



Instructed Eucharist

Components of the Liturgy

Holy Communion—A Very Brief History

Background

The Last Supper Two very old versions of the story—one represented by St. Mark (14:25) and the other by St. Paul (1Cor. 11:26). St. Paul puts in the familiar words ‘Do this in remembrance of me’ after the distribution and concludes ‘For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.’ (1Cor. 11:26). The Passover provides the background for the Last Supper. One of the well-known features of the Passover Seder is the identification of some food which the family eats ‘This is the bread of affliction which your forefathers ate when they came out of Egypt.’ When Jesus took the bread and made a different identification, its significance would not be lost on the Twelve. ‘This is my body...this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many. Truly I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day I drink it anew in the kingdom of God.’ The new celebration in the body and blood of Christ is to signify that through the death of Jesus, a new kingdom is established—the Kingdom of God. The Supper is the sign of the kingdom, a prophetic sign.

Early Eucharists After the death of Jesus, the disciples continued to eat together, as Jewish religious fellowships, or ‘chaburoth,’ were accustomed to do. As they ate, recalling the many occasions when the Lord had broken bread before the crucifixion, they found he was still with them. They eventually understood (maybe St. Paul himself) that the continuation of these common meals was how the Lord intended to give his disciples a sign of his presence and a foretaste of the kingdom of God until in God’s good time it was established.

Eucharist: Focus of Christian Life

1. Reminder of the Last Supper
2. Recalled all the meals Jesus had shared with them
3. Reminded of the feeding of the multitudes
4. Not just a recollection, but a prophetic sign of the cross

5. Signs of the coming of the kingdom—stood at that moment between Jesus' death in the past and fulfillment of God's promises in the future.
6. More than this because Christ is present in these meals. Through Christ, communion with God restored, therefore the death of Christ recognized as a sacrifice—once and for all sacrifice signifying the obedience of Jesus' life and death.

Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus

The *Apostolic tradition* of Hippolytus who was an important 3rd century Christian leader in Rome provides us with some of the earliest written evidence of liturgical practices of the early church.

- Prayer of Thanksgiving: Christianized version of the Jewish thanksgiving for creation.
- Institution: The words of institution of the supper.
- Oblation/Anamnesis/Memorial: a succinct recital of the acts of God in Christ for the salvation of the world as bread and wine are offered, and how through the power of the Spirit we participate in them.
- Epiclesis/Invocation—the prayer invokes the Holy Spirit upon the material gifts of the bread and wine and asks that all who share in Eucharistic gifts may thereby be filled with the Holy Spirit for the confirmation of their faith.

The 1979 Prayer Book

The Offertory Has had a checkered history as part of the Eucharist. Popular late medieval theology of the Eucharist made of it a new offering of Christ himself, and each Mass came to be seen as something offered to God for the sins of the people. The once and for all character of Christ's dying became obscured and the point that in the Eucharist Christ is offered by God for us was lost. In English Prayer Books after 1552 until 1662, all mention of offering was dropped—not even the bread, wine and money were offered. The bread and wine were put on the holy table before the service. In 1662 bread and wine were put on the table at the time of the Offering. In 1928 Prayer Book, it was directed that the money should be presented and that the bread and wine should be offered and placed on the Holy Table. 1979 Prayer Book says money and bread and wine offered together as part of one action. The restored Offering is thus in no sense a new offering of Christ. It is the representative gifts—and by placing it on the altar, that the congregation offers itself and its world. As in every sacrifice from time immemorial, a part stands for a whole. We give part of what we make.

The Preparation of the Altar and the Offertory

The Opening Salutation (The Lord be with you) is also found in the introduction to the Collect. This opening salutation was in the 1549 Prayer Book but was dropped in the 1552 book. The 1979 Prayer Book reintroduced the opening salutation.

The Sursum corda ('Lift up your hearts') The elements of this bidding prayer come from Jewish prayers at their sacred meals which would have been familiar to early Jewish Christians: the bidding to stand up, 'Lift up your hearts' with its response, followed by the celebrant's request for permission to pray in their name and their assent are typical of the dialogue that introduces a Jewish 'berakoth.'

Proper Prefaces One difference between Eastern and Western liturgies is the use of proper prefaces. The Roman rite allowed for proper prefaces and the 1549 Book provided for 5 proper prefaces for Christmas, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost and Trinity — eliminating some of the prefaces used in the Sarum rite. The present Prayer Book contains 22 -- 19 are seasonal and 3 for Sundays for which special prefaces have not been appointed.

Praise and Thanksgiving At Jewish sacred meals, the principal blessings said over the cup, continued into an expression of praise to God for His might acts of creation, the sustenance of his people, and redemption. The Eucharistic Prayers in the 1979 Prayer Book follow a similar pattern with thanks for the creation and the incarnation. They also have returned to the earlier practice in the Western church of allowing for Proper Preface which relate to the major seasons, for saints' days and certain other occasions. The basic note of these Proper Prefaces is that of praise.

