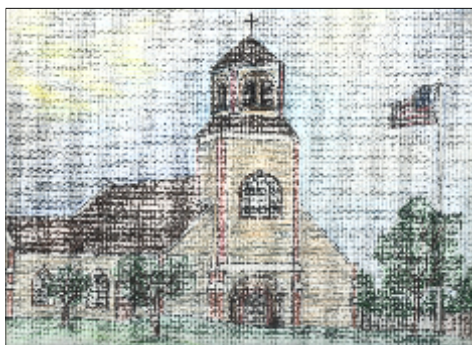


The Church of the Holy Communion



From a painting in the office of Bishop Sutton by Jenny Heissenhuber.

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An Instructional Commentary for the Order of Holy Communion



by
Bishop Ray R. Sutton, Ph.D.

Church of the Holy Communion
Dallas, Texas



About the Church

The meadow on which the church stands once served as a place where Native Americans held their spiritual gatherings. Later it became a rest stop for cattle drives along the Preston Trail. Eventually the pioneer village of Frankford, a cemetery, and a chapel, carved out a space in the midst of this ancestral convening place. In recent times this historic site has become a quiet refuge from the restless energies of an encircling city. At its center is the old prairie Gothic chapel, originally a Methodist chapel and later an Episcopal mission and parish, Church of the Holy Communion. In April 2006, the Parish completed and dedicated the new 350 seat brick and stone church building pictured here.

Our parish derives its name from the Church's principal service of the Holy Communion, sometimes called the Eucharist or Mass. For nearly 2,000 years Christians have gathered in obedience to their Lord to partake of the one cup and one loaf called his Body and Blood (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). This Holy Communion transforms those who partake by faith into witness of Christ's Death and Resurrection. Hence, our name expresses what we seek for all humanity, Holy Communion with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Church of the Holy Communion is affiliated with the Reformed Episcopal Church. Founded in 1873, this national jurisdiction in the Anglican tradition firmly upholds the authority of Holy Scripture, the traditional Book of Common Prayer and the Articles of Religion, to which all of its bishops and clergy in Apostolic Succession subscribe, confessing Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. One of its founding bishops stated the goal of the Reformed Episcopal Church as "continuing the old paths of the Protestant Episcopal Church as established through the English Reformers back to the ancient church of the Apostles and Jesus Christ."

In 1998, the Parish established the Bent Tree Episcopal School, a pre-school with a focus on 2-year old through kindergarten students, which during its seven year life has gained a high degree of success and acceptance in the north Dallas community.

With thanks and appreciation
to my dear friend in Christ, fellow traveler,
and foursome member of that ancient and most humbling game of golf

Rudy Schenken

whose encouragement and
dedicated help brought this commentary into print.

About the Author

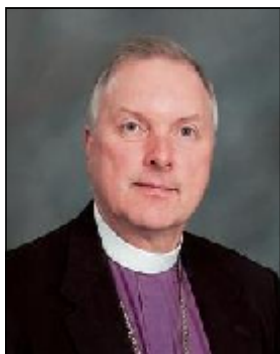
The Right Reverend Ray R. Sutton, Ph.D., currently serves as Bishop Coadjutor in the Diocese of Mid America of the Reformed Episcopal Church and is Rector of the Church of the Holy Communion.

He was born in Louisville, Kentucky, and moved to Dallas at age thirteen. He earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts [B.F.A.] from Southern Methodist University in 1972, a Master of Theology [Th.M] from the Dallas Theological Seminary in 1976, and a Doctor of Philosophy [Ph.D.] from Wycliffe Hall, Oxford University, in association with Coventry University in 1998.

Bishop Sutton served in parish ministry from 1976 until 1991; Dean and Associate Professor of New Testament at the Reformed Episcopal Seminary in Philadelphia from 1991 until 1995; and Dean and Professor of Theology at Cranmer Theological House in Shreveport, Louisiana from 1995 until 2001.

He was ordained a Bishop of the Reformed Episcopal Church in 1999, and was called to the Church of the Holy Communion in 2001. Bishop Sutton has authored four books on theology, his most recent being *Signed, Sealed and Delivered: A Study of Holy Baptism*.

Bishop Sutton is married to Susan Jean Schaerdel of Dallas, also a Southern Methodist University graduate, presently a counselor at the Shelton School in Dallas. They have seven children and two grandchildren. He is an avid reader, listener to classical music, a low handicap golfer and bird hunter.



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An Instructional Commentary For the Order of Holy Communion

By Bishop Ray R. Sutton, Ph.D.

A Letter for You . . .

Dear Visitor:

Welcome to the service of Holy Communion. The following pamphlet offers a brief explanation along with the service itself. The actual service is in regular type and the commentary is in italics. It is also indicated where the congregation has a verbal response, as well as where it stands, sits, kneels.

If our worship is new to you, we hope that this brief commentary will make it a little easier to follow. It is our additional desire for you to understand this beautiful, biblical and reverent approach to worship. And then by reaching a basic level of comprehension, we want you to be able to enjoy the richness of this ancient form of worship utilized by millions of Christians. To this end a few brief introductory comments are in order.

First, the service of Holy Communion is *biblical*. Nearly 85% of the words, phrases and language of this worship service is directly from the Bible. The other 15% is based on it. Large sections of Scripture will be read, prayed and sung. The words of the consecration of the bread and wine are the very ones used by Jesus when He established Holy Communion at the Last Supper before His Crucifixion. They are also the words He spoke when He shared the same Holy Communion with the disciples when He first appeared to them after He was raised from the dead. These words continued to be used in the early Church. Holy Scripture permeates every facet of this worship service.

Second, the service of Holy Communion is *heavenly*. The origin of everything said, seen and done in this service is the worship of heaven described at various places in the Bible (Ezekiel 1, Revelation 4-5). Jesus told His first disciples that heaven is the model of earth, when He instructed them to pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth *as it is in heaven*." Heaven is the pattern for earth. True biblical worship is supposed to emulate heaven, leading us to where Jesus sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. This worship, therefore, takes us to heaven, nourishes our souls, and equips us to serve as witnesses of Christ's presence in the world.

Third, the service of Holy Communion is *liturgical*. The word liturgy comes from a Greek word in the Bible, since the New Testament was originally written in the Greek of the first-century Roman Empire. It is actually a compound word, "work" and "people." Liturgy is therefore a service involving the congregation in responses and ordered participation. For example, the minister will sometimes introduce prayer, "The Lord be with you," and the congregation responds, "And with thy Spirit." This pattern of one person speaking and the congregation responding has been described as *antiphonal*, literally "answering back." In a liturgical service a reverent conversation with heaven occurs as the minister speaks Scripture and the people are

looking garment. It too reminds of the presence, glory and Lordship of Christ. It has its origin in the symbolism of "train of the Lord filling the temple" (Isaiah 6:1). The Lord God Almighty is pictured as in the midst of the people wearing a robe of glory. His robe filled the temple, meaning His presence was there in abundance. The bishop, as a descendent of the apostles by the laying on of hands, conveys the regal nearness of Christ through his special presence.

