

# LITURGY - THE WORK OF THE PEOPLE

## THE SACRAMENT OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST

The Holy Eucharist is the main liturgy of the Church, originating from the Last Supper of Jesus the night before His crucifixion. There are other “liturgies”, celebrated in the Church which are mentioned in this chapter, that are associated with other Sacraments, such as Unction, which can be administered at Healing Liturgies. The sacrament of Penance can be offered at a Penitential Liturgy as well as privately or at the Holy Eucharist.

### The Work of the People

Liturgy is, indeed, the “work of the people.” It is not just the work of the ordained, but rather, is the Body of Christ gathered together to celebrate the reality of the Risen Lord Jesus Christ. The word *Liturgy* is a much better term than “service”, for service can mean anything from the military to what is provided by an exterminator. The word *Liturgy* is a particular word, which has not yet been secularized. Liturgy is what we do when we worship the one true God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Liturgy involves a sense of ritual and drama. That troubles some people, for ritual and drama for some people are uncomfortable, and yet every sports fan, theatre-goer, and lover of dance is involved in some form of drama and ritual. We are people who are affected by atmosphere; we are emotional people, some more than others.

In a very simplistic way, our entire morning wake up involves ritual. There is the ritual of what we do in the first ten minutes of waking up. We do just about the same thing every morning. And if one thinks about it, we have made a ritual out of getting dressed. What would life be like if we had to decide each morning which leg we placed in our pants first and which foot we put a sock on first? We do these things in a specific way and pattern. It becomes a ritual. Furthermore, one can conclude that “eating is eating”, but do we not have a different feeling eating at McDonald's from the feeling after eating at a fine restaurant? When is the last time a waiter at McDonald's asked you, “Did you enjoy your meal?” People tend to respond to their environment and just as we take care of the way in which we arrange our homes to meet our needs or to set a mood or tone, so we arrange our churches. To a great extent, what we encounter in our churches tells us how we feel about our God.

### We enter through the water of Baptism.

Adequate parking, ramps and special parking for the handicapped, greeters for newcomers, and a roomy narthex (church vestibule) all make people feel that they are included. Not long ago I visited a church that had a fence around it with a closed gate, and a sign which said, “The Episcopal Church Welcomes You”. So they said. What do we find when we open the door to the Nave (the main body of the church)? The very first thing which we encounter in many churches is the Baptistry (Baptism area) — the Baptismal Font, which is filled with Holy Water (water which remains from the last Baptism, or which has been blessed at the Great Vigil (the eve of Easter). There is an obvious reason for this water. It reminds us that all of us entered the church the same way — through the Water of Baptism, each person, whether “prince” or “pauper”, is baptized in the same way, without distinction. Therefore, each time we enter the

church, we are reminded of our original entry. Some may merely dip their fingers in the water to touch it, while others may make the sign of the cross by either the later way (forehead and shoulders) or the earlier way, by retracing the sign of the cross placed on our forehead at Baptism. We usually also see the Paschal Candle next to the Font, reminding us of Christ's triumph over death — His Eternal Life. Thus, we enter the House of God aware of our new life, which is a result of Jesus' new life. We are an Easter People, washed by Christ and born anew.

### **The Processional**

Now that we have gotten inside the church, we are ready for the Procession. We notice several pieces of ecclesiastical “furniture”. We have already noted the Baptismal Font with the Paschal Candle. Now we see an Altar, the Presidential chair, a Lectern, a Pulpit, and an Altar Rail, along with a cross, candles, the Tabernacle (or Aumbry) and the Sanctuary Lamp. In many churches in the Anglican Communion there are also side Altars, Chapels and Shrines. In addition, one may see a Rood Screen with a Rood (cross).

### **The Altar of God**

The altar is the focal point in the church, for it is the place where all of the action takes place, as it were. It makes a statement: sharing in the Eucharistic meal is the central action of the church. On a “free-standing” altar, we do not have a cross, for it would obscure the actions of the altar. This is also why many of the Liturgical appointments, which were commonly seen on altars against the wall, are not to be seen on altars that are freestanding. When the altar is against the wall, the priest has his back to us, and we rarely see much of what is happening. At a free standing altar, the general rule of thumb is this: Nothing should be on the altar for the Liturgy of the Word except the Gospel Book, and during the Liturgy of the Eucharist, nothing should be higher than the Chalice, lest the focal point shift. Tall candles, high Missal stands, Altar Cards, etc., are not appropriate for freestanding Altars. Nor is it appropriate for the vested Chalice and Paten to be on the Altar for the Liturgy of the Word. Why would someone set his own table long before he was ready to serve the meal? The Liturgy of the Word has its own integrity, and we must not obscure those actions appropriate to it, nor confuse the people with items which are not yet ready to be used; the Credence Table is the proper place for these. Therefore, what we see when we enter the church is an Altar with low candles on it, or, perhaps, torches next to it. In fact, in the early days of the Church, the Processional Cross became the Altar Cross, and the Processional Torches became the Altar Candles after the Procession.

