

PART I

Praying the Holy Eucharist (by Fr. Moseley): weekly instruction in how to more fully participate in the Sunday Liturgy. If you miss one, or want to read ahead, you can find all the pieces (as I write them) on the website at Resources/Order of Service/Praying the Holy Eucharist.

The Liturgy of the Word

Beginnings

Upon your entrance into the church, your primary concern should be to prepare to receive and participate in the two principle parts of the Liturgy (the People's Work of Worship): the Liturgy of the Word (the Greeting through the Peace, including the readings, sermon, creed, prayers, and confession), and the Liturgy of the Table (the offering, thanksgiving, sacrifice and reception of our Lord through the mystery of the Lord's Supper).

The Preparation should be done prayerfully, asking God to be with you in your worship and your receiving of His Word and Sacrament. Each person may pray in his own way – some pray the Rosary, others in various other ways, but prayer is the primary preparation. There is an example of a prayer that may be said on page 835 in the Book of Common Prayer.

The Liturgy of the Word

Beginnings

Understanding that the whole Liturgy is planned to be a cohesive worship and reception of our Lord - all parts the work together. The music played before the Mass (The Prelude) is intended to assist in your preparation. The entrance procession is a hymn which is selected to give further emphasis to the readings which will be heard, and reflects the current season of the Church Year.

The Greeting begins the worship in the style of the Church Year Season: during Easter, it is celebratory (Alleluia. Christ is Risen.), during Lent, penitent (asking for mercy) (Bless

the Lord who forgives all our sins.), and at other times, worshipful (Blessed be God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.).

The Liturgy of the Word

Collect for Purity

Following the Greeting, the Celebrant (the priest who is celebrating at that service) prays, on behalf of the congregation, the Collect for Purity, which is a prayer of preparation as the service begins: Lord, you know our hearts, desires, and secrets. Cleanse us so that we may worship and love you.

Hymn of Praise

A Hymn of Praise is sung after the Collect for Purity – after God has prepared us, our next intentions should be to worship and glorify Him. We do this in the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent with the '*Kyrie Eleison*' (Lord have mercy), and in other seasons with the '*Gloria in Excelsis*' (Glory be to God).

The Liturgy of the Word

Collect of the Day

The Collect of the Day precedes the Readings for the Day. This Collect (gathering prayer) as well as the readings are chosen from the Sunday Lectionary – the Church Year Calendar of Readings, divided into three years (A, B, C) and encompassing most of the Old and New Testaments. Each week of the year has a specific Collect and Readings – the Collect acting as the glue that binds the readings together. Since this Collect is also used through the following week at Morning and Evening Prayer, they are listed in the BCP after those services, pages 159-261. This prayer gets us ready for the readings.

The Liturgy of the Word

The Readings

The Readings of the Day are chosen from the Sunday Lectionary, BCP pages 888 – 931, which includes Old and New Testament Readings, with an intervening Psalm, and a Gospel Reading for each Sunday through the three-year cycle of years in the church reading schedule. Most of the Bible is read. Readings have been part of the Liturgy since the 1st Century. Instructions on navigating the Lectionary are found on page 888. These readings guide us in our Christian walk. We should hear something different from them every time we hear them (once every three years).

The Gospel Reading is read from the midst of the congregation (as it is Jesus' words to all of us) from a book that is '*of appropriate size and dignity*' (see page 406). It is taken from the same Sunday Lectionary (BCP pages 888 – 931) as the preceding readings, dependent upon the calendar year, the church year, and the week therein. All should turn to face the reader of Christ's words. At the Announcement of the Gospel, the People may cross their foreheads, their lips, and their hearts, asking God to be in our minds, our lips and our hearts in receiving and bearing witness to the words we are about to hear.

The Sermon

After the Gospel, a sermon or homily (shorter) should be preached by a person chosen by the rector on the Gospel or other approved topic.

The Liturgy of the Word

Confession/Profession of Faith

Originally a rite of baptism, and since the 5th century a part of the Liturgy in the Eastern Church, the profession of a creed (Latin: *Credo* = I Believe) has been included in the Holy Eucharist. Adopted by the Church at the Council of Nicaea in 325 to combat the Arian Heresy, and then modified to its current form at the Council of Constantinople in 381 to also combat the Apollinarian Heresy. It is a doctrinal statement of correct belief that we are directed to say each Sunday and on other Holy Days. Believe and say I believe.

