

## WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Each Sunday, we gather together to share in Holy Eucharist, breaking bread, drinking from the cup, and recognizing one another as the Body of Christ. Many if not most of us have attended church so frequently and for so long that we know the words of the liturgy by heart. That familiarity instills in us a calm comfort, as the prayers we have heard and recited since childhood seep into our souls. But such familiarity also carries with it a risk. Our ability to recite the words of the liturgy from memory has the capacity to dull our attention and affections, depriving the Eucharist of its mystery and transformative power.

Over the next seven weeks, we will explore the Holy Eucharist by providing a running narrative to accompany a video recorded Easter Eucharist. We begin tonight by delving into the first section of the service: the Gathering Rite. Before we begin, a few points will help guide our time together.

## VOCABULARY

Some of the terms you will hear used are perhaps not the ones you are most familiar with. Each term was selected deliberately for the important message it carries.

“Presider” will be used instead of priest or celebrant. The priest as presider has, of course, a unique role in any liturgical service. But we are all members of the Body of Christ, and we all celebrate the Eucharist as a community of faith. The presider’s role, as unique as it is, is to lead all celebrants in worship. We are as much participants as is the presider. The liturgy is the work of all God’s people, who assemble in Christ’s name to offer thanks and praise, and to recommit themselves to Christ’s continuing work in the world.

“Assembly” will be used instead of congregation or people. When we gather together to worship, we do something more than congregate. Our coming together, our assembling, is a spiritual union. The whole becomes greater than the sum of the individual parts. We who are many become one Body, as we prepare to share one bread and one cup. This type of union requires of us deep, awe-filled participation, as we join our voices with angels and archangels, and offer our selves, our souls and bodies to God.

“Holy Table” or “Table” will be used instead of altar. There are deep, fundamental theological points supporting the use of either term, and they cannot be explored adequately here. While both terms are entirely appropriate, the Liturgical Committee decided to use “Holy Table” for this presentation. The use of “Holy Table” or “Table” shifts us away from the sacrificial language and framework of “Altar” and towards the language of Passover and the family meal. During this Year of Eucharist, we hope to deepen our understanding of the way in which we are nourished by Christ’s body and blood. The term “Holy Table” seems more fitting in this context.

## MOVEMENT

A significant portion of this Instructional Eucharist will focus on movement. Liturgy is meant to be active and alive, not stale and dormant. Accordingly, movement is central to a vibrant liturgy. Every motion, if done authentically, can be a form of prayer. Walking, sitting, kneeling, bowing: all these forms of bodily prayer have the capacity to enhance our worship experience and draw us closer to God.

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But for a movement to transcend mere action and become prayerful, the person performing the movement must be present in it. The movement must be more than merely “going through the motions.” The quick bow that is made because we are supposed to bow is vastly different from a bow that is a deep-rooted response to the presence of the living God. Sitting with our legs crossed and an arm slung over the back of the pew might be comfortable, but it is not the best position -- physically or spiritually -- to encounter God. In the words of “An Anglican Prayer Book 1989” (the book used by the Anglican Church of Southern Africa: “Liturgy becomes true worship when the people of God clothe it with devotion of heart and mind. Then it becomes a flame, kindled and rekindled by the Holy Spirit, for our benefit and for God’s glory.”

Ideally, during worship body, mind, and spirit are integrated, and what happens with one influences the rest. Put differently, the body can lead the mind and the heart. We hope that a careful examination of some of the liturgical movements will deepen your appreciation of the liturgy, and open to you new opportunities to incorporate the interrelationship of body, mind, and spirit into our worship.

## CAMERA ANGLES

Prior to the liturgical reforms of the 1960s and 1970s, many Holy Tables were placed flush up against the so-called “east wall.” The presider would stand facing the Altar with his back towards the assembly. This created the impression that the presider was not connected to the assembly, and that he or she was praying privately, literally and figuratively turning his or her back on the assembly.

Following the reforms, many Tables were placed more centrally in the sanctuary, which created a space for the presider to stand behind and face the assembly. This had the benefit of allowing the assembly to witness the liturgical actions the presider was taking, thus deepening their worship experience. It also advanced the significant theological shift from thinking of God as transcendent (and “out there”) versus God as immanent (and “with us”).

But the new positioning also presented new problems. By facing and speaking towards the assembly, the presider can seem like an actor performing to the assembled audience. This reinforces the false and harmful notion that the celebration of the Eucharist is something done by the presider and observed by the assembly. The assembly can become dependent and passive, while the presider remains powerful and active.

The bulk of visual images in the videotaped Eucharist we will be using focus on the presider. That was an intentional and practical decision by the Liturgical Committee. It allows us to closely examine the motions the presider makes during the service and to learn about their significance. But the recording's focus on the presider should not suggest that the presider's role is any greater than the role of the rest of the assembly. Nor should it perpetuate the mistaken belief that the presider is celebrating while we are merely observing.

