

# **Section Seven: Worship**

## **Prayer and Liturgy**

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# The Sanctification of Time and Life

## Cyclical Liturgies

The yearly cycle of seasons is a natural phenomenon in temperate climates. The constant repetition of spring, summer, autumn, and winter has always served agricultural peoples as a reminder of their dependence on nature. The liturgies of nature religions express this dependence in a symbolic way: with each important change in the seasons, the people cultically identify themselves with the gods who produce the crops, hoping to ensure abundant harvests by imitating them in fertility rites.

Israel developed its own interpretation to the experience of time. Time still moves in cycles, but it also points in a definite direction. Yahweh is the Lord of history who created the world which had a beginning, and has been directing it toward a meaningful fulfillment. Time, by the Israelite interpretation, is more than a repetition of moments or of seasons; it is a series of significant moments in which Yahweh has performed mighty acts by which to further his purpose of redemption and fulfillment. The difference is clear in the two Greek words for time: *chronos*, regular, measured time, with no particular moment having more value or significance than any other, and *kairos*, a significant moment, a 'pregnant moment', the 'fullness of time'. Israel paid attention to certain *kairoi* (plural) within the passage of *chronos*. She took the ancient agricultural liturgies, which were observances of 'chronological' time, and turned them into celebrations of the meaningful—'kairotic'—moments of her history.

The *Torah* commanded the observance of three festivals each year: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Each of these probably originated in an agricultural event—the first lambing, the barley harvest, and the harvest of grapes for wine. By Yahwism, these festivals became annual remembrances of the exodus from Egypt (Passover), the giving of the Law at Sinai (Pentecost), and the life in the wilderness (Tabernacles). Thus, the foundation-myth of Israel was rehearsed each year. By *anamnesis* (recollection), each generation of Israelites relived the events in which the covenant was established.

For the Christian church, Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection during the time of the Passover festival made that feast especially important. In most languages except English, the annual celebration of the resurrection is called by a derivative of the Hebrew *pesah*, Passover ('paschal' is the adjective). The festivals of Pentecost and Tabernacles as such had no specific significance for Christianity. The 'paschal' celebration of the resurrection, however, soon came to be extended throughout the approximately seven weeks from Passover to Pentecost. The Luke-Acts narrative possibly reveals liturgical influence in claiming the Jewish celebration of the giving of the Law as the Christian 'Pentecost,' the celebration of the sending of the Holy Spirit—a fitting climax to the 'seven times seven' days of Easter.

The 'Great Fifty Days,' the period from Easter to Pentecost, extended the time of the Easter festivities, during which fasting was prohibited and joy reigned. Soon it became the custom for baptisms to be administered on the eve of Easter, so the candidates could begin their new lives at the feast of the New Life. A time of preparation for baptism—with instruction, prayer, and fasting—then extended the season of Easter backward. The season of Lent (the forty days before Easter) developed from this.

The Christian 'foundation-myth', centering in the resurrection of Jesus, was rehearsed each year. The cycles of *chronos* were punctuated by the supreme *kairos*—the fullness of time in which God brought salvation-history to its climax. Eventually, all the major events of the Christian foundation-myth would be liturgically remembered, from the preparation for Jesus' birth through the sending of the Holy Spirit. But during the period we are studying, it was Easter, with the period of preparation before it and the season of festivities following, that dominated the yearly cycle.

Another kind of annual observance also began to emerge, as persecutions took their toll of martyrs. As Christian communities began to observe the anniversaries of the deaths of their sons and daughters, local 'calendars of saints' developed alongside the cyclical observance of the foundational events in the life of Christ. (Paul used 'saints' to refer to all Christians. The special honor paid to martyrs for their heroic witness marks the first stage in the process by which the word came to be reserved for extraordinary Christians.)

### The Weekly Cycle

The seven-day week was the basic unit of time in ancient Israel. Since the phases of the moon recur in a regular pattern every twenty-eight days, many ancient cultures found it convenient to measure time by the four seven-day periods into which the lunar month neatly divides. The Priestly creation story, however, used the week as more than a time-keeping device—there, it is a liturgical cycle culminating in the Sabbath. The Sabbath was the day on which the covenant was celebrated. On the Sabbath, the Jew looks back to creation itself—especially the creation of Israel by the covenant with Yahweh—and forward to the great 'Sabbath rest' when the kingdom of God is fulfilled.

Each week in the life of the Jew reaches its climax in the Sabbath meal, a liturgy centered in the home. 'Home' then implied what is now called the 'extended family': several generations, including any servants the family might have. A group, such as Jesus and his disciples, was bound together as a fellowship (a *chaburah*;) it also functioned as an extended family in which the Sabbath meal was observed.

Early Christians retained the pattern of the seven-day week, but they moved the high point from the seventh day to the first. They celebrated the day of the Lord's resurrection, not the Sabbath. It was the first day of the new creation; it was also, figuratively, the 'eighth day'—the eschatological 'day of the Lord'.

On 'the Lord's day', the members of the Christian 'family' gathered for their sacred meal. It was a 'fellowship meal', like the *chaburah* meals the disciples had with Jesus, a family meal, such as Jews had always observed. Above all, it was the weekly celebration of a covenant, like the Jewish Sabbath.

On the Sabbath, Jews looked backward to creation and forward to the eschaton—the Day of Yahweh. Christians also looked in two directions as they observed the Lord's day in the sacred meal. For them, both directions pointed to the eschaton. The 'paschal mystery'—the death and resurrection of Jesus—was remembered, and by this *anamnesis* the past event was made present. Although it was in the past, the event itself was eschatological. All of salvation-history from creation onward came to its fulfillment in the events of the paschal mystery. At the last supper the disciples participated in the 'messianic banquet'. Now, as the Christian family eats its sacred meal, the messianic banquet is experienced again. The host at the meal is the risen Jesus, now 'Lord and Messiah'.

There was still a future to look to. Although the eschatological age had begun, it would not be consummated until Jesus returned in glory. So the meal was still, like the Jewish Sabbath meal, an occasion for anticipation. In the present—a period 'between the times' of resurrection and *parousia* (the return of Christ)—Christians participated in the reality of the *parousia* by sharing the food and drink of the messianic banquet, remembering the paschal mystery and anticipating the *parousia* itself.

While the Temple remained standing, morning and evening sacrifices were offered daily, and services of psalms and prayers were held in mid-morning and mid-afternoon. Most people, however, could not attend the Temple—it was available only to those who lived in Jerusalem or who visited as pilgrims. Indeed, the building itself was not designed for large congregations. Many could be accommodated within its grounds in the various courtyards, but the central part was intended for the priests and their attendants, not as a gathering place for the people. The sacrifices were performed *for* the people *by* the priests.

Most Jews worshiped in the synagogues. By the first century, services with the reading of scripture, preaching, psalmody, and prayers were held on at least some week days, with the major gathering on Friday evening immediately before the Sabbath meal.

Important as the synagogue services were, not every synagogue could muster a congregation each day. The day was sanctified primarily by the prayers of individuals. Every Jew was expected to pray three times a day—mid-morning, noon, and mid-afternoon.

At first, Christians too attended the Temple (Acts 2:46, 3:1), but they did so as Jews. Acts makes it clear that the specifically Christian assemblies

took place in people's homes and consisted of "teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers" (Acts 2:42). It was not long before Christians realized that the Temple could form no part of their lives. The Epistle to the Hebrews makes this point, as does Paul's insistence that the cultic obligations of the Law no longer applied to Christians. What the priesthood had been appointed to do for the people was completely fulfilled in Jesus.

Synagogue worship, however, formed the basis for Christian weekday observances. As long as it was possible, Christians attended the synagogues. After Jamnia, in the face of growing animosity from the rabbis, they adapted the synagogue service to their own use. They added Christian writings and prayer in the name of Jesus, and interpreted the scriptures as fulfilled in Christ. They continued to hold this 'service of the word' on weekdays, the sacred meal being reserved for the Lord's day. As in Judaism the Friday evening synagogue service had been followed by the Sabbath meal in the homes, so also on the Lord's day the service of the word preceded the celebration of the eucharist.

### **Crisis Liturgies—The Sanctification of Life**

Any society, as time goes by, experiences events that alter its configurations. New members come into the group, by birth or marriage or some other process. Former members drop out; they resign, or they die, or are expelled from the group. Leadership changes hands. Relationships within the society itself change as people once single decide to marry. In each of these events, individuals are obviously involved. It is the individual who acts in all that happens. The events also have an effect on the community. In each instance, the community has to reorder its life in some way because of what has happened to the individual. Liturgies develop to respond to these circumstances, to enable the society to reorganize itself around the new conditions. Society pauses to observe the changes, names them, and then derives strength to go in new directions.

#### **Initiation**

Most Jews, of course, became Jews by birth. Male children were circumcised on the eighth day after birth, and by the time of Jesus there was apparently some kind of ceremony marking puberty and the assumption of the duties of the *Torah*. But it was also possible for a Gentile to become a Jew.

Judaism did not actively seek converts; indeed, Roman law forbade such a practice. Converts to Judaism, therefore, had usually been 'God-fearers' for some time. They had attended the synagogue and knew enough about Judaism to want to become Jews themselves. A prospective candidate had to respond appropriately to intense questioning about his motives; only those who seemed sincerely willing to undertake the burden of the *Torah* were accepted.

The next step was thorough instruction in the traditions of Judaism. A born Jew would have grown up with the words of the *Torah*, and a new candidate had to become equally well acquainted with them.

Circumcision was required of all males. For a born Jew, this external sign of the covenant was sufficient. But for Gentiles, an additional rite was imposed on both men and women candidates, to erase the taint of their former condition. A ceremony of cleansing was necessary, not only to remove the defilement associated with the low moral level of much Gentile culture but also to wash away the stigma of ritual pollution acquired simply by being a Gentile.

After publicly renouncing the old life, the candidate pledged loyalty to the *Torah*, and was led into a river or pool, for a momentary total immersion. On emerging, he or she was marked on the forehead with the Hebrew letter 'Taw', the first letter of 'Torah'. (Christians should not picture this letter as a "T", similar in shape to the cross with which Christians are signed.) Obviously, immersion in water signified cleansing from the Gentile life. But it also symbolized participation in the crossing of the Sea of Reeds and the pilgrimage to the promised land.

Christian baptism was almost certainly an adaptation of the Jewish rite of initiation. Circumcision dropped out of practice, thanks to Paul's successful campaign against it, and out with it went the last cultic implication that women were not full members of the covenant. All the rest of the Jewish rite found its counterparts in the Christian initiation rites.

If the candidate were a Jew, very little instruction was required. The scriptures and the story of salvation-history were familiar settings in which the Christian message could be learned. A Gentile convert, however—unless a 'God-fearer'—would need a protracted period of instruction. (Paul's relatively rapid success in winning Gentile converts and establishing congregations that could carry on after he left them was due to his appeal to the 'God-fearers'. Conceivably, the gross misunderstanding he worked so hard to correct at Corinth stemmed from converts who were accepted from paganism too quickly to be given adequate instruction.)

Early forms of baptismal liturgy required the candidate, after instruction, to renounce the present age of Satan and to profess faith in Jesus. Renunciation of the old life is necessary if one is to enter the new—death precedes resurrection.

As time went on, the original profession of faith in Jesus assumed a trinitarian form. The candidate was asked if he or she believed in God the Father; if the answer was yes, the person was immersed. Similarly, affirmations of belief in Jesus and in the Holy Spirit were each followed by immersions. The person had thus been baptized into 'the name' of the Trinity; it was the triple confession of faith that was intended in Matt. 28:19, rather than a trinitarian formula, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Spirit.

In Jewish society, a person could be excluded from the community for moral offenses or for ritual pollution. For certain offenses, principally

**Penance**

murder and adultery, 'exclusion' took the form of death. For offenses less serious but grave enough to violate standards of acceptable behavior, the *Torah* prescribed specific penalties. When these had been paid and the penitent had expressed repentance and remorse, a suitable person—the head of the family, the chief elder of the community, or the rabbi—could grant restoration, usually symbolizing it by the laying-on-of-hands.

Ritual pollution would exclude a person as effectively as serious moral delinquency, though for quite different reasons. Any Jew was considered 'taboo'—not to be touched or approached—as a result of contact with either a profane or a holy thing. (Tax-collectors were 'sinners' because they came in close contact with Gentiles; women were quarantined after giving birth to a child. The 'impurity' of new mothers was probably because of the new life they had borne, since life was considered holy.) Ritual pollution required only purification, not penance.

In Christian practice, as we have seen, the sin of apostasy was added to the unforgivable sins of murder and adultery. The punishment, however, was not death, but excommunication—expulsion from the community. In the view of the earliest Christians, it came to the same thing—to be outside the realm of salvation was equivalent to death. From Hermas through the events that produced the Novatian schism, the church moved to soften its stance against these 'mortal' sins. The way to restitution, however, for those sins that could be forgiven, was similar to that practiced in Judaism: to express repentance and remorse to the community, and acknowledge restoration at the hands of the head of the Christian community—the bishop.

## **Ordination**

When we examine the nature of liturgies that express the relations of social groups with their leadership, the distinction between 'communities' and 'institutions' becomes very significant. As we are using the term, a 'community' is a relatively small group established on the basis of natural relationships—a family, for example, or a group of friends. In a 'community', the leader is usually clearly recognized and no liturgy is required. In a patriarchal culture, the father would be the head of the family; in a matriarchal culture, the mother. The biological relationship automatically establishes the official leadership, even if in fact someone else in the family exerts more effective control. In communities not related by blood, leadership may be established on the basis of aggressiveness—like the pecking order among birds—or some obvious talent. The 'charismatic' leaders in Israel before the monarchy were accepted by virtue of their display of spiritual gifts.