The bishop also wears a mitre, a conical shaped hat with two tails on the back. This garment symbolizes the unique presence of the Holy Spirit on the bishop. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles, the first bishops, in "cloven tongues of fire" (Acts 2:3). The top of a mitre has the shape of cloven tongues. The two tails represent the two tables of the Ten Commandments. Historically, when a bishop is consecrated (ordained), he kneels and a Bible is laid on the back of his neck to symbolize that He is to be under the authority of Holy Scripture. Often the old Bibles would have two markers representing the two tables of the law or the Old and New Testament. When the Bible was placed on his neck at ordination, the ribbon would extend down his neck. As an abiding reminder of the need to be under the authority of Scripture and to be empowered by the Holy Spirit, many bishops wear this important symbol on their head.

A bishop also carries a shepherd's staff, or crozier. Since he is called a shepherd in the Scriptures this is an appropriate symbol of his office. He is under the Good and Great Shepherd as a pastor to pastors of Christ's Church. He oversees the pastors of parishes as well as the people in a region of churches, a diocese.

Minister's Vestments: *The minister presiding at the celebration of the Holy Communion wears vestments to cover up his worldly clothing. This biblical principle is found not only in the Old Testament but also practiced in the worship of heaven. Those who serve before the Lord in worship wear garments to reflect His presence. They wear distinct clothing. Specifically, the vestments of heaven and earth are Christ-centered, meaning they are all designed to remind us of some aspect of the presence of the Living Lord. The most basic piece of clothing is the white alb. It represents the purity of Christ. Over this garment and around the neck of the minister is a colored stole that matches the color of the church season. It represents the yoke of Christ referred to in the Gospels (Matthew 11:29); the yoke was an instrument that kept an ox in harness. The stole therefore reminds the minister that he is to be doing Christ's ministry and work.*

At the time of the Eucharist, after the sermon, the minister will put on an additional garment, a chasuble. It literally means "little house." The clergyman inside the chasuble reminds the people of Christ in the midst of His house, for at Holy Communion Christ comes to be really present with His people. Jesus told His disciples at the Last Supper that the Bread and Wine are His Body and Blood. He did not explain how; He simply declared it to be so. In Anglicanism we simply accept the Scriptural statements of Christ without trying to explain. Christ's presence is real but it is mystical, meaning unable to be comprehended by human reason. So at Holy Communion Christ is literally in the "house" with His people. This reality is so important that the Church preserves and presents it by several images and symbolic objects and garments. The chalice on the altar rests on a piece of cloth called a corporal, meaning "body," because the Body and Blood of Christ in the form of Bread and wine sit on this cloth. Over the chalice is a board, called a pall, a covering and an outer colored cloth, both of which are referred to as a burse and veil. These ornaments are analogous to the same covering over a casket, again reminding the people of God of the presence of Christ in the House of God on the altar. Thus as the minister is clothed with a symbolic garment and the elements are covered with a sacred drape, the Scriptural teaching of Christ's special presence at the Holy Communion is re-enforced.

If a bishop is present he will wear distinctive clothing as well. The most basic Episcopal clothing for bishops in the Anglican tradition is a long white garment (like an alb), called a rochet. It is worn under a black or red chimere, an academic gown without sleeves. The chimere is the precursor to the academic gown. It was worn in the Middle Ages and at the time of the Reformation to emphasize the teaching office and responsibility of a bishop. He is a true doctor of the Church. Historically, the red chimere was only worn by bishops who had an earned doctorate. Today most Anglican bishops wear the red regardless of their academic standing, but in keeping with this tradition they are often automatically given honorary doctorates by seminaries. Also, a black scarf, called a tippet, is worn as a symbol of the prophet's mantle or preaching stole. Many times bishops who wear the rochet and chimere at Holy Communion will wear a Eucharistic stole (described above).

Instead of the rochet and chimere, a bishop (sometimes a priest may use a cope as well) may wear the ancient garments of cope and mitre. In the procession and recession, and in some cases in the place of a chasuble, he will wear a cope over his alb and stole (he may even wear a cope over the rochet). A cope is a beautiful, cape

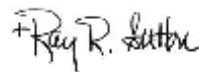
given opportunity to answer back with equally biblical responses. Since the responses are usually straight out of Holy Scripture, reverence, beauty and a level of familiarity to all Christians takes place. This heavenly conversation also means that biblical liturgy is not for the purpose of entertainment, stimulation or the manipulation of the many by the few. Rather the liturgy is to draw all of God's people literally into an ordered, reverent and organized conversation with the Lord Almighty.

Fourth, the service of Holy Communion is *historical*. The particular liturgy before us was first used in its original form in the ancient Church of Ephesus at the end of the first century. It was carried through France, Europe and England as missionaries took Christianity westward. It was slightly modified to become the primary liturgy of England at Salisbury Cathedral, being called the Sarum Rite. At the time of the English Reformation in the sixteenth century, it became the basis of reforming (correcting) corruptions in worship at the end of the Middle Ages. This important liturgical return to a biblical and ancient approach to worship was compiled by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, authorized by the Church of England, and published as the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Fifth, the service of Holy Communion is *universal*. The Book of Common Prayer was carried around the world in the northern and southern hemispheres under the influence of England and the missionaries of the Church of England. As these colonies gained their own indigenous existence, such as in America, the churches left behind continued to use the prayer book as the best example of biblical, Christian worship. Today the Anglican Communion, eighty million strong, still uses this basic communion service found in the Book of Common Prayer. It has been translated into virtually every language of old, new and third world cultures.

Thus, by means of this powerful service of Holy Communion, we join with countless millions in heaven and on earth to worship Christ as He intended from the very beginning. Those first Christians of the first century followed His command to "Do this in remembrance of Me." Holy Communion was the central way of communing with Christ and one another. It has been always a frequent mainstay for Christians in their faith. May it be the same for you. Thank you for joining us and may God bless your communion with Him.

Sincerely in Christ,



The Rt. Rev. Ray R. Sutton, Ph.D.
Rector and Assistant Bishop

Easter 2003

Some special comments before we begin . . .

Rubrics: For your information the italicized print in the prayer book provides basic instructions for the service. Not all the rubrics are listed in this instructional pamphlet. At the end of this pamphlet, you will find much information about the meaning of the symbols and vestments (clothing) in the service. Perhaps you will want to read through this section as you wait for services to begin.