### **Pulpit and Lectern**

The use of both a pulpit and a lectern is relatively recent. The Pulpit is really a “child” of the Ambo, a “lectern” which was used for all of the Readings and for the Sermon. The Lectern as we know it was formerly a moveable podium, which was brought in only for the Readings at the Daily Office (Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, etc.). Later, when the Daily Office was used as a “main service”, the Lectern became a permanent fixture, and was seen by some as a symmetrical complement to the Pulpit.

*The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.*

## **The Tabernacle**

The Tabernacle (Repository for the Blessed Sacrament either on the Altar or in the wall immediately behind the Altar) or the Aumbry (Repository on the side wall - usually the North wall) has a long standing use in the Church, first as a means of taking the Sacrament to those unable to attend Mass, and secondly (at a later period) for devotional purposes. There is also the “cathedral usage”, where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved on a side Altar, often the Altar or Chapel to the left of the High Altar (often a Chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, who bore the Body of Christ). A Sanctuary Candle (always to be white - the color of the Blessed Sacrament) tells us that Christ is present in the Sacrament. This light is passed on from the first fire at the Easter Vigil, and is not extinguished until Good Friday, when, to the eyes of the world, the “Light” was extinguished.

## **The Chairs**

The use of the Presidential Chair is an historic practice, placed behind the Altar so that the Celebrant is visible to the people. When the Altar is against the wall, the Chair is placed to the side. When there are three chairs together, the arrangement is called the Sedilia. The Liturgy of the Word is appropriately proclaimed at the Presidential chair, the Lectern, and Pulpit or Ambo. In the absence of the Chief Celebrant of the Diocese (the Bishop), a priest may use this chair.

## **The Altar Rail and Iconostasis**

The Altar Rail is a very late introduction, and was given to us in the Mediaeval period when people began to kneel to receive Communion as an act of penitence. Formerly, the people stood to receive Communion as an act of joy. The Council of Nicea indicated that kneeling was not permitted during the Easter season, for instance. Later, in rural areas, such as parts of England, Altar Rails were installed to keep animals from “grazing” at the Altar.

Finally, as the Iconostasis (Icon Screen) was used to separate the Altar area from the “nave” in the Eastern Rite Churches, so the Rood Screen was used to separate the Sanctuary and Chancel from the Nave (the clergy from the laity). In some Anglican churches we still see a portion of the screen left, or we may see just a ceiling beam with a Crucifix and St Mary and St John. The purpose of the Screen was to “veil” the Holy of Holies.

## **Upon entering**

When people enter the church, they use a variety of “entrances”. Most individuals genuflect (go down on their right knee) before entering their pew. Certainly this must seem odd to non-Anglicans, but it shows that we really do believe that Christ is present in the Eucharist, under the Species of Bread and Wine. Eastern Rite Christians generally bow profoundly and make the sign of the cross before entering their pew.

After taking time to collect our thoughts through prayer, we await the Procession. Usually a bell signals the beginning of the procession, and we stand, bowing our heads as the cross or crucifix passes by. We may also slightly bow our heads as the Gospel Book passes us. In some places it is customary to bow the head as the priest/celebrant passes by, and to drop to the left knee if the celebrant is a bishop. (The right knee is reserved for Christ). This act is to

show respect for the fact that the celebrant will function as an Icon of Christ in the Liturgy. Once the Procession reaches the Altar Rail, it is customary, after the Sanctuary Party has revered the Sacrament, for the celebrant to enter the Sanctuary first (In Anglicanism, the term “Sanctuary” refers only to the area behind the Altar Rail. The area where the people sit is called the “nave”). The reason the celebrant enters first is because he is the shepherd, who “opens the door” to determine that all is safe, and the sheep follow. This is why the reverence is made outside the Altar Rail. Upon entering the Sanctuary, each person goes to his place, with the celebrant deacon and subdeacon and/or assisting priest(s) positioned behind the Altar so that they are visible to all.

### **The Liturgy**

The opening of the early Liturgies was the Collect for the Day, but a number of elements have been added over the years. For instance, the Collect for Purity (“Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open ...”) is a prayer, which was originally said in the Sacristy by the celebrant while he was vesting. Archbishop Thomas Cranmer added this ancient prayer to the Liturgy in 1549 (the first *Book of Common Prayer*). The “Summary of the Law” (“Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ saith...”) was added just two American Prayer Books ago as an alternative to the Decalogue (the Ten Commandments), which was required ever since the second *Book of Common Prayer 1552*. *The Kyrie* (“Lord have mercy”) is a very early element, but is really a vestige of the people's response to a procession litany, which used to be sung by the deacon and the congregation as the Procession made its way to the Altar. *The Gloria in Excelsis* (“Glory be to God on High”) was originally said only by the Bishop at Christmas time, but was later used by priests at Christmas time, and then eventually by the celebrant on any special day (excluding Advent and Lent). Eventually all of these elements were put together, in addition to having a “Processional Hymn”! Thus, the Collect for the Day ceased to be the opening “theme prayer” which would begin the Eucharist, and became one of a number of prayers which function as a type of “transitional prayer” from a developed Entrance Rite to the Liturgy of the Word.

