in glory."

PRIEST *Words of Institution*

ALL *Memorial Acclamation*

READER After our acknowledgement that the history of salvation is not yet finished, the priest bids the Holy Spirit to descend upon the elements, to set them apart to be special food for a specially constituted people. Then, either the

priest or the gathered community as a whole bids the Holy Spirit to descend upon us — to set us apart as servants of God, heirs of an eternal realm. The prayer concludes with a doxology and the great “AMEN.” Here we acknowledge the magnitude both of what we have done and what we are called to be.

PRIEST *Epiclesis*

ALL *AMEN*

READER As a set-apart people, constituted by the life and action of Jesus Christ, we now join together in the prayer he taught his followers, again acknowledging our link with, and indebtedness to, those countless numbers of disciples of our Lord throughout history.

ALL *The Lord's Prayer*

READER The action following the Lord's Prayer is simple, but probably the most dramatic point of the liturgy. During a period of complete silence, the bread is broken. Here again, an originally utilitarian gesture has been invested with deep symbolism. The Body of Christ is broken so that we can share it, becoming one with Christ and one another in this most holy of Christian Sacraments. And so we rightly end the silence with the joyful sound of a hymn that bids, “Be known to us Lord Jesus in the breaking of the bread.”

PRIEST *Fraction and Fraction Anthem*

READER God has accepted and used the gifts we gave at the Offertory for God's own purposes. Our gifts are transformed by God and returned as God's gifts to us. They are transformed so that we may be transformed. And, as Christ's transformed people, we approach the altar to be fed by heavenly food.

PRIEST *“The Gifts of God...”*

ALL *The Communion*

READER After communion, all join in song and prayer to give thanks for our discipleship. We acknowledge our debt to God for bringing us together into a new family. We also pray that we may be sent forth in the power of Christ who even now is taking away the sin of the world. To emphasize this, the priest pronounces God's blessing to give us the strength to do so.

ALL *Post-communion hymn and prayer and the final blessing.*

ALL *Closing Hymn*

READER The dismissal which concludes our service has its basis in the ancient Latin rite. The Latin dismissal was “Ite, missa est” or “Go, you are dismissed.” It is from this Latin “missa” that one name for the entire service is derived: the Mass. In our Prayer Book, the “dismissal” has been transformed into a “*commissioning*”; no longer just “go”, but “go forth” with a mission: to bring God’s love and healing to a broken and hurting world. The dismissal is customarily performed by the Deacon, symbolizing the diaconal role of leading the people forth to conduct ministry in the wider world.

PRIEST *Dismissal*

Postlude