

CHAPTER V

INTRODUCTION TO THE LITURGY: THE HOLY EUCHARIST

This chapter is designed to help explain and point out the various parts of the service of Holy Communion, their meaning and significance. There are a variety of interpretations, allegorizations, justifications, of each part of the service, which have come about over the centuries. Our discussion will be directed more toward origins and basic meanings that seem to be fundamental to the act, rite, or form.

Rite refers to the written text and content of the liturgy, while **ceremony** refers to the actions of the liturgy. Throughout this chapter we will be exploring both the rites and ceremonies of the Eucharist according to the usage of the Episcopal Church. It will become obvious that it is the ceremonies that can become complicated and involved, and sometimes even obscure the impact of the intent of the rite. Most ceremonies have their origin in practical matters, *i.e.*, washing of the hands at the offertory or the breaking of the Bread at Communion. Others are elaborate or ornate accretions, such as how many times the priest makes the sign of the cross over the elements during the Consecration.

The term *rubric* refers to the directions in the Prayer Book which direct the specifics of the services. The term means "red" because the early rubrics were printed in red ink, as is still the case with the Altar Service Book. The Rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer are in many instances supplementary to Canon Law. This means that they play an important part in the structuring of the church's liturgical life. In reading the rubrics, one gains insight into the subtle meanings of the services as well as an understanding of what is considered important. Following each major set of services in the 1979 Prayer Book, there are additional directions on the conduct of the services.

Worship for Anglicans conveys more than just an act on the part of people who gather to perform certain rites. For instance, the rite of the Holy Eucharist, as celebrated in the Chapel of St. Anselm, where only two or three are gathered, is the same rite with the same reality experienced as that celebrated in the National Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul in Washington, D.C. with some 5,000 people present and presided over by the Presiding Bishop flanked by an entourage of bishops. This is because "Anglicans have always understood their liturgy to be more than just human activity initiated here on earth; it is a participation in the worship of heaven. The ultimate destiny of humanity is seen in participation in that

worship."⁶⁵ This discernment is similar to that of Ignatius of Antioch, the third Bishop of Antioch, succeeding Evodius, the successor of Peter the Apostle.

Ignatius wrote his letters on the way to martyrdom around 110 C.E. He reports that he is well acquainted with John the Apostle and others of the Apostolic band. He is the first to refer to the Eucharist as the "medicine of immortality." He says, in his letter to the Ephesians: "Come together in common, one and all without exception in charity, in one faith and in one Jesus Christ, who is of the race of David according to the flesh, the son of man and the Son of God, so that with undivided mind you may obey the bishop and the priests, and break one Bread which is the medicine of immortality and the antidote against death, enabling us to live for ever in Jesus Christ."⁶⁶ Hence, there is the call to celebrate the Eucharist frequently as in a sense of focus and direction. Here is the coming together of heaven and earth. "Be zealous, therefore, to assemble more frequently to render thanks [*to celebrate the Eucharist*] and praise to God. For, when you meet together frequently, the powers of Satan are destroyed and danger from him is dissolved in the harmony of your faith."⁶⁷

What we do in the Divine Liturgy is not a matter of fancy or preference as though what we do is optional. What we do in Divine Liturgy, even though this Liturgy is imperfect and subject to revision from age to age, is not penultimate, but ultimate! For what we do is to join with "Angels and Archangels and the whole company of Heaven in the praise and adoration of Almighty God." And this is what we have been created to do, and that to which we look forward for all eternity.

The service itself is called by many names: *Holy Communion*, *The Divine Liturgy*, *The Service of the Lord's Supper*, or *the Mass*. *Eucharist* is perhaps the most widely used term, meaning "Thanksgiving." *Mass* comes from the Latin used in the dismissal, *Ite missa est* (Thus, it is dismissed!). To go to Mass, means that you stayed for everything: to the end, through the Dismissal. We are sent forth from the experience of the Risen Lord into the world.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist is itself a divine drama of the life of Christ. The overall form of the service is the life of Christ encapsulated in the very movement of the Liturgy. Hence, meaning is found even in the general form of the service that has its own interpretations. The *Gloria in Excelsis* at the beginning, has echoes of the song of the angels at the birth of Christ. As the service unfolds, the life of Christ is portrayed, leading up to the breaking of the Body of Christ for us. The Risen Lord appears to the faithful, and in the *Breaking of the Bread*. He is recognized. Each service is an enactment of the story of his life. Each service becomes Gospel, proclamation of the Risen Lord.