In an 'institution', however, people are linked together by more complex and less obvious ties. The leadership office is not as readily discernible, and some public liturgy is required to legitimize its incumbent. A 'legitimate' leader—one who is officially recognized by the institution—may have an abundance of talents or nearly none. Leadership would presum-



ably be better under a gifted leader, but the less gifted can rely on the authority stemming from 'legitimacy' to a degree impossible to the leader of a 'community'.

In Moses, Israel had a 'charismatic' leader. He performed all three functions Israel's community life required: he was ruler, priest, prophet. As the ruler, he mediated the Law of Yahweh to Yahweh's people; as the priest, he represented the people before God and acted as a buffer between Yahweh's holiness and their humanity; as the prophet, he spoke Yahweh's word to specific situations—the golden calf, or Korah's rebellion.

When Israel became sufficiently institutionalized to require a king, the three leadership roles could no longer reside in one person. At first, the king could still function as priest, but ultimately the roles were separated. The king represented Yahweh's rule, and the priests offered the sacrifices to God for the people. Both king and priest had to be legitimized. Saul and David were still cast in the charismatic mold, but after their time it no longer served. The 'house of David' became an institution; dynastic descent and the liturgy of anointing were required. Solomon may not have been the most able of David's sons, but he was the one on whom the succession rested—so it was he who was anointed king. The priests also had to be in the proper line of succession, as evidenced in the rivalry between the Aaronic and the Zadokite lines throughout the Old Testament. Priests were anointed, as were the kings, as a public sign of their legitimacy in office.

The liturgies that established these leaders were seen as conferring gifts from God to enable the persons selected to perform their tasks. No office in Israel could be carried out apart from Yahweh, and all required his approval and help. The liturgies became necessary only when public recognition of the leaders had to be proclaimed rather than taken for granted as it had been in a community.

The prophetic role was by definition charismatic. No liturgy can establish a prophet in office. The Spirit alone bestows the charismatic gift—anointing with oil would be superfluous.

As long as the Christian movement was small and the congregations bound together by a sense of familial intimacy—for all were newly 'adopted' into the family of God—members were not overly concerned about leadership. Although Paul found it necessary to assert his apostolic authority, he did so on grounds that explicitly repudiated 'institutional' authorization. He was a 'charismatic' apostle, appointed by Christ himself; he was not a deputy from the Jerusalem congregation. No doubt he had a hand in selecting local leaders in the congregations he established, but he shows no particular interest in the process, either in his own letters or in the Acts accounts of his work. Paul's list of leadership roles in I Cor. 12:28 refers only to functional abilities, all gifts of the Holy

Spirit. In no letter does he hint at a specific person or class of persons as the ones who were expected to preside at the community's sacred meal.

By the time the 'pastoral epistles' are written, however, leadership roles have become more closely defined. 'Elders' and 'overseers' are to be respectable, to be chosen with care; 'deacons' are to be worthy of their office. The 'community' is no longer so easy to discern; rival groups and divisions within the local congregations are asserting claims. The ties that bind Christians together must be noted more clearly—the faith as taught by the apostles must be affirmed, the boundaries of the community more carefully drawn.

When word is heard from Ignatius of Antioch, the institutional pattern of leadership is complete. Ignatius himself may be deserving of the title 'saint', but by his own reasoning neither his personal abilities nor even 'charismatic' gifts were at issue. What was important was the legitimacy of his office as bishop of Antioch. He was the 'head of the family', presiding at the sacred meal because he held the office of bishop.

The documents we possess tell us very little about the other 'crisis liturgies' in the early church—marriage, childbirth, and burial. From the glimpses we have, all from post-New Testament times, these liturgies seem to have followed closely the practices of pagan society, with appropriate Christian substitutions for the names of the pagan gods. Essential though they are to any human group, there seems to have been little about them that required a distinctively Christian emphasis.

**Hippolytus:  
The *Apostolic Tradition***

Hippolytus founded a schismatic church in protest against the moral laxity of Bishop Callixtus. He is remembered further, however, for some important theological writing, which followed very closely the lines of thought developed by Irenaeus. Tradition has it that shortly before his death, he renounced his schismatic bishopric and urged his followers to be reconciled with the newly elected bishop of Rome. Whatever disfavor he may have incurred during his lifetime, his martyrdom in 236 CE earned him a place in the Roman congregation's calendar of saints.

**Note: The Eucharistic Liturgy of Hippolytus is found on p. 7-10-1 ff.**

Among his many works is a 'Church Order' he entitled *Apostolic Tradition*. With the exception of the *Didache*, it is the oldest of its kind in existence, dating from 215 CE. It is far more complete than the *Didache* in its directions for the liturgical life of a congregation, and, according to the author's foreword as well as the title, is itself based on older traditions. It gives us our clearest picture of life in the church in Rome in the third century and probably as early as the middle of the second.

The *Apostolic Tradition* had an influence over an area much wider than Rome proper. It has been recognized recently as the basis of several eastern Church Orders of a much later date. Up until the beginning of the twentieth century, the document was presumed lost. Modern scholars

have found it incorporated into Egyptian and Syrian Church Orders of the fourth century. Since the *Apostolic Tradition* was demonstrated as acceptable to both East and West, we can take it as a sample typical of early church practice.

From the directions for the admission of catechumens (CAT-ah-kew-mens)—people receiving instruction—Christians were not to be outdone by their Jewish counterparts in setting rigorous standards for their converts. Not everyone who sought baptism was allowed even to set foot on the lengthy path of instruction. Unworthy applicants were weeded out in preliminary examinations on the basis of their reasons for seeking baptism. Their occupations were strictly screened; many professions were prohibited. Besides the obviously immoral occupations, applicants also had to give up any way of life that would bring them into commerce with pagan idolatry or that would entail violence and the taking of life.

If the prospective candidates were deemed suitable, they were admitted to a three-year 'catechumenate', a period of intensive study. During this period, the catechumens were examined concerning their daily lives to determine their fitness for baptism—"whether they have lived devoutly during their catechumenate, whether they have respected widows, visited the sick, practiced all the other good works" (*Ap. Trad.* 20).

Only after thorough instruction in these matters were they finally allowed to learn the gospel itself. Once they had been chosen for baptism, the preparation became more intense. Every day they received the laying-on-of-hands to exorcise the demons of paganism. As the day of their baptism drew near, the bishop himself performed exorcisms to determine whether or not they were 'pure'—free from demonic possession. Any who were not 'pure' were rejected. They had not truly heard the Word with faith, or the demon would not still be there. (The concepts and images used differ from those of modern western civilization, but the exorcisms served the same purposes that psychological tests and therapy do today.)

Baptisms took place on the Lord's day, preferably on Easter. On the Friday and Saturday before the baptism, the candidates were required to fast, and on Saturday evening an all-night vigil was held in whatever building was used for worship. Before the candidates and clergy went to the baptismal site, the bishop said a prayer of thanksgiving over one container of oil, the 'oil of thanksgiving', and an exorcism over another, the 'oil of exorcism'. At 'cockcrow'—the early morning watch—on Sunday, presbyters and deacons led the candidates to the water, usually a nearby stream or spring-fed pool. At the baptismal site, the candidate stood facing the west, the symbol of Satan's realm, the land of darkness farthest away from the east where the sun rose, the direction of the eschatological hope. (The 'prince of this world' comes from darkness.) After swearing renunciation, "I renounce thee Satan and all thy undertakings and all thy works," the candidate was then anointed with the oil of exorcism.

Now the candidate was ready for the triple profession of faith and the triple immersion. The deacon or deaconess accompanying the candidate asked, “Do you believe in God the Father almighty?” The candidate replied, “I believe.” The deacon placed his hand on the candidate’s head and immersed the candidate in the water.

After the immersion the deacon asked the second question,

Do you believe in Christ Jesus, the Son of God, born by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary; who died and was buried and rose again on the third day; who ascended into heaven; who sits at the right hand of the Father; who will come to judge the living and the dead?

A second affirmative reply was followed by a second immersion.

The third profession of faith and third immersion came in response to the question,

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, in the Holy Church, in the resurrection of the flesh? (*Ap. Trad. 21*)

(The threefold question put to candidates is an example of the ‘rule of faith’. It is also the precursor of a creed called the ‘Roman Symbol’, itself the basis for the one commonly called ‘the Apostles’ Creed’.)

Their immersions completed, the presbyter anointed the candidates with the ‘oil of thanksgiving’. They were then clothed and brought inside the building to the bishop, who laid his hands on them and prayed that they might serve God according to his will. He marked their foreheads with the sign of the cross and kissed them, saying “The Lord is with you”, and the newly baptized replied, “and with your spirit”.

Up until this time the candidates had not been allowed to pray with the congregation. They were dismissed after the scripture readings and sermon at the services of the word. Now they joined in the prayers of the people as the worship of the Lord’s day began. The prayers over, they joined also in the kiss of peace. The celebration of the eucharist continued, this time with a cup of milk and honey and a cup of water in addition to the usual cup of wine. The sweetened milk (a baby’s ‘formula’) was the food of infants, signifying that the new Christians were but newly born; the cup of water signified an inner ‘baptism’, “so that the inward man [person] who is spiritual may receive the same effect as the body” (*Ap. Trad. 23*). The newly baptized people received the bread, the wine, and the other two cups. The initiation was now completed. (Compare the description of baptism in Justin Martyr’s *First Apology*.)

After such arduous preparation—three years of instruction, two days of fasting, and an all-night vigil—the experience was so moving that the

candidates really felt they had gone through death and had come into new life. The liturgy accomplished what it set out to do—to fully incorporate new members into the fellowship and with doubts about what life in the church involved.

The lengthy process of preparation for baptism, from the admission of a catechumen to the final rite itself, contrasts sharply with the brevity of the ordination of a bishop. A new bishop is elected by all the people of the congregation. No mention is made in the *Apostolic Tradition* of any prerequisites, not even that the bishop-elect be from among the presbyters. Presumably, however, anyone chosen to exercise the authority of leadership would be someone who had shown himself capable. But nowhere is it suggested that a bishop, presbyter, or deacon needs training beyond what is required for baptism. Nor is the liturgy of ordination itself nearly as solemn as that of baptism.

A newly elected bishop is presented to the entire congregation on the Lord's day, together with the council of presbyters and neighboring bishops. The bishops lay their hands on the head of the one to be ordained and pray that God may

Pour out now the power which has its origin in thee, the sovereign Spirit whom thou hast given to thy beloved Child [Greek *pais*—'child' or 'servant'] Jesus Christ and that he has handed on to the apostles who built the church in place of thy sanctuary [the Temple] for the glory and unceasing praise of thy name.

Grant, O Father who readest the heart, that thy servant whom thou has chosen as bishop may feed thy holy flock, may exercise thy sovereign priesthood without reproach serving thee day and night. May he never cease to render thy regard favorable, and offer to thee the gifts of thy holy church. In virtue of the Spirit of the supreme priesthood, may he have the power to forgive sins according to thy commandment.

May he distribute the shares following thine order; may he loose every bond in virtue of the power that thou hast conferred on the apostles; May he be pleasing to thee for gentleness and purity of heart. May he be before thee a sweet savior through thy Child Jesus Christ, our Lord.  
. . . . (*Ap. Trad.* 3)

For all the importance of the bishop's office, the ordination is complete after prayer alone. After the people have acclaimed him with the words "He has become worthy," the newly ordained bishop, with his presbyters attending him, presides at the Eucharist for the first time with his congregation.

Ordinations of presbyters and deacons are similarly brief. The bishop lays his hand on the head of the one to be ordained a priest, while the other presbyters also touch him. The bishop prays that God may give

## Ordinations

him “the Spirit of grace and counsel, so that he may help the presbyters and govern thy people with a pure heart.” The prayer cites the appointment of the seventy elders as precedent for the office (*Ap. Trad. 8*).

The order for ordaining a deacon is oriented more toward the bishop, “For a deacon is not ordained for the presbyterate, but for the service of the bishop, to carry out his orders.” The bishop alone lays his hands on the candidate. The prayer says that God has chosen the deacon “for the service of thy church and to bring into the Holy of Holies the offering presented by the high priests that thou has established for the glory of thy name” (*Ap. Trad. 9*). The latter phrase refers to the deacon’s function of bringing the offerings of bread and wine *from the congregation* for use in the eucharistic celebration; the “high priests” here means the people.

During this period, Christianity’s growth was due primarily to the witness of the laity. Thoroughly trained before they were admitted to baptism, they were in every way as competent as the clergy to carry out their apostolate to the world. The ordained ministers were commissioned to exercise specific tasks within the church, while the laity did all the rest.

The *Didache* had instructed the members of the congregation to pause and pray at three times during the day—mid-morning, noon, and mid-afternoon. The *Apostolic Tradition* makes provision for seven ‘hours of prayer’: (1) on arising to go to work; (2) at the ‘third hour’ (nine in the morning); (3) at the ‘sixth hour’ (noon); (4) at the ‘ninth hour’ (three in the afternoon); (5) on going to bed; (6) in the middle of the night; (7) at ‘cock-crow’, the earliest sign of dawn. How faithfully this regimen was followed is impossible to say. The clear intent, however, was to remind Christians wherever they were that in their ‘diaspora’ throughout the workaday world, they remain the church. ‘Church’ is not something they *come* to on the Lord’s day; it is they themselves, every minute of the day and night.