## RUBRICS

Finally, in our sessions you will hear references to the rubrics in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, or BCP. Rubrics are notes offering directions about the liturgy. The word comes from the Latin word for the color red, from a time when the directions were printed in red type in earlier versions of the prayer book.

Rubrics are the ground rules that the Church has put in place to ensure that both the rights and duties of all worshipers are honored. They enunciate and safeguard the structure of our common worship life, and have the force and effect of canon law: even a bishop cannot rightly ignore them. In this way, the rubrics are not dictatorial but democratic, not controlling but liberating.

And now, without further ado, we proudly present the first installment of the Trinity Church Instructional Easter Eucharist!

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## GATHERING HYMN

In the early church, there was no need for a gathering or entrance rite. Services, often at homes, were small and simpler. But as the church -- and more specifically, churches -- grew larger, gathering rituals developed, for some very practical purposes. Time was needed to allow the clergy, choir, and other members of the service to process to their seats. A time of gathering also provided the opportunity for the assembly to settle in and prepare to be attentive to worship. With so many demands and distractions in our daily lives, an opening rite that allows us time to center ourselves and to prepare for worship remains valuable, if not vital. Some presiders note at the beginning of the service: "Let us take a moment to be still, and prepare our hearts and minds for worship."

Over time, more formal entry processions evolved. Processions were at first accompanied by the reciting of psalms, and later by hymns or canticles. The current BCP rubrics provide that "a hymn, psalm, or anthem may be sung" during the procession. The entrance procession is an enacted symbol, rich with many allusions: the pilgrimage of the Christian life; movement from distraction to mindfulness; and the journey to the kingdom are but a few.

## BOWING

As the presider approached the altar, you may have noticed him pause and bow. This bow is an acknowledgment of the sacredness of the Holy Table, and of the sacrament that is about to take place. Some people choose to bow at the mention of the name of Jesus, a practice based in the language of St. Paul's letter to the Philippians: "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow." In 1274, Pope Gregory wrote a letter suggesting that worshippers bow their heads at mention of Jesus' name, while interiorly bending the knee of their heart.

As with every other gesture, authenticity demands that the mind and heart be engaged so the gesture becomes more than empty ritual. A bow by the presider or by anyone should be intentional, not rushed. A bow is commonly made with one's eyes reverently lowered along with the body, not directed towards what is being revered, such as the altar or the cross. A "solemn bow" is a bow of the entire body at the waist, which is contrasted with a more simple bow of the head.

Scripture is replete with people instinctively averting their gaze when encountering God, like Moses at the burning bush, or Adam and Eve in the garden. It is this kind of awe before the presence of God that the practice of bowing replicates, as we reverence the sacred mysteries of the Eucharist.

## KISSING

When the Presider took his place behind the Holy Table, he kissed it. This devotion appeared in worship as early as the 7<sup>th</sup> century. This kiss expresses reverence toward Christ, whose presence is symbolized by the Table or, more accurately, in the food and drink that are consecrated upon it.

The kiss is not meant to be romantic, nor should it be a perfunctory peck. Rather, with honor and respect the presider's kiss is a form of greeting or welcome to Christ, recognizing the Lord's presence in the midst of the assembly.

## ACCLAMATION

The first spoken words of this Eucharist are the Acclamation.

In the BCP, three Acclamations are given: one for Lent and penitential occasions; one (which we use today) for Easter Day through the Day of Pentecost; and one for other times. The liturgical resource [Enriching Our Worship](#) provides other variations of the Acclamation. Rite II requires the use of an Acclamation, while Rite I makes it optional.

The Acclamation is not a prayer. It is more of a statement acknowledging and praising God. Note how the presider looks towards the assembly and invites them to give their response of praise following their words.

The Acclamation used today incorporates what was the traditional Christian Easter greeting. As recounted in Luke's Gospel, after meeting the Risen Christ on road to Emmaus, the disciples who met him returned to Jerusalem and proclaimed to their companions, "The Lord has risen indeed!"

## CROSSING

Many people make a sign of the cross as a form of prayer. Although crossing oneself is not required, the service bulletin indicates with a small cross the places in the liturgy where this action is appropriate. Many people cross themselves during the blessing, or the absolution, or at the mention of the Trinitarian Name: "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." The Acclamation is another place that some people choose to cross themselves.

Making the sign of the cross dates back to at least 200 A.D., when Christians marked the sign on their foreheads. The gesture developed in different ways in different parts of the world and in different Christian denominations. Most commonly in the west, the sign of the cross is made with the right hand tracing a cross from top to bottom, and then from left to right: forehead, waist or chest, left shoulder, right shoulder.

As with other liturgical movements, the significance of crossing oneself is not the outward motion but the inward sentiment. Crossing should be done deliberately, but not dramatically, and it will seem more meaningful if it is done thoughtfully, not mechanically.