65. Stephen Sykes and John Booty, eds. *The Study of Anglicanism*, SPCK/Fortress Press, New York (1988), p. 87.

66. Ludwig Scholpp, ed. *The Apostolic Fathers*, CIMA Publishing Company, New York (1947), p. 95.

67. Schopp, p. 92.

A service of Holy Eucharist easily divides into two parts. The first part focuses on the Word of God, and is called the *Liturgy of the Word*. The second part focuses on the Altar and Communion and is called the *Liturgy of the Table*.

THE OPENING OF THE SERVICE

When we enter the church, in a sense, the service has already begun. This is God's House, God is already here, and when you enter, God is waiting. This is a time of personal devotions and personal prayer. Kneeling has long been a customary position for prayer, and kneelers are provided in the pews, should you wish, at this time to make use of them. Some will make the sign of the cross at this time, recalling their baptism and that through baptism we enter the church and are incorporated into Christ. It is also customary in the Episcopal Church not to talk during this time or carry on idle conversation. This is a time of preparation and anticipation. Silence remains the hallmark of these moments before the service begins. The congregants are encouraged to use this time for personal meditation and reflective prayer. This is a time of contemplative expectation.

After entering the church, and before entering the pew, it is customary to reverence the altar, either bowing or genuflecting. Of the two, bowing (or nodding of the head) is both the older, and the more widespread custom. The practice of reverencing the altar grew from the acknowledgment of the bishop by the congregation. And so it is still today, although the bishop may not be present. In some of our congregations, there is a chair in the Sanctuary that is reserved for the bishop when he is present, though today in numerous congregations they are without a Bishop's Chair (*cathedra*). When the chair is present it is a visual reminder of the place and role of the bishop in the life of the church. The Bishop's Chair for the diocese is in the cathedral of the diocese, the church that takes its name from the presence of the *cathedra* of the bishop. The custom began in the first century when the congregation would gather in the atrium of the home or villa for the Divine Services. The bishop would be seated with the presbyters of the congregation. As the people gathered, they bowed toward the bishop in acknowledgment of his authority.

This bowing or genuflecting has been transferred over the centuries to indicate our respect and subjection to Jesus Christ, the cross, the altar, or the Blessed Sacrament on Reserve, which is the Presence of Christ in our midst in the blessed Bread and Wine of the Altar. All of these reasons are appropriate and indeed right. This transference of reverence has occurred because the bishop is not always physically present in the service, yet the custom of bowing remained a part of the life of the liturgy.

In the same way that we acknowledge our bishop, whose presence is known to us at our altar, we likewise acknowledge our bishop, as his or her presence is known to us in our priest. The priest is not only the bishop's person, but is the bishop's gift, and the bearer of the bishop's presence, love, and caring for us. The priest is the symbol or *Icon* of the bishop, who is likewise the symbol or *Icon* of Christ. When

the clergy enter or leave the service, the congregation stands out of respect.

The fourfold ministry of bishop, priest, deacon, and laity remains imbedded in the liturgy. The chief celebrant at all Eucharists is, in theory, the bishop. This is adhered to throughout the rubrics. Each level of ministry has a significant place in the Liturgy. "At all celebrations of the Liturgy, it is fitting that the principal celebrant, whether bishop or priest be assisted by other priests, and by deacons, and lay persons."⁶⁸ It is a total ministry of the people of God that is involved in the Divine Liturgy. As Ignatius says in the *Letter to the Trallians*, "You must continue, then, to do nothing apart from the bishop. Be obedient, too, to the priests as to the apostles of Jesus Christ. . . in the same way all should respect the deacons as they would Jesus Christ, just as they respect the bishop as representing the Father and the priests as the council of God and the college of the Apostles."⁶⁹

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

The gathering hymn we sing serves as a general call to the Liturgy of the Word; that part of the service which deals with the reading of Scripture and the exposition given in the sermon. The practice of singing together dates back to at least the 1st century. Singing the whole service was customary in Judaism and is still the practice of the Eastern Church. This is seen not only in the numerous hymns in the New Testament, but in the references from the Church Fathers. Singing, what is sung, and when music is used throughout the Liturgy has shifted and changed throughout the ages. "From a very early period, possibly from the beginning as a heritage of Judaism, the prayers and readings from the Scriptures were sung. In the Eastern rite today the entire liturgy is sung."⁷⁰

If there is a procession during the opening hymn as the ministers (lay and clerical) enter the church, there is the custom of bowing when the Processional Cross passes by. It is always the case that the congregation stands when the ministers enter, even if there is no hymn. The Procession may include incense as well as the Processional Cross these precede the choir, servers, and clergy (deacons, priest, and bishop).