In addition to the ‘hours of prayer’, the *Apostolic Tradition* describes two daily congregational meetings. In the mornings, at least occasionally, there was an assembly for “instruction on the Word of God.” The service consisted of reading from the scriptures and instructions about them—“The speaker will teach what is useful for all, and you will hear things that you have forgotten, you will draw profit from what the Holy Spirit gives you through the teacher.” The people offered prayers and then went to their work (*Ap. Trad. 35*). This was the ‘service of the word’, patterned after the synagogue worship. It corresponds to the description Justin Martyr gave of the ‘service of the word’ preceding the celebration of the eucharist.

In the evening, a ‘service of light’ (*lucernarium*) was held. A deacon brought a lamp, and the bishop gave thanks for the light that Jesus brought to our lives, and for the light that now illuminates the evening darkness. Then, after the evening meal, they recited psalms and probably read from the scriptures.

## Cyclical Liturgies

## The Daily Cycle

The eucharist was celebrated every Sunday. As the rolls of martyrs lengthened, it became customary to observe the anniversaries of their deaths; the eucharist was probably celebrated on those days, but on no other weekdays. It was a celebration of the paschal mystery, to be observed on the day of the resurrection.

Congregations were small, and they usually gathered for their Sunday worship in private homes. By the middle of the third century, and possibly earlier, some congregations had purchased buildings specifically for worship, but the practice was not widespread. After all, it was still illegal to be a Christian. The room in which worship was conducted was open, containing a few chairs—reserved for the elderly and infirm—and a chair each for the bishop and his attending presbyters and deacons. A small table, sometimes not brought in until the offering of bread and wine was placed in the center of the room. The clergy dressed in the same manner as the laity. ‘Vestments’ or distinctive clothing for the clergy had not yet evolved.

On Sunday morning, the people gathered in the room and greeted each other, engaging in conversations until the person appointed began to read from the Scriptures. The readings were often lengthy, sometimes an entire Old Testament book and frequently an entire letter from a Christian writer. When the readings were over, the bishop, seated in his chair at the front of the gathering, lectured on the significance of the biblical passages. The people sat on the floor or on one of the few chairs or stools.

When the bishop’s sermon was completed, the catechumens and any penitents who were still excommunicated were dismissed. Then prayers were offered. A deacon would lead the prayers by asking the congregation to pray for the various needs and issues in the congregation’s life. Such ‘bidding prayers’ as “I bid your prayers for. . . .” gave direction to the congregation while still allowing each person to offer his or her own petitions. At the close of the prayers, the service of the word was over and the people greeted each other with the kiss of peace.

People who had not been able to attend the service of the word during the week came on Sunday for their weekly instruction. The continuing education of the laity was carried out by these frequent gatherings. The Bible and its meaning for Christian life was the constant ‘curriculum’. Prayers were offered—and as always when the church gathered, the people assembled ‘in the name of the Lord’—but the primary purpose of the gathering was instruction. Worship in its more usual sense was offered at the eucharist and the hours of prayer.

The service of the word completed, the deacons circulated among the people to gather up their offerings of bread and wine. Frequently other foods would be offered as well—olive oil, cheese, and olives. These were symbolic of the ‘first fruits’, the gifts of the earth offered to God in thanksgiving for the abundance of creation; they were also used for the *agape*, a fellowship meal after the eucharist, and for the poor of the congregation.

The deacons brought the table to its place in the center of the room and spread it with a cloth. Enough bread and wine for the eucharist was put on the table and the rest set aside for the poor and for the clergy. The bishop, with the presbyters gathered on either side of him, stood at one side of the table and the congregation gathered around it. All the people joined the bishop in lifting their hands upward in the gesture of prayer as the bishop began the prayer of thanksgiving. (The bishop did not *celebrate* the eucharist—he *presided* as the congregation celebrated.)

When the prayer of thanksgiving ended, the people shouted “Amen”—ratifying what their spokesperson had said. After the bishop and his attending clergy had received the bread and wine, the members of the congregation came forward to receive the sacred meal. Each person would go first to the bishop to receive a piece of the loaf and then to one of the other clergy for a sip from the cup. When all had received, the deacons took some of the bread (and possibly wine) to the homes of any who could not attend the Sunday gathering. In some places, the people took some of the bread home; they were to eat a piece of it each morning before touching any other food, thereby extending the eucharist through the week.



# Worship in the Imperial Church

In the early centuries when Christianity was a minority religion, considered at best illegal and at worst oppressed, the form of public worship remained relatively simple. Congregations were small, and everyone knew each other. Leaders were chosen from among the members, usually according to whatever various talents or gifts made them suitable to preside—perhaps piety, wisdom, or eloquence. Such people, given the framework of liturgical structure, prayed in their own words.

After Christianity was declared both legal and official, many changes took place. The church became virtually a department of government. Church membership rose in numbers but declined in commitment. The period of instruction (catechumenate) remained as a prerequisite for baptism, but had to be given in less time to accommodate the large number of candidates. As the membership rolls exploded in size, the administrative structure needed to be reformed. The bishop was no longer the presiding minister of a single congregation—or at most a central congregation with a few smaller communities nearby. His city and its environs suddenly became a ‘diocese’, comprising several large congregations as well as smaller ones. His presbyters, who had been his council of advisors and co-administrators, had to be deputized as ‘vicars’—representatives who acted on his behalf in the congregations within the diocese. As the eucharistic ‘president’ (normally, the bishop— *episcopos*) increasingly came to be called a ‘priest’ (*hierous* in Greek; *sacerdos* in Latin), that title was applied also to the presbyters functioning as the bishop’s vicars. (The English word ‘priest’ is a contraction of ‘presbyter’; the ‘elder’ had become sufficiently identified with the ‘sacerdotal’ function that ‘presbyter’ meant the same as *sacerdos*.)

Rapid expansion of membership along with delegation of leadership would have been reason enough for the establishment of standard texts for worship; centuries of controversy over vital issues of faith made a high degree of control from central authority essential. We should not imagine bureaucratic officials designing official texts to be followed by all the congregations of a diocese. Fixed texts evolved naturally as the new presbyter ‘priests’ copied their bishop’s style of offering prayer. It did not take long for sample prayers to be written down, and then collected into books.

To fill the expanding needs, *libelli* (LEE-bell-ee—‘little books’) were composed to guide those responsible for the various parts of the rite. These took the place of the ‘Church Orders’, which had sufficed earlier. The prayers read by the ‘president’ of the eucharist were contained in a ‘little book’ called a ‘sacramentary’. The persons who read the scripture used a ‘lectionary’ which indicated the readings for each celebration. There were three different kinds of lectionaries: (1) a table indicating the beginnings and endings of readings; (2) a marked Bible; or (3) a collection of pas-

## The Church Becomes Legitimate

## The *libelli*

sages written out in full. Another book contained litanies and other portions of rites for which the deacon was responsible. As music became more complex, choirs were formed; separate books contained their portions of the rites.

There was no single book that contained the entire text of a rite. Considerable variety could be achieved by combining the different parts to fit the tone of the day or season, or to express the preferences of officiants or congregations. A significant result was that public worship was truly a public affair; it was impossible to conduct worship without the cooperation of all the participants with their separate books. A single clergyman could not conduct a worship service.

## Buildings

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Larger congregations, having outgrown private homes or house-churches, required different types of buildings patterned after such dwellings. There were no architectural precedents to guide Christian church builders. Pagan temples were houses for the gods, not meeting-places for a congregation. (Even the Jewish Temple was patterned after pagan models—only the Temple staff went inside, and the various ‘courts’ were not used for worship.) Jewish synagogues, it is true, were meeting-places, and their influence on Christian architecture was pronounced. The seating arrangements for the officiants and the raised platform (*bema*) for scripture reading and preaching were taken from the synagogue. In synagogue worship there was nothing that was comparable to the eucharist. The Jewish archetype of this central Christian rite took place in the home around the family table. In the early Christian house-churches, a table was brought into the room and prepared for the eucharist at the time of the offertory.

Public meetings for any purpose—political or commercial—took place in a type of building called a *basilica* (ba-SILL-i-kah, ‘house of the king’). Basilicas in pre-Christian Greece and Rome were built in different sizes and various designs, but the typical one was oblong in shape, with a row of columns dividing the floor space into a main central area and two side aisles. In Christian usage, the central area came to be called the ‘nave.’ (‘Nave’ is probably derived from the Greek *naos*—nah-OSS—‘temple’. In the Latin-speaking west, similarity between the words suggested that ‘nave’ came from the Latin *navis*, ‘ship’. This fitted well with the image of the church as the ark of salvation.) Each side aisle was half as wide as the center aisle and had a flat roof over it. On top of the columns that divided the aisles, a second tier of columns or a wall supported the roof over the central area. Opposite the entrance to the main aisle, there was often an ‘apse’—a recessed alcove, sometimes semicircular—where magistrates sat to administer justice. A porch provided shelter for the main entrance.

Since Constantine’s time, the basilica has been a favorite architectural form for church buildings. The apse housed the bishop’s chair and those of the other clergy. During much of the liturgy, the bishop officiated from his chair—the *kathedra*. Nearer the people stood a small table, usually cube-shaped.

It was sometimes given prominence by being covered with a rigid canopy supported on four columns, called a *ciborium* (sib-OR-ee-um). The eucharistic elements of bread and wine were placed on the table.

The Scriptures were read from a reading desk—called an *ambo*—which was placed far enough forward into the nave so that the readers could be easily seen and heard.

As congregations and buildings grew larger, musical adornments were added to the liturgies. Psalms had probably always been sung; they are hymns and certainly were sung in Jewish Temple worship. As early as New Testament times there are samples of theological hymns, such as the hymn to Christ in Phil. 2:1-11.

Paradoxically, a heresy provided the impetus to a more extensive use of hymnody. The Arians used hymns set to popular music as a device to spread their teachings, and when orthodox Christians saw how well it worked, they began composing their own hymns. Eastern and Gallican rites, with their tendency to greater elaboration, used the new hymns more frequently than did Rome; in the Roman family of rites, music was usually limited to psalmody. Many of the hymns composed during this period are still sung today.

Ambrose of Milan, a fourth-century bishop, and Pope Gregory I are credited with promoting musical reforms, improving the quality of the singing and sponsoring the composition of simple melodies, based on earlier Greek modes. The Ambrosian chant and Gregorian chant—together known as ‘plainsong’ melodies—were intended to help project the words of the psalms and other musical settings so they could be heard more clearly in the large basilicas.

Eucharistic liturgies all followed the basic order described in the *Didache* and outlined clearly in Justin Martyr’s *First Apology*. But within this essential structure, local customs introduced enrichments and elaborations that varied from place to place. Major sees influenced the surrounding areas, and distinctive features began to characterize the rites of different regions.

The eastern ‘families’ of rites all tended toward flowery speech and lengthy prayers, with extensive use of ‘deacon’s litanies’—biddings for the prayers of the people for various causes, with a refrain said by the people. Where the influence of the imperial court was most pronounced—in Constantinople, of course, but also other major eastern cities—all the trappings of courtly ceremonial became part of Christian liturgy. Incense carriers led processions, and emblems of status marked the entrance of the clergy at the beginning of the rite. Similar processions came to mark the dignity of the reading of the gospel and the offering of the bread and wine. The rite that developed in Constantinople in the thirteenth century, one of the

## Music

## Families of Rites

most complex in Christian usage, has remained the principal rite of the eastern churches.

## **Western Families of Rites**

In Rome the tone of worship remained more restrained than in the east, with fewer liturgical elaborations. The new status unquestionably had its effects, however. Clergy ranked as privileged members of society, church buildings were utilized as public gathering places, and the ceremonial symbols of rank—stole, incense, and staff—came into use in the large city congregations. Everything was done in a simpler way. Perhaps the ideals of simplicity cherished in the old Roman republic were still having their effect; the pomp and ceremony of the eastern capital may even have given Rome cause to resurrect its more austere ways. Whatever the reason, the Roman branch of the western family of rites—which included Rome and the province of North Africa—was noted for its austere simplicity.

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The other western branch, the Gallican, stands in striking contrast. It was as ornate as the Roman was plain. The Gallican family of rites takes its name from the province of Gaul, now France and southern Germany. This was the largest of the western provinces, and its rite was the most influential one. The Gallican family includes the rites of three other regions as well. Spain, including present-day Portugal, developed a rite called Mozarabic (moz-A-ra-bik or MOZ-a-RA-bik, from an Arabic word). In the British Isles, prior to the mission of Augustine of Canterbury, the rite was called Celtic. In what is now northern Italy and Switzerland, worship was conducted according to the Ambrosian rite, the rite of the city of Milan, named after its most famous bishop, Ambrose.

As the papacy grew more influential, the Roman rite began to spread throughout the west. Strangely enough, the Gallican king, Charlemagne, worked strenuously to suppress the Gallican rite in favor of the Roman. The reasons are not hard to find. Strong rulers usually like uniformity and standardization; affairs are more easily managed. The independent Gauls would not be circumscribed; the Gallican Rite kept growing and changing. From place to place local versions of it added their own embellishments. Charlemagne, aided by some strong popes, was able to insist on the simpler, more uniform rite of Rome, but there seemed to be no way to put an end to the exuberance of the Gallic spirit. The Roman rite and Gallican elaborations blended, striking a balance that sometimes warrants the description 'Gallicanized Roman', and at times might better be called 'Romanized Gallican'. The blending process fed changes back to Rome itself and finally culminated in the elaborate rite of the late medieval Catholic church.

