

CHAPTER FIVE: COMMENTARY ON THE LITURGY OF THE HOLY COMMUNION

THIS chapter contains the liturgy of Holy Communion from the Book of Common Prayer, with certain historical additions, on the right-hand page, and a commentary on each part of the liturgy on the left-hand page. It is intended to help worshipers grow in their understanding of the Eucharist and lead them into a deeper experience of worship.

A Note On Liturgy

THOSE unfamiliar with liturgical worship often object that it is repetitive and, thus, devoid of the spontaneity they desire. But repetition is precisely the point of liturgy. C. S. Lewis wrote:

Every service is a structure of acts and words through which we receive a sacrament, or repent, or supplicate, or adore. And it enables us to do these things best—if you like, it “works” best—when, through long familiarity, we don’t have to think about it. As long as you notice, and have to count the steps, you are not yet dancing but only learning to dance. A good shoe is a shoe you don’t notice. Good reading becomes possible when you need not consciously think about eyes, or light, or print, or spelling. The perfect church service would be one we were almost unaware of; our attention would have been on God. (*Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*).

As we learn the words and actions of the liturgy and come to understand what they mean, we develop the ability to pray from the heart.

A Note On Language

LITURGICAL English is necessarily different from everyday language. There are words in the liturgy with a long history of theological meaning that cannot be translated into modern English. If a word is unfamiliar, look it up in a dictionary. It will help you learn the faith.

Liturgical English retains the “thees” and “thous” because they are poetic, reverent and more precise than “you.” The body of Christ is “given for thee,” meaning the particular individual.

While it is not necessary or desirable to use liturgical English in personal prayer, it is highly desirable and appropriate to retain a majestic, reverent and theologically accurate language for liturgical prayer. Liturgical English reflects the “beauty of holiness” (Psalm 96:9) and has the capacity to lift the heart, mind and soul to God in worship.

A Note on the Reception of Holy Communion

THE requirements for the reception of Holy Communion fall into two categories: The first concerns the rites of Christian initiation, and the second concerns one's current manner of life.

A person becomes a member of the Church, the Body of Christ, through baptism (BCP 290, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Colossians 2:12). Since the beginning of the Church, the sacrament of baptism has been completed by confirmation, the laying on of hands by a bishop in Apostolic Succession (Acts 8:14-17, Hebrews 6:2). The Prayer Book says, "And there shall none be admitted to the Holy Communion, until such time as he be confirmed, or be ready and desirous to be confirmed" (299).

The Invitation to Confession invites to communion those "who do truly and earnestly repent...and are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God." Those receiving Communion should believe the Catholic and Apostolic Faith expressed in the Bible and the Creeds. They should come to the altar having confessed all known sins. They should be reconciled with their neighbors, as much as it is in their power. They should be faithful in daily prayers and in attendance at the Eucharist (Hebrews 10:25), or should intend to be faithful from now on.

This does not mean that the communicant must be free from the struggle with sin and temptation. It means that the communicant must want to conform his life and behavior to God's will and commandments. God welcomes the penitent and is patient with us in our struggles with sin, but God does not welcome the willfully disobedient.

We meet Jesus Christ in the sacrament. He said, "This is my body" and "This is my blood." Therefore, St. Paul instructs us, "Let a man examine himself and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup" (1 Corinthians 11:28).

Baptized and practicing adult Christians who fulfill the requirements of the Invitation but have not yet been confirmed may be admitted to Communion by permission of the rector. Those who are not receiving Communion are invited to come to the communion rail, with arms folded across the chest, for a blessing.

Bible Passages on the Eucharist

WHEN the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine flake-like thing, fine as hoarfrost on the ground. When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, What is it?...And Moses said to them, It is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat (Exodus 16:15, RSV).

Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh (John 6:49-51, RSV).

I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst (John 6:35, RSV).

Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed (John 6:53-5, RSV).

He went in to stay with them. Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him (Luke 24:31, NKJV).

I recieved from the Lord that which I also delivered unto you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks [*eucharist*], he broke it and gave it to them saying, "Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same manner he also took the cup after supper saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. This do as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till he comes (1 Corinthians 11:23-25, NKJV).

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread (1 Corinthians 10:16-17, KJV).

Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me (Revelation 3:20, RSV).



Preparation for Worship

WORSHIP requires preparation. Sunday worship cannot be isolated from the life of prayer that we live during the week. If the only prayer we practice is the time we spend in church on Sunday, worship is not likely to have a transforming impact on our lives. The habit of daily Bible reading will lead us to glean more from the Sunday lessons and sermon. The daily experience through prayer of communion with the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit will lead us to a greater experience of communion at the altar. The Eucharist on the Lord's Day is the beginning and ending of the life of prayer, for Christ is the Alpha and Omega.

Be in church at least five to ten minutes early for personal prayer. Allow time before worship to “be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46). Consider where you are in your relationship with God. What sins do you need to confess? What thanksgivings and petitions do you want to offer?

The symbols of the church aid us in the practice of remembrance. They remind us of the true nature of things—the way heaven really is. The altar of God is the centerpiece because we come to the Father through the sacrifice of the Son. The cross is exalted. The risen Christ sits enthroned as Lord of all. Statues and icons of the saints remind us of our participation in the communion of the saints.

Christ is present in the Sacrament, which is reserved on the altar in the tabernacle. The presence of the reserved sacrament is indicated by the sanctuary lamp. This is a candle that burns continuously near the altar. As we enter the pew, we genuflect (touch the right knee to the ground) before the Sacrament to acknowledge that Jesus is Lord.

The time before the liturgy begins should also be used for practical preparation. Look at the bulletin, mark the prayer book and hymnal for the lessons and hymns so that you are prepared to participate in the liturgy.



The Liturgy of Holy Communion

From

The Book of Common Prayer

With Commentary

The Collect for Purity

The Collect for Purity calls to mind Psalm 139:

Lord, thou hast searched me out and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising; thou understandest my thoughts long before. Thou art about my path and about my bed; and art acquainted with all my ways. For lo, there is not a word in my tongue, * but thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether.