The use of incense is an ancient practice. Incense was used in the Temple worship of ancient Israel. There was an offering of incense at the morning (9:00) and evening (afternoon or 3:00 p.m.) service in the Temple when the sacrifices were made. It was part of the sacrifice of atonement made daily on behalf of Israel. Incense was a very costly item, and hence was a very important expression of offering. Some of its more practical uses were that of fumigation, a deodorant. The church rejected the use of incense in the first few centuries due to its association with the worship of the emperor. It became a

68. Book of Common Prayer,(1979), p. 322.

69. The Apostolic Fathers, pp. 102-3.

70 Marion J. Hatchett, *Commentary on the American Prayer Book*, the Seabury Press, New York (1980), p. 33.

part of the church's worship following the conversion of Constantine, first used to proceed the clergy and then before the Gospel Book.⁷¹ In today's service, incense is used at the Entrance, not only in procession, but with the censuring of the altar at the beginning of the service; with the reading of the Gospel; at the Offertory as the altar, gifts, and the people are censed and offered to God; and as the Eucharistic Prayer is said.

GREETING OR SALUTATION

The service proper begins with the *Greeting or Salutation*. This is based upon the traditional beginnings of Jewish prayers, opening with a blessing of God ("*Blessed are You, O Lord God, King of the Universe*"). The salutation changes seasonally, for instance in Lent the structure has a penitential mood, and during Eastertide it is the joyful proclamation, "Alleluia. Christ is risen!" This opening acclamation has been kept most intact in Eastern Liturgies, and is only now beginning to be revived in the West.

COLLECT FOR PURITY, GLORIA, KYRIE, AND TRISAGION

These greetings are followed by the *Collect for Purity* ("Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid"). A collect, (pronounced *COLL-ect*) is a short prayer following a set form, almost poetic in structure and form: opening salutation, ascription, petition, doxology. Poetic in its nature, it is similar in many ways to Japanese *haiku*. It is as rigid a structure/form as is a sonnet. The word "collect" "may signify the summing up of the prayers of the individuals who have been called to pray. Or it may designate the prayer said at the collecting of the people at the start of the Mass, for the collect was inserted immediately after the salutation which, at an earlier stage, had served to call the people to attention before the reading of the first lection."⁷²

The *Collect for Purity* was originally a private prayer said by the priest as he vested. A ritual prayer for cleanliness, it has its roots in the Jewish concept of being ritually clean. No longer a private prayer, we, as a royal priesthood of believers, exercise a part of our priesthood, as this public plea for purity is read, so that we may approach God, cleansed in God's sight. Following the *Collect for Purity*, is either the *Gloria ill Excelsis* ("Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on Earth"), the *Kyrie eleison* ("Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy"), or the *Trisagion* ("Holy God, holy and might, holy immortal One, have mercy upon us").

The *Gloria in Excelsis* is an ancient Greek hymn that is composed of "a series of acclamations, arranged in three stanzas."⁷³ The three stanzas are the Antiphon, that is the song of the angels from Luke's Gospel at the announcement of the birth of Jesus. This is "a kind of praise-shout to the glory of God and

71. Hatchett, p. 152.

72. Hatchett, p. 163-4.

73. Massey Hamilton Sheperd, Jr., *The Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary*, Oxford University Press, New York (1955), p. 84.

the coming of his salvation to men through the Messiah-Redeemer."⁷⁴ This is an ancient Jewish Messianic song. The second stanza is composed around the responses in the *Kyrie* and *Agnus Dei*. The third stanza comes from the Eastern liturgies reminiscent of the primitive confession of the Christian faith. It is the model of the ultimate hymn of praise that the church offers. The rubrics direct that the *Gloria* not be used during the seasons of Lent and Advent. These seasons have a penitential mode that is not compatible with the use of this hymn of praise. Lent and Advent are times of introspection and penitence, and are subdued seasons. The *Gloria*, at the beginning of the service, echoes the joy of the manifestation of the Christ. This song has always been associated with moments of high praise.