The Liturgy of the Word

The Prayers

As early as the 2nd century, Prayers of the People were made after the readings and sermon. The Rite One Prayer for the Whole State of Christ's Church dates to the 1st Book of Common Prayer of 1549. The Rite Two Liturgy (1979) includes six forms and also allows for the use of any of the Prayers on pages 809 – 841, as long as the directions on page 383 are followed (directing the content), for the Church and its mission, our nation and its leaders, the world and its welfare, our local concerns, those who are in any need, and the departed.

The Liturgy of the Word

General Confession

The General Confession, made by the whole congregation was begun in the First Anglican Prayer Book (1549), but at a different place in the service – immediately before the distribution of Holy Communion. Prior to this, confession was made publicly – to the whole congregation. Private confession was made available to the sick and dying in the early prayer books, but not formalized or prescribed for all Christians until the 1979 BCP. A General Confession is intended to cleanse your soul (and your conscience) of all the “little sins” that impede us and to prepare us for receiving Christ in the Holy Communion. Private confession should be made for larger or more persistent sins (with a priest). The Absolution that follows each of these permanently removes those confessed sins from your soul, freeing you to further your walk with Christ.

The Liturgy of the Word

The Peace

In early liturgies, The Peace was shared by the members of the congregation after the Catechumens (those being instructed and prepared for Baptism) had been dismissed. It was and is a rite of reconciliation – making peace with our brothers and sisters – before receiving communion is required – see Matthew 5:23-24.

The Offertory

An offering may be collected at any service of the church. In the 1549 BCP, the celebrant read scripture to the congregation while the collection was made. In the 1582, Offering Sentences like the ones found on pages 343-344 and 376-377 were said at the beginning of the collection. From the earliest times, the collection has been used to help the poor. Once separate buildings were used (instead of homes), the collection was also used to support the facilities of the church and the ministers and staff. The offering is processed with the people standing, indicating their participation and consent. A 10% tithe is the Biblical and traditional offering of our time, talent and treasure.

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The Liturgy of the Table

The Preparations

Since the 2nd century, the Deacons were responsible for preparing the Altar for the Sacrament of Holy Communion. The collection and presentation of Bread and Wine (of that culture) was made sometime prior to this in the Liturgy – at the beginning, during the peace, during the collection of the Offering, etc. The Liturgy of the Table has a four-fold shape: Offering, Thanksgiving, Breaking, and Taking. All of the elements (bread and wine) to be consecrated (made sacred) are placed on the corporal – a square linen, which is laid on the fair linen (which covers the altar).

The Sursum Corda

The beginning of the Eucharistic (Thanksgiving) Prayer is the “Hearts Lifted” Responsory. This opening dates to the 3rd Century. In it, we focus on the Worship of our God. The “We” includes not only those present, but all Christians who are celebrating the Holy Eucharist on earth, as well as the hosts of angels, archangels, and the whole company of

heaven. On Sundays, there is a Proper Preface inserted in the Sursum Corda, which is chosen based on the season of the church year (see pgs. 344-9, or 377-82).

The Sanctus

The “Holy, Holy, Holy” hymn, focusing on the proper and deliberate worship of God, whether sung or said is the proper beginning for our offering of Thanksgiving (Eucharist) to God. (Revelation 4:8). The Hymn is concluded by the Benedictus Qui Venit “Blessed is he that comes.” It is traditional to bow during the Sanctus until the Benedictus Qui Venit, at which time one looks up and crosses himself (as we are the ones blessed by Christ to desire and be able to come to the table of the Lord).

The Eucharistic Prayer (Opening)

Dating from the last of the 4th century, the Institution Narrative begins with the thanksgiving and praise of God for creating us, then sending His only Son to redeem us by the sacrifice of his life. That sacrifice, which is described as “one oblation (offering) of himself once offered, (is a) full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.” Christ instituted this Holy Communion at the Last Supper, and commanded us to continue offering it until his 2nd coming. We celebrate this Holy Eucharist with the whole church and all the company of heaven. It is traditional for the people to kneel during the Eucharistic Prayer.

The Eucharistic Prayer (Consecration)

The consecration (making sacred) is performed in two parts – one for each of the elements of bread and wine. For each element, the Words of Institution, quoting Mat 26:26-27, Mark 14:22-24, and Luke 22:17-20 are said, “Take, eat, this is my body” and “take, drink, this is my blood.” After each element is consecrated, it is raised up for the people to see, at which time they may cross themselves.