### **The Liturgy of the Word**

Traditionally, there was only one “podium” from which the Word was read – the Ambo. Later on, a portable lectern was used for the Daily office (Morning and Evening Prayer). During the Mediæval Period, the pattern of having an Old Testament Lesson, a Gradual Psalm, and Epistle, an “Alleluia” and a Gospel, was reduced to an Epistle, Gradual Psalm (a verse), Alleluia and Gospel. The 1549 *Book of Common Prayer* adopted the mediaeval practice, and the Old Testament was read only at Morning Prayer (Mattins) and Evening Prayer (Evensong). Since there was a new found interest in Scripture — partly due to the invention of the printing press — it was not uncommon for people to have their own Bibles, and thus the chapter and verse citation was added to the announcement of the Lessons. With the advent of Liturgical renewal and the centrality of the Eucharist, we have returned to the ancient practice of having three lessons and a complete Psalm.

### **The Readings**

The reading of the Old Testament and the Epistle is appropriately done by the lay order — not by deacons, priests, or bishops. In fact, it is inappropriate for a member of the clergy to read the first two lessons unless there is no layperson present! A layperson does not need to be licensed to read the lessons. The reason we sit for these lessons is so that we might be able to “think” about them. It is a long-standing tradition to sing the lessons. There are two primary advantages (historically) for this: (1) amplification; (2) chanting reduces the regional dialects of the singer. The use of the Psalms has a fascinating history. The psalms were written to be sung. This was David’s intention. Therefore, the said psalm is the extraordinary usage. When numbers were given to verses, asterisks were also added as “breath marks”, and also as the place where the tone was changed. There is no historical precedent for a leader reading the first half of a verse to the asterisk and the congregation reading the second half. This practice obscures the intention. There are however, several practices with significant histories: (1) antiphonal, (2) responsorial, (3) responsive. The practice of having a leader and the congregation read alternate verses (all standing) is a carryover from Morning Prayer. Generally speaking, having one side of the church read one verse and the other side read the next with all sitting is the most historical usage for Eucharistic Liturgies. An ancient usage also, is the use of a “Response” or “Refrain”, in which a leader or cantor says or sings a refrain with the congregation, and then the verses are said or sung by a leader or choir, with the Refrain being repeated after every few verses. In fact, several of the Psalms of David are written in this fashion, indicating that this is an ancient usage.

### **We stand for the Gospel Reading**

The Gospel has always been read with everyone standing. This is done out of respect for the words of Jesus. The ancient custom of making a small cross with the thumb on the forehead, lips and heart carries with it a deep significance: “May I understand the Gospel, may I speak the Gospel, and may I believe the Gospel”. The word Gospel means “Good News”. We always face the Gospel Book no matter where it is carried. The most ancient usage appears to be to read the Gospel from the Ambo (the place where it will be explained). But many traditions have the Gospel Book being carried “to the people” in procession.

The Gospel must always be read (or sung) by a Deacon when one is present, but in the absence of a Deacon, a priest reads or sings the Gospel. It is appropriate (and traditional) for an Alleluia verse to precede the reading or singing of the Gospel, although on rare occasions a hymn may be appropriate (especially during Lent, and sometimes during Advent) when we omit “Alleluias”. In older usage this “hymn” is called the “Tract.”

### **The Sermon**

The sermon is no longer an option. All Eucharists must have a sermon, according to the rubrics of the latest revision of *The Book of Common Prayer (1979)*. The pulpit is a sacred place where the Word of God is to be proclaimed and explained. It is not a place for personal opinions and/or political positions to be expressed. The cry of the people today is the same as 2,000 years ago: **“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”**

### **The Creed**

The Nicene Creed follows the Liturgy of the Word for a good reason: the Readings are the Word, the sermon explains the Word, and the Creed gives an opportunity to respond to the Word by stating what we believe. The earliest version of the Nicene Creed began with, “We believe...”, for the entire assembly to proclaim its corporate faith. Those who in conscience could not subscribe to the teachings of the Creed would, by necessity, absent themselves from the Liturgy. Each of our three historic Creeds (Apostles’, Nicene, and Athanasian) is a result of heresies, disputes, bloodshed, and theological debate. Oddly enough, though, the Apostles’ Creed was not written by the Apostles, the Nicene Creed was not written at the Council of Nicea, and the Athanasian Creed was not written by St Athanasius! The Nicene Creed does, however, reflect the beliefs of the Council of Nicea of 325. The issues of the Persons of the Trinity are spelled out, and as we recite this creed, we are well aware of the fact that we believe in the Human and Divine Natures of Christ and that God is One with three Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Liturgy of the Word teaches us this reality, and the Creed is our way of affirming it.