The *Kyrie*, printed in both the original Greek and in English, was originally a secular greeting of the one in authority. It is similar to the British acclamation, "God save the Queen."⁷⁵ The middle response was changed to *Christe eleison*, giving it a distinctive Christian touch. The *Kyrie* is said in units of three—either three, six, or nine times. This probably symbolizes the Trinity of the Godhead. Originally part of the Eastern Liturgy, it passed to the West at an early date, and has been kept at this spot, and as a response in litanies and prayers since.

The *Trisagion* comes from the liturgy of the Eastern churches. Its original use is as the entrance at the opening of the rite, but this later changed to be sung following the Little Entrance, *i.e.*, the entrance of the clergy with the Scriptures. It is still used at this point of the service in the Eastern Church.

COLLECT FOR THE DAY

In traditional Anglican fashion, we are next greeted and bidden to pray in the name of Lord. This is first a sharing of the presence of the Lord, and next an affirmation of community. The call to prayer is the last element. The prayer that follows is the *Collect of the Day*. This prayer varies from day to day, and occasion to occasion. These are found in the Prayer Book, in the section marked Collects (Traditional-Contemporary).

SCRIPTURE READINGS AND SERMON

What follows next is the very heart of the Liturgy of the Word. Everything in the service to this point has been moving towards this moment, and finds its fulfillment in the Word. The reading and exposition of the Scriptures are not optional for the life of the community. During the reading of the Old Testament and New Testament Lessons, the congregation is seated. In the Episcopal Church more Scripture is read and heard in the services than in any other Christian community. Scripture quotations and paraphrases comprise the major content of the Prayer Book itself. This does not include the prescribed readings. The readings are set forth in a *Lectionary* found in the back of the Prayer Book. A

74. *Ibid.*

75. Hatchett, p. 319.

Lectionary is a table setting forth the readings in course, or in a set order. The use of a lectionary is an ancient practice, followed even as far back as the time of Jesus. The Eucharistic Lectionary provides for an orderly reading of the entire Bible (except for a few passages of records and begats), over a course of three years. There are two Lectionaries in the *Book of Common Prayer*. One is the Eucharistic Lectionary for years A, B, and C. The other is the Daily Office Lectionary for years one and two.

There are three distinctions made among those who participate in the readings and the service. The first is a *Lector* who is any person asked to read from time to time the lections or lessons at any given service. This person is not licensed. The second is the *Lay Reader* who is a person who has gone through training and preparation to be able to lead the services of the church, which includes reading the Lessons. The third person is the *Eucharistic Minister* who assists in the administration of the Eucharist. The Lay Reader and Eucharistic Minister are both licensed by the bishop and must conform to the Canons of the church as they work under the direction of the priest. Here is a complete expression of the ministry of aspects of the People of God.

This licensing is not to keep the Bible from the laity, quite the contrary. At the reader's stand (lectern) is an open Bible, always open, for use by the laity. At any time you may come into the church, and read the Bible for yourself. This is a custom we maintain from times when Bibles were scarce, illiteracy common, and English a vulgar tongue. Anglicanism has traditionally favored the inclusion of Bible reading into the habits of the people of God. The reason for lay readers (or lectors) is that we recognize that the public reading of scripture is a form of ministry, requiring some training and a certain preparation.

OLD TESTAMENT

The first reading is from the *Old Testament*. The Christian Church has always recognized our God as the God of the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and of the Matriarchs Sarah, Rebecca, and Rachel. The story of the Jews is our own story! The Hebrew Scriptures remain the foundational Scriptures for the Christian Church. From the very beginning of the church in the first century, and even more emphatically and definitively in the middle of the second century of the Common Era, the church has declared that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the one revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures. The Hebrew Scriptures continue to play, as they always have, a vital role in the life of the church, to the point that without them the New Testament ceases to be a Christian book!

Following the Old Testament Lesson, we worship through the *Psalms*. The *Psalms* were composed and originally used in the worship of Israel as hymns. They were very much a part of the life of Jesus. They were his hymnal, often upon his lips throughout the Gospel accounts of his life. The manner

of reading the Psalms can vary. The Psalm might be read "by gender," in an alternating style with the women reading half a verse, followed by the completion of the verse by the men. Or the Psalm might be read responsively by half-verse or whole verse with a leader and congregation. To go back to an ancient and traditional style, the Psalm might be sung antiphonally, with each side of the congregation responding to the other. The Psalms can also be said in unison-or sung, using Anglican Chant. The possibilities are endless.

