

Celebrate with Reverence

Instructed Eucharist



Contours of the Christian Life
Saint Mark's Cathedral
March 25, 2024

INTRODUCTION

We gather, as Christians have done for the past twenty centuries, to celebrate the Eucharist. Before there was a Bible as we know it, or the Creeds as we know them, there was a Eucharist. Christian beliefs, customs and rites have grown and changed, have come and gone, but there have always been two great sacraments or common elements of the Christian life: Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. We will explore Baptism more in next week's class.

Eucharist is celebrated in one way or another in all Christian traditions. It is the principal act of worship in Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, and has gained increasing favor in recent years in most other Christian denominations as well. This service has been known by many names – The Holy Eucharist, Holy Communion, the Holy Mass, the Lord's Supper, the Last Supper, the Divine Liturgy, and others.

The words liturgy and eucharist are Greek words; liturgy means "the work of the people" and eucharist is from a verb "to give thanks." Thus, today's service becomes literally the task for all of us to give thanks for what God has done for us in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Our service has its roots in the services of the Jewish synagogue. From the time of Moses, the Jewish people have gathered for the reading and preaching of Scriptures. This basic format constitutes the first half of our Eucharistic service, known as the Liturgy of the Word. The Liturgy of the Table constitutes the second half of the service.

At places in this evening's narration, mention will be made of the ceremonial actions members of the congregation may perform during the Eucharist – making the sign of the cross, for example. These invite us to engage our worship as embodied practice. These are not required or even expected of everyone. They are invitations for each of us to consider.

Eucharist is a time of prayer – both individual and communal. The Eucharist takes us into a most intimate relationship with God, hearing and reflecting on God's Word and encountering the real presence of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine. We are active participants when at the Eucharist. A congregation at worship is not an audience at an entertainment event. All are part of the service – as much as the celebrant, any of the other ministers, the acolytes, or the choir. Time spent at Eucharist should be time central to our prayer life.

To Prepare for Worship

In the Episcopal Church, meditative quiet is our custom before the service. This is a good time for personal prayer time with God, opening yourself to God's presence and offering to God your concerns from the past week and for the coming week. Helpful resources include Psalm 43 (BCP p. 644), Psalm 84 (BCP p. 707), and the devotional prayers found in BCP pp. 832-35. The Organ Prelude is designed to invite a quiet meditative transition preparing us for worship, so resisting conversation with pew-mates helps everyone!

The People stand, as able

The Opening Acclamation

The Celebrant and people begin not by exchanging “good mornings”, but by stating briefly but beautifully what we have come together to do. The invocation (calling upon the name of God) is said in dialogue: First, we have come to bless God, which means to give offer honor and worship. Second, we proclaim and remember that God is one in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Third, we celebrate God’s reign in the universe and our commitment to become part of it and to help it grow.

Celebrant Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

People **And blessed be God’s kingdom, now and for ever. Amen**

The Collect for Purity

This prayer has begun Anglican worship for centuries. In it we acknowledge who God is and recognize that we need help and grace in order to love and worship God. Let’s pray it together.

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn of Praise

Then we sing a song of praise, usually the “Gloria in Excelsis,” or in some seasons, such as Lent, we say the “Kyrie” (“Lord Have Mercy”) or the “Trisagion” (“Holy God”).

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy

The Collect of the Day

The original beginning of the Eucharist, the Collect of the Day is a special prayer in a particular form. Usually one sentence long, it begins with an address to God that names a divine attribute, which then forms the basis of a request. On many Sundays, the Collect sets forth a theme that unifies all the worship that follows. This evening’s collect is “For all Christians in their vocation” (BCP, pg. 256).

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of your faithful people is governed and sanctified: Receive our supplications and prayers, which we offer before you for all members of your holy Church, that in their vocation and ministry they may truly and devoutly serve you; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

The Lessons

Christians regard the Bible as a revelation from God that offers us special insight into God's nature and God's purposes in the human story. "Why do we call the Holy Scriptures the Word of God?" asks the Catechism, and answers, "We call them the Word of God because God inspired their human authors and because God still speaks to us through the Bible." It is with this understanding that the reader concludes the reading with the declaration, "The Word of the Lord," or "Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people," to which we respond, "Thanks be to God." In the Episcopal Church we use the Revised Common Lectionary, a three-year pattern that guides us through the Hebrew (Old) Testament, the Psalms, the Christian (New) Testament. For tonight's instructed Eucharist, we will abridge this pattern somewhat.