Preparation: Before worship, use the time to prepare for Holy Communion. Anything worthwhile takes preparation. Important events and meetings in life always involve a good bit of preparation. For example, speeches and presentations are read through prior to meetings. And often it's good to arrive early before a meeting to relax and gain composure so as not to be harried or hurried going into an important meeting. Surely the worship of God is the highest privilege in this life. It deserves the best time of preparation. For this reason, you should try to come a little early. Avoid coming in at the last minute, rushed and unprepared to come before God with stillness. Finally, don't forget to look through the bulletin to note hymns and other pertinent information as part of your preparation.

Reverence: When people enter the pew, you will notice that they slightly bow or genuflect down on one knee toward the cross on the altar or at the front. This is called "reverencing." It is a biblical practice found being done before and at the places of worship (1 Kings 8, Psalm 95). It is not idolatry because nothing on the altar or in the place of worship is a pagan symbol, or what Scripture refers to as a "graven image." Reverencing in the holy place of the Church goes back to the original sites of worship, basilicas. These structures were places where Roman officials conducted civil business. A person would reverence at the front of the building to acknowledge the true emperor presiding over all official business even though he was not present. The famous Roman Eagle (or a statue of the Emperor) was there as a symbol reminding all of the Caesar's constant "divine" presence. As Christians took over the use of the buildings for their services, they entered the worship not of an absent but a present Lord. This was the time Christians began bowing to the presence of the True King, Jesus Christ. The symbol of the cross replaced the secular Roman images as a graphic picture of Christ's kingship over sin and death, even the secular Empire. By reverencing, therefore, we worship what the cross represents, Jesus Christ and His redemptive work for our salvation. So great was this event that we show respect for it by bowing to God every time we walk in front of its symbol, or as it passes by in a procession. The same principle by the way is at work with our national symbol, the flag, when we take off our hats and put our hand over the heart at special times of acknowledgement.

Quiet and Prayer: The best way to prepare for worship is quiet and prayer. The quiet of the sanctuary is one of the places in this life where the noise of the world can be shut out. It is an opportunity to be quiet, prepare and listen to what God would say to us through His Word and worship of Him. It is not good to talk and visit with friends in church before worship. This is reserved for the fellowship time in the parish hall after the service. Instead, use the time before the service to come away from the world's distractions. "Be still and know that the Lord He is God," as one portion of Scripture says. Remember, the service begins with the organ prelude.

Other Explanations (End Notes)

Symbols: After prayer, you may want to sit in silence and meditate. As an aid to your devotions, keep in mind some of the symbolism and practices. Everything about the décor is designed to turn our attention to God. Since we believe true worship momentarily, mysteriously brings us before God, the beauty and design of everything inside a liturgical Church focuses us on Jesus Christ and the glory of His presence.

The Cross: The cross is central to remind us that it is only through Christ's death on the cross that anyone has access to God. It is usually at least on the wall behind the altar or directly on the communion table; it may be found on the hangings on the pulpit, altar and lectern as well.

Altar Paraments: The garments (often called paraments) on the altar are different colors representing the time of the Church year. The Church orders time according to the Life of Christ, which is part of doing what St. Paul commanded: redeeming and ordering time according to Christ (Ephesians 4:5). The colors depict themes of the different times of the Church year: purple for preparation and penitence in the season of Advent (four Sundays before Christmas) and Lent (the Sundays before Easter); white for the glory of God's presence in the seasons of Easter and Christmas; green for growth in the presence of Christ in the season of Epiphany (meaning appearing), and in the kingdom of God at the time of Trinity season (the longest season through summer and fall); red for Whitsunday or Pentecost season to symbolize the coming of the Holy Spirit in tongues of fire, and saints days commemorating martyrs by representing the shedding of their blood for the sake of the Gospel.

Special Communion Vessels: Near the altar is a table, sometimes called a credence table. On it will be placed vessels (cruets) containing the water and the wine, as well as a bread box (ciborium) in which are wafers of bread. There may also be on this table a bowl (lavabo bowl) to wash the hands of the minister before serving communion. The chalice and bread plate (paten) are on the altar and covered usually by colored pieces of cloth (matching the other hangings) called a burse and veil. These sacred vessels will be uncovered when it is time during the offering to prepare for the actual communion part of the service. An acolyte brings the wine and bread to the priest to be placed on the altar.

Kneeling: It is also important to prepare for worship by kneeling for prayer. You are invited to kneel during all prayers before, during and after the service. It is the basic posture for prayer in the Bible (Old and New Testament). It is a gesture of humility and thankfulness. Some physically are not able, in which case please remain seated during prayer. Before the service begins, some people kneel and silently say the Lord's Prayer. Others compose their own. Whatever prayer is used, ask God to cleanse you from sin and help you to come into His presence through Jesus Christ, the only access to God.

+ Final Blessing

THE Peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord: And the Blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you, and remain with you always. Amen.

This blessing is based on the Scripture passage of Philippians 4:7. Blessings can only be given by a priest or a bishop. Only these offices have apostolic presence and authority to extend the blessing of God to others. Normally, the priest will give the blessing by raising his right hand in the air and making the sign of the cross over the people, or by holding both hands in the air with palms facing the congregation, similar to a scene in the Old Testament where Moses blessed the people of God. If a bishop gives the final sign of blessing, he will put on his mitre, hold his staff in his left hand, and make the sign of the cross over the people with his right hand. To show a sign of receiving this blessing, many people will make the sign of the cross on themselves at the same time the bishop makes it over them.

^ Recessional Hymn

*This closing hymn will not be announced. The number can be found on the hymn board or in the bulletin. Please stand as the organist plays through the tune (or part of it) once. The congregation then begins singing the first stanza. As the congregation sings, the acolyte will extinguish the candles. On the second stanza, he (she) will lead the altar servers and ministers out with the cross. This recessional symbolizes the entire congregations' **procession** into the world. Thus, we are led into the world by the cross of Christ to be reminded of our Gospel loyalties and responsibilities.*

+ Kneeling Hymn

After the processional hymn is finished, Church of the Holy Communion has a special tradition of kneeling and singing (two stanzas) a final hymn as a closing prayer. This particular hymn asks God for His blessing as all prepare to leave. After the hymn, the bell rings and participants exit while the organist plays a postlude.

Lighting of the Candles: A few minutes before the service begins, an acolyte (a person assisting in the service) will light the candles on the altar. Originally, candles in worship services served primarily a functional purpose. Nevertheless, they also provided rich biblical symbolism. These candles stand for the light of Christ, because Jesus called Himself the light of the world. Two candles are on the altar itself representing the Deity and the Humanity of Jesus.

