

*An
Instructed Eucharist*

A gift for you in the theory that the more you know of our traditions, the deeper will be your worship experience and the more readily you will recognize Christ in your midst.

*With God's Peace and Love,
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The Instructed Eucharist

The word “eucharist” means “to give thanks”. It is another name for the Holy Communion or mass. There are two biblical sacraments: Baptism and Eucharist, two sacraments given to us by Jesus in which he himself participates. We are taught, by St Paul in fact, to give thanks to God in all things and all times and all places. God is with us. The name Emmanuel literally means: God is with us. The holy habit of giving thanks for all that God is and all he has already done for us, opens our eyes to recognize his action in the present.

The tense or participation is important. The eucharist is communion with God, participation in his nature. In the Catholic tradition, we believe in Transubstantiation: that the bread becomes the body of Christ and the wine becomes his blood. In the Protestant tradition we believe in representative symbols: that the bread remains bread but symbolizes Christ’s body and so with the wine. As good Episcopalians we believe in Consubstantiation (or at least some of us do ☺): the idea that the bread becomes Christ’s body and the wine, his blood in some way that we can’t see, but Jesus is truly present and the elements are transformed. That is why we take such care in the reception of the consecrated elements and consume or store in reverence in the aumbry the leftover consecrated bread and wine. Further, communion is an act of anamnesis. Anamnesis is the opposite of amnesia. It is the act of remembering so strongly that we are transported in time to the critical defining moment.

The Service

The Holy Eucharist consists of two major portions. The first is the Word of God (the lessons, the sermon and the prayers). The second portion is the Holy Communion (the prayer of consecration, the reception and the final prayer and blessing).

The opening sentences, collect for purity, song of praise and collect for the day are the entrance rite. They serve to prepare us to hear the scripture. In conjunction with our own prayers before the service, they help quiet our preoccupations so that we may recognize God, listen to his direction and receive his comfort

The Opening Sentences set the tone for worship. In them we praise God for a particular aspect of his nature that is appropriate to the season and lessons we are using. We praise his blessedness and that he shares himself with us in his kingdom. In Easter season we praise his victory over human frailty. In Lent we praise his mercy.

The Collect for purity helps us to be honest with ourselves before God. It asks God to cleanse us from our conflicted emotions and thoughts so that we can love God wholeheartedly.

The Song of Praise varies seasonally between the Gloria, the Kyrie, the Trisagion or other song of praise.

The Collect of the Day states the theme of the readings for the day.

The Lessons provide one reading each from the Old Testament, Psalms, Epistles, and Gospels. The list of lessons appointed for the day is called a lectionary. The bulk of the Bible is covered over a three year cycle. For example, the Gospel of Matthew is read in Year A, Mark in Year B, and Luke in Year C. The Gospel of John is interspersed in each of the years. The other lessons are selected to coordinate with the themes in the Gospel for the day.

The Sermon is an exposition of God's action in the scriptures and the relevance of his action today.

The Creed is the natural response to what we have just heard proclaimed. It is our statement of what we believe about God. In the Nicene Creed each of the three paragraphs states what we believe about one of the members of the Trinity.

The Prayers of the People are the next logical step. The Bible tells of God's action in the past, the sermon tells of God's action in the present, and the prayers invite God's action in our own lives. The biblical story has become our story. The Prayer Book provides guidelines for prayer so that we will remember that our story expands to include the world in which we live.

The Confession of Sin is an opportunity to let go of our sins so that God's loving action in our lives won't have to compete with, or be sabotaged by, our "mis-action".

The Absolution is the assurance that God DOES forgive our sin.

The Peace is an ancient symbol of our intent to live in harmony with God, ourselves and each other.

The Offertory is the acknowledgement that our lives and gifts come from God and we cheerfully offer them back to God. The bread, wine and money represent: our gifts, our responses, our triumphs, and our struggles. Sacred and secular, perfect and painful, we offer the whole mixture to God to be broken, blessed and made new.

The parts of the **Great Thanksgiving** are:

- Salutation- "The Lord be with You"
- Sursum Corda- "Lift up your hearts"
- Common Preface- "It is right, and a good and joyful thing..."
- Proper Preface- variable for the day or occasion
- Sanctus- "Holy, holy, holy Lord..."
- Benedictus- "Blessed is he who comes..."

“Recitation of salvation history”- That is in quotation marks because there isn’t really a name for this. Each form of the Great Thanksgiving includes, prior to the prayer of consecration, a re-telling of the story of God and his people. Though the prayers vary, there are common elements.

1. God created us out of his love for us.
2. Our sin interferes in our relationship with him.
3. Jesus removes our sin and makes it possible for the relationship to be restored.