A Reading from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians

1 Cor 11:23-26

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Reader Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people

People Thanks be to God.

The Gospel

The liturgical Gospel is a reading from one of the four scriptural gospels that proclaims some word or act of our Lord. The Gospel may be sung or said in the midst of the people as a symbol that Christ came into the world. Proclaiming the Gospel is one of the special tasks of the deacon; because all priests have also been ordained deacons, if no deacon is present, a priest may read the Gospel. At the announcement of the Gospel, some people sign themselves with a small cross on the forehead, lips, and breast to signify their desire that the Gospel may live in their understanding, on their lips, and in their hearts.

Then, all standing, the Deacon or a Priest reads the Gospel, first saying

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew (ch.26:26-29)

People Glory to you, Lord Christ.

While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.'

After the Gospel, the Reader says The Gospel of the Lord

People Praise to you, Lord Christ.

The Sermon

The Homily or Sermon follows the Gospel with no interruption and is intended to be an exposition of the Word that has just been read. It is intended to help us make the Word a living and transforming reality in our lives. This evening, commentary on the liturgy takes the place of the sermon, but normally one hears a sermon at every eucharist.

The Creed

The people's response to the Gospel is the faith of the Church as expressed in the Nicene Creed, which dates from the Fourth Century. The Creed sums up the essential beliefs held by all orthodox Christians and is always said on Sundays and Principal Feasts. We will address the Creed more on another evening in Contours.

The Prayers of the People

The people's response to God's Word continues with intercession. Prayer is offered for the Church, the nation, the welfare of the world, those who suffer and who are in any trouble, and those who have gone on to glory. At St. Mark's we use different forms in various seasons, often writing them for local use.

Prayers of the People

Intercessor In peace, we pray to you, Lord God.

Silence

Intercessor For all people in their daily life and work;

People For our families, friends, and neighbors, and for those who are alone.

Intercessor For this community, the nation, and the world;

People For all who work for justice, freedom, and peace.

Intercessor For the just and proper use of your creation;

People For the victims of hunger, fear, injustice, and oppression.

Intercessor For all who are in danger, sorrow, or any kind of trouble;

People For those who minister to the sick, the friendless, and the needy.

Intercessor For the peace and unity of the Church of God;

People For all who proclaim the Gospel, and all who seek the Truth.

Intercessor For Michael our Presiding Bishop, Melissa our Bishop, for all ministers;

People For all who serve God in God's Church.

Intercessor For the special needs and concerns of this congregation.

Silence

[The People may add their own petitions.]

Intercessor Hear us, Lord;

People For your mercy is great.

Intercessor We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life.
Silence
[The People may add their own thanksgivings.]

Intercessor We will exalt you, O God our King;
People And praise your Name for ever and ever.

Intercessor We pray for all who have died, that they may have a place in your eternal kingdom.
Silence
[The People may add their own petitions]

Intercessor Lord, let your loving-kindness be upon them;
People Who put their trust in you.

Concluding Collect

Confession and Absolution

It is important that, before we approach the Lord's Table, we remember that God is steadfast and holy as well as all-merciful and forgiving. The Prayers of the People continue as we turn in penitence to acknowledge that we are sinful and need God's forgiveness. Repentance is an essential movement in faithfully receiving God's grace. The absolution is a declaration of forgiveness, offered in God's name by the presiding priest. On some occasions, the confession and absolution may be omitted.

The Deacon or Celebrant says
Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

Silence may be kept.

Minister and People
Most merciful God,
**we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.**

The Bishop, when present, or the Priest, stands and says

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. Amen.

The Peace

Greeting one another with the peace of Christ is the fruit of the peace between us and God that has been declared in the Absolution. In the Peace we affirm our reconciliation with one another prior to receiving communion. It is not a time for chatter or tending to business; rather, it is a sacred gesture of right relationship that helps prepare us for Communion.

