

**An Instructed Eucharist  
Saint Ann's Episcopal Church  
Old Lyme, Connecticut**

**27 February 2011**

Today, as we celebrate the Holy Eucharist, we will endeavor to better understand the depth of its spiritual meaning, and be enabled to participate more fully in this, the central act of Christian Worship. The normal order will be interrupted from time to time to explain what is taking place

When we enter the church, we kneel to make our personal preparation in prayer for our participation in the Eucharist. "Eucharist" is a Greek word meaning "thanksgiving." We ask God to stir our hearts and minds to a renewed awareness that we "do this in remembrance of Christ and His redeeming acts." The Altar, as the "family table" of the church, is the table of the Lord, and the Lord, Himself, is to be our host. The table is prepared with fine linens, candles, and flowers in a fashion similar to that which we know in our own homes when we expect an honored guest. Here, we expect the Lord, Himself, as guest and giver, to dine. Two candles are placed on the table. They remind us of the humanity and divinity of Jesus, and that He is the "light of the world."

The Eucharist is not just something that the priest does, it is something we all do. The word "Liturgy" comes from two Greek words meaning: "public acts of the people..." A Priest may not celebrate the Eucharist without the people -- and together they offer praise and thanks to God for the many blessings bestowed upon us.

The Bishop, our Chief Pastor, is traditionally the chief celebrant, but since the Bishop cannot be with all congregations at the same time, the Priest serves as the Bishop's deputy in the local parish church. Deacons, from the earliest time, have been set apart to assist the Bishop and the Priest. Our Book of Common Prayer gives special emphasis to the role the people play in the celebration of the Eucharist by specifically providing for the ministry of lay people at key points in the Liturgy.

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In essence, the Eucharist is very simple. Its four parts are outlined in Saint Paul's Letter to the Corinthians: "In the night in which He was betrayed, He took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and gave it to His disciples . . . likewise after supper He took the cup. . . ." And so today we **take** the bread and wine -- we give **thanks** -- we **break** bread -- and we **give** the bread and wine, which now become the **body and blood** of Christ, to the people of God.

This simple pattern has been elaborated and added to, according to the Church's needs in history. The Church's worship does not remain static, but changes in response to cultural situations and opportunities for mission. A sensitive Church is called to respond to its own time and place in its worship and ministry. Our *Book of Common Prayer* is the Episcopal Church's response to the worship of God in our own time.

The Liturgy begins when the celebrant and other ministers enter the church. This entrance may be very simple as when the celebrant and other ministers simply walk into the church from the Sacristy, or more ornate with a procession and the singing of a hymn. We stand when the celebrant enters to honor that office as a channel for Christ's blessing upon us. The opening hymn is number 398.

### **(The Entrance Procession)**

The celebrant and people greet each other with sentences of praise. (Page 355)

### **(The Acclamation)**

The introductory portion of the Liturgy after the acclamation is flexible and may include the Great Litany, a Penitential Order, the Ten Commandments, the Collect for Purity, the Gloria in Excelsis, or another song of praise. None of these options is required. Today we will say the Collect for Purity and sing the Gloria S280 in the front of your hymnal.

### **(Collect for Purity and the Gloria in Excelsis)**

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After the preparation is the Ministry of the Word with its focus on Scripture and Preaching. This part of the Liturgy has been borrowed from the Jewish Synagogue. We remain standing for the Collect as a sign that we celebrate Christ risen from the dead and present in our midst -- known to us in Word and Sacrament. After the prayer, we read from the Old and New Testaments. The *Book of Common Prayer* specifies that these lessons are to be read by lay members of the congregation. A Psalm is appointed to be read or sung between the scripture readings. It is appropriate that a brief period of silence follow each reading, so that the people have a few quiet moments to meditate on this part of God's Word and what it means to them.

### **(The Collect, Old Testament, Psalm and New Testament)**

The Gospel is traditionally read by a Deacon (or in the absence of a Deacon by a Priest), in the midst of the people, from the pulpit or some other prominent place. The word "Gospel" means: "Good News." The Good News comes to us in the Word made flesh in the person of Jesus, the Christ, the Incarnate Son of God. There are four renderings of the Good News commonly referred to as "The Gospel according to ..." and each rendering of the Good News provides us with a different emphasis of God's work of salvation through Jesus, the Christ. Because the Gospel is Good News, we stand to face the reader and to praise the God who gives it. A gradual anthem or hymn is often sung between the Epistle and the Gospel readings. Today we will sing two verses of Hymn 559 before the Gospel is read, and then the third verse after the Gospel is read.