The Mozarabic rite survived until the eleventh century when it was suppressed by Pope Gregory VII, except for a few sites in the city of Toledo, where it is still used today. The Celtic rite was finally suppressed in the twelfth century. It had spread beyond the British Isles through the mission-

ary outposts established by Irish monks on continental Europe. The Ambrosian rite also succumbed everywhere but in Milan itself, where it is still found, although the Roman eucharistic prayer has replaced the original.

The large influx of converts to Christianity, many of them motivated more by political than religious zeal, placed a burden on the church. It had been organized to face the problems of a minority movement, its structure so closely interconnected and efficiently managed that it aroused the envy of emperors. Now its large staff of clergy was not large enough to cope with the sudden increase in the number of baptisms.

The long catechumenate required the close attention of the clergy. Instruction was personal and intensive. With the change to favored status, the duration of instruction had to be shortened and the method standardized. Scholarly bishops prepared written catechisms. Those of John Chrysostom and Cyril of Jerusalem are among the most famous. Candidates for baptism were taught from them.

Instead of up to three years, the catechumenate now lasted only a few weeks. Easter eve was the customary time for baptisms, and the few weeks before Easter, the forty days of Lent or, in some places, an additional two or three weeks of 'pre-Lent,' were given to catechetical instruction.

At the beginning of Lent a person who wished to be baptised was received as a catechumen and expected to attend several services during the following weeks at which the scripture readings pertained to baptism. Instructions were given based on these readings. On the Sunday before Easter, the catechumens were made candidates.

The baptism itself was performed on Easter eve as part of the Paschal Vigil, a lengthy service that began with a blessing of new fire and the lighting of a large candle (the Paschal candle) that would burn at services throughout the 'Great Fifty Days' of the Easter season. The Paschal Vigil contained several scripture readings, interspersed with psalms and prayer. The readings told the stories of the creation, the fall, the sacrifice of Isaac, the Passover, the crossing of the Red Sea, the entry into the promised land, Isaiah 55 ("come ye to the waters"), Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones, and the story of Jonah. Water and new life dominated the readings and the themes that led up to the blessing of the water of the baptismal font, the container for the water of the baptism.

Baptism, with a threefold renunciation of Satan and the traditional threefold confession of faith, was followed by the Easter eucharist at which the newly baptized made their first communion.

As late as the council of Nicaea (325 CE), public penance over a period of several years was required for serious offenses. As time went on, however, the severity that characterized the age of persecutions lessened.

## **Crisis Liturgies Sanctifying Life**

### **Initiation**

### **Penance**

The time of public penance was shortened to the period of Lent. The Wednesday before it began, the penitents were admonished of the seriousness of their offenses and received the laying-on-of-hands with prayers for their proper repentance. They were then expelled from the church building. In the ninth century, ashes, reminiscent of the 'sackcloth and ashes' that were the sign of sorrow and penitence in biblical days, were poured on their heads; from this practice, the day came to be called 'Ash Wednesday.'

Near the end of Lent the penitents received reconciliation. According to the Roman rite, they were reinstated on 'Maundy Thursday,' the day commemorating Jesus' command (*mandatus*), to wash one another's feet. The Gallican rite restored them on Good Friday. They were admonished while they prostrated themselves and the congregation cried out for their pardon. Prayers were read over them, hands were laid on them. They were lifted to their feet and restored to fellowship with the reception of communion.

Private penance began within the Celtic church. Under the leadership of the monks, who exerted far more influence than bishops, people were urged to do penance for sins that had previously been considered too inconsequential to require more than individual repentance and determination to amend. Public penance was required for the remission of sins that affected the community. For lesser sins one could be forgiven by confessing them to a 'confessor' and performing the acts of penance he prescribed.

**Cyclical  
Liturgies:  
The Sancti-  
fication  
of Time**

Hippolytus' *Apostolic Tradition* had prescribed seven 'hours of prayer' to be observed by Christians wherever they might be, as well as two daily congregational services. In the post-Constantinian era, this proved too demanding a regimen. The morning congregational service of instruction in the Scriptures and the evening *lucernarium* were held in many church buildings. The 'hours of prayer' were often observed only in the monastic communities.

Monastic rules differed, but they all used the Psalter as the basis for daily worship. Some eastern monasteries 'prayed the Psalter' each day—the entire one hundred fifty psalms were read in the course of one day's series of services. Monks following the Roman rite read through the Psalter weekly, while those of the Gallican rite took two weeks.

Some monks were ordained and others were 'lay brothers'. Ordained or lay, monks lived by a rule (*regula*) and were called 'regulars'. Clergy who were not monks were called 'secular clergy.' They lived in the world (*saeculum*), rather than in the monastery. Frequently the monks used a congregation's building for their worship, and sometimes the clergy of the congregation, even though not bound by the *regula*, observed the monastic 'Hours'. Thus, the two systems of 'daily offices' coexisted and, when the monks used the church buildings, were often combined. The monastic office called Lauds, 'praise', was combined with the morning congregational scripture service, and the monastic Vespers ('evening')

with the *lucernarium*. Where these combined services took too long, the scripture reading and instructions were the first parts to be cut.

The liturgical year was greatly expanded under the changed circumstances of the imperial church. New converts were often only half-converted, their outlook still largely pagan. One of the most popular pagan festivals in Rome was held at the time of the winter solstice (December 25) in celebration of the birth of *Sol Invictus*, the 'Unconquerable Sun'. The Christian church, rather than oppose the festival and try to stamp it out, 'baptized' December 25 as the Christian feast of the Incarnation—the birth of Christ.

In Egypt, the winter solstice was observed on January 6 as the appearance (*epiphaneia*) of the sun-god. The celebration featured light, water, and wine. The Christians took this pagan festival as a feast of the Incarnation and associated with it (a) the Matthean account of the visit of the Wise Men to see the infant Jesus, the 'appearance' of Christ to the Gentiles; (b) Jesus' baptism, the manifestation of Jesus as the Son of God; and (c) the story of the wedding feast at Cana, the first miracle manifesting the hidden glory of Jesus. Thus, light (the star guiding the Magi), water (the baptism), and water and wine (the Cana miracle) were preserved from the pagan cultus, but were given meanings associated with the epiphany ('appearance') of the Christ. It was not long before both feasts were combined to produce 'the twelve days of Christmas'—December 25-January 6.

In the regions of the Ambrosian and the Roman rites, the weeks immediately preceding Christmas were viewed as times of preparation for the feast. In Gallican and eastern territories, Epiphany became, with Easter, a time for baptisms. The weeks preceding it took on the tones of Lent. The season of Advent ('the coming') still retains the mixed notes of penitence and joy that came from these two traditions, anticipation of the feast and preparation for death and resurrection.

'Baptism' of pagan customs into Christian life provided some of the motivation for the multiplication of saints' days during this period. The many pagan gods and goddesses had their special days, and Christian martyrs provided an alternative focus. Congregations that had no local martyrs to commemorate sought relics of saints, bones or other objects associated with the martyr, and instituted commemorative days for other martyrs and noteworthy Christians. In churches of the Celtic rite, and in a few of the eastern rite congregations, figures from the Old Testament were also commemorated. In some places a day for the commemoration of all the martyrs—All Saints' Day—was set aside, and eventually adopted universally. Originally, the martyrs were regarded as witnesses to Christ. Under the new custom of commemorations, they came to be seen as intercessors and protectors of the Christians who commemorated them.

## The Liturgical Year

### Christmas

7

### Epiphany

### Saints' Days

## Pentecost

The week before Easter had been the time when the catechumens faced their final testing before baptism. Gradually, the observances of the week acquired more historical overtones. Under Constantine, church buildings were erected at the sites traditionally associated with events in the life of Christ, especially the events of his last week in Jerusalem. Pilgrimages to these churches became popular, and the emphases the pilgrims saw at their services suggested patterning 'Holy Week' after the series of events they marked. Palm Sunday was observed with processions, Maundy Thursday with an evening eucharist and foot-washing, and Good Friday with devotions centering on the cross and reception of communion only from elements consecrated on a less somber day (the Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts). The earlier meaning of the Easter eve Paschal Vigil, with its emphasis on baptism and the symbol of water, was obscured by this shift in the Holy Week emphasis.

The same trend toward commemorating historical events affected the observance of the Great Fifty Days—Pentecost. The fiftieth day, the day of Pentecost, originally marked the climax of the joyous festival season of the resurrection. It evolved, over this period, into a commemoration of the day on which the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples. From this interpretation, Pentecost became another day for baptisms, along with Easter and Epiphany. The fortieth day became the day of Jesus' ascension, and the Great Fifty Days were, in effect, reduced to an Easter Octave (eight days).

## Propers

Most of the other days in present-day liturgical calendars were designated during these centuries between Constantine and Charlemagne. The days and seasons were assigned appropriate scripture readings, prayers, and psalms—the 'Propers' belonging to them (Latin, *proprius*). These selections were published in the sacramentaries, the books the officiants used. In the sacramentaries the Propers were separated into two groups, the *Temporale* (tem-por-AH-lay), which were determined by the dates of Easter and Christmas, and the *Sanctorale* (sank-tor-AH-lay), fixed dates marking the days of the saints. The Temporale were 'movable feasts', changing according to the dates of the two great feasts that determined them; the Sanctorale were 'immovable feasts', occurring on the same date each year.

**Note: See p. 7-11-1 ff for an example of liturgies from this era.**

Over the centuries the development of eucharistic worship in the west was characterized by the interplay between the Roman and the Gallican rites. The simple Roman rite was pressed by emperors and popes alike during the Middle Ages. But the richness of the Gallican tradition held great appeal among the worshipers. We shall look at an example of each—a Roman liturgy from about the sixth century, still retaining its original simplicity but already showing signs of enrichment, and a Gallican liturgy from the seventh or eighth century.



# Liturgical Revision—The Reformation

As the Reformation proceeded during the first half of the fifteenth century, Luther began to provide new liturgical forms for his followers and eventually produced German-language rites for all the services—eucharist, daily offices, baptism, and the crisis rites. He also wrote catechisms embodying his teachings and several hymns expressive of the spirit of his new understanding of the gospel. Soon others published Church Orders outlining doctrine, discipline, and worship for protestant centers in Germany. Reformed churches also developed their own liturgies—Martin Bucer in Strassburg, Zwingli in Zurich, and Calvin in Geneva.

**Protestant  
Church  
Orders**

The Roman Catholic Church was no less active. In Spain, Cardinal Quinones (kin-YOH-nays) was commissioned by Pope Paul III to revise the *Breviary*, the book containing the daily offices. He simplified the services, omitting legendary material about the lives of the saints and reducing the complexity of the calendar. The most conspicuous feature of his revised *Breviary* was its provision for reading the entire Psalter each month and the whole of the Bible in the course of a year.

**Quinones**

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More radical was the work of the archbishop of Cologne, Hermann von Wied. At first he was violently opposed to the Protestantism that was growing up in neighboring German electorates, but when he discovered that the Lutheran movement was quite different from the Anabaptists, whom he loathed, he became convinced that some such reform was essential within his own archdiocese. In 1543 he published a Church Order, the *Consultation*, which was translated into English in 1548; it exerted considerable influence on Cranmer's thinking. Hermann invited Bucer to act as his liturgical consultant in compiling his *Consultation* and asked Melancthon to advise him theologically.

**Hermann  
von Wied**

Although he intended to remain loyal to Rome while implementing his reform policies within his diocese, he met with resistance from his own subjects, from Emperor Charles V, and Pope Paul III. The combined opposition forced him to leave his post and join the Lutheran church.

It was the Council of Trent that exerted the greatest effect on the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church. The council established a 'Congregation [commission] of Rites' and charged it with the task of liturgical revision, to be based on the rites of the city of Rome at the time of Pope Gregory VII. Other rites were permitted only where they had been in consistent use for at least two hundred years. The Mozarabic rite in Spain and the Ambrosian in Milan are notable examples of such exceptions.

**Congregation  
of Rites**

In England, when Thomas Cranmer produced the first Book of Common Prayer in 1549, he drew heavily on the German Church Orders, Hermann's *Consultation*, and Quinones' *Breviary* in his translation and revision of the Latin Sarum rite, the rite used at Salisbury Cathedral.

**The Book of  
Common  
Prayer**

The influence of the Reformed liturgists is more apparent in the 1552 revision. Successive revisions—in 1559, 1604, and 1662—vary little from the principles established in these first two books.

**Crisis  
Liturgies:  
The  
Sanctification  
of Life**

**Lutheran**

Luther tried to restore an emphasis on death and resurrection in the rite of baptism, and to liken it to the anointing of kings and priests. He removed the medieval rite's prayer for blessing the water. Many had come to regard the blessed water as possessing powers to wash away the taint of original sin; for Luther, it was God in Christ who did so. In the place of cleansing, Luther turned to Paul's symbolism of death and resurrection with Christ (Rom. 6:3-4), seeing baptism as a sacrament of transition from death to life. In place of the blessing of the water, Luther composed 'the Flood Prayer', comparing the water of baptism to the flood in which Noah was saved, the Red Sea through which the Israelites marched to freedom, and the Jordan River through which they crossed to enter the promised land.

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**Reformed**

The Reformed churches, believing that people are saved or damned by the decrees of predestination rather than by the administration of baptism, rejected the notion that infants who die unbaptized are unable to enter heaven. Accordingly, they abandoned the custom that had urged lay persons to administer baptism to infants *in extremis* (at the point of death) and allowed private baptism only in extreme circumstances. They removed from the rite all ceremonies except pouring water—exorcisms, signing with the cross, blessing the water, anointing, vesting the candidate in white robes, giving a candle. All of these were current practices.