That we must make a response is vividly implied when we come forward to receive communion.

The Words of Institution- Jesus’ words at the Last Supper

Anamnesis- “Do this in remembrance of me...” Anamnesis means to remember. It is the opposite of amnesia. Anamnesis is the remembering of historical events in such a way that they not only shape your identity, but actually call the past into the present. It is such an intense recall that we actually participate with Christ in the events of his death and resurrection.

The Epiclesis or Invocation- This is the supplication for the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the gifts. We ask the Holy Spirit to bless (literally be with) the bread and wine and also to bless us, all in Christ’s service.

The Amen-The Amen is the joyous assent of the people to all that has been proclaimed. It is the only place in the Prayer Book where the Amen is capitalized, which serves to accent the importance of our participation.

The Lord’s Prayer- This is the only prayer that Jesus taught us. By calling God OUR father, we emphasize our union with Jesus.

The Communion- Our own very active role in our salvation is our willing, joyful reception of God in our lives. Coming forward to the altar rail to receive is a dramatic symbol of our desire for God.

The Post Communion Prayer- This prayer summarizes all that has gone before and reminds us that we carry Jesus within us as we enter the world in His service. The worship is ended, the service begins....

The Blessing- The Blessing is a reminder that our lives are lived in the very heart of the Trinity. God is with us even into eternity, because we live in Him.

The Dismissal- Sends us into the world to do the work God has given us to do. It is our commission.

Glossary

Vessels

Chalice: a large cup for the wine

Paten: a plate for the bread. Some churches have a bowl paten, which is a plate with a raised lip on the edges.

Ciborium: a serving piece for the bread. It usually looks like a chalice except that it has a lid.

Cruets: Flasks of varying sizes to hold additional wine and to hold water.

Lavabo Bowl: a bowl in which the priest's hands are washed prior (and sometimes after) the communion.

Linens

Veil: Square piece of decorative fabric which drapes the chalice and paten before and after communion.

Burse: An upholstered pocket that rests atop the pall and veil. The burse is made of the same decorative fabric as the veil. The burse and veil usually are coordinated to the season of the church year by their use of color and ornamental symbolism. The burse contains the simpler white linens used in communion: the corporal and purificators.

Pall: A square piece of cardboard covered in white linen that rests on the top of the chalice, providing a base for the veil to rest upon.

Corporal: A square piece of fine linen that is placed under the chalice and paten during communion. It is used to catch any pieces of bread that may fall inadvertently. The name comes from the word "corpus": body, as it holds the body of Christ.

Purificator: A small towel of linen that is used to wipe the cup between administrations of the wine.

Vestments

Alb or Cassock Alb: A long white garment with a short stand up collar or attached hood. Worn with or without a cincture.

Cassock: Long garment with a short stand up collar. Typically worn by acolytes, choir members, clergy and lay readers. Color may denote function or rank. For example a Bishop's cassock is purple.

Surplice: A full white garment with full open sleeves worn over the cassock. It comes down to about mid thigh. The priest's surplice may come almost to the floor and may have pointed sleeve hems.

Cotta: A shorter white garment with open sleeves worn over the cassock, with straight sleeve hems.

Stole: A long strip of fabric worn by the priest around the neck, symbolizing the "yoke" of Christ. It is color coordinated with the season of the church year and is worn at celebrations of the Holy Eucharist. A deacon's stole is worn across the chest.

Tippet: Looks just like a stole except that it is black and is worn at services of the Daily Office. This was originally an academic garment and often has seals from the priest's seminary or diocese on the bottom.

Church Architecture

Narthex: The entry or lobby of the church. It is also called the vestibule.

Nave: The main body of the church. From the same root from which comes our word Navy. We are in the same boat, the ship of the church.

The Choir: The front part of the chancel. So named because it is usually where the choir sits.

Sanctuary or chancel: The area behind the chancel rail or altar rail.

Colors and Seasons

White: White signifies light, joy and triumph. It is used on Christmas, Easter, Epiphany, the Transfiguration, weddings, funerals and All Saints Day.

Red: Red is the color of fire and blood. It is used on feasts of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost, confirmations, ordinations and conventions) and for all saints who are martyrs.

Violet/purple: Purple is the color of repentance and is used during Advent and Lent.

Green: Green is the color of nature, symbolizing hope and growth. It is used during the Season after Pentecost and during the season of Epiphany.

Black: Black is for solemnity, not necessarily mourning. It is used on Good Friday.

Gold/Silver: Gold and silver are used for their ornamental and intrinsic value, not necessarily color. They are often used for festive occasions.