The Bell: When it is time for the service to begin, one of the ushers will ring the bell. The bells of churches have long been one of the basic instruments used to announce the beginning of worship. Hung high in the air producing their own unique sound, they remind us that heaven, God Almighty, is calling us to come to Him. Thus, when the bell rings all rise. As a general rule of thumb, the congregation stands when it is time to sing.

The Processional Hymn: After the bell is rung and the congregation stands, the organist will begin the processional hymn. Congregational singing is unique to Judaism and Christianity, since the largest book of the Bible is a hymnbook, the Psalms. But since the earliest days of Christianity, the Church has composed hymns directly from or based upon Holy Scripture and other theological truths (i.e. the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, the Church and so forth). The hymns sung in a liturgical church span all of Church history because after all, if worship takes us to heaven then we join with the Church (called the Church Triumphant) of all ages in our worship. We should sing music representative of all redemptive history. For your information, the hymn numbers are in the bulletin and posted on the hymn board. At smaller services the minister may simply call out the hymn number. The hymns sung at our services usually come from the hymnal in the pew. Sometimes hymns from other hymnals will be copied and placed as an insert in the bulletin.

The organist will play through the hymn once before the procession begins. A procession reminds all in attendance that we are entering the presence of the Lord together. An acolyte or another server will lead the procession with a cross, reminding us that we can only enter God's presence through Jesus' death that removed the sin barrier between humanity and the all-holy God. Moreover, as the procession approaches the chancel area (the space behind the communion rail), the congregation will slightly bow as the cross passes by to acknowledge faith in and reverence for our Lord's payment for sin.

Symbols

- + kneeling
- = sitting
- ^ standing

Holy Communion

^Minister: The Lord be with you

Response: And with thy spirit

Minister: Let us pray

The priest will enter the chancel area, stand on the right side of the altar, and begin the service with this simple exchange. After this greeting, the congregation kneels (see endnotes) for the opening prayer. The priest faces toward the altar and holds his hands out to God. He faces eastward in anticipation of the return of the Ascended Christ who rose at the time of the rising of the sun. Also, although he turns his back toward the people, he is symbolically joining and representing them when he speaks to the Lord on their behalf. In other words, this posture for prayer on the part of the minister in no sense excludes the people; it includes them in a special way.

The New Testament word for Holy Communion is a term from which we derive Eucharist. The Lord's Supper is literally giving thanks to God. It is therefore appropriate to thank God verbally after having communed with Him. This remarkable prayer of thanksgiving rivals the other beautiful one at the end of Morning and Evening Prayer. Thankfulness is expressed for the assurance that spiritual food, the Body and Blood of Christ, has been received, assurance to our faith has been secured, and that we are part of the eternal fellowship of God's people in heaven and on earth. Finally, we ask God for assisting grace to do good works, for after the service we will enter the world again.

+ The Collect for Purity

ALMIGHTY God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid; Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

A collect, normally composed by one saint, is a prayer that is a collection of biblical truths reflecting the thoughts and sentiments of the people of God everywhere and at all times. The collect of purity expresses the need to be cleansed as we enter the presence of God. In Holy Scripture, anyone coming into the presence of Holy God always first gets low before the Lord in humility and asks for cleansing (Isaiah 6:1ff.). The prayer also invokes the presence of the Holy Spirit who cleanses the inner-most thoughts of our hearts by the loving, atoning work of Christ on the cross. Alcuin, a famous English scholar and priest in the early ninth century, composed this particular prayer. He was brought to ancient France by Charlemagne to establish an educational system for his kingdom. (cf. 1 Chronicles 28:9; Hebrews 4:13; Psalm 51:2, 10, 11, 12; Luke 1:46-47)

This hymn is based on the words of the angelic chorus at Christ's birth (Luke 2:14), which itself paraphrases an Old Testament Messianic song (118:26). The hymn is a prayer confessing faith, similar to the Te Deum in Morning Prayer, and a final appeal for the mercy of God. In the ancient liturgies, this hymn was only sung by bishops at their Sunday Masses. In the Middle Ages, priests were allowed to use it at the beginning of the liturgy. At the time of the English Reformation, Cranmer placed it at the end of the liturgy to make it part of the prayer of thanksgiving, continuing the petitions to include a final request for hearing the prayers offered by the Eucharist.

+ Prayer of Thanksgiving

¶Then shall the Priest say,

Let us pray

ALMIGHTY and everliving God, we most heartily thank thee, for that thou dost vouchsafe to feed us who have duly received these holy mysteries, with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ; and dost assure us thereby of thy favour and goodness towards us; and that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of thy Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people; and are also heirs through hope of thy everlasting kingdom, by the merits of his most precious death and passion. And we humbly beseech thee, O heavenly Father, so to assist us with thy grace, that we may continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

^The Gloria in Excelsis

GLORY be to God on high, and on earth peace, good will towards men. We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.

O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us.

For thou only art holy; thou only art the Lord; thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

+ A Hymn: The Agnus Dei

O, Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.
 O, Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.
 O, Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, grant us thy Peace.

The phrase agnus dei is Latin for Lamb of God. The Church acknowledges the Lord's real presence in the singing of this hymn. And in so doing states the purpose for which He came as well as the object of communion with Him, peace. Thus, the song of the angels at His birth, peace on earth good will to all men, is accomplished through His death applied at the Eucharist.

+ The Communion

¶ Here may be sung a Hymn.
 ¶ Then shall the Priest First receive the Holy Communion in both kinds himself, and proceed to deliver the same to the Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, in like manner, (if any be present,) and, after that, to the People also in order, into their hands, all devoutly kneeling. And sufficient opportunity shall be given to those present to communicate. And when he delivereth the Bread, he shall say,

THE Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith, with thanksgiving.

¶ And the Minister who delivereth the Cup shall say,

THE Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's Blood was shed for thee, and be thankful.

Holy Communion is received by coming forward to the communion rail, prompted by the Ushers. The minister and other servers (Chalice Bearers) will distribute the bread and the wine. You may receive the bread into your hand or directly into your mouth. If you are sick or do not prefer to drink directly from the chalice, you may hand your wafer to the chalice bearer and he will dip (instinct) it into the wine and put the host into your mouth. If you do not wish to receive, simply cross your arms over your chest making an X. The minister will bless you instead of serving communion.

God enters into a relationship with His people by forming a covenant, a sacred union by oath. This covenant is established and renewed by means of faith declared in various covenant ceremonies. These official services usually involved the recitation of the standard of holiness, the Ten Commandments or their summary. Neither God nor His standard of right and wrong ever change, since His laws are nothing less than a publication of His own character. God's moral law, the Ten Commandments, is absolute in the Old and the New Testament.