### **The Prayers of the People**

The Prayers of the People are of ancient origin, and were present in every major Liturgy until the Mediæval Period. They were often in the form of a Litany, and were usually led by the Deacon, who would either encourage the people to express their intentions, or would write down the intentions. The 1979 Book of Common Prayer permits a layperson to lead these prayers in the absence of a Deacon. The original term for these prayers was “The Prayers of the Faithful”, which refers to the fact that only those who were “in communion” with the Church could remain for the Liturgy. Excommunicated people and Catechumens, (unbaptized people preparing for baptism), were dismissed by the Deacon prior to praying the Prayers of the Faithful. Thomas Cranmer, in 1549, restored the Prayers to the Anglican usage of the Western Rite in his first Prayer Book. These prayers, however, were recited only by the priest, and gave no opportunity for individual intentions. This, of course, was the case until the 1979 Prayer Book was adopted. These prayers were once called “The Prayers for the Church Militant here on Earth”, and were later called “The Prayer of the Whole State of Christ’s Church, and then “The Prayer for the Whole State of Christ’s Church and the World”. This is an appropriate time for all of us to offer our prayers silently or aloud, and to use an Intercessions Book where we write in our intentions prior to Mass.

*Let us pray for the Church and the world ...*

### **The Confession and the Peace**

The procession of our liturgy is now rather clear; we enter, we hear the Word, we have the Word explained, we proclaim our belief, and we make our needs known to God. Now it is time for us to be reconciled to God and our neighbors. The ways in which we have formally expressed our sorrow for our sin have varied throughout the ages. One condition does not change - we are all sinners. As Scripture says, “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God”. Furthermore, we know that we must be sorry for our sins. This is a prerequisite for forgiveness or absolution. Once again Scripture tells us, “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”.

## **The Penance**

In the early Church, “group” or “communal” penance was practiced. Individuals confessed their sins publicly. There was a trust level within the Christian community. Later, confessions were said “privately”, with the priest representing the Community. By the mediaeval period, there was also an opportunity for confession by those serving at Mass. The so-called “Prayers at the Foot of the Altar” were said as the first act upon entering the church, often while the congregation was singing (or listening to) the opening hymn. This confession included an Antiphon, Psalm 43, the *Confiteor* (confession) and several versicles and responses.

Later, prior to the first *Book of Common Prayer*, an “order” was added to the Mass in England whereby priest and congregation would have a “General Confession”. The placement we find today is different from several other liturgical traditions for at least a few reasons. This part of the Liturgy is a transition from the Liturgy of the Word to the Liturgy of the Eucharist. This placement seems to echo Scripture: “If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

## **Absolution**

In both Rites I and II in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, we note that sin is against God, our neighbors and ourselves. The prevailing tradition has been to have an “absolution” — which has been believed to be a function of the priesthood. The priest functions as an “Icon of Christ”. Reformation thinking, however, was that absolution was inappropriate, and that an “assurance of pardon” from Scripture was preferable; thus, the so-called “Comfortable Words” in Rite I and in the 1928 Book of Common Prayer. (These sentences are now optional in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer).

Upon receiving forgiveness from God, and thus being reconciled with God, we now celebrate this grace by being reconciled with each other; thus, the Peace. The Peace is one of the most ancient parts of the Liturgy, and echo the Jewish *Shalom*. For many centuries this action was confined, in the Western Rites, to an exchange between the clergy at the altar. Today this ancient action has been restored to all of God's people.

## **Peace**

The Peace is not meant to be a time to exchange recipes or the latest “news”, nor is it meant to be reduced to the single word, “Peace”. This action and phrase are of greatest significance. We are extending God’s peace to our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is not our peace we extend, but rather “the Peace of God which passes all understanding”. We can even exchange the Peace with an enemy, with someone with whom we feel no peace. The reason for this is clear: Our peace is fickle; God’s peace is constant. Reconciled with God and each other, we are now ready to make the transition to the Altar.

## **The Offertory**

The long-standing action of the Offertory is to carry the oblations (bread, wine and water) to the Altar from the Credence Table (belief table). The bread, traditionally, is carried by a woman, the wine by a man, and the water by a child. The custom of the lavabo (the priest washing his hands) comes from this action, at a time when many other oblations or gifts were carried to the Altar. The idea of collecting money and carrying it to the Altar is a much later tradition. Actually, to this day there are churches which do not take the money to the Altar, for the oblations, and thus the Offertory, are not to be seen as the money offering alone: "And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies..." It is appropriate, however, to see the offering of money as a symbol of what we offer.

### *We give Thee but Thine own*

In a decreasing number of parishes, the so-called "Doxology" is sung. This final stanza of the "Old One-Hundredth" sneaked into the Liturgy only in very recent years, and has never been an official part of any *Book of Common Prayer*, and yet many parishes treated it as if it were part of the Liturgy. Unfortunately, it was very often an anticlimax, musically, to a choral rendition. Just as soon as the choir concludes a meditative musical text, it is followed by a tune, which is musically inconsistent. The use of the Doxology hit its prime when Morning Prayer was the main Liturgy of the church, and in Morning Prayer there is no Offertory - just an offering. The Doxology covered the "money procession". When the Eucharist became once again the central Liturgy, it became the custom in many places to continue to use the Doxology, in spite of its incongruity, out of habit.

The Doxology is a lovely "praise" hymn, which can appropriately be used as a grace at meal times, or as a response to an event, decision, or election. Cohesive flow is essential in Liturgy, and that is why certain "extraneous" customs have never been incorporated into our official Liturgy.

