

INSTRUCTED EUCHARIST, RITE II

Part I: The Liturgy of the Word

July 10, 2005, 10:00am

St. Paul's, Fairfield

Rev. Mary Anne Osborn

This is said in the church, immediately before the service begins:

This morning our service will be a little different. We are doing an Instructed Eucharist which takes us on a liturgical journey designed to deepen our understanding of why we do what we do when we gather for worship each Sunday. We will pause from time to time during the service and I will offer comments. These reflections are intended to enhance our worship and to bring all of us into deeper communion with God. Today we focus on the first part of the service. In a few weeks, we will focus on the second part.

Preacher goes to the back of the church and the service begins with the hymn and continues through the opening acclamation. Then the people are seated and the preacher moves to the pulpit.

FIRST COMMENT: Gather in the Lord's Name *After the*

Acclamation. Please be seated.

Our service each week is divided into 3 main parts and each part makes Christ's presence known in a particular way:

1-The Entrance Rite

2-The Liturgy of the Word

3-The Liturgy of the Holy Communion.

Today we focus on the first 2 parts.

The Entrance Rite begins with the Processional Hymn, our first communal act in worship. We all stand, to remind ourselves that we are ALL participants in the Eucharist, offering our prayer and praise as one family. St. John of Chrysostom said it this way:

“As soon as the singing begins, all the voices are united and gathered into a harmonious canticle. Young and old, rich and poor, men and women, slaves and free sing the same melody...together we form one choir; the inequality which exists in the world has been pushed aside, forming a single choir with equal voices, earth imitating heaven.”

The Entrance Rite gathers all the people, and that is the first way Christ's presence is made known in our service: in the gathered assembly: priests and people together. The Body of Christ, the church, is the primary sacrament of Christ's presence in our world. As the priests and other ministers take their places, the whole body is visible in its fullness.

Everyone participates from beginning to end. Our liturgy is never meant to be offered by the priest alone but by everyone worshipping that day. In fact, the word liturgy means, “the work of the people.”

The cross leads the procession toward the altar as we remember that through time and history, we are following the cross of Christ and moving toward the Kingdom of God.

When the hymn is finished, we say the opening Acclamation, which changes with the liturgical seasons. This has its roots in the Liturgy of St. John of Chrysostom, a 4th century liturgy still in use in the Orthodox church. It is customary to make the sign of the cross on ourselves as we begin in the name of the Trinity. The sign of the cross, made on our foreheads at baptism, has a history of marking beginnings, and so it marks the beginning of our liturgy.

Then follows the Collect for Purity which used to be recited silently by the priest. Now we **all** prepare our hearts for worship as we listen to this prayer being read aloud by the priest. At the end of this prayer, and all others, everyone says, "Amen." This is a Hebrew word which means, "I have heard you and I accept it."

The gathering increases in momentum with one of the oldest Christian hymns, the Gloria in Excelsis. By the 5th century, this song of pure praise was sung at every festal celebration of the Eucharist.

Now that we are all gathered and we have asked God to make us ready to worship and we have sung a hymn of praise, we now greet one another with what we call the Salutation. It's an old fashioned word for Greeting: "The Lord be with You; And also with you." In the early church, the service began with these words.

We complete our preparation for hearing the Word of God with a prayer called the Collect of the Day. In this prayer, our many prayers are "collected" into one prayer which is said on behalf of all by the

priest. The collect changes each Sunday and is often related to a theme found in the scriptures for the day.

Now let us continue our service by praying the Collect for Purity, singing the Gloria and conclude the Gathering with the Salutation and Collect of the Day. **Please stand.**

Move to chair as congregation stands for the Collect for Purity.

SECOND COMMENT: “PROCLAIM THE WORD OF GOD”

(after Collect of the Day; before the Old Testament reading) Please be seated.

When families gather for celebrations, particularly if there are several generations present, they are likely to sit around and tell family stories. And this is what we do as a Christian family, gathered for celebration. We listen to family stories from Holy Scripture, told to help us remember who we are, where we came from, and where we are going. We listen to these stories not so much to gather information, but to listen for the presence of God who has called our family into being.