Furthermore, since the Lord's Supper is called the "New Covenant" (Luke 22:20), it is appropriate to recite God's absolutes in the midst of the central rite of the New Testament, Holy Communion. The repetition of the response after each commandment is read follows a pattern set out in the Book of Psalms (Psalm 118:1-4). The cry for mercy in the repetition is to be our response when we discover sin (Psalm 33:22; Luke 18:13).

The Ten Commandments are understood as divided between duty towards God, the first four commandments, and duty towards neighbor, the last six commandments. The first four commandments are called the first table of the law. The last six are called the second table of the law.

The Book of Common Prayer contains a wonderful catechism summarizing the meaning of each commandment. A catechism is the most ancient form of teaching the truths of the Christian faith in a question/answer format. The catechism provides the following definitions of duty toward God and neighbor

The First Table:

Duty Towards God

"My duty towards God is to believe in him, to fear him, and to love him with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul, and with all my strength: To worship him, to give him thanks: To put my whole trust in him, to call upon him: to honor his holy Name and his Word:

+ The Decalogue
 (The Ten Commandments)
 Or the Summary of the Law

GOD spake these words, and said:
 I am the LORD thy God; Thou shalt have none other gods but me.

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them;

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Thou shalt not take the Name of the LORD thy God in vain;

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath-day.

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Honour thy father and thy mother;

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Thou shalt do no murder.

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Thou shalt not steal.

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Thou shalt not covet.

Lord, have mercy upon us, and write all these thy laws in our hearts, we beseech thee.

¶ Then may the Priest say,

+ Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ saith. THOU shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.

And to serve him truly all the days of my life" (BCP p. 579).

The Second Table: Duty Towards Neighbor

"My duty towards my neighbor is to love him as myself, and to do to all men as I would they should do unto me: To love, honor and obey the civil authority: To submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters: To order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters: To hurt nobody by word or deed: To be true and just in all my dealings: To bear no malice nor hatred in my heart: To keep my hands from picking and stealing, and my tongue from evil speaking, lying, and slandering: To keep my body in temperance, soberness, and chastity: Not to covet nor desire other men's goods; But to learn and labor truly to get mine own living, and to do my duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call me" (BCP pp. 579-580).

The summary of the law can be substituted for the recitation of the Ten Commandments. It confirms the perpetuity of God's moral standard for the Church. Jesus indicates in the Sermon on the Mount, He did not come to destroy but to fulfill the law (Matthew 5:19-20). The New Testament alters the ceremonies of the Old Testament, the ceremonial law, by canceling such practices as animal sacrifice and the dietary laws. But the moral law, the Ten Commandments, remains the same. Even the changes, such as worshipping on the first day of the week, actually satisfy the Sabbath requirements of the Old Testament. In the Old Testament there were special eighth day Sabbaths, an extra day after the seventh (Leviticus 23). The Old Testament moral law of God, literally written in stone, continues as the ethical standard for the Christian in the New Testament.

+ The Lord's Prayer

And now, as our Saviour Christ hath taught us, we are bold to say,

OUR Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer is prayed in conjunction with Holy Communion because the fulfillment of its petitions are embodied in the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ by faith. In other words, participation in this sacrament uniquely and specifically begins the answers to the petitions in it. God's Name is hallowed by remembering His Son. God's will is done when we do what He says, namely, take Holy Communion until His Son returns. The kingdom comes when heaven is opened. Daily bread is literally received in the form of Holy Bread and Wine. Forgiveness of sins results from receiving the Eucharist by faith. The Church is delivered from Evil by the strengthening power of Christ's presence.

In case we have missed the point that we are not worthy to have such a gracious opportunity to commune with Christ, this prayer is based on a particular verse in the Gospels: "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof; wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee" (Luke 7:6-7). And then, there is a story about a woman who came to Christ for her daughter to be healed. She spoke to Christ, "Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table" (Matthew 15:26-27). We are recipients of the Grace of God, completely unworthy of entering God's special presence and eating even crumbs from the Lord's table. But the wonder of God's grace is that we are allowed with His help access through Him to God the Father.

+ Prayer of Humble Access

¶ Then shall the Priest, kneeling down at the Lord's Table, say, in the name of all those who shall receive the Communion, this Prayer following.

WE do not presume to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table. But thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy: Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.

+ Prayer of Invocation

AND we most humbly beseech thee, O merciful Father, to hear us; and, of thy almighty goodness, vouchsafe to bless and sanctify, with thy Word and Holy Spirit, these thy gifts and creatures of bread and wine; that we, receiving them according to thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ's holy institution, in remembrance of his death and passion, may be partakers of his most blessed Body and Blood.

This prayer invokes the Holy Spirit to "bless and sanctify," that is to set apart, the bread and wine so that by faith the recipients "may be partakers of the most blessed Body and Blood." St. Paul describes this communion with the Living Christ by asking, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16). The power of the Holy Spirit mystically makes the elements become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ without destroying the character of Bread and Wine (1 Corinthians 12:13).

+ Prayer of Dedication

AND we earnestly desire thy fatherly goodness, mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; most humbly beseeching thee to grant that, by the merits and death of thy Son Jesus Christ, and through faith in his blood, we, and all thy whole Church, may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of his passion. And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, our selves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto thee; humbly beseeching thee, that we, and all others who shall be partakers of this Holy Communion, may worthily receive the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son Jesus Christ, be filled with thy grace and heavenly benediction, and made one body with him, that he may dwell in us, and we in him. And although we are unworthy, through our manifold sins, to offer unto thee any sacrifice; yet we beseech thee to accept this our bounden duty and service; not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences, through Jesus Christ our Lord; by whom, and with whom, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honour and glory be unto thee, O Father Almighty, world without end. Amen.

This prayer also follows the specific language of Holy Scripture. When we accept Christ, we receive the Grace of God. Only by His grace can we please Him. And having been allowed to have this wonderful blessing of Christ, we offer ourselves to His service. The Apostle Paul tells the Church to "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1). But even in this, we are unworthy to "offer unto thee any sacrifice." We commune because it is our "bounden duty and service" undeserved and unearned. The prayer reminds that in the final analysis, our fellowship with Christ is all of grace.

¶Here, if the Decalogue hath been omitted, shall be said

+ Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

¶Then the Priest may say,

+ O ALMIGHTY Lord, and everlasting God, vouchsafe, we beseech thee, to direct, sanctify, and govern, both our hearts and bodies, in the ways of thy laws, and in the works of thy commandments; that, through thy most mighty protection, both here and ever, we may be preserved in body and soul; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

¶Here shall be said,

+ The Lord be with you.
Answer. And with thy spirit.
Minister. Let us pray.