In the Garden of Eden, after the first sin, Adam and Eve hid from God in the bushes (Genesis 3:8). As their descendants and inheritors of Original Sin, we continue to try to hide from God.

The work of redemption begins in us when we come out from hiding and expose our sin to the light of God's redeeming presence. Only then can the Holy Spirit cleanse us so that we can begin to love and magnify (exalt) God as we ought to.

Psalm 139 concludes with a prayer that can be used in preparation for worship:

Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart; prove me and examine my thoughts. Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me; and lead me in the way everlasting.

***Kneeling is the common posture for prayer in the Anglican tradition. In general, we will stand to praise, sit to listen and kneel to pray.*

The Summary of the Law

The Summary is a direct quote from Matthew 22:37-40. The law is an appropriate beginning to worship because it is the beginning of the gospel. Galatians 3:24 says, "The law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

The law shows us that we are sinners because we have not loved God and neighbor as the law instructs us (cf. Romans 3:20, Matthew 6:17-30). The law leads us to repent and turn to Christ for forgiveness.

As we come to the altar of God, we should also be mindful of our current areas of struggle and progress with regard to the law and the command to love. What particular sins are we struggling with? What particular virtues do we want to acquire? It is helpful in this regard to be familiar with the seven deadly sins: pride, anger, lust, gluttony, covetousness, envy and sloth. This is another way of looking at the moral law. They are ways we fall short of the ideal of love. There are virtues that correspond to the deadly sins, such as humility, charity, chastity, self control, generosity, contentment, and diligence. As we pray for and practice these virtues, we sin less.

The Procession to the Altar

¶ *The service begins with a procession to the altar by the Priest and servers. The People stand for the procession.*

¶ *A hymn may be sung. Hymnals are in the pews. The hymn numbers are on the hymn board.*

The Collect for Purity

Priest. The Lord be with you.
People. And with thy spirit.
Priest. Let us pray. (¶ *The People kneel.***)

ALmighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid; Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Introit. ¶ *A portion of the Psalter is sung or said.*

The Summary of the Law

¶ *On occasion, the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) is recited in the place of Summary of the Law. See addendum (page 102-103) for Decalogue and Comment.*

¶ *The Priest or Deacon says,*

Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ saith.

THOU shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.

Kyrie Eleison

The verdict of the Law leads us to ask for mercy and prepares us for the experience of redemption that follows in Word and Sacrament. Kyrie Eleison is Greek for “Lord have mercy.” It was an ancient hymn to Caesar that was adapted for Christian worship by the addition of the middle phrase, “Christ have mercy upon us.” The prayer for mercy will be answered. Christ will have mercy upon us. He will forgive us and feed us with his body and blood.

The Gloria in excelsis

The Gloria in excelsis is an ancient Christian hymn based on the hymn of the angels in Luke 2:14. It was written as a companion to the Kyrie. It raises the penitential note of the Kyrie to praise and makes clear that the Lord we are asking for mercy is Jesus Christ.

The Gloria in excelsis proclaims the Incarnation. The angels announced the birth of Christ with these words. We use the same words to herald his presence in the Eucharist.

The second Book of Common Prayer (1552) moved the Gloria in excelsis to the end of the service where it serves as a post communion hymn of praise. It is Anglo-Catholic custom to restore the Gloria in excelsis to its ancient position after the Kyrie.

During the Gloria in excelsis:

**A bow is made at the words, “we worship thee” in paragraph one.*

***A bow is made at the words “Jesus Christ” (cf. Philippians 2:10) at the beginning of paragraph two.*

****A bow is made at “receive our prayer” at the end of paragraph two.*

+ A sign of the cross is made at the end of the Gloria as a personal affirmation of what has been said.

Kyrie Eleison

¶ *The Priest and the People sing or say the Kyrie.*

Lord, have mercy upon us. *(Three times)*

Christ have mercy upon us. *(Three times)*

Lord, have mercy upon us. *(Three times)*

¶ *The Gloria in excelsis which follows below may be sung at the end of the liturgy, in which case the service continues here with the Liturgy of the Word on the next page. The Gloria is also omitted during Advent and Lent.*

Gloria in excelsis

¶ *The Priest and the People stand to sing,*

GLORY be to God on high, and on earth peace, good will towards men. We praise thee, we bless thee, *we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.

O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus** Christ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, ***receive our prayer. Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us.

For thou only art holy; thou only art the Lord; thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father. + Amen.

The Liturgy of the Word

The Collect(s)

The lessons are preceded by a prayer called the collect. The collect is introduced with the Apostolic Greeting (“The Lord be with you.” *“And with thy Spirit.”*). This verse and response is found in the earliest liturgies and follows the biblical custom (cf. Ruth 2:4) of greeting one another in the name of the Lord.

The collects are addressed to God the Father. An attribute or aspect of God’s person or work is recalled. A petition is made. And the prayer is offered through the person of Jesus Christ. Some collects are offered directly to Christ. There will be more than one collect when there is an octave (an eight day celebration of a feast), when two or more feasts occur on the same day, or when there is seasonal collect to be said after the collect for the day (Advent and Lent).

The Epistle and Gospel

The epistle is read from the right (traditionally south) end of the altar, or from the lectern. Hence, this side of the altar is called the epistle side. It is ancient tradition to have a gospel procession in which the gospel book is carried from the sanctuary (the front part of the church, within the communion rail, where the altar is) to the nave (the main body of the church where the people sit). This symbolizes Christ’s bringing of the gospel to the people. When there is no gospel procession, a remnant of it remains in the moving of the book from the right side of the altar to the left (traditionally north) end of the altar. Hence, the left side of the altar is called the gospel side.

The lessons speak to the whole church, but they also have something to say to each worshiper. Try to discern what God is saying to you each week through the lessons. Come to church expecting that God will speak to you. The lessons will have greater impact if you are in the habit of reading the Bible in a disciplined manner during the week.

** The People stand in special reverence for the words of Christ in the gospel.*

*** By ancient tradition, the gospel is read by the Deacon. If there is no Deacon present, it is read by the Priest, who was a Deacon before he was ordained Priest.*

+++ While the gospel is announced, the People make three small crosses with the thumb, one on the forehead, one on the mouth and one on the heart. This represents a prayer that the words of the gospel will transform our thinking, speaking, and our heart.