EPISTLE OR NEW TESTAMENT

In the first century church, it was common to read from the letters of traveling missionaries, with Paul chief among them. Gradually a corpus of "guiding letters" grew to be recognized as having special authority. From this collection of letters, part of our *New Testament* was formed. As we still read sections of these letters today, the readings are known as the *Epistle* or the *New Testament Lesson*.

GOSPEL

The practice of greeting the *Gospel* is likewise an ancient one. With glad shouts of joy, singing, triumphal marches, and sometimes incense, the proclamation of the Risen Lord is made. The Gospel is *not read*; it is Proclaimed! The ancient synagogal practice of the Jews of standing for the procession of the *Torah* is carried over into the Christian tradition as we stand for *Torah*, the Torah of the New Covenant. In the synagogue the *Torah Scroll* is taken from the *Ark* and processed throughout the congregation standing and singing, so in the same traditional manner the *Gospel Book* is presented with hymns and standing.

The proclamation is done from the midst of the people. For it is in the midst of the People of God that our *Torah* is found. The proclamation is made by the deacon, or a priest in the absence of a deacon. It is a part of both the deacon's and the priest's ministry to make the Risen Lord known to us. And it is here, as well as in the Sermon (*homily*) which follows, that this function is carried out. Rather than reading a history of the man Jesus, we are presented a living Christ.

The Sermon is not an optional element in the Eucharist. Any time the Eucharist is celebrated, a sermon or homily is to be preached. The people are seated for the sermon. They stand again with the conclusion of the sermon as the preacher gives an ascription of praise concluding the sermon. One of the early witnesses to the reading of the Scripture and the Gospels followed by a sermon is Justin Martyr. He was martyred around 165 C.E. In his First Apology he reports: "On the day which is called Sunday we have a common assembly of all who live in the cities or in the outlying districts, and the memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the Prophets are read, as long as there is time. Then, when the reader has finished, the president of the assembly verbally admonishes and invites all to imitate such examples of

virtue.⁷⁶

We turn now to the transition from the Liturgy of the Word to the Liturgy of the Table.

THE LITURGY OF THE TABLE

The *Creed* recited in the Eucharistic celebration is referred to as the *Nicene Creed*, dates from 381 C.E., from the *Second General Council* called at Constantinople by the Roman Emperor Theodosius. The church at that time was beset by controversy. Differing groups, whose names are no longer known by any but historians and scholars, both within and without the church, were at war. In an effort to reach consensus, the General Council was called. A general council was a meeting of all bishops of the Christian Church. While possessing no formal authority, its decisions came to be regarded as binding, both by the government, and by the church. The congregation stands to recite the Creed.

The use of the *Creed* in the Eucharist has a two-fold history. Some form of creed seems always to have been used. Originally, it appears the Eucharistic prayer was both prayer, and statement of belief. The use of the Nicene Creed in the Eucharist was originally done by those who announced their agreement with the consensus of the Church Catholic concerning the nature of Christ and God. They were orthodox. Uses of the Creed in its present place spread from the East, to Spain, and from there to England. From England, it spread to the rest of Europe.

Some controversy is heard about the *so-called filioque* clause. This is Latin for "and the Son". This is the part of the Creed that says that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father "and the Son". "And the Son" was not an original article of the Creed. Its inclusion is a very thorny, theologically detailed question. The *filioque* clause is not used in the more theologically sensitive, and sophisticated East. But use of it is nearly universal in the West. The real importance lies in the fact that it is the *prima facie* reason for much division, especially that of the East from the West. (NOTE: The Roman Catholic Church is in communion with some Uniate groups that have never used it.) At the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in 1994 it was voted to exclude this clause from future revisions of the Prayer Book.

In the **Prayers of the People**, which follow, we stand, as a fellowship, as a Royal Priesthood. The Priesthood of all Believers are those who have been anointed by the chrism of baptism, the liturgical expression of the Protestant Reformation principle. Here the church exercises its priestly character. We pray for the world, for the church, and for ourselves. This prayer is the very essence of intercessory prayer, the model of evangelism. We pray for other people, that they may be made whole, delivered into faith. The church has always been a *servant people*. Part of our service is to pray for others. The Prayer Book offers traditional forms for this prayer. These may be lengthened, shortened, and edited, as the

76. Justin Martyr, *The First Apology*, Thomas B. Falls, Trans., Christian Heritage, Inc. New York (1948). pp. 106-7.

occasion dictates according to the rubrics. The prayers are concluded by the celebrant, but may be lead by anyone. The concluding prayer is in the form of a collect.