At the Offertory on special days we cense the gifts. There are a number of reasons for using incense:

1. Because the Bible says so (see *Revelation*). We are told that incense burns before the Throne of God, and our altar is the "earthly" throne.
2. Because the Early Christians did it (signifying the Divinity of Christ). (It was one of the gifts of the Wise Men.)
3. Because it symbolizes our prayers (rising up to God).
4. It sets a tone (if the right kind is used!).

After respect is shown for the gifts by the censing, respect is shown for those who presented the gifts, and all of the participants, including the congregation, are censed. We must remember that one of the essential differences between Liturgical worship and non-Liturgical worship is that we "Liturgical churches" believe in the ancient understanding that worship (and thus liturgy) is an offering to God. We participate in a foretaste of Heaven. Non-Liturgical churches stress educating, encouraging, and "entertaining" the congregation. We see worship as God-centered, and actively engage the laity as functional co-celebrants, instead of seeing the laity as passive recipients. That is why there are so many responses, and so many gestures (bowing, genuflecting, making the sign of the Cross, etc.).



## **The Great Thanksgiving** *Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.*

We are now entering into the “Thanksgiving” part of the Liturgy. There have been various names for the Liturgy; the Protestant Reformers renamed the Liturgy “Holy Communion”, but that refers to only one part of the Liturgy. Archbishop Cranmer, in the 1549 Prayer Book, continued to use the term “Mass”, which for most of England’s history was the name of this Liturgy. The Greeks used the term “Eucharist”, which means Thanksgiving.

### **Sursum Corda and the Pater Noster**

The part of the Liturgy, which begins with the Salutation and *Sursum Corda* (“The Lord be with you” ... “Lift up your hearts”) and ends with the *Pater Noster*, (Lord’s Prayer) is called the Great Thanksgiving. It is the most sacred part of the Liturgy. For the Early Church and most of the Eastern Rites, it has had a Thanksgiving theme, but the Mediaeval Church changed all of that. During the mediæval period, less emphasis was placed on thanksgiving, and greater emphasis was placed on the sin and unworthiness of the participants. In the Early Church there were a variety of Eucharistic Prayers, and many of them were named after the priests or Bishops who prayed these prayers. One, which has endured, has been the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom. One of the Eucharistic prayers in Rite II is an adaptation of his Great Thanksgiving, and another of his prayers is to be found in Morning Prayer (or Mattins, as the original Prayer Book called this office), and Evening Prayer (or Evensong, as it was originally called in 1549). During the time of Gregory the Great, one Eucharistic Prayer was adopted, namely the “Gregorian Canon”, or *Te igitur*. For many centuries, this was the only Eucharistic Prayer that was permitted. In fact, the Roman Church mandated it until Vatican II.

### *Hidden 'neath forms of bread and wine.*

### **The Eucharistic Prayer**

Anglicanism was not really in the same “rut” as Rome. When the first *Book of Common Prayer* was compiled in 1549, it contained many of the elements of the Gregorian Canon, but Archbishop Cranmer also used some elements of the Earlier Eastern Rites. The Eucharistic Prayer in Rite I called “Eucharistic Prayer I” is a Scottish adaptation of the Eucharistic Prayers of the 1549, 1552 and 1662 Prayer Books; “Eucharistic Prayer II” (1979 BCP) in Rite I is similar to Prayer I, but it omits the mediæval penitential note. Thus Prayer I is suitable for Lent, for example, and Prayer II for Easter. The Eucharistic Prayers for Rite II A, B, C, D (1979 BCP) each have a different seasonal emphasis. You may wish to look at each and see which Church Season seems to be emphasized in each. What is most important, however, is what happens in this Prayer— the bread and the wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Originally, people stood during this Prayer out of respect for God's presence (we stand when someone enters the room), and also to express the fact that Christ has made us free (slaves at that time knelt). In fact, at the Council of Nicea in 325, a Canon was enacted which insisted that there could be no kneeling during the Easter season at all! For those of us of the Western tradition, this must seem to be very odd, but to this day, most Eastern Orthodox and many Byzantine Catholics do not

even have pews or chairs in their churches, because standing is the normal posture. For Anglicans, however, kneeling has been our usual posture for the Great Thanksgiving, but we do this not so much out of penitence as out of reverence and respect for “... He who comes in the Name of the Lord” — Jesus our Savior. During the course of the Great Thanksgiving, a number of manual actions occur. Some of these actions are rather obvious in terms of what they convey, while others are not. For the most part we are people who express our emotions by our facial expressions and body language. When the celebrant looks as if he is bored, disturbed or unemotional, this is not perceived as great piety or sacerdotal holiness. When the priest says, “Lift up your hearts”, he lifts his hands to indicate the joy that he assumes we share. This manual act and others clarifies and reflects what the words are saying.