The Liturgy of the Word

Priest. The Lord be with you.
People. And with thy spirit.
Priest. Let us pray.

The Collect(s)

¶ *The Priest says the Collect (prayer) of the Day and any other collects (prayers) appropriate for the day or season.*

The Epistle

Reader. The Epistle is written in the ___ chapter of ___, beginning at the ___ verse.

¶ *The People sit for the reading of the Epistle. After the Epistle is read,*

Minister. Here endeth the Epistle.
People. Thanks be to God.

Gradual. ¶ *A portion of the Psalter is sung or said during the procession of the Gospel.*

¶ *The People stand for the reading of the Gospel.**

The Holy Gospel

***Deacon or Priest:* +++The Holy Gospel is written in the ___ chapter of ___, beginning at the ___ verse.

¶ *After the Gospel is announced, the People sing or say,*

Glory be to thee, O Lord.

¶ *After the Gospel is read, the People sing or say,*

Praise be to thee, O Christ.

The Nicene Creed

The Nicene Creed is the authoritative summary of the Faith. In the liturgy it serves as our assent to the faith expressed in God's Word.

The Nicene Creed was written by the Church in the fourth century in response to the Arian heresy. The Arians said that Jesus is part of the Creation. The Church said, No! Jesus is part of the Creator. The essential distinction is between "made" (the Creation) and "begotten" (the Son of God). The begetting of the Son by the Father is referred to as "The Eternal Generation of the Son." To use an ancient phrase, "There never was a time when the Son was not."

The Nicene Creed identifies Jesus as the agent of creation: "By whom all things were made." Romans 1:25 defines idol worship as the worship of the creation instead of the creator. It would be wrong to worship Jesus unless he is God. The Nicene Creed also affirms the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the Creed sets forth our Trinitarian faith. The Nicene Creed also teaches us that Jesus is genuinely human ("And was made man"). Thus, it asserts the two foundational doctrines of the faith. God is Trinity. And Jesus is fully God and fully man.

The third paragraph extends belief in the Holy Ghost to belief in the Church, which the Holy Ghost created (Acts 2). The true Faith is the Catholic and Apostolic faith into which the Holy Ghost led the Church (John 16:13).

* *Bow at the name of Jesus (cf. Philippians 2:10).*

** *Genuflect (or bow) to acknowledge that Jesus humbled himself to be made man (cf. Philippians 2:5-7).*

*** *Rise to acknowledge that the exaltation of Jesus came on the cross (John 3:14).*

**** *Bow to acknowledge that we worship the Holy Spirit because he also is God.*

+ *The sign of the cross is made at the end of the Creed. This is an outward acknowledgment that one accepts the truth just recited. The sign of the cross is the most ancient Christian gesture of worship. It is recorded that the early Christians made the sign of the cross as they witnessed the deaths of the martyrs.*

The sign of the cross is made by touching the finger tips in succession to the forehead, chest, left shoulder and right shoulder.

The Sermon

The sermon will generally be an exposition of either the epistle or gospel, but may pick up some other theme of the season or the faith. As with the lessons, the key to the sermon is determining what God is saying to you. It is not necessary for the sermon to be the best ever preached for it to speak to you. What God says to you may be something different than the sermon's main point. Avoid being defensive or critical. Be open to what the Holy Spirit has to say (cf. I Corinthians 2:1-5).

The Nicene Creed

¶ *The Priest and the People say,*

IBELIEVE in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, And of all things visible and invisible:

And in one Lord *Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God; Begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God; Begotten, not made; Being of one substance with the Father; By whom all things were made: Who for us men and for our salvation **came down from heaven, And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, And was made man: ***And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried: And the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures: And ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of the Father: And he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead; Whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, The Lord, and Giver of Life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; Who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped**** and glorified; Who spake by the Prophets: And I believe one Catholic and Apostolic Church: I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins: And I look for the Resurrection of the dead: And the Life of the world to come. + Amen.

The Homily or Sermon

¶ *The People sit for the sermon.*

THE OFFERTORY

The Offertory is the first of the four parts of the Eucharist. At the Last Supper, Jesus took bread, blessed bread, broke bread and gave bread. We take bread and wine (Offertory), bless bread and wine (Consecration), break bread (Fraction), and give bread and wine (Communion).

The Offertory refers to the offering we make to God on the Altar. Having heard the Word of God we are moved to respond by offering ourselves to God. On Sunday, two visible actions take place. There is a collection of alms (money), and bread and wine are placed on the altar. The second of these is the essential part of the Offertory. The bread and wine are the people's gifts. The acolytes represent the people in presenting the elements to the celebrant.

We offer back to the Creator that which he gave (wheat and grape) modified by human effort (making the wheat into bread and the grape into wine). Through the tokens of bread and wine, the people (the creation) offer themselves back to God (the Creator). The alms are an appropriate complement. They are used to purchase the bread and wine. And, as Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21).

Use the time during the Offertory to reflect on the lessons and sermon and to prepare for the confession and prayers that follow.

Prayer for the Church and General Confession

The Prayer for the Church and the General Confession and Absolution are parts of the Offertory. In the prayer for "the whole state of Christ's Church" we pray for the well-being of the church, which is offering herself to God. In the confession we pray for the purification of the Church so that our offering may be worthy.

Prayer for the Church

The "holy Apostle" spoken of is St. Paul. The first sentence refers to 1 Timothy 2:1. The first paragraph ends with a prayer for unity, which should be taken to heart by all who participate in the sacrament. This was Jesus' own prayer for the Church in John 17.

The prayer for rulers spells out what the Church wants from government, based on the Bible's teachings (Rom. 13:1-7). "To the maintenance of thy true religion and virtue" does not mean it is the government's responsibility to establish religion. The point is that when the government does its God-given job of administering justice, it provides a setting in which true religion will flourish.

The prayer for "Bishops and other Ministers" covers all who minister in the name of Christ. And it makes the point that Christianity is taught by example as well as by verbal instruction. The "lively" or living Word comes from Hebrews 4:12. The ministry, like the Eucharist, consists of Word and Sacrament.