The Exchange of the Peace

All stand. The Celebrant says to the people

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People **And also with you.**

Announcements

There is no good place for announcements, whether at the liturgy's opening or end or in the middle, yet there are always matters important for all to hear. This is also a time when we commission ministers and recognize important milestones in ministry. An Offertory Sentence at the end of announcements begins the Liturgy of the Holy Communion.

THE LITURGY OF THE TABLE

The second half of the Eucharist was originally reserved only for the baptized and confirmed. Those who were preparing for membership in the Church were called "Catechumens" and were escorted out of the Church at the end of the Liturgy of the Word. The Liturgy of the Word centered around the pulpit and lectern, but the Liturgy of the Holy Communion moves our attention to the Altar-Table. More recently, our sacramental theology is shifting to welcome all at the Table.

The Offertory

The Offertory begins the second half of the Eucharist. It is not an interlude between worship components but a key part of worship. The term "offertory" does not refer to taking a collection but to the offering of ourselves together with our monetary gifts and the elements of bread and wine which will be consecrated. The deacon prepares the holy table by preparing the elements. Enough bread for all is placed on the altar, and a little water is added to the wine as a sign of the union of human and divine natures in Christ. At the end of the Offertory, the server washes the hands of the celebrant, and ancient practice to ritually prepare for what follows. The Offertory Anthem sung by the Choir is a major music presentation chosen to enhance our worship, highlight themes of the day and season, and inspire us as we approach communion

The Great Thanksgiving: Eucharistic Prayer B

Note: (+) denotes places where some may choose to make the sign of the cross.

(Ω) demotes places where some may choose to bow at the name of Jesus.

(Sursum Corda)

Celebrant The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Celebrant Lift up your hearts.

People **We lift them to the Lord.**

Celebrant Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People **It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

(Common Preface)

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

(Proper Preface for Lent)

You bid your faithful people cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the Paschal feast; that, fervent in prayer and in works of mercy, and renewed by your Word and Sacraments, they may come to the fullness of grace which you have prepared for those who love you.

Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who forever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

(Sanctus)

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

(Benedictus)

**(+)Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

(God's Salvation History Recounted)

We give thanks to you, O God, for the goodness and love which you have made known to us in creation; in the calling of Israel to be your people;

in your Word spoken through the prophets;

and above all in the Word made flesh, Jesus (Ω), your Son.

For in these last days you sent him to be incarnate from the Virgin Mary,

to be the Savior and Redeemer of the world.

In him, you have delivered us from evil, and made us worthy to stand before you.

In him, you have brought us out of error into truth,

out of sin into righteousness,

out of death into life.

(Narrative of Institution)

On the night before he died for us, our Lord Jesus Christ (Ω) took bread;
and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it,
and gave it to his disciples, and said,
"Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper Jesus (Ω) took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said,
"Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

(Memorial Acclamation)

Therefore, according to his command, O God,

**We remember his death,
We proclaim his resurrection,
We await his coming in glory;**

(The Oblation)

And we offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to you, O Lord of all;
presenting to you, from your creation, this bread and this wine.

(The Epiclesis: Invocation of the Holy Spirit)

We pray you, gracious God, to send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts
that they may be the Sacrament of the Body of Christ and his Blood of the new Covenant.

Unite us to your Son in his sacrifice, that we may be acceptable through him,
being (+) sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

In the fullness of time, put all things in subjection under your Christ,
and bring us to that heavenly country where, with Mary, Mark, and all your saints,
we may enter the everlasting heritage of your sons and daughters;
through Jesus Christ our Lord (Ω),
the firstborn of all creation, the head of the Church,
and the author of our salvation.

(The Doxology)

By him, and with him, and in him,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours,
Almighty Father, now and for ever.

(The Great Amen)

AMEN.

The Lord's Prayer

At this solemn moment we return to the prayer we all know, the one Jesus taught. It has not always appeared at this point in the liturgy, but its placement here grounds us in the sacred moment.