### **(Hymn 559 and The Gospel)**

The *Book of Common Prayer* places the sermon after the Gospel -- for it is the interpretation, exposition and application of the Good News we have just heard. Today, this commentary on the Eucharist replaces the sermon. The Creed is then recited. Its plural form allows the people to claim for their own what they have heard and proclaimed. The Creed is a statement of what we believe about God and the things God has done for us. It was written down by the Bishops of the early Church so that all the world might know what we Christians believe.

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### **(The Nicene Creed)**

The Word of God concludes with prayer. The major portion of the Prayers of the People is devoted to intercessions, petitions and thanksgivings. The *Book of Common Prayer* requires that the Prayers of the People normally include intercessions for six basic topics. These are prayers of all the people and are led by a member of the Congregation. The Prayers of the People may also include penitential prayers: namely a general confession and absolution. These may be omitted if a form of confession is used elsewhere in the Liturgy. Today, we will use the Prayers of the People printed in your bulletin on page 4.

### **(Prayers of the People)**

The Confession and Absolution may be found on page 360.

### **(Confession and Absolution)**

The Peace is like a bridge, tying together the two main parts of the Liturgy. It concludes the Ministry of the Word with a positive act as the members of the community reach out to each other. It expresses and celebrates the reconciliation we experience after hearing God's word, praying and confessing our sins. Also, the Peace looks forward to the sacramental and sacrificial aspect of the Liturgy. Jesus said we should be reconciled with one another before offering gifts at the altar. In the Peace, we endeavor to do just that.

### **(The Peace)**

After the Peace, we move into the Holy Communion -- the Liturgy of the Table. This portion of our worship originated with the religious meals of the Jewish tradition. Jesus gave such meals new meaning through the meals which He ate with His disciples, and especially at the Last Supper. Now the emphasis moves from the Scriptures and Preaching to the Altar -- the table is prepared and the four-fold action of the Eucharist begins.

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The Offertory represents the life and labor of God's people as we return to God a portion of the gifts so freely given to us. In our alms, we give a symbol of our labor as we share a part of what we have earned. The bread represents the substance of life which gives us strength. The wine represents the liquid of our very being without which we could not possibly survive. The offering is one of the oldest traditions of human kind -- gifts to our God. An offering of music is often made at this time, sometimes a hymn, or an anthem by the choir, or an instrumental interlude. Today we will have both an anthem by the choir and hymn 380 sung by the congregation.

### **(The Offertory)**

The celebrant places bread on the paten and prepares the chalice by adding a little water to the wine after the Jewish custom. In Christian symbolism, the mixing of water and wine represents the mingling of water and blood as flowed forth from our Lord's side as He hung on the cross. The prepared elements of Bread and Wine, monetary and other offerings are then presented to God with a doxology -- a reminder to the people that all things come from God and we offer a portion in return -- including our lives. The Priest may then wash his/her hands, in a ceremonial from the time when produce and animals were presented at the offertory.

### **(Doxology - All things come of thee O Lord, etc)**

Once the table is prepared, the Great Thanksgiving begins as the people of God join in the greatest act of praise in all liturgy. The priest bids us leave the earth and its care behind and "lift up our hearts" to the altar of God on high. We join in a beautiful and joyous prayer. We add our praises in fellowship with the communion of saints and angels, singing together the hymn: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord which is sung continually before the throne of God. This ancient hymn, which appears in Scripture is preceded by a preface appropriate to the season or day of the Christian year. It is followed by the joyous cry of the palm Sunday greeting extended to Jesus as He entered Jerusalem in triumph, Bless is he who comes in the name of the Lord. For in the consecration, He is once again to enter into history in a very real way in the Eucharist. In this solemn moment we join in the praises offered by the whole heavenly host. For the Great Thanksgiving we will use Eucharistic Prayer B beginning on page 367. The setting for the Sanctus is hymn S130.