A meek heart (paragraph 4) is not a timid heart—the implication in modern English. The meek person "hears the word of God and does it" (Luke 11:28, see James 1:21). For "reverence" see Hebrews 12:28.

THE OFFERTORY

¶ *The Offertory begins as the Priest recites a verse of Scripture. During the Offertory the communion elements are prepared on the altar. On Sunday, an offering is usually taken. However, the monetary collection is not the essential part of the offertory. A collection is not usually taken at mid-week celebrations.*

¶ *The choir may sing sentences of Scripture (the Offertory Verse) and/or an anthem.*

Prayer for the Church

¶ *The Priest mentions the prayer intentions for the day, then says,*

Let us pray for the whole state of Christ's Church.

¶ *The People kneel.*

ALMIGHTY and everliving God, who by thy holy Apostle hast taught us to make prayers, and supplications, and to give thanks for all men; We humbly beseech thee most mercifully to accept our [alms and] oblations, and to receive these our prayers, which we offer unto thy Divine Majesty; beseeching thee to inspire continually the Universal Church with the spirit of truth, unity, and concord: And grant that all those who do confess thy holy Name may agree in the truth of thy holy Word, and live in unity and godly love.

We beseech thee also, so to direct and dispose the hearts of all Christian Rulers, that they may truly and impartially administer justice, to the punishment of wickedness and vice, and to the maintenance of thy true religion, and virtue.

Give grace, O heavenly Father, to all Bishops and other Ministers, that they may, both by their life and doctrine, set forth thy true and lively Word, and rightly and duly administer thy holy Sacraments.

And to all thy People give thy heavenly grace; and especially to this congregation here present; that, with meek heart and due reverence, they may hear, and receive thy holy Word; truly serving thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life.

These various adversities mentioned occur in this “transitory life” (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:17). Comfort is God’s strength. Succour is help, assistance or relief. A short silence may be kept at the end of this paragraph for each worshiper to mention those in need of prayer. Bring your prayer list to church and mention the names of those for whom you are praying.

We pray for the departed in Christ. This expresses the doctrine of the Communion of the Saints. Death does not separate the body of Christ (see Hymns 207 v. 3 & 396 v. 5). The Church has always prayed for the departed. The church does not believe that prayers for the dead can save a person’s soul after death. Rather, prayer expresses our continued concern for and fellowship with the faithful departed. We pray for their growth, which assumes that they are still alive in and with Christ (cf. Luke 23:43, Philippians 1:23).

+ A sign of the cross is made as we remember the departed and, generally, whenever we invoke a blessing during the liturgy.

Invitation to Confession and General Confession

The biblical basis for a confession of sin in the context of Communion is 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. St. Paul says that unworthy reception of the sacrament can cause harm. Therefore he writes, “let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread or drink of that cup.” The requirement that we be in love and charity with our neighbors comes from Matthew 5:23-24, where Jesus mandates that we be reconciled with our brother before we offer our gift on the altar. These requirements are set forth in the longer exhortation (BCP 85) and are stressed in the Offices of Instruction (BCP 292).

The familiar routine of general confession should not keep us from practicing specific confession. Specific confession means that we not only admit we have sinned in thought, word and deed; it means we also confess the specific thoughts, words and deeds. Part of our preparation for worship is self-examination, which should bring to mind the specific sins for which we will offer this prayer. It is highly profitable to augment general confession with the regular practice of making a specific confession to a Priest.

And we most humbly beseech thee, of thy goodness, O Lord, to comfort and succour all those who, in this transitory life, are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity.

And we also + bless thy holy Name for all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear; beseeching thee to grant them continual growth in thy love and service, and to give us grace so to follow their good examples, that with them we may be partakers of thy heavenly kingdom. Grant this, O Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our only Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

Invitation to Confession

¶ *The Priest or Deacon says,*

YE who do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways; Draw near with faith, and take this holy Sacrament to your comfort; and make your humble confession to Almighty God, devoutly kneeling.

General Confession

¶ *The Priest and the People say,*

ALmighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, Judge of all men; We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, Which we, from time to time, most grievously have committed, By thought, word, and deed, Against thy Divine Majesty, Provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, And are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; The remembrance of them is grievous unto us; The burden of them is intolerable. Have mercy upon us, Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father; For thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, Forgive us all that is past; And grant that we may ever hereafter Serve and please thee in newness of life, To the honour and glory of thy Name; Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Absolution

In the upper room on the night of the resurrection, Christ gave the apostles authority to forgive sins (John 20:22-23)—the very authority that caused scandal when Christ exercised it (cf. Mark 2:1-12). This authority is passed on by the bishops (the successors to the apostles) to the Priests in ordination (BCP p. 546).

The Priest gives absolution in the name of Christ. The point emphasized by Priestly absolution is that forgiveness does not depend upon whether one feels forgiven. Forgiveness depends upon the promise of Christ, of which the Priest is an outward and visible sign.

+ The sign of the cross is made by the worshiper at the same time the Priest pronounces forgiveness and makes the sign of the cross towards the congregation. This gesture is an outward sign that the worshiper receives the absolution.

Comfortable Words (BCP 76)

The comfortable words give the biblical basis for the forgiveness of sins. They allow the worshiper to reflect deeply on the promise of forgiveness. They also provide a transition to the Prayer of Consecration. Each promise of the Comfortable Words is received in the sacrament. Here we who travail and are heavy laden come to Jesus. Here we receive the promise of eternal life through faith. Here Christ comes into the world to save us. Here we proclaim that Christ is the propitiation for our sins.

Absolution

¶ *The Priest says,*

ALMIGHTY God, our heavenly Father, who of his great mercy hath promised forgiveness of sins to all those who with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him; Have mercy upon you; pardon + and deliver you from all your sins; confirm and strengthen you in all goodness; and bring you to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Comfortable Words

¶ *The Priest or Deacon says,*

Hear what comfortable words our Saviour Christ saith unto all who truly turn to him.

Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. St. Matt. xi. 28.

So God loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. St. John iii. 16.

Hear also what Saint Paul saith.

This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. 1 Tim. i. 15.

Hear also what Saint John saith.

If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the Propitiation for our sins. 1 St. John ii. 1, 2.