### **Sanctus Bells**

In addition, the use of bells highlights what is happening at the Altar. Bells have an ancient origin, and have always been used as “attention getters”. For instance, instead of screaming, “Supper’s ready; come and eat”, three times, it is much nicer to ring a dinner bell. To some extent the Sanctus Bell is a type of “Dinner Bell”. We ring the bells three times at the *Sanctus* (Holy, Holy, Holy) to remind us that we are entering into a special moment in worshipping God along with “Angels, Archangels, and all the company of Heaven”. It is a special moment and we call all people to attention. In addition, we ring the bells immediately before Christ’s words of Institution, to remind us that this is the most sacred portion of the Eucharistic Prayer. We also ring the bells as we elevate the Host and the Chalice, so that we may be drawn to the sacred presence of Christ. The worshipper may wish to join St Thomas, who in joy beheld Christ and say: “My Lord and my God”. Finally, we ring the bells when it is time to come to the Altar Rail to receive the Eucharist. The bell is much nicer than saying: “Y’all come. It’s time!”

### ***with Angels & Archangels***

We must remember that in worship we are setting the stage for the coming of Christ, and we participate in His life. Liturgy – “the work of the people” is all of us joining together to “present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies”.

### **The Lord’s Prayer and the Breaking of Bread**

The conclusion of the Great Thanksgiving is the Lord’s Prayer. It is appropriate that we conclude the actions of the Eucharistic Prayer with the very prayer taught to us by Jesus Himself. The Lord’s Prayer is really an outline, if you think about it. It is an answer to the disciples’ request to “teach us how to pray”. While the words are obviously sacred, the outline is what we must note. It contains virtually every type of prayer known to Christians: petition, thanksgiving, intercession, adoration, penitence, praise, and oblation. This is truly how we are to pray.

Upon completing the action of the Great Thanksgiving, the Lord’s Prayer prepares us to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. And yet before we can receive His Body, we must first “break the bread”. There are two reasons for this: one is functional, and the other is symbolic. Functionally, the bread must be broken in order for us to receive it. This action makes it very clear that originally only one “loaf” of bread was used. St Paul himself is very clear about this, as he makes reference to “one Bread and one Cup”. Ideally, we should have just “one bread” on

the Altar. In fact, the rubrics indicate that only one Chalice is to be on the Altar for the Eucharistic Prayer. Flagons may be used, and then the Sacred Blood is poured into Chalices, which are brought to the Altar after the Eucharistic Prayer. But it is difficult to have “one bread”.

### **My Body, broken for you**

It would appear that “Syrian Bread” or Pita Bread was the type of bread used in the early Church. It doesn’t crumble so easily, and it is easier to break than “Wonder Bread”. Obviously, in order to receive the bread, it must be broken. The symbolic reason is that it represents the broken Body of Christ and thus the phrase: “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the Feast.” Not only is this Biblical, but it was used in the first *Book of Common Prayer* (1549), in a slightly different form. Thus, in terms of the historic liturgies, it is unique to Anglicanism. We are now ready to receive our Lord’s Body and Blood.

## Receiving the Eucharist

Do you remember the joy you felt when you first received the Lord's Body and Blood? This is the climax of the Eucharistic action. Everything we have discussed leads to this point, just as our Lord's ministry led to His Crucifixion and Resurrection. Now we are ready to receive the triumphant living Lord Jesus, whose Body was broken and whose Blood was shed for us.

*O see, within a creature's hand the great creator deigns to be*

There have been a variety of ways to receive the Eucharist over the years. In the Early Church, we know that considerable quantity of both species was received. In fact at the Last Supper (as we know from the Seder), Jesus distributed bread to be eaten and wine to be drunk. Such a quantity required chewing and drinking, and it was not until the mediæval period that we begin to have discussions about allowing the host to dissolve, and allowing the precious Blood merely to touch our lips. There is no question: both species were received in the early Church. Also, the posture was to stand, for only those who were in a state of communion with God were to receive worthily. Once again, during the mediæval period kneeling became the normal position for receiving the Body and Blood.

What we discover from early documents is that a response was expected from the communicant when the Host and Chalice were presented. The priest would say, "The Body of Christ", while the communicant would say, "Amen". It was then that the host was given to the communicant, in many places, on the hand, and in other places, on the tongue. Likewise, the Chalice was presented with "The Blood of Christ" said by the priest, as the communicant said "Amen". This response makes us active participants instead of passive recipients. It gives the communicant the opportunity to say: "I believe that this is the Body and Blood of my Lord".

It should be noted that reverencing the Sacrament before approaching the Altar is most appropriate, but it is not necessary to bow or genuflect upon leaving the Altar, for we are carrying within us the very One whom we have revered. It is appropriate to make the sign of the Cross before receiving each species and after receiving the Chalice.

The 1979 *Book of Common Prayer* restores the early practice of saying "Amen", and makes the earlier Prayer Book Reception Sentence optional. The 1549 *BCP* very clearly expresses a belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Sacrament, and the priest delivered the Body and Blood of Christ accordingly ("The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for you..."). Unfortunately, later Prayer Books (1552) reflect the Continental Reformers' belief that Christ was not present in the Sacrament ("Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee...").

This controversy over Christ's presence remained for many years, and the 1662 and 1928 Prayer Books reflect the Elizabethan compromise between belief and non-belief in Christ's Sacramental presence: "The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on Him in thy heart by faith, with thanksgiving".