+ The Collect of the Day

= The Scripture Readings

This simple refrain is called the "Kyrie Eleison," the Latin for "Lord have mercy." In the Medieval Mass, it was a ninefold Kyrie. Our liturgy reduces it to a threefold version. It is said or sung when the law is not recited. It is a plea for God's mercy through Christ after being convicted by the law.

There is a collect (prayer) for every Sunday and for special seasons of the year. Most of the time there is only one appointed for each Sunday; sometimes at special times of the year, like Advent and Lent, there will be two. They are quite short. They say much with little, reflecting that God is not impressed by more words than necessary. Many of the prayers were written in the early church. Some were written at the time of the English Reformation in the mid sixteenth century. The collect(s) page number is printed in the bulletin for your reference.

The Scripture lessons are appointed in the lectionary at the front of the prayer book. The Epistle and Gospel readings are provided in a section after the service of Holy Communion. Together with the collect for the day, they are called the propers. The concept of a cycle of Scripture readings goes back to the Bible itself. In Jesus' day there were apparently appointed readings for each Sabbath going through the entire Bible. When Jesus went into a synagogue on one occasion (Luke 4:16), He was handed the reading for the day to read and explain it, which was the custom when a visiting teacher (Rabbi) attended the synagogue. The Church continued this practice and added New Testament readings.

The readings in Holy Communion and Morning and Evening Prayer go through virtually the entire Bible in one year.

As part of the Scripture reading cycle, the Apocryphal books are included. This literature was written in the period between the Old and New Testaments. It was attached to the Old Testament canonical books, quoted in the New Testament manuscripts and always esteemed by the historic Church as more than other sacred literature but not quite the same as Holy Scripture. In the Anglican tradition, these books are “read for example of life and instruction of manners, yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine” (Articles of Religion, 6). Thus, they are part of the deuterocanon, and not considered the primary canon of Scripture. No biblical doctrine is derived from them. But since Jesus and the other New Testament authors referenced them, they are read for spiritual edification.

^ The Gradual Hymn

A gradual hymn may be sung between the Epistle and the Gospel readings. The Gospel was historically read from a platform called a “gradus.” Eventually, the gradual came to mean the progression from the Epistle to the Gospel.

^ Glory be to thee, O Lord.

¶ *And after the Gospel may be said,*

Praise be to thee, O Christ.

^ The Nicene Creed

I BELIEVE in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, And of all things visible and invisible:

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God; Begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God; Begotten, not made; Being of one substance with the Father; By

When the Gospel is announced, the congregation stands out of respect for Jesus Christ, because the readings come from the portion of Scripture about His Life.

The Nicene Creed is considered the irreducible minimum of a true Christian confession of faith. It is based directly on Holy Scripture and was written in response to the false teaching of Arius in the early fourth century. Arius taught that Jesus Christ is not eternal, meaning He was not God from the beginning; He became God at some point (His birth, baptism and so forth). And if Jesus became God, then others could too, which led to the inevitable conclusion

+ The Consecration

¶ *When the Priest, standing before the Holy Table, hath so ordered the Bread and Wine, that he may with the more readiness and decency break the Bread before the People, and take the Cup into his hands, he shall say the Prayer of Consecration, as followeth.*

ALL glory be to thee, Almighty God, our heavenly Father, for that thou, of thy tender mercy, didst give thine only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the Cross for our redemption; who made there (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world; and did institute, and in his holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that his precious death and sacrifice, until his coming again: For in the night in which he was betrayed, he took Bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take, eat, this is my Body, which is given for you; Do this in remembrance of me. Likewise, after supper, he took the Cup; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of this; for this is my Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins; Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me.

+ Prayer of Oblation

An oblation is an offering. The offering of Holy Communion is not a propitiatory sacrifice, one offered for our sin. Only Christ offered the once for all propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the world: “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many” (Hebrews 9:28; 7:27). The sacrifice offered in the Eucharist is a memorial offering. It is an offering of thanksgiving through the consecrated bread and wine, pleading the once for all sacrifice of Christ before the throne of God.

WHEREFORE, O Lord and heavenly Father, according to the institution of thy dearly beloved Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, we, thy humble servants, do celebrate and make here before thy Divine Majesty, with these thy holy gifts, which we now offer unto thee, the memorial thy Son hath commanded us to make; having in remembrance his blessed passion and precious death, his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension; rendering unto thee most hearty thanks for the innumerable benefits procured unto us by the same.

+ Whitsuntide

Through Jesus Christ our Lord; according to whose most true promise, the Holy Ghost came down as at this time from heaven, lighting upon the disciples, to teach them, and to lead them into all truth; giving them boldness with fervent zeal constantly to preach the Gospel unto all nations; whereby we have been brought out of darkness and error into the clear light and true knowledge of thee, and thy Son, Jesus Christ.

+ Trinity Sunday

Who, with thine only-begotten son, and the Holy Ghost, art one God, one Lord, in Trinity of Persons and in Unity of Substance. For that which we believe of thy glory, O Father, the same we believe of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, without any difference of inequality

+ All Saints

Who, in the multitude of thy Saints, hast compassed us about with so great a cloud of witnesses that we, rejoicing in their fellowship, may run with patience the race that is set before us, and, together with them, may receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away.

THEREFORE with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious Name; evermore praising thee, and saying,

¶ Priest and People

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, Lord God of hosts, Heaven and earth are full of thy glory: Glory be to thee, O Lord Most High. Amen.

Whitsuntide means white Sunday because it was a day when those to be confirmed came in white robes to renew their vows before the Bishop. It is also called Pentecost. The Jewish Feast of Pentecost was fifty days after Passover. It was the time of the first offerings from the spring harvests. As such it was a great international feast when Jews from all over the world came to Jerusalem to worship God. It was at this time that the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Apostles in cloven tongues of fire to preach the Gospel to every ethnic group in their own languages. The Tower of Babel was reversed. Even though it is called "White Sunday", the color is red on this day to symbolize the fire of God coming down on the Church.

Trinity Sunday, following Whitsunday, begins the longest season of the Church year with the most foundational teaching of the Church, the Doctrine of the Trinity. The propers for Sundays in Trinity actually take the Church through the themes of the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds. The color is green as the spring time comes, goes and summer begins. This is also a time when the Church learns about the growth of the Kingdom of God.

All Saints is November 1, the day after All Hallows Eve. This special feast commemorates all the saints in heaven and commends their lives to us, reminding that they are near when we approach the throne of God in worship. The color is white to emphasize the purity of those who have gone before and are in heaven.