The Rite I and II contains the 1928 thanksgiving (Prayer 1) and an alternative (Prayer 2). Rite II contains four prayers which embody the elements of praise for creation and the incarnation but with different emphases.

The Sanctus (Holy holy holy...) This is the song of the seraphim in Isaiah's account of his vision of the Lord (Isaiah 6:1-3). The Jewish synagogue used the Sanctus and, as early the 4th century, it became an acclamation of the people in Christian Eucharistic worship. Historically it was the song of the people and not the choir. Only with the separation of the Preface and the Sanctus from the Canon in the Middle Ages was the function of the Sanctus lost.

Benedictus qui venit (Blessed is he...) The Apostolic Constitutions (c. 380 AD) is the first liturgical work to contain this text associated with our Lord's entry into Jerusalem (Matt. 21:9). Its use as an expansion of the Sanctus began in Gaul and spread to Rome and

then into Eastern liturgies. Cranmer included it in the 1549 Book. Rite I contains it as an optional addition. It is contained in all 4 Eucharistic Prayers of Rite II.

Standing and Kneeling Except in Prayer C of Rite II, the Benedictus is followed by a rubric which permits people to stand or kneel for the remainder of the Eucharistic Prayer. Standing was the universal posture for this prayer until the late Middle Ages and continues to be the posture in the Eastern Church. The Council of Nicea forbade kneeling for prayer on Sundays and during the Great 50 days of Easter. Late in the Middle Ages when the focus of the congregation had changed from participation in the Great Thanksgiving and receiving of communion to being present for adoration at 'the moment of consecration,' there is evidence that people began to kneel for the elevations. The 1549 Prayer Book assumed standing to be the posture for this prayer.

The Institution Narrative With the possible exception of the prayer in the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, Eucharistic prayers surviving from pre-Nicene period do not contain an institution narrative. After the last part of the 4th century, this became a regular component of the Eucharistic prayer.

The Memorial Acclamation (Rite II Pages 363, 368, 371, 375) Found in many Eastern liturgies where the people were original more active participants in the liturgy than in the West.

The Anamnesis (A Remembering) The concept of anamnesis is basic to Jewish-Christian tradition. Anamnesis is the opposite of amnesia. To know who you are, to whom you belong, and where you are headed you must remember. For a Jew through anamnesis, they remembered the mighty saving acts of God as basic to Jewish blessings—the God who had led them through the Red Sea and into the Promised Land. A Christian is one whom, through anamnesis, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is a present reality and one who has already entered the kingdom though it is not yet fully realized. Anamnesis was an important part of many early Eucharistic prayers and had become a normal component by the end of the 4th century.

The Oblation (An Offering) The early Apostolic Tradition of the 3rd century contained an offering or oblation 'remembering his death and resurrection, we offer you the bread and the cup.' Early Church fathers like Irenaeus for example, spoke of the Eucharist as a sacrifice. The offering in some Eastern and Gallican prayers and in the Roman rite, used the popular notion of the Mass as a repetition of Calvary. The 1549 Book omits an oblation, and the word 'sacrifice' is always qualified 'a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.' The 1552 Book moved the receiving of communion to immediately after the institution narrative. The 1637 Scottish Prayer Book did not restore the oblation but did restore the

anamnesis and the American 1789 Prayer Book retained the phrase in the revised form of Scottish prayer which is adopted. Each of the Prayers of Rite I and Rite II contains an oblation.

The Epiclesis/Invocation The Eucharistic prayer of the 3rd century Apostolic tradition contains an epiclesis, a call for the Holy Spirit to come upon the gifts and the people. From the late 4th century, the Eastern liturgies usually contained an invocation of the spirit upon the gifts and the people. As the institution narrative came to be seen as the 'moment of consecration' in the West, some groups in the East began to think of the epiclesis upon the elements as that event. The Roman rite had no explicit epiclesis; instead it had a preliminary epiclesis before the institution rite taken from the Coptic tradition that God might bless the oblation 'that it may be unto us the body and blood of Christ.' Cranmer retained that clause in the 1549 Book but prefaced it with an invocation derived from Saint Basil 'Hear us, O merciful Father, we beseech thee, and with thy Holy Spirit and word, vouchsafe to bless and sanctify these thy creatures of bread and wine.' 'Word' meant the institution narrative, so he managed to combine on this epiclesis both the Eastern and Western emphases. The 1552 Book contained a prayer for worthy reception which replaces the epiclesis. The 1637 Scottish Book modified the petition for the worthy reception in a manner that suggested the epiclesis of 1549. The American Book of 1789 inserted an abbreviated form from the Scottish Book. The form adopted in the 1789 Book is the one included in Prayer 1 of Rite I. Prayer 2 of Rite II changed from a receptionist interpretation to conform to that of the 1549 Book.