Sursum Corda

Sursum Corda is Latin for “lift up your hearts.” These verses and responses mark the transition from Offertory to Consecration. These responses are an ancient part of the liturgy. We lift up our hearts to the throne of God and join our earthly worship with the heavenly worship described in chapters 4 and 5 of Revelation.

The Preface

The general preface acknowledges the appropriateness of thanksgiving before God. “Meet” means fitting or proper. It leads into the Proper Preface.

Proper Prefaces

The Prayer Book provides various Proper Prefaces to highlight the themes of the seasons. The Proper Prefaces state the theological meaning of each season or feast. Careful attention should be paid to the words. The Proper Prefaces provide a tour through the central doctrines of the faith.

Christmas

The Christmas preface stresses the main theological point of Christmas and the Incarnation. Jesus was made very (truly) man by the working of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1: 35), without the agency of a human father in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He was born without sin (2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 4:15) to cleanse us from all sin (1 John 1:9).

Epiphany

The theme of Epiphany is the revealing of the One who is born at Christmas. The preface uses the theme of light based on 1 Peter 2:9 (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:6 and Luke 1:79).

Purification, Annunciation and Transfiguration

The feasts of the Blessed Virgin focus on the “Mystery of the Word made flesh” because Jesus (The Word, John 1:1) received his humanity (flesh) through Mary. The preface is based on 2 Corinthians 4:6.

Sursum Corda and Preface

Priest. The Lord be with you.

People. And with thy spirit.

Priest. Lift up your hearts.

People. We lift them up unto the Lord.

Priest. Let us give thanks unto our Lord God.

People. It is meet and right so to do.

¶ *The Priest says,*

IT is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto thee, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty, Everlasting God,

¶ The Priest says or sings the Proper Preface from the following,

Proper Prefaces

CHRISTMAS

BECAUSE thou didst give Jesus Christ, thine only Son, to be born as at this time for us; who, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, was made very man, of the substance of the Virgin Mary his mother; and that without spot of sin, to make us clean from all sin.

EPIPHANY

THROUGH Jesus Christ our Lord; who, in substance of our mortal flesh, manifested forth his glory; that he might bring us out of darkness into his own glorious light.

PURIFICATION, ANNUNCIATION, and TRANSFIGURATION

BECAUSE in the Mystery of the Word made flesh, thou hast caused a new light to shine in our hearts, to give the knowledge of thy glory in the face of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lent

Lent is the fast that prepares us for Easter. The preface for Lent focuses on the rewards of genuine fasting. Self-denial trains the soul in virtue. The biblical basis for this preface is Matthew 6:16-18.

Preface of the Cross (Passiontide)

Passiontide is the last two weeks of Lent, which focus on the cross. The preface draws out the contrast between the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:9, 3:1-7) through which the serpent tempted Adam and Eve, bringing death into the world (Romans 5:12-17), and the tree of the cross through which Christ overcame the devil, sin and death (1 Peter 2:24, Hebrews 2:14-15).

Easter

The Easter preface succinctly states the theology of Easter. It is based on John 1:29 and 2 Timothy 1:10. Jesus is the true Paschal (Passover) Lamb who fulfilled the rite described in Exodus 12, destroyed death (cf. Hebrews 2:14-15), and gave us everlasting life.

Ascension

The Ascension preface summarizes Acts 1:3-9 and reflects the thought of Colossians 3:1-3, the Easter Day epistle.

Whitsuntide

The Whitsuntide (Pentecost) preface summarizes the descent of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 and describes aspects of the Spirit's work. He is the Spirit of Truth (John 16:13). He gives boldness (Acts 4:31) and zeal.

LENT

WHO By bodily fasting dost curb our sinfulness, uplift our hearts, and bestow both virtue and its reward upon us, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PREFACE OF THE CROSS (PASSIONTIDE)

BECAUSE on the wood of the Cross, thou gavest mankind salvation; that so, whence death arose, life might also rise again: and that the foe, who by a tree had conquered, by this Tree might be overcome, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

EASTER

BUT chiefly are we bound to praise thee for the glorious Resurrection of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord: for he is the very Paschal Lamb, which was offered for us, and hath taken away the sin of the world; who by his death hath destroyed death, and by his rising to life again hath restored to us everlasting life.

ASCENSION

THROUGH thy most dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who, after his most glorious Resurrection, manifestly appeared to all his Apostles, and in their sight ascended up into heaven, to prepare a place for us; that where he is, thither we might also ascend, and reign with him in glory.

WHITSUNTIDE

THROUGH Jesus Christ our Lord; according to whose most true promise, the Holy Ghost came down as at this time from heaven, lighting upon the disciples, to teach them, and to lead them into all truth; giving them boldness with fervent zeal constantly to preach the Gospel unto all nations; whereby we have been brought out of darkness and error into the clear light and true knowledge of thee, and of thy Son Jesus Christ.

Trinity

The Trinity preface states the Nicene doctrine of the Holy Trinity. God is three persons but only one substance or essence.

The alternative Trinity preface is a simpler expression of the doctrine of the Trinity.

All Saints

The All Saints preface is based on Hebrews 12:1-2. It reminds us that death does not divide the body of Christ. The unfading crown of glory is taken from 1 Peter 5:4.

Requiem

The preface for a requiem (funeral) is based on 2 Corinthians 5:1-4. While the body we have in this life (“tabernacle of our earthly habitation”) is taken away in death, we will not be left as disembodied spirits. God has prepared for us a “house eternal” in the heavens. This refers to the resurrection body we will be given when the dead are raised by Christ on the Last Day.

Sanctus

All the company of heaven includes the saints of ages past and, indeed, the faithful of all ages (the elders of Revelation 4:4). For another biblical image of this assembly in heaven, see Hebrews 12:22-24.

Sanctus is the Latin word for holy. The Sanctus is the hymn of the Seraphim in Isaiah 6:3 and the Cherubim in Revelation 4:8. The Sanctus is Trinitarian. There is one Holy for each divine person of the Holy Trinity.