The Eucharistic Prayer (Epiclesis)

Following the consecration, the priest performs the Epiclesis (the calling of the Holy Spirit) to make the Body and Blood of Christ here offered usable to us as God wills it to be as His grace given to us. This is done as the priest holds his hands over the elements.

The Eucharistic Prayer (Conclusion)

The committing of and thanksgiving for this sacrament is concluded in a doxology (a short hymn of praise) to God, “By whom, and with whom and in whom, in unity with the Holy Spirit” for all time, at which the people respond enthusiastically with a Great AMEN. At this time, the Body and Blood are elevated together. It is customary to cross oneself at this elevation.

The Lord’s Prayer

Since the 4th century, the Lord’s Prayer has been said after The Eucharistic Prayer. It is quoted from Mat 6:9-13, with the 4th century doxology added to the end: “For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, for ever and ever.” The early Church Fathers identified the “daily bread” with the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

The Fraction

Practically, the bread is broken (fractured) so that it may be divided among the people. In the early church, the bishop (before there were priests) would divided the bread and send it with deacons each of his churches. Symbolically and theologically, Christ’s body was broken as he was sacrificed on the cross, that the finality of death is “passed over” for us.

Agnes Dei

Since the 4th century, the Fraction has been concluded with the “Lamb of God” hymn, asking Christ to have mercy upon us, with as many repetitions as were necessary to account for the breaking of all the bread and distribution of it to the outgoing deacons. When there were priests consecrating bread for the local use only, it was shortened to three verses. When the people were receiving communion only once a year, the last verse was given its “peaceful” ending.

Prayer of Humble Access

In our Rite 1 service, this prayer, “We do not presume to come” is a prayer for God’s mercy that we, though unworthy, may receive the Holy Eucharist as Christ intends and our service to God demands, not because of our merits, but because of Christ’s love. It is a good and holy thing to pray this (page 337) before you receive your communion in Rite II services as well.

Holy Communion

The Gifts of God are presented and distributed, first to the priest and to those serving at the altar, and then to the people. It is appropriate to pray that you will worthily receive Christ's Body and Blood before you receive it. There is a prayer on page 834 that can be used, or the Prayer of Humble Access on page 337 may be used if not said already. It is traditional to cross oneself before receiving each of the elements. It is not necessary to receive both elements if you are ill or otherwise disposed. One is completely sufficient. After your communion, you should return to your place prayerfully – there is a prayer on page 834 that may be said. There is a specific prayer used by the priest to consecrate more bread or wine if they are needed – see pages 338 or 365. Prior to the 1979 BCP, the entire Eucharistic Prayer was said to consecrate additional elements.

Ablutions

After Communion, the remaining elements are all consumed or placed in the tabernacle (dwelling place) for use later in the week. We also send hosts (the Body of Christ) out to shut-ins with Lay Eucharistic Ministers. We pray with them as we send them out – please join in our prayer that they may safely travel to their destination, and Christ's Word and Sacrament will bless those that receive it. Great care is taken to protect the Body and Blood of Christ – our Lord and Savior. All the crumbs and drops are meticulously accounted for and each vessel is cleaned by the clergy.

Post-Communion Prayer

The traditional prayer of thanksgiving after communion (pages 339 or 366) have been used in approximately this form since the 4th century. It is at once, a prayer of thanksgiving for the communion with Christ and the heirship that our Baptism has promised, as well as a prayer of mission, devoting ourselves to the service in the Kingdom of God that our communion has empowered us to do. The condensed Rite II version is used in most Rite II services and echoes the traditional prayer.

The Blessing

Following the Holy Eucharist, the Bishop when present, or his priest uses his hand (or hands, consecrated at his ordination to the priesthood) to bless the people in the name of the Triune God. One should cross oneself at this time. The people are hence blessed individually and as a congregation to receive God's power to do His will. It is traditional to genuflect (kneel on one knee, and then raise back up to standing) at the bishop's blessing.

The Dismissal

The appropriate dismissal of the season is given by the Deacon (or Priest), send the people out into the world with Christ and in His name. In Latin, the Roman Catholic dismissal "*Ite Missa est*" (the mass is over), led to the naming of the Holy Eucharist as "The Mass." At Nashotah House, Canon Kucharski would dismiss us with "Go away now." Thanks be to God.

A good source for the history of the BCP:

Marion Hatchett. "*Commentary of the American Prayer Book.*" (New York: Seabury, 1981).