*The Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ...*

It is obvious in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer that the Church has returned to the earliest view, that Christ is truly present under the species of bread and wine, without any

compromise. Several Prayer Books even went so far as to introduce the so-called “Black Rubric” (an odd term, considering that in Latin *rubric* refers to the ‘red print’), which expresses the view that the act of kneeling for the Sacrament does not mean that the communicant necessarily believes that this is the Body and Blood of Christ. The issue for us is, do we personally believe that this is Christ’s Body and Blood? If only we could approach the Sacrament with the same enthusiasm and joy we had the first time!

### **The Thanksgiving**

One of the more popular names for the Liturgy of Christ's Body and Blood is the Eucharist, which, as we have learned, means “Thanksgiving”. The obvious response to receiving a gift is to say “Thank you”. But when one receives the very Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, are there any words which can adequately express our gratitude? “Thank you” somehow does not say it well enough. And yet, if we can agree that words are symbolic representations of our emotions and thoughts, then we can conclude that no matter how inadequate our words may seem to us, they are precious to God. He wants to hear our gratitude, but more importantly, we need to learn to be grateful people; we need to look outside of ourselves, and look to the One who has provided the many blessings of life.

#### ***Thank you for feeding us with the Body and Blood of your Son***

In the Early Church, the Thanksgiving or “Post Communion Prayer” was extemporaneous, and reflected the theme and needs of the day. As liturgy developed, a variety of Post Communion prayers were developed, which carried out the theme of the “liturgical day”; that is, the Post Communion Prayer was thematically consistent with the Collect and the Scriptural readings for that day. In addition, this was the last action of the Liturgy. We gave thanks and then we left. Later on, the Dismissal was added. By the mediæval period, the “Last Gospel” and “Prayers after Mass” had been added.

By the time the first *Book of Common Prayer* was compiled in 1549, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer included a Post Communion Prayer that was invariable; that is, one which was designed to be used every time the Eucharist was celebrated. That prayer, which is essentially the prayer found in Rite 1, thanks God for the Gift of His Son and the Gift of Eternal Life. The ending makes reference to our desire to do good works, which God has prepared us to do.

#### ***Send us out into the world ... to love and serve***

In the 1928 Book of Common Prayer and in Rite I of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer there is an invariable Post Communion Prayer. In Rite II, there are two Post Communion Prayers. The first one adds a new dimension. We ask God to send us out into the world; in essence, to take what we have received with “the Church gathered” to “the Church scattered”. The point is, we ask God to help us share the gifts. The second Post Communion Prayer is similar to Rite I, but reinforces the concept of us taking out, into the world, “the work you have given us to do”. Thus, these two prayers in Rite II indicate our desire to be “faithful witnesses of Christ, our Lord”. Indeed, we express our gratitude, but we also see that gifts are given to be shared.

*Thank Thee for... assuring us that we are members ... in the mystical Body of thy Son*

### **The Blessing and Dismissal**

One of the points in the Liturgy, that most would say must be one of the most ancient actions, would certainly be the Blessing. Even in parishes where Morning Prayer is still used as a main Liturgy, a blessing is (without authority) added. It seems to be assumed that there can't be a Liturgy without a blessing (or, as some incorrectly say, a "Benediction" - Benediction is a Liturgy in and of itself, and the word "benediction" is the Latin word for "blessing").

#### *May The Blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit ...*

Quite frankly, after giving thanks for receiving our Lord's Body and Blood, everything else seems anticlimactic. Nothing can exceed the real blessing that Christ gives us in His Real Presence. The origin of the Blessing is to be found in the Episcopal Visitation; that is, the bishop as the chief pastor would, upon visiting, pronounce a blessing upon the people. It was not until a much later time that the custom of having a priestly blessing at the conclusion of the Liturgy became normative. Initially, the priestly blessing was seen as a delegated function; that is, in the absence of the bishop, the priest was permitted to pronounce the Blessing. The more ancient departure, however, is the Dismissal. When the Church moved from homes in the First Century into public places of worship, it became necessary to tell the people when they could leave. Thus, the Dismissal became the very last action. In the Latin Rite, the Dismissal was, "Ite Missa est", variously translated as, "Go, the Mass is ended", or, "Go - be, sent". (This depends on how early a translation of the Latin *missa* we use).

In other rites, we were sent in "Shalom" (from our Jewish roots); that is, we were sent in Peace. Much later, however, we added a number of elements: hymns, postludes, and even, during the Mediæval period, the "last Gospel" and "Eucharistic Devotions". It was as if we were conditionally dismissed to, "Go, but not right away!" Archbishop Cranmer lived in a Church where the Diaconate was not functional in a real sense, and although historically, the Dismissal was pronounced by a deacon, functionally, it became the priest. In fact, in the Latin Rite, we even reached the absurdity of having the Blessing follow the Dismissal. In effect, we were saying, "Go, but not until I bless you."

Thomas Cranmer, in the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer*, saw the importance of the intent of the Dismissal, but since its function was weak, he felt it would be wiser to merge the Dismissal and Blessing (the Latin Rite order), and employed his usual principle of finding a Scriptural text which would express the action. Thus, "Go in Peace," became, "The Peace of God which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." Then he added the Blessing, "And the Blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost be upon you and remain with you always. Amen."