Our Reformed or Protestant heritage is the congregational **Confession of sin** or **General Confession**. This is a new development for the congregants to join in the Confession, begun in "only" the 16th Century. The custom developed in the Middle Ages of the priest and his assistant to confess to one another. Later, as a general act of the people it became the custom for those who were to receive communion to be invited to the altar rail to confess. This was at a time when Communion of the people was an occasional event, required only annually of the faithful, not weekly, as is more often the case in eucharistically-centered churches today.

We kneel to say the Confession and to receive Absolution.

As someone has said, "Confession is the obverse of thanksgiving; to give thanks is to acknowledge one's sinfulness." This points out the true nature of the Confession, not an acknowledgment of one as a wretched sinner, but as real preparation to accept the bounties of God, at God's altar. Occasionally, the Confession may be omitted, for instance at celebrations where a penitential note is not appropriate.

The true resolution of the *Confession* is not in the **absolution** alone, but in the total process of being made whole. This process of being made whole may also include the laying-on-of-hands in healing, and the blessing of God. The priest gives the *Absolution* immediately after the Confession. Hence, the *Confession/Absolution*, the *laying-on-of-hands* in healing or *Unction*, and the exchange of the *Peace* of God are a part together. They flow into the Thanksgiving of being made whole by Christ Jesus.

We stand to be greeted by the celebrant with the Peace, and then to pass the Peace along to our fellow congregants. While passing the **Peace of Christ**, it is appropriate to greet one another with "*The Peace of the Lord be with you*", and to respond saying "*And also with you*". This is the Lord's peace with which we greet one another, a peace that passes understanding. A variety of tokens may be used in passing the *Peace*: a handshake, nod, embrace, or a kiss. None is necessarily better than any other is and some may not seem appropriate to some individuals. This is perhaps the freest flowing time in the service; the Peace of Christ can be wholly encapsulated in no single form.

We now focus on the **Great Thanksgiving**, the very heart of our celebration, one of gratitude (the meaning of the Greek word *Eucharist* is *Thanksgiving*.) It is fitting that the act of *Thanksgiving* begins with our return to God of some of the riches given to us in God's creation. This is the **Offertory**. The *Offering* is not something a money-hungry modern church has instituted. Rather, it reaches all the way back to our first experience. Nor is it simply here to pay the bills and to allow us to get on with the

business of the church. The first offerings were food, bread and wine, the necessary staples of life. Today we still give what we prize most, life itself, but now we do so through the medium of money. The bread and wine were tangible expressions of the re-creation of God's gifts of wheat and grapes, which in turn were re-created and given back by God as the Body and Blood of Christ. So it is today that our offering of money is the offering of the works of our hands to be re-created by God into the Body and Blood of Christ!

When the offerings are brought forward to be placed on the Altar, it is appropriate for the congregation to stand as the priestly community in the offering of the gifts in thanksgiving. It is during this time that the Altar is made ready. The priest dons his *chasuble*, or outer coat, in preparation. This is similar to our Lord's "coat without seam," for which soldiers cast lots. The bread and wine, stored on a shelf called the *credence*, are moved to the Altar. In many churches the bread and wine are brought forward to the priest or deacon by members of the congregation, recalling the original offerings of the early Christian Church. Sufficient bread and wine are set out. The wine is mixed with a little water in the *chalice*. This serves a dual function. First it is a mixture of wine and water most nearly always used in Eastern cultures, and most likely used at the Last Supper. Second, at the piercing of our Lord's side, out poured water and blood. So here, in our Communion is his Water and Blood. This is the beginning of our *anamnesis*. *Anamnesis* is a technical term used to describe this whole part of the Eucharistic service. It means the opposite of amnesia. It is the recalling into the present of that which is past. It is the taking into oneself of Christ's history, identity, and purpose. It is the re-enacting memorial of the Christ event. This is the re-presenting of the whole of salvation history.

Finally, in the preparation is the *lavabo*, or washing of the priest's hands. Water is poured over his hands, into the *lavabo* (*lavabo* is both the name of the act and of the bowl used to catch the water), signifying the ritual cleanliness of the priest.