The Supplications Supplications for the various benefits of the Spirit have stemmed from The Epiclesis since the very earliest times. For example, the 1549 Prayer Book contained supplications for the acceptance of our praise and thanksgiving, our offerings of ourselves, the offering of our bounden duty and service, as well as petitions for forgiveness and worthy reception, for grace and that we may be made one with Christ. Rite I and Rite II contain similar prayers.

The Different Eucharistic Prayers

Rite I

Eucharistic Prayer 1 Adopted from the 1637 Scottish Prayer Book and represents a great enrichment compared to the 1662 English Book. It includes a clear verbal link from the Sanctus to the rest of the prayer, a full anamnesis in the traditional position after the institution narrative, an oblation, and epiclesis, and supplications.

Eucharistic Prayer 2 Thanksgiving for creation, the incarnation and reference to the Second Coming enrich this prayer. Also, the epiclesis contains the clause from the 1549 Prayer Book 'that they may be unto us the Body and Blood of thy dearly Beloved Son Jesus Christ' replaced the petition for worthy reception.

Rite II

Eucharistic Prayer A This prayer is a shorter, modern adaptation of the prayers of the previous American Books and Prayer 1 of Rite I. It has place for Proper Prefaces. It contains the Eastern memorial acclamations. The anamnesis moves in traditional style into the oblation of the gifts, and the epiclesis is based on that of 1549. An epiclesis upon the people has also been restored.

Eucharistic Prayer B Similar to Prayer A in many ways. However, differences lie in references to the prophets, emphasis on the incarnation, and the eschatological emphasis at the conclusion which make this prayer particularly suitable for use during Advent, Christmas, Epiphany and on saints' days. Also, it is worth noting that the epiclesis upon the gifts is explicit, but upon the people, more subtle than in Prayer A.

Eucharistic Prayer C This prayer is distinctive in many ways. Like some Eastern prayers it contains much congregational responses. Also, an Eastern characteristic is that there is no provision for a proper preface, but the fixed preface recites salvation history which covers many of the aspects treated in the various proper prefaces of Prayers A and B. There is also a special emphasis on creation—more than in any of the other prayers.

Eucharistic Prayer D is adapted from the liturgy of Saint Basil, generally dated from Basil the Great (d. 379). It continues to be used on certain Sundays and feast days of special solemnity in the Greek and Slavic churches. It is also used by Coptic Christians and a revised form of this prayer is one of the 4 Eucharistic prayers of the Roman sacramentary of Pope Paul VI. This makes it, in its main substance, authorized among more Christians than any other Eucharistic prayers.

The Lord's Prayer has been included since about 400 AD in the Eucharist as a devotion preparatory to receiving the sacrament after the breaking of the bread.

The Breaking of the Bread The practical purpose of breaking the bread is to divide it for the people's communion. Symbolically the bread is shared, and Christ's body is broken.

Prayer of Humble Access In the 1549 Book and is a prayer emphasizing the worthy reception of communion. It was in the 1928 Prayer Book and is retained in Rite I of the present Prayer Book as an optional communion devotion after the fraction.

The Invitation Sancta Sanctis ('The gifts of God for the people of God') dates back to Eastern liturgies of the 4th century.

Receiving Communion The traditional posture for receiving communion is standing, a tradition the Eastern Church has always maintained. The tradition of kneeling came about in the Middle Ages. Among the reformed churches of Zurich and the continent, sitting was the accepted posture. The 1662 Prayer Book directs communicants to kneel. The present Prayer Book does not give any direction about posture. The use of the communion rail grew as a custom in the 18th century. (The rail was originally an altar rail to protect the sanctuary from stray dogs.)

Words of Administration The 1549 Book joins two forms—the Zwinglian reformation notion of communion as a memorial 'Take and eat in remembrance that Christ died for thee...' and the catholic notion of the real presence of Christ in the elements 'The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ...'

Post Communion Prayer The use of a formal conclusion after the communion of the people was another development of the 4th century following the increase in numbers and move to larger buildings following the legalization of Christianity. The prayer emphasizes the Eucharist as an assurance of the baptismal promise that we are one with Christ and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Blessing no evidence of blessings at the end of the Eucharist prior to the 4th century. The 1662 Book contains the blessing found at the end of Rite I. Rite II allows for a blessing but gives no text allowing the priest to choose the prayer.

The Dismissal dates to the 4th century. At the time of the Reformation, the dismissal was not retained in the Prayer Book (it was on the continent by some reformers). The present Prayer Book is the first edition to restore it. The use of a dismissal is permitted in Rite I and required by Rite II.