Both Luther and Calvin rejected the medieval view that confirmation bestowed an additional gift of strength to face the temptations of adult life. Luther composed catechisms explaining the Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the sacraments. Children were to give an account of these teachings before being admitted to communion, and, if he wished, the pastor might confirm them with a laying-on-of-hands after examining them. Calvin encouraged the laying-on-of-hands as a benediction during a rite in which children, having been instructed, openly professed their faith.

**Roman**

The age of seven became the recommended age for confirmation in the Roman Catholic church, although the child might receive communion at an earlier time. Bishops could authorize presbyters to confirm. In administering the rite, the officiant signed the candidate's forehead with oil (chrismation), placed his right hand on the candidate's head, and—as a relic of the rite of exorcism—tapped him lightly on the cheek.

**The Book of  
Common  
Prayer**

The baptismal rite in the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* contains Luther's 'Flood Prayer' as well as prayers from the Sarum, Mozarabic rites, and from Hermann's *Consultation*. Immediately after being baptized, the infant is signed on the forehead with the cross, an act analogous to the chris-

mation of the medieval confirmation rite. At the signing, the officiant declares, in words taken from Aquinas' definition of confirmation, that the child shall "not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified and manfully to fight under his banner against the world, sin, and the devil."

Following the precedent of the German Church Orders, the prayer book links catechetical instruction, confirmation, and first communion together and places them at 'the age of discretion', usually early adolescence. Administration of the rite of confirmation is restricted to the bishop—a break from the practice of the Middle Ages.

Luther at first considered penance a sacrament, along with baptism and the eucharist. He used a form for private confession and absolution, similar to the medieval Latin but eliminating acts of penance for 'satisfaction'. Calvin, too, allowed private confession with absolution, but he denied its sacramental nature; for him, it was a ceremony to confirm faith in the forgiveness of sins. Both Lutheran and Reformed traditions tried to restore the ancient practice of public penitence. Notorious sinners were banned from the communion table until they repented, but the more usual expression of public penitence took the form of 'general' confessions—rites in which all members of the congregation confessed to sin and received absolution.

The Roman church continued its former practice of confession to a priest, followed by absolution and the imposition of an act of penance. A public rite for receiving excommunicated sinners and converts from Protestantism was also employed.

In England, Cranmer's 1548 'Order of the Communion', taken from Hermann's *Consultation*, contained an exhortation to confession, a general confession, absolution, and 'Comfortable Words'—sentences from scripture reciting assurance of forgiveness. This order was retained within the eucharistic rites of all editions of the prayer book. From 1552 on, the daily offices also contained an exhortation, confession, and absolution. A lengthy exhortation within the eucharistic rite also advised private confession for those whose consciences were not quieted by "their humble confession to God, and the general confession to the church." Such advice and a form for absolution were also given within the rite of the Visitation of the Sick.

In both Lutheran and Reformed traditions, ordination consisted of scripture readings and prayers with a laying-on-of-hands by the presbyters. In the Reformed tradition, laying-on-of-hands was sometimes omitted, the prayers of the congregation sufficing.

Martin Bucer of Strassburg, concerned over the Anabaptists' total disregard for ordination, composed an ordination rite that provided greater solemnity and suggested a greater importance than many other protes-

## Penance

## The Liturgical Week

## Ordination

tant rites. It consisted of a sermon on the ordained ministry and the duty of the laity toward the clergy, prayers and scripture readings, an exhortation and examination of the candidate, congregational silent prayer, laying-on-of-hands, and the eucharist.

The 1549 prayer book contained no ordination rites. In 1550 Cranmer produced an 'ordinal', a book of ordination rites, in which he modified Bucer's service to apply to the three orders of bishops, presbyters, and deacons. The 1550 ordinal directed that a chalice be delivered to a presbyter and a pastoral staff to a bishop, but in the 1552 prayer book these directions were dropped.

**Cyclical  
Rites: The  
Sanctifica-  
tion of Time**

7

Lutheran, Reformed, and Anglican traditions made provision for daily morning and evening services. Luther's services of Matins and Vespers and the services of Morning and Evening Prayer in the English prayer book consisted of psalms and scripture passages read 'in course'—serially, rather than by random selection—with canticles, the Lord's Prayer, collects, and a dismissal. Among the Reformed churches, weekday services ordinarily centered around a lecture or sermon and prayers.

Quinones' revised *Breviary* went through more than one hundred printings. It was criticized, however, for excising lessons from the lives of the saints and simplifying the order. Pope Paul IV suppressed the book in 1568. A much more conservative revision of the *Breviary* was issued by the Congregation of Rites in 1570.

The continental reformers attempted to restore the primacy of Sunday by insisting on communion at the weekly eucharist. In the late medieval church, people had grown accustomed to receiving only once a year, and they were not prepared for the frequent communication wanted by the reformers. Rather than continue non-communicating celebrations, which the reformers considered a misuse of the eucharist, they began to offer communion quarterly. On the other Sundays, they used the *Anaphora*, the 'service of the word,' that forms the first part of the eucharistic rite.

In England, too, Sunday was reemphasized. The eucharist with communions was to follow Morning Prayer. When, in the priest's judgment, there were not a sufficient number of communicants present, 'Ante-Communion' (the *Anaphora*) was to be read. But the medieval reluctance to receive communion more frequently than once a year had prevailed in England too, and a monthly celebration soon became the typical practice. From about 1690, some parishes in towns provided early services to make communion available for servants.

Luther's first step in designing suitable eucharistic worship for his congregations was to simplify the existing Latin Mass. Considering certain late additions to the rite unnecessary and even distracting from its central meaning, he removed private prayers by the priest (the 'secrets'),

variable offertory chants and prayers, and the variable post-communion prayers. He disliked the old Canon of the Mass, the prayer in which the bread and wine are consecrated, because it describes the eucharist as a sacrifice to God. He replaced it with the 'Words of Institution' alone. A sermon was to be preached at every celebration.

In 1525, two years after offering this revision of the Latin service, he translated it into German. German hymns—some of them his own compositions—or metrical paraphrases of the psalms in German were substituted for the Introit, Gradual, Creed, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei. The German Church Orders generally followed his example.

Others composed rites in the vernacular for Lutheran and Reformed use. Calvin adapted the German pattern. Bucer urged the substitution of 'table' for 'altar' to remove sacrificial connotations. Zwingli's first rite, in 1523, retained too much of the old form for many of his friends, and in 1525 he proposed a rite that eliminated all that he thought non-scriptural, even the use of music. For the regular Sunday services, he offered a 'service of the word' composed of (1) intercession, (2) the Lord's Prayer, (3) the Ave Maria ("Hail Mary"), (4) scripture readings and sermon, (5) notices of deaths and a prayer of thanksgiving for the departed, (6) a general confession and an absolution. On Easter, Pentecost, the beginning of autumn, and Christmas—the four quarterly celebrations—communion was to follow. In place of the Canon there was a prayer that the people may give thanks faithfully and live as becomes members of Christ's body. The Words of Institution followed, and the sacramental elements were administered to the people from wooden trays and cups while they remained seated in the pews. Psalm 113:1-9 was read, a post-communion thanksgiving offered, and the people dismissed.

The liturgy established by the Congregation of Rites following the Council of Trent was the old rite of Rome, stripped of some of its Gallican embellishments. It was kept in Latin, the one language that transcended the many national boundaries within which the Roman Catholic Church prevailed. The reserved sacrament was kept in a tabernacle on the altar, and a service of devotion—'Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament'—became popular.

An important part of the consecration prayers in early liturgies was the *epiklesis*, the invocation of the Holy Spirit. The medieval Roman rite had no explicit *epiklesis*, and Cranmer, following eastern examples, inserted one in the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer*. It was removed in 1552, never to be reinstated in any subsequent English prayer book.

The 'Black Rubric', removed in 1559, was reinserted in 1662 in revised form. Instead of denying "any *real* and *essential* presence," it rules out "any *corporal* presence of Christ's natural flesh and blood."

The German Church Orders retained the general structure of the traditional liturgical calendar, but reduced the holy days to Feasts of our Lord (counting the Annunciation and the Purification of the Blessed Virgin as 'Feasts of our Lord' rather than of Mary), the days of saints mentioned in the New Testament, All Saints' Day, and the new feast of 'Reformation Sunday' on the last Sunday of October. The Reformed churches usually rejected holy days, some even refusing to celebrate Easter, Pentecost, and Christmas.

The post-Council of Trent revision of the Roman rites reduced the number of saints' days, especially those that came during Lent. To offset Reformation Sunday, a Feast of Christ the King was appointed for the last Sunday of October.

The English liturgical calendar followed the German closely, reducing the holy days to those mentioned in the New Testament. The 1552 book began the distinction between 'red letter days' and 'black letter days' in the calendar. The former were biblically sanctioned days, printed in red in the prayer book calendar; the latter, printed in black, were lesser holy days from the old calendar for which there were no propers—collect, epistle, gospel, and preface. The 'black letter days' were probably included for convenience to identify dates found in old documents.

## Music

Popular folk hymnody had been in existence during the Middle Ages, but was not used in liturgical worship; Luther brought it into the church. "A mighty fortress is our God", for which he wrote both words and music, has become a favorite in many traditions. Calvin established the use of metrical paraphrases of the psalms, and the 'Geneva Psalter' became a model for such hymnody. Probably the most famous example of a metrical psalm is 'Old Hundredth', the paraphrase of Psalm 100 set to a tune by the sixteenth-century French Huguenot composer, Louis Bourgeois ("All People that On Earth Do Dwell"). In spite of Calvin's example, however, some of the Reformed churches prohibited music of any kind.

In England, Miles Coverdale, published a collection of "Goostly [spiritual] Psalmes and Spirituall Songes" based on German hymnals. John Merbecke provided musical settings for the rites of the 1549 prayer book, and the 'Sternhold and Hopkins Psalter', a metrical version of the Psalter in English, provided the staple musical diet early in Elizabeth's reign. Large churches with choirs used modifications of ancient plainsong and the harmonized ('polyphonic') music that was being developed. 'Anglican chant', a harmonized adaptation of plainsong, appeared near the end of the seventeenth century as a setting for psalms and canticles. The first part of each half-verse is sung to the first note of the chant, with the rest of the verse fitted to the remaining notes of the chant.

# The Liturgical Movement

## The Twentieth Century

The late Middle Ages were a time of deterioration in the church's liturgical life. For centuries the Mass had been seen as a mysterious occasion during which bread and wine were miraculously transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ, a supernatural transaction, in which the rank and file of ordinary Christians expected to take no part. The divine Lord, they had been taught, was present on the altar. At the moment when the common elements of food and drink changed into the sacred Presence, the sanctus (holy) bell called their attention to the altar as the priest lifted up the Host for them to see. Between times, when no Mass was being said, they could be reminded of its holiness by the Presence enshrined in an ornate tabernacle at the altar. But the average worshiper rarely ate the consecrated 'Bread of Angels' and never tasted the sacred Blood. The eucharistic elements were to be adored, not to be consumed.

For the laity, access to God was always indirect. Priests, consecrated by ordination for their task, handled the holy things at the altar where God dwelt; the laity confided their private fears and hopes to the more human intercessors whose statues adorned the church buildings. Mary the Mother of God, closest of all humans to the divine Son, received the petitions of the faithful, as did many others. Crucifixes graphically portraying the human body of Jesus hanging on the cross were reminders of Jesus' kinship with us. While the elaborate liturgy was being said by the 'sacred ministers' and the small group of trained lay servers appointed to assist them at the altar, the pious worshipers went about their private devotions, invoking the saints to carry their prayers to a distant heaven. Beads clicked on rosaries, assisting the faithful in their meditations on the mysteries of the Christian faith. The human Jesus consoled them and the human saints joined them in their prayers.

The eucharistic Presence was too holy to communicate with the laity. What had once been the *leitourgia*, 'the work of the people', was now the work of the priests. For 'the people', worship was now a private matter.

The Reformers tried to change the pattern. Luther, with his doctrine of justification by faith, broke with the view that intermediaries were needed between the common worshiper and God. He insisted that every Christian is a priest, carrying Christ within as a result of baptism; each is called to participate in the priesthood of the church in whatever vocation life presents. Luther translated the Mass into the language of the people, sweeping away the mystification that had enshrouded it since the time when its ancient Latin phrases had become unintelligible. Now the Bible was freed to speak to all in the common tongue, and preachers expounded its message for everyone to hear. Calvin trained countless people in the fundamental teachings of Christianity and created an organizational structure within which the collective leadership of laity and clergy could

**The Remote Presence**

**Private Devotions**

**Reformation Liturgy**

**Priesthood of All Christians**

emerge. No longer, it seemed, could a hierarchy control the spiritual destiny of the people.

### **The Book of Common Prayer**

In England, Cranmer drew from the examples of the Protestant reformers as well as the liturgies inherited from the past. His *Book of Common Prayer* was more than a translation of the church's services from Latin into English; it was a manual for the entire church, clergy and laity alike, to use together in *common* worship. For a while, under Elizabeth I, it seemed that most subjects of the British queen would be able to join in the nation's corporate worship of its Lord.

### **Worship in Recent Times**

By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, all had changed. Rationalism had reduced Christianity to a minimal set of beliefs in a 'Supreme Being'; liberalism regarded it as a moral way of life, patterned after the example of Jesus; and pietistic revivalism sought the inner assurance of salvation in subjective experience.