Christ's presence in this part of the liturgy comes through The Bible, which is now the focus of our attention. One or Two lessons are read from the Bible and we make a variety of responses acknowledging that we have heard God's word.

The first reading is usually from the Hebrew scripture, or what the

Christian church calls the Old Testament. After the first lesson we sing or say a Psalm, from the Bible's own hymnal, the Psalter. When there is a second lesson, it comes from the epistles, or letters, written by the apostle Paul and other early Christian leaders. A lay minister called a lector reads the lesson. We read only one lesson during the summer at St. Paul's.

Before the Gospel is processed from the altar to the people, we sing the psalm as our gradual hymn. This word gradual comes from the Latin word meaning step, as the Gospel book is carried down the chancel steps to the midst of the people.

The procession of the Gospel book reminds us that it is our responsibility to carry the Gospel into all the world, through our words and deeds. We turn to face the Gospel book. Often people make the sign of the cross over the forehead, the lips and the heart. This is a prayer enacted rather than spoken. We are inviting God to bless our minds, our speech and our hearts through the message of Christ. Out of respect for the words of our Lord, we stand to hear the Gospel, which is read by a priest or deacon.

Return to seat for 1st lesson. Stay there through gospel.

THIRD COMMENT: RESPONDING TO THE WORD (after the Gospel) *Congregation may be seated.*

Normally, we hear a sermon after the gospel. The Sermon is the "today" of God's good news, the proclamation that today the Word of

God comes true, here and now, in our lives through Jesus Christ.
Today, we are having an Instructed Eucharist in place of a sermon.

After hearing the Word of God applied to our lives in a sermon, then we RESPOND *together* by proclaiming the faith of generations of Christians, by saying the Nicene Creed. This Creed was written after months of debate, at the Council of Nicea in 325, and recited by the church ever since. The Nicene Creed begins with “We believe...” a statement that proclaims our God-given unity in shared faith.

LET US NOW stand and say together the Nicene Creed.

Stay in pulpit. After the creed, the congregation may be seated.

THE FOURTH COMMENT: PRAY FOR THE WORLD AND FOR THE CHURCH (*after Creed, before Prayers of the People*)

Now we are about to share in one of the oldest parts of public Christian worship: the Prayers of the People. In these prayers, the Christian body makes intercession before God for the needs of the whole world. Our Christian lives are lived in a particular context, and our prayers reflect the needs which arise out of these contexts, be they political, economic, social, or personal. The BCP offers 6 forms of the POP, but other forms arising out of a particular community are entirely appropriate. We do this on occasion at St. Paul's.

To intercede for all who are in need of prayer is part of our work as God's people. Someone once put it with startling clarity saying, "Feasting at the King's banquet without interceding for those who are absent is like eating a beautiful meal without concern for the starving."

Our preparation for communion is not complete without self examination. The *didache*, a document from the church in the early second century instructs Christians in this way:

"On the Lord's Day, assemble together and break bread and give thanks...if anyone has a quarrel with a friend, let them not join your assembly until they are reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be defiled. For this is the sacrifice spoken of by the Lord: 'In every place and time offer me a pure sacrifice.'"

We begin our self-examination with silence and reflection. Then, together, we confess our need for forgiveness. Kneeling is usually the posture for penitence.

We say the Confession, admitting that we fail God and each other. The Absolution, follows. This is the declaration that we are forgiven, we are loved, and we are free. The absolution is a sacramental act by the priest, declaring that those who repent are forgiven; we are freed from sin and we are strengthened in all goodness to do God's will.

Go to chair and kneel for Confession

FIFTH COMMENT “Exchange the Peace of God” : *(please be seated; after the absolution, before the Peace)*

The exchange of the Peace, which dates back to New Testament times, is not intended to be a casual, social gesture or greeting. It seals the reconciliation God has just given us and is a sign of the peace bestowed by Christ on his disciples. In the early church, unwillingness to exchange the peace with another member disqualified one from receiving communion.

The original gesture was a “holy kiss”. Today, we use a variety of gestures depending on our comfort with them.

The Peace moves us forward to the holy communion, which we are about to receive.

Say: “The Peace of the Lord be always with you .”