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### **(Sursum Corda, Sanctus, Benedictus Qui Venit)**

The words of the Great Thanksgiving summarize all that has gone before in the Liturgy as it has been expressed in Bible readings, sermon, Creed, prayers and hymns. The story of creation, the tragedy of sin that has beset us, the history of God's calling people to serve, and finally God's coming among us in the person of His Incarnate Son, Jesus' death and resurrection, the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church and the hope of eternal life -- the meaning of all this is gathered in the Great Thanksgiving and is recalled in the bread and wine. The Body and Blood of Jesus the Christ signify His presence with us and in us. Therefore we become the sign of Jesus' presence in a broken world. The invoking of Holy Spirit in the midst of the Great Thanksgiving symbolizes God coming down from heaven in a direct intervention in His created world as the elements are transformed into the Body and Blood of Jesus. The congregation gives its assent to all of this in the great "Amen" spoken in boldness and conviction by all the people. The Eucharistic Prayer continues on page 368. Please note that the people may stand or kneel.

### **(Prayer of Consecration . . . . . Amen)**

The Lord's Prayer is both a conclusion to the Eucharistic Prayer and an introduction to the Fraction or Breaking of the Bread which is to follow. Like the Acclamation at the beginning of the Liturgy, it prays for the glorification of God and the advancement of God's kingdom. In it we pray for our daily bread, which has special meaning for us as we prepare to receive the Bread of Life. It petitions for the forgiveness of sins and grace to persevere which are major benefits of Holy Communion. Assured of God's love and care of us, with boldness we say as Christ commanded and taught us; Our Father . . . .

### **(Lord's Prayer)**

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The third action of the Eucharist is the Breaking of the Bread. At Saint Ann's a large host (specially prepared wafer) is broken as an active and visual expression of the principle that we are all united in Christ, sharing His unity as we share in the one bread, broken for us. Because the Fraction is an action and not a set of words, it takes place in silence -- a time for each of us to pray silently in our own words, or simply to adore God without any words at all -- the silence is followed by the acclamation "Christ our Passover . . ." thus linking every celebration of the Eucharist with Easter. A hymn or other appropriate music may follow the acclamation.

### **(Fraction, Christ our Passover . . .)**

The Priest now invites the people to come forward with the words: "The gifts of God for the People of God . . ." The Sacrament is distributed with one or two brief sets of words. It is appropriate for the people to respond "Amen" before taking the elements into the mouth. As we receive the bread and wine, we are again reminded of the outward and visible sign and inward and spiritual grace of the Sacrament -- the bread (body) which nourishes and strengthens life -- the wine (blood), the very fluid of life -- both of which feed us as we move toward that eternal kingdom which we seek. When approaching the Altar, and when returning to your seat, it is helpful if you will "bear right" in the aisle. During the communions we may sing an appropriate hymn. Today the choir will sing an anthem and then the congregation will sing hymn 388. Before, during and after this music, silence will allow others to meditate and/or pray. Please respect this need for quiet time during communion.

### **(Anthem and Hymn 388)**

The remainder of the consecrated bread and wine is now consumed or set aside to be carried to those who are sick or disabled. The sacred vessels are carefully cleansed and the celebrant and people say together the Post Communion Prayer in which we give thanks for the free gift of Christ to us. We ask God the Father to help us keep in communion with Him and His Son in the course of our daily lives.

### **(Post Communion Prayer)**

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The celebrant then gives a final blessing -- assurance of God's blessing -- and then pauses to give God a personal thanksgiving -- for the office of priest and for the privilege of celebrating once again the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood,

### **(The Blessing)**

Announcements of activities and events of concern and interest to the people are then given by the celebrant and/or others.

### **(The Announcements)**

The Liturgy concludes with the formation of a procession which moves out of the church, either silently or with the signing of an appropriate hymn. This procession reminds us to carry into the world the Gospel of our Lord Jesus, the Christ, showing Him forth by the way in which we live and speak and work and play as Christians. Today we will sing hymn 375 as our closing hymn.

### **(Hymn 375 in procession)**

The celebrant then bids us to depart in peace.

### **(Dismissal)**

When music has been used during the Liturgy, a postlude may be played by the organist and/or sung by the choir. "Postlude" means "aftertime". Now that the Liturgy is over, the service can begin!

### **(Postlude)**