The *Sursum Corda* follows, while the congregation remains standing. It is the section beginning "*Lift up your hearts.*" Based upon traditional Jewish blessings of God, we likewise follow the Jewish practice of standing for this act. "The oldest of the common, fixed elements of the prayer come from Jewish liturgical tradition: the bidding to stand, "Lift up your hearts," with its response, followed by the celebrant's request for permission to pray in their name, "Let us give thanks to the Lord our God," and their assent "It is right to do so," is typical of the dialogue which introduced the Jewish *berakoth* (form of blessing). The acclamation "Amen" (so be it) at the end was also retained from Jewish tradition.⁷⁷ It is followed by an appropriate *Preface*, or general introductory prayer. This sets the right note for the season or specific occasion. The prefaces are found in the Prayer Book on pages 344-45 for Rite I and pages 380-

77. Hatchet, p. 350.

81 for Rite II.

Following the *Preface* is the *Sanctus*, or *Holy, Holy, Holy*. This is the song of the *Seraphim* in Isaiah's vision of God. Its use is directly taken from Jewish liturgical practice. In it, we join with the angels in singing their eternal song of glory. The last two lines are the acclamation of Christ's entry into Jerusalem. Presaging the breaking of the body of Christ, we again are reminded that the whole liturgy is the dramatic re-presentation of the life of Christ.

The congregants may either remain standing throughout the remainder of the Eucharistic Prayer or they may kneel. Standing is the stance of the priestly community offering the gifts to God. Kneeling is the position of a contrite and humble community in awe of the Presence of God in our midst.

The body of the *Eucharistic Prayer* follows, including the *Institutional Narrative*. These are the words that recount the events at the Last Supper when Jesus took, blessed, broke, and gave, thus providing the framework for the actions for the Sacrament. Great stress has traditionally been laid upon the Institutional Words "Take Eat: This is my Body" and "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood". This is *anamnesis*. The *Institution* is followed in Rite II by the *Eucharistic Acclamation*, as in Prayer "A" beginning "*Christ has died*". This acclamation comes at the climax when we turn from Thanksgiving for the mighty acts of God, and the *anamnesis* of the work of Christ, which has culminated in the offering of the Bread and the Cup, to pray for the benefits of the Holy Spirit.

Before moving to the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ, i. e., the *Communion* itself, it is best to recap what has been said about the central movement of the section. The *Institutional Narrative*, the section beginning: "On the night in which He was betrayed ", as pointed out is our; it is our history, our remembering, and calling to mind of our identity. It is a calling into the present. This is the event of going beyond time. After recalling what happened on that night so long ago, perhaps a night not too unlike tonight, we offer through the gifts the thanksgivings and memorials. This is the *Oblation*. "The Oblation is the hinge of the whole Consecration Prayer. It gathers up the thanksgivings and memorials that have gone before and offers them to God by means of the 'holy gifts,' the instruments of bread and wine which our Lord Himself chose to represent His own sacrifice and to be occasion of its continuing and 'innumerable benefits' to His Church."⁷⁸

In the context of worshiping God as Father, and relating God as Son, we next invoke God as Spirit. We ask God to sanctify the elements and ourselves, as we offer not only the bread and wine but ourselves as "living sacrifices." This asking for the presence of the Holy Spirit is called the *Epiclesis* or *Invocation*. "All the ancient liturgies, as far back as we can trace them, contained some form of

78. Shepard, P. 80-81

Invocation in their consecration Prayers."⁷⁹ It is at this moment in the Eastern tradition in which it is understood that the elements of bread and wine are changed to *Body* and *Blood*. It is the offering of ourselves as part of the offerings that we bring. We request that we, too, may be hallowed. This is in keeping with the most ancient Christian tradition. "The earliest forms request the hallowing of the communicants or the Church no less than of the oblations."⁸⁰ In Rite I this offering of ourselves is in the paragraph that follows the *Invocation* and in both rites immediately precedes conclusion of the Eucharistic Prayer. The culmination all of this is a short *Doxology*. This is the short section with the phrase "By him, and with Him, and in Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit..." *Doxology* is a term used in other parts of the service. It is a triune or Trinitarian affirmation of praise. It is a short summary of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit structure.