Benedictus Qui Venit

Benedictus qui venit is Latin for “Blessed is he that cometh.” This comes from Psalm 118:26 as it was applied to Jesus during his triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matthew. 21:9). Just as these words heralded Christ’s entry into Jerusalem, so they herald his coming among us sacramentally in the consecration that follows.

The Eucharistic coming of Christ foreshadows his Second Coming in glory. As we prepare to meet Christ in the sacrament, we prepare to meet him when he comes again. The faithful are gathered for his coming at the altar on the Lord’s day (cf. Revelation 1:9), just as the faithful will be gathered for his coming on the Day of the Lord (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:16, Matthew 24:30-31).

+ *The sign of the cross is made during the Benedictus at the word “Blessed.”*

TRINITY

WHOO, with thine only-begotten Son, and the Holy Ghost, art one God, one Lord, in Trinity of Persons and in Unity of Substance. For that which we believe of thy glory, O Father, the same we believe of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, without any difference of inequality.

Or this

FOR the precious death and merits of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, and for the sending to us of the Holy Ghost the Comforter; who are one with thee in they Eternal Godhead.

ALL SAINTS

WHOO, in the multitude of thy Saints, hast compassed us about with so great a cloud of witnesses that we, rejoicing in their fellowship, may run with patience the race that is set before us, and, together with them, may receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away.

REQUIEM

THROUGH Jesus Christ our Lord; in whom the hope of a blessed resurrection hath shone upon us; that we, who are saddened by the certainty of dying, may be comforted by the promise of immortal life to come. For the life of thy faithful people, O Lord, is not taken away, but changed and through the tabernacle of their earthy habitation is dissolved, thou preparest them a house eternal in the heavens.

¶ *The Priest continues,*

Therefore with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious Name; evermore praising thee, and saying,

Sanctus and Benedictus Qui Venit

¶ *The Priest and the People sing,*

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, Lord God of hosts, Heaven and earth are full of thy glory: Glory be to thee, O Lord Most High.

+ Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

PRAYER OF CONSECRATION

Words of Institution

The words Jesus used at the Last Supper are called “The Words of Institution.” Through the Prayer of Consecration the elements become what Jesus meant them to become when he said, “This is my body” and “This is my blood.” Christ’s presence depends on his promise, not on whether the communicant thinks or feels that Jesus is present. The Greek word for remembrance is *anamnesis*. It means to bring something from the past into the present. In the Eucharist the historical event of the Cross is brought into the present moment so that we can receive its benefits now. The Greek word used in the New Testament for “giving thanks” is *eucharist*. Hence, the early church called the Lord’s Supper “The Eucharist.”

The words “a full perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world” address the medieval notion that the Mass somehow added to the sacrifice on Calvary (Article XXXI BCP 609).

1 Corinthians 11:25 says “as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord’s death *till he comes*.” The Eucharist looks forward to the Second Coming and the heavenly feast (Revelation 19:9). When Jesus comes again in glory, the eucharistic foretaste will give way to the reality of heaven.

+ After reciting the words, “This is my body...Do this in remembrance of me,” the celebrant genuflects, elevates the host, then genuflects again. He repeats the same action after reciting the words, “This is my blood...Do this in remembrance of me.” The worshiper makes the sign of the cross at each elevation in reverence for the words of Christ and his presence in the sacrament.

The Oblation

Oblation means sacrifice or offering. The eucharistic oblation succeeds the Old Testament temple sacrifices. As the prophet Malachi wrote,

From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my Name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name and a pure offering. For my name shall be great among the Gentiles, says the Lord of Hosts (1:11).

The Church’s sacrifice is not another sacrifice that adds to the cross; it is the cross itself recalled and represented before God. We plead the merits of the one sacrifice of Christ once offered. As Hebrews says, “We have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he opened for us.”

PRAYER OF CONSECRATION

ALL glory be to thee, Almighty God, our heavenly Father, for that thou, of thy tender mercy, didst give thine only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the Cross for our redemption; who made there (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world; and did institute, and in his holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that his precious death and sacrifice, until his coming again: For in the night in which he was betrayed he took Bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take, eat, this is my Body, which is given for you; Do this in remembrance of me. + Likewise, after supper, he took the Cup; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of this; for this is my Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins; Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me. +

The Oblation

WHEREFORE, O Lord and heavenly Father, according to the institution of thy dearly beloved Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, we, thy humble servants, do celebrate and make here before thy Divine Majesty, with these thy holy gifts, which we now offer unto thee, the memorial thy Son hath commanded us to make; having in remembrance his blessed passion and precious death, his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension; rendering unto thee most hearty thanks for the innumerable benefits procured unto us by the same.

The Invocation

The ancient liturgies all contained a prayer asking God to make the gifts what Christ intended them to be. God is asked to “bless and sanctify, with thy Word [Jesus Christ] and [Holy] Spirit.” This recalls the Creation in Genesis 1 where the Father created by his Word through the Spirit.

The Invocation recalls Pentecost (Acts 2). The descent of the Spirit sanctified the first Christians. So, by invocation of the Spirit, the elements are sanctified to be holy food. The Invocation also recalls the “fire from before the Lord that consumed the burnt offerings” (Leviticus 9:24, cf. Hymn 376 v. 2).

There is a logic to the Prayer of Consecration. The consecration of the gifts begins with the Words of Institution. The gifts are offered to God in the Oblation; then they are sanctified for our use through the Invocation.

The Oblation of the Church

The last paragraph is sometime called the Oblation of the Church because it sums up the people’s participation in the eucharistic offering. We offer “our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving” (Hebrews 13:15). We also offer “ourselves, our souls and bodies” (Romans 12:1). In his book *The City of God*, St. Augustine wrote:

The whole redeemed city, that is to say, the congregation or community of the saints, is offered to God as our sacrifice through the great High Priest, who offered Himself to God in His passion for us, that we might be members of this glorious head, according to the form of a servant....this also is the sacrifice which the Church continually celebrates in the sacrament of the altar, known to the faithful, in which she teaches that she herself is offered in the offering she makes to God.

“That he may dwell in us and we in him” (cf. John 17:22-23).

The ancient commemoration of the departed is said in some places. It expresses our ongoing concern for the faithful in Christ who have died and our desire to be given a place among the company of the blessed.