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### **Roman Catholicism**

To Christians outside the Roman Catholic church, the choices were few. They could accept liberalism's adaptation of rationalistic moralism or go for pietistic revivalism. In neither camp was there any interest in the eucharist as a form of worship; both interpreted Christianity subjectively, as an intensely private and individualistic religion. Worship services consisted primarily of preaching, with the eucharist observed only infrequently as a memorial of Jesus' last supper with his disciples. Sermons either gave moral instruction for individuals to follow in their personal lives or called individuals to experience the presence of God in their hearts. The church was rarely perceived as a corporate body, and worship held no resemblance to the Christian community engaged in 'the work of the people'.

### **Secularism**

Within Roman Catholicism, the situation was no better. In France, rationalism flourished, tinged from the outset with anti-Christian fervor. The church was badly damaged by the French Revolution and fared little better under Napoleon. Monasteries had been confiscated and the clergy largely discredited by their close association with the aristocracy and the monarchy. Masses were still being said in parish churches, and worshippers could still be found at their devotions, kneeling in the darkness of the church nave. But they were few in number. Though the liturgical form differed entirely from that of non-Roman churches, here too individual piety dominated worship.

Many people found it possible to live without any of these versions of the Christian faith. The concrete achievements of science and technology gave promise of a heaven on earth, available to Christian and non-Christian alike. Those for whom technology was proving to be a curse rather than a blessing—the impoverished 'proletariat' uprooted by the industrial revolution—found political and economic ideologies of revolution offering greater hope than anything they heard from the churches. 'Secularism' had become an attractive alternative to Christian faith.



Almost simultaneously, two efforts were made to restore Christian worship to a former state of vitality: the Benedictines started a revival on the European continent and the 'Tractarians' instigated one in England. Both looked to the Middle Ages as the golden age of Christianity, the 'age of faith'.

## **Medieval Revivals**

In 1832, Dom Prosper Louis Pascal Gueranger reopened the Benedictine monastery at the Abbey of Solesmes (so-LEM) in France. Five years later the pope recognized it as a Benedictine community and restored to it privileges it had enjoyed in the centuries before Napoleon destroyed it. Gueranger was well aware of the spiritual lethargy that had overtaken the church and determined to use his influence to revitalize its worship.

## **Benedictine Revival Solesmes**

To fashion its framework, he looked to Rome for his ideal. The Rome he saw, however, was the romanticized 'Eternal City' of his imagination. There, in Roman Christianity, he envisioned throngs of the faithful crowding the dark aisles of splendid cathedrals, absorbing the mystery that dwelt in the shadows and flickered from the countless candles on altars and shrines. He revelled in the solemn beauty of the Roman liturgy, so restrained and clear compared with the florid excesses of the Gallican rite still prevalent in France, and he thrilled to the measured tones of the early medieval music he imagined echoing through the nave, a sublime approximation of the angelic choir. He launched a campaign to 'purify' worship by imposing the Roman rite throughout France; he succeeded in establishing a rigid liturgical practice that accepted late medieval standards as the inflexible norm.

Whatever the aesthetic merits of the period may have been, it was a time of liturgical deterioration that augured poorly for reform. Nostalgic neo-medievalism might attract a monastic community, schooled in ecclesiastical Latin and well-versed in the mysteries and subtleties of sacramental theology, but a laity all too accustomed to worshipping as passive spectators was not impressed with the 'purity' and 'clarity' of the newly imposed rite.

Nonetheless, Gueranger guaranteed his place among liturgical reformers by teaching the Roman Catholic clergy to sing again after many centuries of muted intonation. His monks studied the ancient plainchant credited to Pope Gregory I's sixth-century liturgical reformation. 'Gregorian chant' was heard once again at the Abbey of Solesmes, and from there it spread to parishes and cathedrals throughout France. Here was a change everyone could recognize: where before, the mass was said barely audibly, now music gave voice to a sublime mystery. The meaning of the words being sung still eluded most worshippers, but the music itself spoke of eternity within the world of time.

## **Gregorian Chant**

The Benedictine revival spread into Germany, England, and the Netherlands. As it broadened geographically it also acquired a wider histori-

## **Imposition of Roman Rites**

cal horizon. At the Abbeys of Maria Laach in Germany, Mont César in Belgium, and Farnborough in England, monks began to look into the history of Christian worship. The patristic age and the period of the early sacramentaries provided them with new vistas in which they could see Christians worshiping with another spirit and outlook, different from anything known in nineteenth-century Catholicism. From Gueranger's romanticized revival of later medievalism, the Benedictines were moving toward scholarly discoveries that would soon launch the twentieth-century liturgical movement.

### **Anglo-Catholic Revival**

In England, the Oxford Tractarians were turning their attention to the pre-Reformation traditions that were part of their Anglican heritage. Keenly aware of the rampant individualism that was creeping into Christianity, they sought to remedy the resultant distortion. They reaffirmed the ancient tenet of the faith which interprets the church as the principal vehicle through which salvation is mediated to the world. At first their emphasis was doctrinal, but they saw that along with a 'high' doctrine of the church went an emphasis on the church's sacramental life. They wanted, therefore, to encourage more frequent celebrations of the eucharist. How the rite was performed was of less concern to them than its centrality in worship.

### **High-Church Doctrine**

Soon, the newly-termed 'Anglo-Catholic' party became interested in adopting more of the outward features of pre-Reformation Catholicism. As they sought liturgical models, however, they turned to nineteenth-century Roman styles as the standard for the Catholicism they wanted to restore. Just at the moment when the Roman Catholic liturgiologists were advising the church to drop many of their own practices, Anglo-Catholics picked them up. They adopted 'Low Mass', the service originally designed to allow monks the opportunity to say daily Mass with only a server present, as a regular feature of Sunday worship, and some took the non-communicating High Mass as the norm for Sunday worship. As their final ironic imitation of Roman customs, they instituted the extra-liturgical service of 'Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament', in which the consecrated Host, mounted in an ornate silver setting, was lifted in blessing over the people.

### **Ritualistic Controversy**

A 'ritualistic controversy' soon gripped Anglicanism. Debates raged, both in the Church of England and the Episcopal Church in the United States, about ceremonial, vestments, and alleged 'aping of Rome'. Whether one was 'evangelical' or 'catholic' came to be determined by one's preference for Morning Prayer or the eucharist, and by whether one's priest wore simple vestments or more ornate ones. The debate rarely moved beneath the superficialities of aesthetic taste to the issue of the church's basic self-understanding. Clergy, however they dressed and whatever services they conducted, were still by far the most active participants in corporate worship; the laity remained relatively passive, addressing their devotions individually to God. They wanted Sunday worship to be morally

and aesthetically 'edifying', either through the impressive ceremonial of High Mass or the increasingly elaborate 'High Morning Prayer' with sermon and choir. Deeper spiritual needs were met outside the liturgical setting, in private meditation and prayer.

Deeper currents were flowing, however. As biblical and liturgical scholars increasingly used the tools of historical research, they achieved clearer insights into the life of the early church. As the picture came more clearly into focus, it became apparent that the life of the church during its first few centuries was quite different from what it was in modern times. Nowhere were the differences more apparent than in the patterns of worship. The major difference in worship was not, as some Protestants had thought, between the 'simplicity' of early Christian worship and the 'ceremonialism' of Catholicism. It was in the basic notion of what worship consisted of and what its implications were for Christian life.

The monks at the Abbey of Maria Laach led the way in uncovering the heart of early Christian worship. The first major difference they found between ancient and modern worship was in the notion of how God and the world are related. Modern Christians had been driven to make subjective attempts to reach communion with God. Catholics sought to bridge the gulf between themselves and their Divine Lord through their private devotions, since the sacred Presence in the Mass was too remote and holy for them to approach. Liberals, equally subjective, tried to shape their individual lives after the pattern of morality Jesus had exemplified. Pietists sought the inner assurance of Christ's Spirit in their hearts.

In the early church, however, the central tenet of Christian piety was the conviction that God and humankind had *already been united* by virtue of the mystery of the Incarnation. The fundamental purpose of Christian worship was to enable the church to participate in this objective fact of redemption. "He became what we are in order that we might become what he is," the Fathers had said; in the eucharist, this divine-human transaction is continually actualized anew. The eucharist, therefore, is first and foremost the action of Christ offering himself as our perfect High Priest and uniting us with God his Father. The human priest performs the outward acts of the liturgy, but the priestly role belongs to Christ.

The second major difference, as the Maria Laach monks discerned it, lies in the perception of the roles of clergy and laity. In recent concepts of worship, catholic or protestant, the clergy act for the laity. In the earliest church the whole body of the faithful shared in the eucharistic feast. It was not limited to the hierarchy, or dispensed through it. Worshiping together the entire church, clergy and laity alike, offered themselves in the bread and wine presented for the meal. The priest, who had been seen in late medieval and modern times primarily as the representative of Christ at his table and therefore the sole 'celebrant', appeared in the ancient liturgies as the 'president' at the eucharist. He *led* the celebration and *presided* over it, but the total congregation *celebrated* the eucharist.

## Historical Research

## Roman Liturgical Models

7

## The Essential Ministry of the Laity

A third difference involved the sacred drama itself. Since medieval times Christ had been thought of as residing in the sacramental elements themselves after they had been consecrated by the priest. Theologians, Protestant and Catholic, had debated the meaning of this belief, whether he was 'really', 'spiritually', or only figuratively present. Attention remained fixed on the elements themselves. In the early church, however, it was the eucharistic *action* that commanded attention. When the church offered the gifts of bread and wine in thanksgiving for Christ's eternal offering of himself for us, the two offerings—Christ's and the church's—were made one. The dramatic action was completed at the time of communion. The worshipers then received Christ himself in the sacred food; they also received themselves, now consecrated as his own sacred Body. Offertory, thanksgiving, and communion formed a single dramatic action. The medieval rite had obscured the offertory, and medieval piety had shunned communion. The thanksgiving was all that seemed important; it was then that the elements were consecrated and the Presence began.

### **Objective Versus Subjective Religion**

Other liturgical scholars confirmed the insights the Benedictine pioneers revealed. Roman Catholics had led the way; Anglican, Lutheran, and Reformed historians and biblical scholars followed them to affirm the contrast between ancient and modern views. Against the subjectivism of modern Christianity stood the ancient conviction that redemption was an objective reality, a datum given to the world in Christ. Against the 'priest-ridden' nature of modern worship, protestant as well as catholic, stood the 'work of the people' in the ancient church. Against the individualistic piety of modern times, the early church proclaimed the corporate action of Christ and his members, joined in holy fellowship at the sacred feast.

### **Liturgical Experiments**

The distance between the scholar's study and the everyday life of the church is great. To bridge the gulf a series of monographs entitled *Ecclesia orans* ("The Praying Church") began to appear from Maria Laach in 1918. In 1919 the Augustinian monk Pius Parsch took charge of a parish church in Austria and turned it into an experimental laboratory for liturgical renewal. Benedictine monks undertook similar experiments in Belgium, and the Oratian Fathers conducted some in Germany. The Benedictines at St. John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota, began publishing magazines in 1929 to tell Americans about the new liturgical developments. In Sweden and England, Lutheran and Anglican liturgiologists began to reach larger audiences through their publications.

### **The Mission de France**

Not until the 1940s did the new liturgical movement gain enough momentum to attract popular attention. It began to be noticed when the *Mission de France* was launched in Paris in 1941. In an effort to revitalize several inner-city parishes, it used the insights of liturgical scholarship to mobilize the congregations for missionary action among industrial workers. Abbé Michonneau took charge of the mission; his book, *Revolution in a City Parish*, helped to inspire others to follow his example.

Michonneau conceived of 'parish' as three distinguishable entities. The first is simply geographical, the area from which a given congregation draws its members. Second, it means the congregation itself. And third, it refers to the inner core of deeply committed parishioners he called 'the militants'. He saw the geographical parish as the mission area, and the congregation as the 'leaven' of Christians who permeated it and could be missionaries to the people in it. The 'inner core' of the congregation formed the nucleus of a team to work with the clergy; together they would energize the congregation to do its mission.

In the United States, a group of Episcopal clergy and laity had heard about Michonneau's work and read some of the liturgical literature that had been published. In 1946 they joined in a loosely-knit association, calling it 'The Associated Parishes'. Four years later a similar group formed in England, under the name 'Parish and People'. They hoped to revitalize parishes through liturgical renewal. A more highly organized venture emerged at the Iona Community, a Scottish Presbyterian monastic order that had taken over the ancient site from which St. Columba had launched his mission to Scotland in the sixth century. The Iona Community had begun in the 1930s as an attempt to restore a greater depth to Reformed spirituality; in the 1940s it became a center for missionary work in the industrial centers of Scotland. In France, the Reformed and Lutheran monastic community of Taizé led the way for protestant missionary ventures to workers in industrial centers.

Efforts such as these have provided the practical experience that liturgical renewal demands. It is not enough to discover that Christians living in another age worshiped differently from the ways of the present. Even if sound reasons can be found for believing that the older ways were better than the modern, it would be a mere exercise in nostalgia to attempt to duplicate them without considering how they relate to present circumstances. This was the mistake the nineteenth-century romantics made. The liturgical movement, however, has grown in influence as clergy and laity have found its insights usable for the larger purpose of restoring a sense of mission to the church.