The congregational response to all of this: **The Institutional Narrative**, the **Oblation**, the **Invocation of the Holy Spirit**, and the **Doxology**, is the **Great AMEN**. At the end of the *Doxology* is the word *AMEN* in capital letters. This is the only place where *AMEN* is in all capitals. *Amen* is a way for the congregation to agree with what has been said; to affirm, to say "yes," we approve. It is a direct loan from the Hebrew. When Israel affirmed what was said, prayed, taught it was with the word "Amen." Thus, in like manner and in that unbroken tradition we approve worshiping God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We affirm the presence of God in our midst, and at the Holy Table which is God's! And we agree with and affirm the offering of ourselves, our souls, and bodies, as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God.

Following the **Great Amen**, is a short pre-Communion meditative prayer. This prepares us to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, to commune with each other as the family of God, and sets the proper perspective for our approach to God. This prayer is the "**Our Father**" or alternatively "**The Lord's Prayer**". This follows the Consecration Prayer proper, and is the immediate preparation for receiving the Eucharistic Body and Blood. This prayer has long been part of the devotions of the people. There is evidence that it was used as a preparatory devotion before receiving the Eucharist in their homes on weekdays. It is a standard part of the Eucharist from around 400 C.E.⁸¹

One of the most dramatic moments in the service follows the conclusion of the Consecration Prayer. Called the Fracture, it is the moment of the breaking of the Body of Christ. As so long ago His Body was broken for us, re-enacted here for us, in a memorial sacrifice of His Body, is Christ, still yet being broken for us. This is the climax of the Great Thanksgiving. Silence is kept for a time. As the disciples recognized him in the breaking of the bread at Emmaus, so we too recognize him in the Breaking of the Bread.

79. Shepherd, p. 80-81

80. Shepherd, p. 80-81

81. Hatchett, p. 378.

An Anthem may be sung following the Fracture. This is often the *Agnus Dei* or *O Lamb of God*. In Rite I the Prayer of Humble Access may be said as part of the preparation before receiving the Communion. This prayer acknowledges our place at the Altar as one dependent on God's grace.

The invitation is given, and we gather at a Common Table to receive. We do not just sit in our separate pews to passively receive, but we have our common call to come and receive Him "who takes away the sins of the world". Rich and poor, young and old, short and tall, beautiful and ugly we are changed as we gather together at a common Altar, a common Table, as manifestation of our unity.

We receive either *kneeling or standing*. The former is symbolic of our humble approach to God, while the latter is symbolic of our nature as children of God. When the ministers pass among the communicants, they use the words "**The Body of Christ**" and "**The Blood of Christ**", and we respond "**Amen**", meaning "yes, I agree, affirm that this is the Body of Christ." I use my priesthood to affirm and to complete what is happening, and I receive the Body and Blood of Christ.

The congregation kneels for the **Post Communion Prayer**. This prayer is short, but very compact and with each phrase full of meaning and intention. The prayer sums up all the various strands of everything said so far-the triune nature of the context, the Real Presence and saving Grace of our Lord. In addition it serves to dedicate us in our entrance back into the world.

Once charged to go out into the world, we receive the **Blessing**. In the East it is this point that the *laying on of hands* occurs, something we do much earlier. But the **Blessing** has this same character. The priest lifts his hands and blesses, much the same as the priest in the Temple of Jerusalem did so long ago, and the *Cohen* still does today in the synagogue. The priest lifts his hands and blesses, a kind of long distance *laying on of hands* for the entire congregation. We are fully healed or made whole in Communion, and this is symbolized in the **Blessing**. The **Dismissal** is taken from Jewish services, which begin and end by blessing in the Name of the Lord. We do likewise. Although we have a few variant **Dismissals** to fit the proper time, occasion, and season, the basic idea remains, a blessing of God. (Blessed are you, o Lord God, King of the Universe). **GO IN PEACE!** Following the Dismissal the ministers of the service leave. The congregation stands while the clergy, readers, and servers leave the sanctuary.

FOR FURTHER READING

Croquet, William R. *Eucharist: Symbol of Transformation*. Pueblo Publishing Company, New York [1989].

Driver, Tom F. *The Magic of Ritual*. Harper, San Francisco [1991].

Mitchell, Leonel L. *The Meaning of Ritual*. Morehouse, Harrisburgh, Pa. [1977].

Sydnor, William. *The Story of the Real Prayer Book*. Morehouse, Wilton [1978].

Thompson, B. *Liturgies of the Western Church*. Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1962.

White, James F. *Introduction to Christian Worship*, Abingdon Press, Nashville [1980].