## COLLECT FOR PURITY

The first communal prayer said in the service, the Collect for Purity, dates to at least the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Originally, it was prayed privately by the presider in the sacristy during his preparations before the liturgy. Archbishop Thomas Cranmer moved it to the public part of the service in the 1552 prayer book, and it now serves as a preparatory prayer for the entire assembly.

Note how the presider deliberately keeps his eyes focused on the altar book, even though he most certainly has the Collect for Purity committed to memory. This action conveys that the collect is a prayer for the entire church, not just for the presider. Although the BCP rubrics indicate that the presider should pray the Collect for Purity, that view is in the minority and most Anglican Prayer Books assume that this prayer will be prayed by the whole assembly. At Trinity, we customarily pray it together.

The Collect for Purity is required during Rite I, but optional during Rite II, and is appropriately omitted or replaced by an appropriate preparatory prayer during festal seasons. Its sobering opening statement recognizes God's ability to know everything about us, and is followed by a supplication that the Holy Spirit cleanse the shame of our secret sin.

As we begin our preparation for worship, the Collect for Purity recognizes that the very ability to celebrate the liturgy is predicated upon God's grace, and we pray that the Holy Spirit may inspire us to worthily magnify God's holy Name.

### *ORANS*

During the Collect for Purity, the presider assumes the *orans* position. (Although, as discussed earlier, the Collect for Purity is more commonly prayed by the assembly and presider together, in which case the presider typically does not use the *orans* position). *Orans* is a Latin word, translated as "one who is praying." This posture is shown in the earliest depictions of Christians at prayer. The *orans* position is formed by standing with arms spread, hands open and palms facing upward.

There is rich symbolism in the *orans* position. It is a stance of openness and vulnerability, as well as a gesture of reaching toward God, and thus a wonderful encapsulation of the purpose of worship. It goes back to Moses holding up his hands in prayer for victory by Joshua and the Israelites in battle. The *orans* stance also mirrors the position of Christ's outstretched arms on the cross.

The *orans* stance is not reserved for clergy; some lay people assume the position during prayer. Keeping in mind the need for authenticity, the *orans* position is best used not mechanically but rather by integrating one's internal disposition into an external gesture. As our spirit reaches out to God, our body mirrors that action.

### *GLORIA*

The Collect for Purity is followed by a song of praise. Historically, the hymn that was sung was one used frequently in the daily office, thus allowing the assembly to participate easily with a hymn that was familiar to them. The Gloria in Excelsis, used in the morning office since the fourth century, is one such hymn.

The BCP sets forth the seasons during which it is customary to sing the Gloria or another song of praise, including Easter Day through the Day of Pentecost. The Gloria is not to be used during the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent. Although the BCP rubrics permit it to be spoken, the description of the Gloria as a "song" or "hymn" emphasizes the apparent preference that it be sung. Festive singing of the Gloria -- such as we hear today -- does much more to inspire than does a bland, spoken recitation.

The Gloria begins with the words the angels sang when announcing the birth of Jesus to the shepherds in Luke's Gospel. It offers praise and thanksgiving, and petitions for mercy. In the middle of the Gloria, the mention of "Lord Jesus Christ" is an opportunity for people to bow, as discussed earlier.

## COLLECT OF THE DAY

As early as the fifth century, a prayer came to be included in the entrance rite. The final element of the gathering rite, this prayer serves to “collect” or call to attention the assembly before the first scripture reading. The BCP appoints one collect for each Sunday of the church year. There are collects for special occasions, and collects for saints on their feast day. Some collects emphasize the season of the church year, others echo the scripture lessons to be read that day. Still others express more general concerns or needs.

A collect is a specific form of prayer, with a specific structure, much like a sonnet or haiku. Boiled down to its simplest form, a collect has three component parts: invocation; petition; and conclusion. This structure imbues collects with a succinct, rhythmic, and symmetric feel.

The collect is preceded by a salutation: “The Lord be with you.” This salutation has its roots in the book of Ruth and the greeting Boaz offers to the reapers. It is annunciative language, proclaiming the presence of God with the assembly. The salutation is not a prayer, but rather an invitation to prayer. Notice that the presider keeps his hands folded during the salutation, and moves to the *orans* prayer position for the recitation of the collect.

As it does for the Nativity of our Lord, the BCP appoints three alternative collects for Easter Day. The first, which we use in this service, has as its source the Gregorian sacramentary, a 10<sup>th</sup> century manuscript of liturgical services. It was originally used as a collect during Holy Week. The association of this collect with Holy Week, and its language of death and life, make it a fitting transition from the time of meditation on Christ’s passion to the Easter celebration of Christ’s resurrection.

Following the collect, the presider takes his seat, as does the assembly, for the Liturgy of the word.