As the experiments in parish renewal have increased and the insights these pioneers gained have been fed to the liturgical scholars, the joint enterprise has gradually gained the support of high-level church authorities. In 1947, Pope Pius XII issued the encyclical *Mediator Dei*, lending strong papal approval to the movement's aims. Many denominations began revisions of their official liturgies in the 1950s and 1960s. Probably the most radical revision of liturgical practice is that effected as a result of the Second Vatican Council. For the first time, the entire liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church is conducted in the vernacular tongue instead of Latin.

Liturgical revision in the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, and Reformed churches has taken essentially the same form. In the

**Associated  
Parishes  
Taizé  
and Iona**

**Parish  
Renewal**

**The Paschal  
Mystery**

English-speaking world, through the International Consultation on English Texts (ICET), cooperation has even extended to agreement on the wording of the portions of the liturgy the congregation says. Major emphasis has been placed on the eucharistic and baptismal liturgies. Taken together, these two rites symbolize what has come to be called the 'Paschal Mystery', the drama of redemption in which Christ offered himself as our sacrificial redeemer on the cross and rose again for our justification on the third day. In baptism, we die with Christ and rise with him to the new life of praise and thanksgiving; the eucharist is the symbolic expression and actualization of that new life with Christ.

**The Eucharist** In the new eucharistic liturgies, one of the most noticeable changes is the increased use of scripture. In medieval worship the ancient Service of the Word that preceded the eucharistic celebration had been drastically curtailed. Protestant and Anglican Reformation liturgies tried to restore readings from scripture and preaching, but often placed them in services separated from the eucharist. In all Anglican prayer books, for example, the eucharistic lectionaries offered almost no readings from the Old Testament. The new rites of the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Anglican churches are virtually identical. A three-year cycle of Bible readings for each Sunday and major holy day is prescribed. It calls for a reading from the Old Testament, one from a New Testament epistle, and a selection from one of the four gospels.

**Service of the Word** The older Service of the Word was usually read by the priest from the altar, sometimes facing away from the people. Now it is more usual for this part of the liturgy to be conducted near the pulpit, the sermon following directly after the gospel is read. Under the provisions of the new rites, lay persons are encouraged to read some of the scriptural passages and often to lead the congregation in its prayer.

**The 'Peace'** To mark the transition from the Service of the Word to the eucharist itself, the ancient exchange of 'the Peace' has been restored. Probably no single change has caused as much comment as this. Apart from its antiquity as a feature of the church's eucharistic celebration, the main reason for restoring the Peace is to break through the individualistic preoccupation that had characterized worship since later medieval times. It is a dramatic reminder that the church is a fellowship, that the people are members one of another, and that all share the responsibility of pronouncing the ancient benediction ("The Peace of the Lord be always with you") upon one another. It is an exercise of the 'royal priesthood' of all Christians, a recognition of the ministry to which we are called in baptism.

**Offertory Procession** In the older liturgies, the offertory was almost completely obscured, and its place taken by the alms collection. The offertory is the presentation of bread and wine, the elements to be consecrated at the eucharist. When they are presented by a server to the priest from a credence shelf or table near the altar, the congregation may not be able to see what is

taking place. The new liturgies make the presentation more obvious by appointing some members of the congregation to bring the elements to the altar in procession. Coming from among the people in the congregation, the bread and wine are seen more clearly as symbols of the people's self-offering at the eucharist, their participation in the church's priestly act.

To make it clear that the eucharist is a meal in which the entire congregation participates, the 'president' of the celebration now usually stands behind the altar facing the people. This was the usual posture until medieval usage changed it and has always been customary at papal Masses. It was adopted almost universally by the protestant Reformers. For the 'celebrant' to face away from the people suggested that the service was being directed toward a God who was far away, or at the very nearest, located on the altar. The new configuration suggests the presence of the Risen Lord in the midst of his people as they gather around his table. And increasingly, congregations are being encouraged to stand instead of kneeling during the eucharistic celebration to affirm their own role as priestly participants rather than receivers of the rite celebrated for them by the priest.

## **Restoration of Corporate Emphasis**

At the close of the eucharist, the people are dismissed with an injunction to go forth into the world as ministers and missionaries. They have gathered to hear the Word of God, to offer their life-in-the-world to God in thankful response to Christ's saving work. Now they are sent back into the world, commissioned to convert it to Christ and bring his redemption to fruition in it.

## **Dismissal**

Changes in the baptismal liturgy are equally comprehensive. In the early church candidates for baptism were usually adult converts to Christianity. A long catechumenate preceded baptism, and at its conclusion the newly-baptized person was ready to take up the full life of Christian ministry and mission. As Europe turned into 'Christendom', and almost everyone became at least a nominal Christian, baptism began to be performed primarily on infants. The rite that once admitted Christians to active membership in the community and declared them responsible for its mission now focused inwardly to cleanse the individual child from the taint of original sin. The words of the rite still spoke of new birth into the community, but in practice it had become a rite performed privately, the congregation represented only in the persons of the sponsors, members of the family, and friends.

Changes in the wording of the rite would not be sufficient to restore baptism to its original status as a communal act rather than an individualistic one. The setting in which it was administered was the principal factor that had to be changed. Originally baptisms had been held at suitable times in the liturgical year at the end of a lengthy period of instruction. Easter had been a particularly favored time, especially symbolic of the 'Paschal mystery' to which the candidate was about to be admitted.

**Privatization  
of  
Baptism**

The revised baptismal rites accordingly suggest that Easter Eve be used for baptism and restore the ancient Easter Vigil as a setting for it. During the Vigil, the drama of redemption that was taught to the catechumens at great length is rehearsed briefly by means of readings from the Old Testament. Then baptism is bestowed on the candidates in time for them to participate in their first celebration of the Easter eucharist. Even when the rite is administered at other times in the year, it is set in the context of the eucharist. The connection between initiation into the church and participation in its corporate life is thereby symbolized; the Paschal mystery requires both sacraments for its full expression.

The rite itself has also been revised to express more clearly that the church is founded on the basis of a covenant between God and humankind. The candidates (and, to renew their own vows, the congregation as well) respond as the terms of the baptismal covenant are recited: renunciation of Satan and his realm, acceptance of discipleship under Jesus as Lord, and fidelity to the fellowship of the church. Baptism now clearly symbolizes the corporate mission of the church into which each individual is initiated, and every time it is administered the church corporately recalls that mission.



# The Eucharistic Rite of Hippolytus

One of the best ways to learn liturgics is also one of the best ways to ‘get inside’ an age and culture different from one’s own: by actually participating in a liturgy of that age and culture. The text of the Hippolytan rite follows, with suggestions on how to use it in a way that will approximate its original setting. Using your seminar group as a nucleus, gather a group of Christians to join you in a celebration of this third-century liturgy. There are differences among present-day Christian denominations about who is allowed to preside at a eucharistic celebration. Most denominations require an ordained person, and many have regulations about receiving the holy communion from clergy of a denomination not one’s own, and about receiving with people of differing communions. Determine what is appropriate for your group; if the circumstances do not permit an actual celebration, enact the rite without using bread and wine. If an attitude of reverence and worship is maintained, true fellowship with our Lord and with one another will occur.

Congregations were small in third-century Rome; about twenty to thirty people would be a good size for this celebration. The most appropriate setting for the rite would be a living room in a home or a similarly informal room in some public building. Most congregations did not have church buildings, and nothing resembling a present-day church would be appropriate.

If possible, move chairs away from the center of the room; everyone who was able to do so stood during most of the liturgy. Chairs for the officiating clergy should be given a prominent place in the room, with a small table placed in front of them (or moved to that position at the offering of the bread and wine). There should be a tablecloth to cover the table at the offering, a cup or goblet for the wine, a plate or basket for the bread, and possibly a reading stand for the persons reading the scriptures. The clergy should be dressed in the same manner as the rest of the congregation.

As the people arrive, they should converse as they would at any gathering of friends in a home. When the clergy arrive, they should mingle with the others until the time approaches for the liturgy to begin. They should then take their seats inconspicuously, not as a signal for quiet. As others arrive, they might bow informally to the clergy before falling into casual conversation.

When it is time to begin, the reader should take his or her place by the reading stand. As the congregation becomes attentive, the scripture reading can begin. A passage from the Old Testament that contains a complete story or segment of teaching should be selected. It can be reasonably lengthy, not constricted to the few verses that present-day readings usually contain.

## **Preparation for the Celebration**

## **The Congregation Arrives**

A New Testament reading, also containing a complete unit of thought, should also be chosen, as well as a psalm the congregation will read between the two scripture readings. The presiding officiant, whom we shall call the President, should have prepared some instruction for the congregation, based on the scriptures read. It would be appropriate for the instruction to be directed to the practical task of living a Christian life in a hostile and immoral society.

A deacon (or someone designated to function as a deacon) should prepare a list of matters for which the prayers of the people are desired. The deacon can ask the people's prayers, in any form he or she finds comfortable.

## **The Liturgy of the Word**

The Old Testament reading (*the reader*)

Psalm(s) (*begun by the reader, the congregation joining in*)

The New Testament reading(s) (*the reader*)

Homily (instruction) (*the president, the presiding officiant*)

[The catechumens and penitents would have been dismissed here]

Prayers (*biddings by the deacon*)

The kiss of peace (*a handshake, embrace, or kiss on the cheek; time should be allowed for all to greet one another*)

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## **The Liturgy of the Table**

The offertory (*A deacon spreads a cloth on the table while other deacons collect the gifts of bread and wine from the congregation. The bread should be in small loaves, preferably home-baked; wine should be brought in its original bottle. A deacon places a sufficient amount of bread and wine on the table and puts the rest aside on another convenient table. The president and the presbyters gather about the table and place their hands momentarily on the elements.*)

## **The Eucharistic Prayer**

*President:* The Lord be with you.

*People:* And with your spirit.

*President:* Lift up your hearts.

*People:* They are lifted to the Lord.

*President:* Let us give thanks to the Lord.

*People:* It is worthy and just.

*President:* We give you thanks, O God, through your beloved Child Jesus Christ, whom in the last times you sent to us, a Savior and Redeemer and Messenger of your will, who is your Word, inseparable from you; through whom you made all things and whom, in your good pleasure, you sent from heaven into the womb of a virgin, and who, conceived within

her, was made flesh, and was manifested as your Son, born of the Holy Spirit and a virgin; who, fulfilling your will, and winning for you a holy people, spread out his hands when he suffered, that by his passion he might set free those who believe in you; who, when he was given over to his voluntary suffering, that he might destroy death and break the bonds of the devil, and tread hell under foot, and enlighten the righteous, and set up a boundary post, and manifest the resurrection, taking bread and giving thanks to you said, Take, eat, this is my body, which is broken for you. In the same manner, also, the cup, saying, This is my blood, which is poured out for you. When you do this, you make *anamnesis* of me.

Therefore, remembering his death and resurrection, we offer to you the bread and the cup, giving thanks to you because you have counted us worthy to stand before you and to minister as priests to you.

And we pray you to send your Holy Spirit upon the oblation of the holy church, gathering into one all who receive the holy [mysteries], that we may be filled with Holy Spirit, to the confirmation of faith in truth, that we may praise and glorify you, through your Child Jesus Christ, through whom be glory and honor to you, with the Holy Spirit in the holy church, both now and world without end. *Amen.*

*[Blessing of cheese and olives: Sanctify this milk which has solidified, and solidify us in your love, and let not your sweetness depart from this fruit of the olive tree, which is a type of your mercy which you caused to flow from the Tree for life to those who hope in you. Glory to you, Father and Son with the Holy Spirit in the holy church both now and always and world without end. Amen.]*

*The breaking of the bread*

*The receiving of communion*

*The departure of the deacons to take the sacrament to those who were not present.*

# Early Roman Liturgies

Over the centuries the development of eucharistic worship in the west was characterized by the interplay between the Roman and the Gallican rites. The simple Roman rite was pressed by emperors and popes alike during the Middle Ages. But the richness of the Gallican tradition held great appeal among the worshipers. We shall look at an example of each—a Roman liturgy from about the sixth century, still retaining its original simplicity but already showing signs of enrichment, and a Gallican liturgy from the seventh or eighth century.

The Roman rite of the fourth century was still closely akin to that of the second and third centuries. Buildings and congregations were larger, and therefore a dignified entrance and departure of the clergy had been added. The following chart will illustrate some of the changes that occurred between the fourth and the eighth centuries.

<b>The Fourth Century</b>	<b>Sixth Century</b>	<b>Eighth Century</b>
Entrance of clergy	Entrance (with Psalm in churches with choirs) Litany ( <i>Kyrie eleison</i> as response)	Entrance (with Psalm in churches with choirs) <i>Kyrie eleison</i> <i>Gloria in excelsis</i> on certain special occasions.
Old Testament Lesson Psalm (sung by a cantor) Epistle	Collect for the Day Lesson (OT or Epistle) Psalm (sung by a cantor)	Collect for the Day Lesson (normally an Epistle) Psalm (sung by a cantor)
Alleluia Psalm (cantor) Gospel Sermon Intercessions Kiss of Peace Spreading of tablecloth	Alleluia Psalm (cantor) Gospel	Alleluia Psalm (cantor) Gospel
Offertory	Second collect and spreading of tablecloth	Spreading of tablecloth
Offertory	Offertory (with Psalm in churches with choirs) Presentation collect (aloud)	Offertory (with Psalm in churches with choirs)
Eucharistic Prayer	Fixed Eucharistic Prayer, with Proper Preface for occasions, and occasional insertions	Presentation collect (said silently by officiant) Fixed Eucharistic Prayer (amplified), with fewer Proper Prefaces
Breaking of Bread	Breaking of Bread and Commixture Kiss of Peace Lord's Prayer with Protocol	Lord's Prayer, with Protocol and Embolism Breaking of Bread and Commixture with <i>Agnus Dei</i> Kiss of Peace
Communion	Communion (with Psalm in churches with choirs)	Communion (with Psalm in churches with choirs)
	Postcommunion collect <i>Super populum</i> collect	Postcommunion collect
Exit of clergy	Exit of clergy	<i>"Ite missa est,"</i> Exit of clergy

In the sixth-century rite, the Intercessions were replaced with a litany immediately following the entrance of the clergy. The people responded to each of the petitions of the litany with the Greek words *Kyrie eleison* (KEE-ree-ay ay-LAY-ee-son—‘Lord, have mercy’). By the eighth century, the litany had been dropped, leaving only a ninefold *Kyrie* as a relic of the older custom.