The Amen signals one’s assent to, and participation in, the prayers that have been said. The Amen should be said audibly and boldly.

+ *A sign of the cross is made during the petition “be filled with thy grace and heavenly benediction.”*

+ *A sign of the cross is made at the end of the prayer when the Priest lifts up the body and blood of Christ.*

The Invocation

AND we most humbly beseech thee, O merciful Father, to hear us; and, of thy almighty goodness, vouchsafe to bless and sanctify, with thy Word and Holy Spirit, these thy gifts and creatures of bread and wine; that we, receiving them according to thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ's holy institution, in remembrance of his death and passion, may be partakers of his most blessed Body and Blood.

AND we earnestly desire thy fatherly goodness, mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; most humbly beseeching thee to grant that, by the merits and death of thy Son Jesus Christ, and through faith in his blood, we, and all thy whole Church, may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of his passion. And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto thee; humbly beseeching thee, that we, and all others who shall be partakers of this Holy Communion, may worthily receive the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son Jesus Christ, + be filled with thy grace and heavenly benediction, and made one body with him, that he may dwell in us, and we in him.

¶ *In some places, the following commemoration of the departed is added,*

Remember also, O Lord, thy servants and handmaidens who have gone before us with the sign of faith and are at rest in the sleep of peace (esp.). To these, O Lord, and to all who rest in Christ, we beseech thee to grant a place of refreshment, of light, and of peace. And vouchsafe to give unto us some portion and fellowship with thy holy Apostles and Martyrs; with John, Stephen, Matthias, Barnabas, Ignatius, Alexander, Marcellinus, Peter, Felicitas, Perpetua, Agatha, Lucia, Agnes, Cecilia, Anastasia and with all thy Saints; within whose fellowship we beseech thee to admit us.

AND although we are unworthy, through our manifold sins, to offer unto thee any sacrifice; yet we beseech thee to accept this our bounden duty and service; not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences, through Jesus Christ our Lord; by whom, and with whom, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honour and glory be unto thee, + O Father Almighty, world without end. *Amen.*

The Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer comes at the climax of the Consecration. The words "bold to say" mean that we have confident access to God through Christ. The thought comes from Hebrews 4:16.

We are able to call God "Our Father" because we have become his adopted children in baptism. "When we cry Abba! Father! It is the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:15-16). In the Eucharist, having just remembered the sacrifice of Christ that reconciles us with God, we renew the privilege of calling God "Father."

THE FRACTION

The Priest breaks the bread as he says, "The peace of the Lord be always with you." This mirrors the "He broke" of the Last Supper. The Fraction represents the total offering or "breaking" of Christ in sacrifice to the Father. It also represents our being broken with him in sacrifice. The proper attitude at this point of the liturgy is complete surrender to God.

Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei means "Lamb of God." This hymn is a traditional part of the liturgy. It calls to mind the connection between Eucharist and Passover. Jesus is the Passover Lamb (Revelation 5:6, 1 Corinthians 5:7). It is a fitting climax to the preparation for Communion. We want two things from Christ: mercy and peace. Peace is the Jewish *Shalom*. It means spiritual and psychological wholeness. During Eastertide, the Pascha Nostrum (a chant based on 1 Corinthians 5:7-8) may be substituted for the Agnus Dei.

And now, as our Saviour Christ hath taught us, we are bold to say,

¶ *The Priest and the People say,*

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, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE FRACTION

¶ *As the Priest breaks the Consecrated Bread he says,*

Priest. The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People. And with thy spirit.

Agnus Dei

¶ *The Priest and the People sing or say,*

OLAMB of God, that takest away the sins of the world,
Have mercy upon us.

OLAMB of God, that takest away the sins of the world,
Have mercy upon us.

OLAMB of God, that takest away the sins of the world,
Grant us thy peace.

The Prayer of Humble Access

This prayer is based on the healing of the centurion's servant (Matthew 8:5-13) and the healing of the Canaanite woman's daughter (Matthew 15:21-18). It expresses clearly what it means to be justified by faith (cf. Luke 18:9-14). Its petition for worthy reception of Christ's body and blood is based on John 6:56.

COMMUNION

Presentation of the Lamb of God

This is a quote from John 1:29. Just as John the Baptist presented the Incarnate Son of God to the people and invited them to receive Christ, so the Priest presents Jesus Christ, sacramentally present, to the people, who then come forward to receive him.

+ A sign of the cross is made when the Priest presents the sacrament before the people.

The Words of Administration

These are products of the Anglican Reformation. They stress the two aspects of the sacrament: the objective gift of Christ's body and blood and the subjective disposition with which we are to receive him.

After communion, time should be spent in prayer reflecting on the gift we have been given. Prayers of praise and thanksgiving are most appropriate here, as opposed to intercession or petition.

** See "A Note on the Reception of Holy Communion" on page 64 of this booklet.*

A genuflection to the altar is made when leaving the pew because of Christ's sacramental presence on the altar.

*** Communion is received with outstretched hands, the right hand supporting the left. Communion is taken into the mouth directly from the palm of the hand. It is not picked up with the fingers. If one prefers to receive Communion by intinction, the host is left in the outstretched hands. When the Priest or Deacon comes by with the chalice, the host will be dipped and placed on the tongue.*

The cup is received by gently holding the base of the chalice between the thumb and middle of the index finger and gently assisting the Priest or Deacon in bringing the chalice to the mouth.

Communion may also be received directly on the tongue. When the Priest comes by, the mouth is opened and the tongue extended. The Priest places the host on the tongue. The chalice is received as above.

The worshiper may make the sign of the cross before and/or after receiving communion.

The Prayer of Humble Access

¶ *The Priest and People say,*

WE do not presume to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table. But thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy: Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.

COMMUNION

¶ *The Priest says,*

BEHOLD the Lamb of God. + Behold him who takes away the sins of the world.

¶ *The People come to the altar rail by rows, beginning with the front row, to receive Holy Communion. Those who are not receiving Holy Communion are encouraged to come to the altar to receive a blessing. To receive a blessing, kneel at the altar rail with your arms folded across your chest. **

Communion. ¶ *A portion of Scripture or the Psalter is sung or said.*

The Words of Administration

¶ *When the Priest administers the Body of Christ, he says, ***

THE Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith, with thanksgiving.

