

Unpacking the Eucharist

Entering

Lord Jesus Christ,
we thank you that in this wonderful sacrament
you have given us the memorial of your passion:
grant us so to reverence the sacred mysteries
of your body and blood
that we may know within ourselves
and show forth in our lives
the fruits of your redemption;
for you are alive and reign with the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

In these four sessions I want to unpack the Eucharist with you. We know the Eucharist so well, I suspect, what we do in the place where we worship – and whilst we will all do things slightly differently – ask any priest visiting a church asking the wardens what you do – “Oh, just the usual” – to be presented with anything but usual! – we all basically follow the same ‘Shape of the Liturgy’.

Dom Gregory Dix

George Eglinton Alston Dix OSB (4 October 1901 – 12 May 1952), known as Gregory Dix, was a British monk and priest of Nashdom Abbey, an Anglican Benedictine community. He was a noted liturgical scholar whose work had particular influence on the reform of Anglican liturgy in the mid-20th century.

One of the ways in engaging with the shape is through a bit of bible study and at each of these 4 sessions I want to begin with one of the post-resurrection encounters with Jesus – namely the journey to Emmaus. Luke wrote this account from a eucharistic perspective. We unpack the liturgy by unpacking this particular event.

Luke 24.13-35

It begins like this.

13 Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, 14 and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. 15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, 16 but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

We enter the story meeting two of them – disciples – unnamed so far – we learn their names later. These were not part of the twelve, not part of the inner circle but that wider group that we are told were following Jesus. They are leaving the fever and terror of the Holy City and making their way home, to the calm and safety of their small community, the place they call home. So they embark on the journey – about seven miles – not too far, what was permitted on that particular day in the law but far enough to talk and think and try to make sense of everything.

But they are not alone, someone else joins them, a stranger. It's Jesus but as with Mary in the garden they don't recognise him. But they become a community with him, companions on the road. They enter the journey together, not alone and as Jesus says in Matthew 18.20.

'where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.'

They begin the journey with all the experiences that they have had and they are talking about what had happened. The talking was helping, getting it off their chests as we might say. The talking, they hoped, would begin to make sense of what they had gone through, like a kind of talking therapy as we might call it.

With the Eucharist the first thing we do is enter into it and even more prosaically, we enter into church, we come through the door and enter God's house, alone or with companions.

That word – companions – is an important one for us

The origin of our word in Latin and then French means simply and most powerfully

'one who breaks bread with another',

We arrive through the door as bread breakers, bread sharers and as we know that it is at the very heart of what we do together.

What do we call it?

But on our noticeboard outside the church and on our websites and publicity we will use different words to describe what it is that we are going to be doing. In our rich and broad Church of England this is very important because the words specifically chosen are clues to what we will find when we get into church and the service begins. Being a bit picky about church I make a judgement about what I will find inside by what I find outside! (Nets in Hastings boarding houses.)

Let's start with the Book of Common Prayer

- The Lord's Supper or Holy Communion

The Lord's Supper refers to the act of bringing ourselves or being brought into the Upper Room, re-entering Maundy Thursday.

Holy Communion – refers to the act of being together, in community, sharing, taking communion is about being companions.

- Common Worship = Holy Communion
- Eucharist

Since the 1960's/70's the term Eucharist has become widely used – Greek *eukharistia* 'thanksgiving', Calling it the Eucharist emphasises that central concept of thanksgiving – and not just the great prayer of thanksgiving but the whole act of worship as being eucharistic, being thank full people, glad to be with Jesus.

- Mass

This comes from ecclesiastical Latin *missa* 'dismissal'. The most missional name for the service. We enter to leave, church is a fuelling station for mission. Without the grace of the sacrament we cannot be disciples, missionaries, witnesses. Wonderful line in 1 Kings 19.8

Elijah got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food for forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God.

God fed Elijah for the work he had to do – we come to the Eucharist to the Mass to be fed for the missionary journey to which we are called as disciples of Jesus.

- The Liturgy

Finally, you will sometimes hear it called The Liturgy. This comes from Greek *leitourgia* 'public service' as in ministry.

But these names for this service tell us a lot about who we are as a community – high, middle or low, evangelical or catholic. You can anticipate what you will get if the notice board says 'The Lord's Supper' at 9.30 or High Mass at 11. But the important thing is that the shape will be the same and the same elements will be there, presented maybe differently, given different emphases but all there.

"Dramatis personae"

If you buy the text of a play you will find at the beginning the "Dramatis personae" – the players in the drama. The liturgy is a drama, we act out something divine, we have texts, action, some is spoken, some sung, we have roles, we play our part. As in so much ancient drama and remember what we do is almost 2000 years old and owes so much to Greek and Roman life and ceremony, we read what is going on, the non-verbal as much as the verbal and understand what is going on.

It was the abandonment of much of the non-verbal at the Reformation that diminished the liturgy. But this series of unpackings is part of our keeping of the Hook Memorial year and Hook was one of those who wanted to recover something of what was lost.