In the eighth century, the hymn *Gloria in excelsis* (‘Glory to God in the highest’), which had been associated with the morning office of daily worship earlier, was sung on special occasions at the eucharist.

A peculiarity of the Roman rite was the development of a prayer form called a ‘collect’ (KAH-lect). It was much less wordy than most eastern and Gallican prayers, normally containing only one petition. A collect ideally consists of five relatively brief phrases: (1) an address to God, (2) a mention of the particular divine attributes appropriate to the petition, (3) the petition, (4) the reason for making the petition, and (5) a doxology, an expression of praise. The sixth-century rite had five collects, all of them varying according to the Propers for the day. By the eighth century, the collect at the spreading of the tablecloth was dropped, the presentation collect was said silently by the officiant, and the collect ‘over the people’—the *super populum*—had dropped out of normal usage.

By the sixth century, the ‘service of the Word’ had become shortened to permit greater elaboration of the ‘service of the table’. The scripture readings were reduced to two, usually both from the New Testament, and only rarely was there a sermon.

The increase in the number of congregations served by presbyters instead of the bishop fostered the custom of ‘commixture’—putting a piece of the bread from the bishop’s eucharist into the cup at the time of the ‘fraction’, the breaking of the bread.

The Lord’s Prayer was introduced by a ‘protocol’—an introduction—and, by the eighth century, closed by an ‘embolism’, a petition drawn from a phrase in the prayer.

The kiss of peace was moved from its earlier position between the service of the word and the service of the table and placed closer to the time of receiving communion.

The hymn *Agnus Dei* (‘O Lamb of God’), which was based on John the Baptist’s greeting of Jesus (John 1:29), was part of the *Gloria in Excelsis*. In the seventh century, Pope Sergius I directed that it be sung at the time of the Fraction.

The *super populum* collect had served as a blessing at the end of the liturgy. The priest said the prayer with his hands outstretched ‘over the people’. The eighth-century rite omitted this prayer, substituting for it a dismissal of the people—‘Ite, missa est’, literally, ‘Go, it is sent’, the sacrifice has been offered. (‘Mass’ is the anglicized form of ‘missa’.)

*Preparations for the celebration:* A simple church building or a room with a raised platform at one end would provide a suitable setting for this rite. At the center of the back of the platform, facing the congregation, there should be a prominent seat for the officiant, flanked by seats for the other clergy. On the platform, or further out into the main area, there should be a small table, almost cubic in dimensions. The Bible might rest upon it until the Gospel Procession. A white linen tablecloth, reaching almost to the floor on all sides, should be placed upon the table at the beginning of the Offertory. The area which is to serve as the nave—where the congregation stands—should contain a pulpit or lectern for use at the reading of the lections and the chanting of the psalms between the lections. It should be so placed that the congregation can gather easily about it. The nave should contain a few seats for the elderly and the infirm. A choir might stand grouped together in the nave. The bread and wine should be brought to the table by those who furnish them. A footed cup of glass, earthenware, or metal (possibly with handles) is appropriate as a ‘chalice’. A plate made of glass, earthenware, or metal, or a basket, is appropriate for use as a ‘paten’ on which to place the bread. The clergy should dress like the congregation, with the addition of stoles. It would be appropriate for the clergy to be preceded at their entrance, and for the deacon (with the Bible) to be preceded at the Gospel Procession, by incense and candles. Ceremonial actions should be notably restrained. The whole text of the rite would have been sung. Simple plainsong settings would be appropriate. The priest’s portions might be monotoned, with occasional inflections to relieve the monotony.

The congregation would have stood throughout the rite. Some seating would have been provided for the elderly and the infirm, and possibly others would have sat on the floor during the first scripture reading and the psalmody which followed. Members of the congregation would have visited with each other before the entrance of the clergy, during the administration of Communion, and after the exit of the clergy. During the prayers they would have held up their hands along with the clergy.





# A Litany of Farewell

Good Christian people, I bid you now pray for the saving presence of our living God.

In this world:  
He is risen.

In this community:  
He is risen.

In our Diocesan Family:  
He is risen.

In this gathering:  
He is risen.

In the hearts of all faithful people:  
He is risen.

But especially I bid you pray and give thanks now for \_\_\_\_\_  
who is leaving our community.

For expectations not met:  
Lord have mercy.

For grievances not resolved:  
Lord have mercy.

For wounds not healed:  
Lord have mercy.

For anger not dissolved:  
Lord have mercy.

For gifts not given:  
Lord have mercy.

For promises not kept:  
Lord have mercy.

And, also, for this portion of your lifelong pilgrimage which you have made  
with us in this place:  
Thanks be to God.

For friendships made, celebrations enjoyed, and for moments of nurture:  
Thanks be to God.

For wounds healed, expectations met, gifts given, promises kept:  
Thanks be to God.

For trust and confidence shared; times of good humor and moments  
of gentle leadership:  
Thanks be to God.

For bread and wine, body and blood:  
Thanks be to God.

And so, to establish a home in \_\_\_\_\_ with other members of the family of Christ:  
Go in peace.

To continue the journey with new friends and new adventures, new gifts to give and receive:  
Go in peace.

To offer wisdom and experience, competence and compassion, in the ministry  
to which you are called:  
Go in peace.

With whatever fears, whatever sadness, whatever excitement may be yours:  
Go in peace.

With our faith in you, our hope for you, our love of you:  
Go in peace.

Your own prayers are invited at this time:  
*(here the community gathered may offer their own intercessions, petitions, and thanksgivings)*

Now, we pray, be with the one who leaves and with those who stay; and grant that all of us, by drawing ever nearer to you, may always be close to each other in the communion of your saints. All this we ask for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen.

# Meditative or Centering Prayer

The great spiritual teachers of the Christian tradition have taught that in the end the most significant kind of prayer is quiet contemplation, in which we literally do nothing but wait on God in consciousness of God's presence. This kind of prayer comes most naturally to introverts (people with a natural inner focus), but some time spent in quiet is also a deep need of more outer-directed people.

Tradition also teaches us that there are certain signs that someone is being called into more quiet contemplation. A general feeling of dryness, lack of pleasure in things earthly or spiritual, and decreased satisfaction with common worship and other methods of prayer which have previously "worked," often signal the time for such a transition. A good spiritual director may be able to help you sort through this. In any case, we do not need to wait for these signs to begin some practice of quiet prayer.

Perhaps you have already had occasions when such signs have lapsed into a prayerful and gracious silence for a time. If so, you may simply wish to continue using whatever approach has worked for you, remembering that God is the point of the exercise, not the technique.

Thomas Keating and his associates have developed methods of Centering Prayer which many people find helpful in approaching prayer of quiet. It is a simple, four-step method.

1. Before you begin, choose a sacred word (Jesus, Lord, Love, etc.) as a symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within. Use the same word for one whole meditation.
2. Sit comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within.
3. When you become aware of thoughts, distractions, etc., return ever so gently to the sacred word.
4. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

We recommend before you begin that you set a timer with some kind of audible signal for twenty minutes to half an hour, to remind you to finish up. It is a good idea to consult a spiritual director before deciding to practice prayer of quiet for a longer stretch, for two reasons. First, it can be helpful to have someone help you check on balance in your overall life with God. Second, there is a rhythm which develops in a serious prayer life which can include moments of both great joy and great sad-

## Background

## Method

ness or dryness. In Christian tradition there are signposts and maps about this rhythm and most people find it helpful to have a trustworthy and knowledgeable person with whom to talk about these matters.

**Resources**

Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart: The Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel* (New York: Continuum, 1995).

\_\_\_\_\_*The Mystery of Christ: the Liturgy as Spiritual Experience* (Amity, N.Y. : Amity House, c1987).

\_\_\_\_\_*Invitation to Love: The Way of Christian Contemplation* (New York: Continuum, 1995).

# *Lectio Divina*

Prayer and meditation require planning and meditation. The *Lectio divina* is a method for focusing prayer that is used by many people throughout the world.

## **Introduction**

Step 1: Select a passage of scripture which you find appropriate, one which touches you or the prayer group of which you are a part. Some examples are:

## **Process**

A. The love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. (Romans 5:5)

B. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:19b-20)

C. Come to me, all you that are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30)

Step 2: Prayer. Begin by prayer for the presence of the Holy Spirit to guide this period of prayer and scripture reading.

Step 3: *Lectio*. Read.

A. Read over the passage you have selected very slowly, savoring each of the words.

B. Read the same passage a second time in the same way.

C. Read the same passage a third time, this time forming the words with your lips.

Step 4: *Meditatio*. Contemplate.

A. Return to the passage and listen for the word or words that have attracted in during your reading.

B. Repeat that word or phrase over and over in your heart

C. Let the word or words speak to you and resound in you rather than analyze its meaning

Step 5: *Oratio*. Respond.

A. You may find that you want to thank God for what you have received, or to praise God, or to ask for the promise that you hear in the passage.

B. Pray to God in the way that seems right to you.

Step 6: *Contemplatio*. Rest.

A. Remain in silence before God, asking nothing but to enjoy God's presence.

B. Whenever thoughts enter your consciousness, return to the word in the passage that spoke most strongly to you.

Step 7. Prayer: At the end of the time, thank God for God's presence to you during this time together.

*Prepared for publication by Robert D. Hughes III, Ph.D.*

# The Ignatian Method of Contemplation

A simplified version of meditation on scripture developed by St. Ignatius Loyola (1491?-1560), founder of the Society of Jesus (popularly known as the Jesuits) provides a method of contemplation focused on sensory imagination and ordered thinking that has proved helpful to many people. Try to stick with it, but if you are finding it more of a block than a help, return for a time to a method you have found helpful, and then return to this method later. Remember that each person has a certain style of spirituality which comes most readily and with which it is best to begin; but as we grow it is important to stretch into methods and styles which come less naturally. It is not helpful to force this, however. Should you, at any time, encounter severe difficulties, we encourage you to seek spiritual direction.

Five words that begin with 'P' provide an outline for the Ignatian method: Prepare, Picture, Ponder, Pray, and Promise.

Select one story from the early chapters of Mark to use for your meditation. Story material with vivid settings and characters work best for this kind of meditation. Note up to three points you would like to think about in prayer. Don't think about these yet—just choose them. This part of the preparation is best done some time before the actual meditation, perhaps the night before if you meditate in the morning, the morning before if you meditate at night.

When you are ready to begin the actual meditation, set a timer or beeper for the length of time you wish to spend. Twenty minutes is a good time for Ignatian meditation. We suggest you not go over half an hour unless you have long experience in this form of prayer and are working with a spiritual director.

When you are ready, spend some time quieting down, using any methods that have worked well for you—relaxation techniques, breath prayer, a formal spoken prayer, etc. Place yourself consciously in God's presence, say hello, and turn over any cares and concerns you need to suspend during the meditation. Pray for grace that you may be open to God's will and love during this time.

Read the chosen passage slowly and carefully, but don't let that take the whole time. Then, use your imagination to picture consciously in your mind the setting and characters of this story. Run through your five physical senses: what do you see, hear, touch, taste, and smell in this setting? Make it and the characters come alive as much as possible, and re-read the story, letting the drama play itself out in this vivid way. Spend a little time thinking about what the author wanted to convey—why was this

## Step 1 Prepare

## Step 2 Picture

story saved in the community's memory, and why did it become part of the gospel?

**Step 3  
Ponder**

Think about the meaning of the passage for you. What application does it have to your life? What difference does it make? What is God trying to teach you or prompt you to do? It may help if you imagine yourself as one of the characters in the story. Then, take the two or three points you identified in the preparation step, and ponder these for a few minutes.

**Step 4  
Pray**

Let your reflections from pondering simply turn into a familiar conversation with God as a friend. If you have surfaced any regrets, confess them and let them go. Seek God's will in any struggles that have come to your consciousness during the meditation, and turn them over. If you feel the need of any gifts, virtues, etc. as a result of your pondering, ask for them. Most important, let God know how this meditation has been for you, how you are experiencing God's presence in prayer and your life in general.

**Step 5  
Promise**

Gather up your thoughts and prayers. Perhaps there are some thoughts and conclusions to take into the rest of life; if so, find a way to remember them (perhaps you are maintaining a journal you can use at this time). If you have been led to take a particular action, make a resolution or promise to do so. Make the action as concrete as possible—one you can do and know when you have done it. Decide when and where you will do it, and if you wish any support and accountability from anyone else. These should be actions flowing from faith, hope, and love for God and neighbor in your meditation, more than efforts at personal moral improvement, however sincere.

Finally, take a final moment in prayer to offer God your resolution, ask for grace to carry it out, and turn over control of the outcome to God.