The three-fold holy, the Sanctus, is directly from Scripture. The words are the vernacular of heavenly worship, imitating the same phrasing used by the saints of God bowing before Him in the vaults above enveloping the place of worship below (Revelation 4:8).

that humans could become gods. Eventually a worldwide meeting of the church, called an ecumenical council, was convened at Nicea. Since this gathering was long before the church was divided into east and west, Protestant and Roman Catholic, every part of the church was represented through the bishops and scholars (called "doctors") from all areas of the world. The Nicene Creed was produced, which states clearly that "Jesus Christ is Very God of Very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father." The Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, was God from eternity long before He became man. God became man but man can never become God. Hence, Arius' teachings were refuted and denounced.

During the recitation of the creed, some will bow their head at the mention of Jesus Christ. This practice is based on the Scriptural statement, "... at the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow" (Philippians 2:10). Also, some will make the sign of the cross at the end of the creed. Of course the cross is the most basic, central and ancient symbol of the work of salvation. From the earliest days of Christianity, baptism was the point at which first commitment to Christ was pledged with creedal statements such as the Nicene Creed. The sign of the cross was made by the minister on the forehead of the one who had been baptized. This symbolic gesture was to remind the person that the only way to God was through the cross, faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ for payment of sin. Since reciting the creed is a rehearsing of baptismal commitments, the sign of the cross is made at the end of the creed in the same way it was first received at baptism as part of the covenant renewal process. These kinds of practices are personal and optional. No one is required to do them.

whom all things were made: Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, And was made man: And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried: And the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures: And ascended into heaven, , And sitteth on the right hand of the Father: And he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead; Whose kingdom shall have no end. And I believe in the Holy Ghost, The Lord, and Giver of Life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; Who spake by the Prophets: And I believe one Catholic and Apostolic Church: I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins: And I look for the Resurrection of the dead: And the Life of the world to come. Amen.

= The Announcements

Please note that announcements will be made after the creed. For those celebrating birthdays or anniversaries, an invitation will be extended to come forward and join with the congregation in praying the prayer of blessing on the bottom of page 597 of the BCP.

^ The Sermon Hymn

= The Sermon

A sermon hymn will be sung (standing) followed by the sermon. The sermons are usually based on the appointed Scripture readings for the day.

= The Offering

After the sermon, the offering is introduced with words like, "REMEMBER the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. Acts 20:35."

During the offering, the minister and servers uncover the communion vessels and make the altar ready for the Eucharistic part of the service. A breadbox containing the wafers of bread and a cruet of wine and water will be brought by a server from the credence table to the altar. The minister will put the necessary number of wafers of bread on a small serving plate called a paten. He will also pour enough wine into the chalice(s) to serve the participants. As part of preparing the chalice of wine, he will also pour a small amount of water into the wine. This symbolizes the blood and water that flowed from the side of Christ when the soldier pierced His side with a sword after He died. Following the ordering of the bread and the wine, the server will bring a small bowl and a cruet of water to wash the hands of the minister. This has symbolic and practical meaning. The washing of the hands reminds us of the need for our hearts to be cleansed. It also washes the minister's hands for the handling and distribution of the communion.

During this time when the altar is being prepared and the offering collected, special music may be sung or played as an offering to God.

The Annunciation (March 25) refers to the announcement of the angel Gabriel to Mary, the famous, "Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women" (Luke 1:28). The color is white symbolizing the opening of heaven to Mary with the splendor and glory of the Lord's presence.

The Transfiguration (August 6) commemorates the poignant moment when Christ was transfigured in front of Peter, James and John on a mountaintop as two Old Testament saints, Moses and Elijah, appeared symbolizing Christ's fulfilling the Law and the Prophets. This event brings into view the completion of Christ's work, analogous to and in anticipation of the Ascension. The color is white for the glory and light of God breaking forth on the world.

Easter is the feast of all feasts for the Christian. It first occurred at Passover, the Jewish feast commemorating the first observance in Egypt the night the Angel of Death passed over all those who sacrificed a lamb, placed blood on their doors, and ate the offering. Death was destroyed by death. So too, the Death of Christ destroyed death through His Resurrection. And we who eat His Body and Blood by faith receive His life in us that our own death would be destroyed by His Death. The color is white symbolizing the presence of the glory of the Resurrected, Living Christ.

Forty days after Jesus' Resurrection, He ascended into heaven. This was the official enthronement of Christ in heaven where He was crowned with many crowns. His rule and dominion were established on the earth for which He had died. The color is white because heaven is open for all who believe to ascend and reign with Him in glory.

+ Easter

But chiefly are we bound to praise thee for the glorious Resurrection of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord: for he is the very Paschal Lamb, which was offered for us, and hath taken away the sin of the world; who by his death hath destroyed death, and by his rising to life again hath restored to us everlasting life.

+ Ascension

Through thy most dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who, after his most glorious Resurrection, manifestly appeared to all his Apostles, and in their sight ascended up into heaven, to prepare a place for us; that where he is, thither we might also ascend, and reign with him in glory.

+ The Preface and Threefold Holy (Sanctus)

¶Then shall the Priest turn to the Holy Table, and say

IT is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto thee, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty, Everlasting God.

¶Here shall follow the Proper Preface, according to the time, if there be any specially appointed; or else immediately shall be said or sung by the Priest,

PROPER PREFACES

+ Christmas

Because thou didst give Jesus Christ, thine only Son, to be born as at this time for us; who, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, was made very man, of the substance of the Virgin Mary his mother; and that without spot of sin, to make us clean from all sin.

+ Epiphany

Through Jesus Christ our Lord; who, in substance of our mortal flesh, manifested forth his glory; that he might bring us out of darkness into his own glorious light.

+ Purification, Annunciation, Transfiguration

Because in the Mystery of the Word made flesh, thou hast created a new light to shine in our hearts, to give the knowledge of thy glory in the face of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

The preface builds on the sursum corda, "bringing together the dutiful praise and thanksgiving of the universal church, both living and dead (i.e. 'at all times, and in all places'), and of the heavenly hosts, into a common hymn of sheer and timeless adoration to the holiness and glory of God" (Massey Shepherd, Prayer Book Commentary, p. 77).

The word Christmas means "Christ's Mass." Mass is the historic word for service, which came to refer to Holy Communion. Holy Communion appropriately celebrates He who was placed in a feeding trough, a manger, after he was born, revealing Jesus as the Bread of Life (John 6). Christmas actually begins on Christmas Eve, all holy days starting the evening before the day. The colors are white to symbolize the glory, light and presence of God become Man.

Epiphany means appearing. It occurs on the twelfth day of Christmas. It commemorates Christ's appearing to the first Gentiles, the magi. The season of Epiphany is also called the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles. Hence, the colors for this season are white on Epiphany, symbolizing the glory of Christ's presence, and green the remainder of the season, reminding of the growth of the kingdom of God into the Gentile realms when Christ appears.