¶ *And the minister who delivers the Cup says, ***

THE Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's Blood was shed for thee, and be thankful.

¶ *After Communion, a hymn may be sung.*

Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Prayer of Thanksgiving is one of the most theologically loaded prayers in the liturgy. The sacrament is spiritual food (1 Corinthians 10:3-4). It provides tangible assurance of “God’s favour and goodness towards us” (Luke 1:30, Ephesians 1:5-8); that we are members in Christ’s body (1 Cor. 12:27) and heirs of the kingdom (Titus 3:7). The prayer points us back out into the world. We have been renewed by grace to “do all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in” (Ephesians 2:10).

Many people get the Christian life backwards. They think they have to be good enough before they can be accepted by God. The liturgy teaches us that we come to God as sinners, in repentance and faith, to receive the gift of eternal life (Roman 6:23). It is only through the experience of forgiveness and the strength God gives us through the Holy Spirit that we are able to live the Christian life. Prayer always precedes holy behavior. We worship on the first day of the week. The Christian life begins at the altar of God.

The Bible teaches that there is a profound connection between the presence of Christ in the sacrament and the presence of Christ in other Christian people. Man was made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). Christians are recreated in the image of Christ. If we reverence the presence of Christ in the sacrament, we must also reverence his presence in others. As 1 John says, “He who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God, whom he has not seen?” (4:20). The good works spoken of in the thanksgiving prayer are a necessary consequence of genuine worship.

Gloria in excelsis

The Gloria in excelsis is an ancient Christian hymn based on the hymn of the angels in Luke 2:14. It was originally a companion to the Kyrie. The second Book of Common Prayer (1552) moved the Gloria in excelsis to the end of the service where it serves as a post communion hymn of praise. We stand, which reminds us that we are risen with Christ.

During the Gloria in excelsis:

** A bow is made at the words, “we worship thee” in paragraph one;*

*** A bow is made at the words “Jesus Christ” (cf. Philippians 2:10) at the beginning of paragraph two.*

**** A bow is made at “receive our prayer” at the end of paragraph two.*

+ A sign of the cross is made at the end of the Gloria as a personal affirmation of what has been said.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Priest. Let us pray. (¶ *The People kneel.*)

¶ *The Priest and People say,*

ALMIGHTY and everliving God, we most heartily thank thee, for that thou dost vouchsafe to feed us who have duly received these holy mysteries, with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ; and dost assure us thereby of thy favour and goodness towards us; and that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of thy Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people; and are also heirs through hope of thy everlasting kingdom, by the merits of his most precious death and passion. And we humbly beseech thee, O heavenly Father so to assist us with thy grace, that we may continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

Gloria in excelsis

¶ *The Gloria in excelsis is omitted during Advent and Lent, and it may be sung at the beginning of the liturgy—see page 4.*

¶ *The Priest and the People stand to sing,*

GLORY be to God on high, and on earth peace, good will towards men. We praise thee, we bless thee, *we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.

O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus** Christ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, ***receive our prayer. Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us.

For thou only art holy; thou only art the Lord; thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father. + Amen.

Closing Prayers

The closing prayer may be a seasonal post-communion prayer, a prayer appropriate to a saint's day or a prayer for a particular need.

The Blessing

The language for the closing blessing comes from Philippians 4:7. Peace is *Shalom*. It is the inner peace that results from being reconciled with God in Christ. We are not promised the absence of problems or pain in life. We are promised the redemptive presence of Christ in all things. As Jesus said,

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you (John 14:27).

These things I have spoken unto you that in me you might have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

Peace is also what Jesus invoked upon the disciples when he appeared to them in the upper room after the resurrection (John 20:21, 26). After we meet the risen Christ in the Eucharist, we leave with the same invocation of peace.

+ *The sign of the cross is made during the closing blessing as the Priest gives the blessing with the sign of the cross. This is an outward sign by which we receive the blessing.*

** *The People stand as the Priest, the representative of Christ in the liturgy, departs.*

Concluding Thoughts

In the Eucharist, the fullness of the faith is revealed. It proclaims the Incarnation. The Word of God who was made flesh two thousand years ago comes to us again in physical form. It proclaims the Cross. The Eucharist is the Church's sacrifice through which we recall and represent the Lord's death until he comes. It proclaims the Resurrection. What we receive is living bread; the Risen Christ himself is made known to us. It proclaims the Ascension. In the Eucharist we lift up our hearts to heaven, where Jesus is Lord and King. It proclaims Pentecost; through the heavenly food we are filled again with the Holy Spirit. It proclaims the Second Coming because it is a provisional feast, a foretaste of the glory that awaits us. It proclaims the Communion of the Saints: "We who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17).

¶ *A prayer may be said before the blessing. The People kneel for the prayer and the blessing.*

The Blessing

THE Peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord: And the Blessing of God Almighty, + the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you, and remain with you always. Amen.

¶ *Announcements are made, if there be any. The service then concludes with a procession out of the church by the Priest and servers. The People stand for the procession.** A hymn may be sung.*

Addendum

The Decalogue (Optional)

On occasion, in place of the Summary of the Law on page 71, the Ten Commandments are read according to the form on page 68 of the Book of Common Prayer (cf. Exodus 20:1-17). The responses to the Decalogue express the appropriate two-fold response to the law: “Lord have mercy upon us” for our failure to obey the law in the past “and incline our hearts to keep this law” in the future. The response after the tenth commandment is, “Lord have mercy upon us, and write all these thy laws in our hearts, we beseech thee.” This is based on the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:31, “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the law is no longer something external, written in stone; it is internal, part of our very nature.

The Decalogue

¶ Recited on occasion in the place of the Summary of the Law on page 71.

GOD spake these words, and said: I am the LORD thy God; Thou shalt have none other gods but me.

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them:

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain;

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath-day.

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Honour thy father and thy mother;

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Thou shalt do no murder.

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Thou shalt not steal

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Thou shalt not covet.

Lord, have mercy upon us, and write all these thy laws in our hearts, we beseech thee.