His principle reflects the fact that he was an heir of the Latin Rite, yet was strongly affected by the Reformers. But how would people know when it was time to leave? This has always been a question. Some parishes resolved it by having the priest add a "peek-a-boo" prayer after the last hymn. Others resolved it by having the "Fire Watchers' Ceremony" (no exit until the last candle is extinguished). Neither of these customs has much history, nor are they logical. Thus the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer* restored the Dismissal (four options) after the

Blessing. The Blessing is even optional in Rite II – it is not even printed in the text. We must note, however, that the long Blessing of Cranmer is redundant when used with a Dismissal – in effect, we have two Dismissals. Thus, the “shorter” Blessing makes more sense when the Dismissal is used. Now we know when to leave. The Liturgy ends with the Dismissal, and a positive note: “Go out with a purpose” (“Go in peace to love and serve the Lord”; “Let us go forth in the Name of Christ”; “Let us go forth into the world rejoicing in the power of the Spirit”). We then end by showing our gratitude, “Thanks be to God!” Therefore we end on an appropriate note: thanks - gratitude - Eucharist.

### **Post Dismissal Devotions**

There is nothing more awkward than saying good-bye. When we visit someone and say good-bye to him or her once, and then again, it is difficult to know what to say if we bump into him or her again a few minutes later. So it is in Liturgy. Once the people are dismissed, what else is there to say? And yet, for centuries, in the Western Rite, after the Dismissal, there were the Last Gospel and Devotions. The “Last Gospel” has an interesting history. Some maintain that it was said at this point in order to proclaim the Incarnation theme (John's Gospel prologue). Others contend that, since the priest was paid a stipend for each Mass he celebrated, two Gospels meant two stipends. No matter what its origin, it is obvious that apart from the beauty and truth of this Gospel, it does interrupt the flow of the Liturgy.

Less commonly used were the devotions said at the foot of the Altar. These are beautiful prayers, but are not appropriate as a public conclusion. It is clear, however, that all of us need a few moments after the Liturgy to collect our thoughts – to rejoice in the many blessings, which we have received, and to prepare to go out into a world that will challenge, tempt, and test our beliefs. We have, indeed, participated in a mystery: Jesus has become truly present to us, now we must be present for Him.

### **Afterwords — ‘Do I Stand, Sit or Kneel?’**

Nothing is more confusing in Church than not knowing whether to stand, sit, or kneel! Many Episcopalians remember being taught, “You stand to praise, sit to listen, and kneel to pray.” Unfortunately, this adage is in the same category as, “*I* before *e* except after *c*.”

So, when do we stand, sit, or kneel? Actually, the earliest custom was to stand for prayer. Only slaves knelt to pray, and even enslaved Jews stood to pray in the synagogue to indicate that they were not slaves before God. Sitting was obviously for listening, but kneeling was rarely ever done, even in the Early Church, until the Mediæval Period except for Penitential Days and Seasons.

The Anglican Church had a very different tradition from the Roman one when St Augustine first came to Great Britain, but over the years, the Roman tradition “won out”, and with that came our various prayer postures. Recent liturgical studies show us that many of the “Postures” of our Liturgy were never intended. For example, the Collect is always said with the people standing because it is the conclusion to the Entrance Rite, and the Entrance Rite, (obviously), implies that we are standing.

Obviously, we sit for the Lessons, Psalm and Sermon because we are listening, but the old “stand to praise, sit to listen, and kneel to pray” adage breaks down when we consider the

Gospel. We listen to the Gospel, but we are standing! The reason is that we show special respect for the words of Jesus.

We stand for the Prayers of the People because we are proclaiming as a Body our own petitions, intercessions and thanksgivings. These prayers were always led by the deacon in the Early Church, but in the 1979 Prayer Book, a layperson may lead these prayers in the absence of a deacon. In these prayers, we stand before God as people who are free to pray, not as slaves. Remember, in the Mediæval Church the lay people had no significant function, and thus kneeling and saying the rosary became the norm. Those days are gone.

On the other hand, we kneel to make our confession to God, and to receive priestly absolution, because we approach God in a spirit of penitence. We then stand to receive and exchange the Peace of Christ. The normal position for the Offertory is to stand (because we are offering something), but when the Choir is singing an anthem, (rather than the congregation singing a hymn), it is customary to sit so that we may listen.

In the Early Church, a canon was passed indicating that it was not appropriate to kneel for the Great Thanksgiving during the Easter Season, since we are celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is still the case in Eastern Orthodox Churches. The Roman usage, however, was to kneel for the entire Great Thanksgiving, because the lay people were not considered worthy to stand. Generally speaking, we stand for the *Sursum Corda*, Preface, and *Sanctus and Benedictus*, but kneel for the Eucharistic Prayer, *Agnus Dei* and Presentation of the Gifts of God.

In the Early Church all people stood to receive the Eucharist (there were no Altar Rails), but the custom of kneeling came in Mediaeval days. (Very few people received the Eucharist in those days). Finally, the usual custom was to stand to give thanks, kneel for the Bishop's blessing, and stand to be dismissed by the Deacon. During the recessional it is appropriate to drop to the left knee as the Bishops passes your pew, if he is giving his blessing.