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

Our Father in heaven,
**hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

The Breaking of the Bread

The breaking of the bread, called the Fraction, both recalls Jesus breaking bread at the Last Supper and reminds us that Jesus' body was broken on the cross for us. The anthems sung or said at the breaking of the bread speak of Christ as the Passover Lamb, sacrificed to take away our sins.

The Celebrant breaks the consecrated Bread.

A period of silence is kept.

Then may be sung or said

[Alleluia.] Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;
Therefore let us keep the feast. [Alleluia.]

In Lent, Alleluia is omitted, and may be omitted at other times except during Easter Season.

Facing the people, the Celebrant says the following Invitation

The Gifts of God for the People of God.

and may Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you,
add and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

The Ministration of Communion

In communion we are joined not only with one another, but also with God. It is the Body of Christ (the bread), given to the Body of Christ (the Church), in order to make us one body. This is a time of prayerful assent to partake in the meal and receive the gifts of bread and wine. Prayers of devotion before and after receiving communion are found on BCP p. 834.

A reverent and respectful way to receive Communion is as follows: To receive the Body of Christ, kneel and place your right hand over your left and hold them palm up so that the priest or deacon can easily place the bread on the palm of your hand. To receive the Blood of Christ, gently grasp the base of the chalice and guide it to your mouth. If you prefer not to drink the wine, simply cross your arms across your chest and hear the words of grace still.

After receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, return to your seat. It is customary in the Episcopal Church that we spend some moments in personal prayer after receiving communion. Choir anthems and congregational communion hymns are chosen to assist such devotion, and worshipers are encouraged to join in the latter.

This evening, we will share the bread at tables, offering a piece to the person next to you. Likewise, with the cup, using these words.

The Body of Christ, the bread of heaven. [*Amen.*]

The Blood of Christ, the cup of salvation. [*Amen.*]

Post Communion Prayer

This prayer sums up what God has done with us in the liturgy and stresses that our worship has prepared us for our daily mission in the world.

Celebrant *Let us pray*
All **Eternal God, heavenly Father,**
 you have graciously accepted us as living members
 of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ,
 and you have fed us with spiritual food
 in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.
 Send us now into the world in peace,
 and grant us strength and courage
 to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart;
 through (Ω) Christ our Lord. Amen.

Blessing and Dismissal

Historically, various prayers, hymns, readings and blessings have been added to the end of the liturgy until periodically they need to be removed. Today, very little obscures the ending of the liturgy. The priest blesses the people, using a form that changes from season to season. After a closing hymn, the deacon or celebrant dismisses us, and we respond with the thanks that is the very meaning of eucharist.

Celebrant Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Examen on Eucharistic Themes

Begin

Taking a few deep breaths, settle mind, body, and spirit. Recognize the presence of God within. Ask God to guide the prayerful thoughts within.

Taken

Thank you, God, for taking me into the divine embrace—for claiming me—for calling me by name.

Remember your baptism, how you were sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked as Christ's own forever. Or if you're not yet baptized, consider what those words mean as you prepare. Consider how God has been present in your life, and that you are in God's hands, whether or not we are always aware of it.

How have I been claimed by God?

Blessed

Recognizing how God has taken you into that divine care, thank God for the many blessings in this life. Hold that sense of gratitude in your heart. Consider the unique talents, abilities, aptitudes, and callings God has given you.

How have I been blessed by God?

Broken

Are there ways you have felt the opposite of blessed. When have you felt broken? The death or loss of a loved one? A failed relationship? Abuse or trauma? Difficulty in career? Lack of direction in life? Perhaps there is a personal weakness, physical, mental, or spiritual which makes the brokenness real. Be gentle with yourself and remember that God's mercy is steadfast.

Can I receive the gift of God's mercy in light of my brokenness?

Given

God, show me how the ways I've been broken prepare me to share love with others. May my brokenness give me understanding of others' pain. May my brokenness strengthen me for that to which God is calling me. Gratitude again for God entrusting me to be God's gift to the world. I resolve to give myself to God and the world in whatever way God has revealed.

How is God giving me to the world?

Amen

Yes, Lord. Amen.

Attributions for this Instructed Eucharist include:

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Examen on Eucharistic Themes adapted from <https://godinallthings.com/>