Purification (February 2) is also called the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, the original commemorating emphasis of the day. But the Purification also declares the obedience and purity of the Blessed Mother of Jesus, Mary, as she kept the requirements of the Lord. The color is white for the presence of the Lord and the purity of Mary.

^The Doxology

+ Prayer for the Whole State of Christ's Church

ALMIGHTY and everliving God, who by thy holy Apostle hast taught us to make prayers, and supplications, and to give thanks for all men; We humbly beseech thee most mercifully to accept our [alms and] oblations, and to receive these our prayers, which we offer unto thy Divine Majesty; beseeching thee to inspire continually the Universal Church with the spirit of truth, unity, and concord: And grant that all those who do confess thy holy Name may agree in the truth of thy holy Word, and live in unity and godly love.

We beseech thee also, so to direct and dispose the hearts of all Christian Rulers, that they may truly and impartially administer justice, to the punishment of wickedness and vice, and to the maintenance of thy true religion, and virtue.

Give grace, O heavenly Father, to all Bishops and other Ministers, that they may, both by their life and doctrine, set forth thy true and lively Word, and rightly and duly administer thy holy Sacraments.

And to all thy People give thy heavenly grace; and especially to this congregation here present; that, with meek heart and due reverence, they may hear, and receive thy holy Word; truly serving thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life.

And we most humbly beseech thee, of thy goodness, O Lord, to comfort and succour all those who, in this transitory life, are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity.

When the offering is brought forward, the congregation stands and sings the Doxology. The minister raises the offering up to the Lord as an expression of thankfulness and a statement that all belongs to God.

The Eucharistic service falls into two parts, Word and Sacrament. The Offering begins the second part and characterizes every aspect. The offerings of the people are followed by the Prayer for the Whole State of Christ's Church, "a petition that these offerings may express and subserve His will that the Church may live and grow in His truth, unity, and love" (Shepherd, Prayer Book Commentary, p. 74). Afterwards, sin is confessed to make the people into a holy offering. The consecration sets apart the Bread and the Wine as a memorial offering. The people are then dedicated to become a living sacrifice. Finally, by faith the people receive the once for all offering of the Son of God in the forms of Bread and Wine. The last blessing then sends out the people to gather in the world to become what they are, an offering of praise and thanksgiving to God.

The minister will announce, "Let us pray for the whole state of Christ's Church," at which time the congregation will kneel for the prayers leading up to Holy Communion.

When the priest pauses after the second to the last paragraph ending in, "or any other adversity," you may want to silently mention to God the names of loved ones or others who have needs.

The final paragraph of the prayer asks for "continual growth" for those who have already gone to be with the Lord. This reflects the language of Scripture (Revelation 7) that indicates the saints in heaven continue to grow spiritually prior to the Second Coming of Christ.

And we also bless thy holy Name for all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear; beseeching thee to grant them continual growth in thy love and service, and to give us grace so to follow their good examples, that with them we may be partakers of thy heavenly kingdom. Grant this, O Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our only Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

+ The Invitation

YE who do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways; Draw near with faith, and take this holy Sacrament to your comfort; and make your humble confession to Almighty God, devoutly kneeling.

+ The General Confession

ALMIGHTY God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, Judge of all men; We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, Which we, from time to time, most grievously have committed, By thought, word, and deed, Against thy Divine Majesty, Provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, And are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; The remembrance of them is grievous unto us; The burden of them is intolerable. Have mercy upon us, Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father; For thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, Forgive us all that is past; And grant that we may ever hereafter Serve and please thee In newness of life, To the honour and glory of thy Name; Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

We welcome all baptized Christians to Holy Communion. Yet, we encourage our fellow believers to be confirmed in their faith. It is our practice in the Anglican tradition to observe the ancient rite of confirmation as a requirement for Holy Communion. Confirmation, performed by the Bishop of the Diocese (a regional area of parishes), is a special time to renew baptismal vows, to be strengthened with the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life, and to be received by the Bishop, as a successor to the Apostles, into the full communion of the universal (Catholic) church. If you have never been confirmed please speak with the Bishop to learn about the next opportunity for confirmation.

As we draw nearer to communion with Christ, we are called to acknowledge our sin before God. Again it is the principle of unclean humans needing to be cleansed before entering the real presence of an all-holy God. Confession of sin is the mark of a true Christian. St. John writes, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9-10). The above statement of confession accurately addresses the human condition. Yet, it also puts into words the human need for mercy and forgiveness.

+ The Absolution

When people ask forgiveness for sin, the Church should offer the forgiveness of Christ. Jesus gave His apostles the authority to grant forgiveness in His Name (John 20:23). The minister (priest or bishop) stands as one commissioned through the laying on of hands of the successors to the apostles, the bishops, to declare forgiveness through Jesus Christ. As he speaks the words of forgiveness, he will make the sign of the cross to remind everyone that the forgiveness comes only through Christ. It is appropriate for each person to make the sign of the cross as a gesture of reception of the forgiveness offered for the same reason. The absolution is therefore a declaration of Jesus' forgiveness of sins.

The minister does not have the power in himself to atone for sin; only Christ died on the cross for the sins of the world. Even so the minister of the Gospel should declare the forgiveness His Master commanded. To this end, additional assurance from Scripture is quoted in the following.

These special verses of Scripture are called "comfortable words," because confessing sin is unsettling, even though it may be good for the soul. They comfort by reminding us of God's care for those who are "heavy laden," of God's love, of Christ's death for sinners, and Jesus' satisfaction (propitiation) of the wrath of God.

This exchange is called the Sursum Corda, from the Latin literally meaning "Lift up your hearts." The congregation is called to lift up their hearts because worship brings the people of God mysteriously near to the throne of God where Christ is seated. Scripture speaks of this "drawing near" to God in a special way in conjunction with worship (Hebrews 10:22-25). This also explains the placement in the liturgy of the following heavenly language.

¶Then shall the Priest (the Bishop if he is present) stand up and turning to the People, say,

ALMIGHTY God, our heavenly Father, who of his great mercy hath promised forgiveness of sins to all those who with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him; Have mercy upon you; pardon and deliver you from all your sins; confirm and strengthen you in all goodness; and bring you to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

¶Then shall the Priest say,

Hear what comfortable words our Saviour Christ saith unto all who truly turn to him.

COME unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. St. Matt. xi. 28.

So God loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. St. John iii. 16.

Hear also what Saint Paul saith.

This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. 1 Tim. i. 15.

Hear also what Saint John saith.

If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the Propitiation for our sins. 1 St. John ii. 1, 2.

+ The Sursum Corda

¶After which the Priest shall proceed, saying,

Priest. Lift up your hearts.

Answer. We lift them up unto the Lord.

Priest. Let us give thanks unto our Lord God.

Answer. It is meet and right so to do.