Walter Farquhar Hook, from 1837-1859 was Vicar of Leeds. Over those years he created 21 parishes and founded 30 schools. He was a High Church man, interested in the Oxford Movement and the revival of interest in the inheritance of worship that the Church of England had had and had lost. These were turbulent days and I just want to give you a timeline

Keble Assize Sermon 14 July 1833.

Hook becomes Vicar of Leeds 1837

Pusey St Saviours 28th October 1845

John Henry Newman converted 30 May 1847

Fr Tooth arrested in Hatcham South London 22 Jan 1877

In 1880 this church was completed as the Hook Memorial Church and Cecil Hook made the first vicar.

So who takes part in our drama.

Priest or bishop – Common Worship says

The unity of the liturgy is served by the ministry of the president, who in presiding over the whole service holds word and sacrament together and draws the congregation into a worshipping community. The president at Holy Communion (who, in accordance with the provisions of Canon B 12 'Of the Ministry of the Holy Communion', must have been episcopally ordained priest).

We identify the priest by what they wear

Chasuble

Stole

Maniple

Alb

BUT in some places it may be cassock, surplice and stole

OR choir dress

OR now allowed to wear no liturgical dress.

Deacon – Common Worship says

In some traditions the ministry of the deacon at Holy Communion has included The deacon's liturgical ministry provides an appropriate model for the ministry of an assisting priest, a Reader, or another episcopally authorized minister in a leadership ministry that complements that of the president.

We identify the deacon by what they wear

Dalmatic
Stole
Alb

BUT another lay minister may wear this and not the stole or their appropriate vesture eg a reader in blue scarf.

Sub Deacon

Assists the Deacon and the Priest. May wear a tunicle.

These are the three Sacred Ministers at a High Mass. When someone refers to a High Mass set they are meaning matching eucharistic vestments for these three ministers.

Servers

These might be

Crucifer – carrying the cross
Thurifer – swinging the incense
Boat child – carrying the boat
Acolyte – carrying altar candles
Taperers – carrying candles either side of the cross
MC – Master/Mistress of Ceremonies
Vimpers – accompany the bishop and hold the mitre and crosier

Lectors, Intercessors, Eucharistic Ministers, sidespeople, Wardens – Common Worship says

Holy Communion is celebrated by the whole people of God gathered for worship. The ministry of the members of the congregation is expressed through their active participation together in the words and actions of the service, but also by some of them reading the Scripture passages, leading the prayers of intercession, and, if authorized, assisting with the distribution of communion.

The whole people of God – being ‘in the congregation’ is a ministry, a vital part on what it means to be community in communion.

Texts

We rely upon the word, spoken, written, read. That means that we need texts

Bible
Service book
Hymn book
Sheet

Lectionary – means two things – the liturgical plan for the year and a book in which the readings are printed out.

Book of the Gospels

Altar Missal - A missal is a prayer book that contains the order of the Mass, including prayers, chants, and scripture readings. It's used by both the priest during Mass and by members of the congregation to follow along and participate in the liturgy.

Gestures

It is traditional for the President to use their hands in making 'liturgical gestures' during the celebration. These need not be elaborate – in fact they should not be elaborate!

The use we make of our hands should indicate what is happening – our hands do not MAKE things happen. This is a very important thing to remember when we come to the Prayer of Thanksgiving.

As a general rule of thumb

Greeting	Hands extended	Greeting, welcome
Absolution	Right hand makes sign of cross from God mediated by the Priest	The forgiveness that comes
Collect	Hands extended	Orans
Anaphora	A variety of gestures	
Lord's Prayer	Hands extended	Orans
After Comm	Hands extended	Orans
Blessing	Right hand makes sign of cross God mediated by the Priest	The blessing that comes from
Dismissal	Hands extended	Sending out

If the priest is praying on behalf of the people – hands extended

If the priest is praying with the people – hands together.

Enough of setting the scene.... Let the Eucharist begin

Procession

The procession enters – we bow to the cross and as the president passes.

The President bows, genuflects if the sacrament is present or does a profound bow and then goes straight to the altar and kisses it. The practice of kissing the altar is an ancient liturgical tradition, dating back to the 4th century. In early Christianity, the altar was often placed over the tomb of a martyr, and the act of kissing the altar was a way to honour and reverence the martyrs. After that a relic of a saint was often placed in the mensa, the top of the altar, into a hole set in the stone and then sealed with another stone.

Now we kiss the altar honouring it and recognising it as the table of the Lord.

Altar or table?

An altar is where you sacrifice something – hence stone.

A table is where a family gathers for a meal – hence wood.

Many altars will have 5 crosses carved into the four corners and the centre representing the 5 wounds on the body of Christ.

Westwards or eastwards?

There are many churches where we celebrate facing eastwards – the priest has their back to the people. The basic rule of thumb is that when the priest is addressing the people they turn and look at them, if they are addressing God they face east.

Following Vatican II which concluded 60 years ago, the church restored the ancient practice of the priest facing the people across the altar – what we call westward facing.

I don't think that we should be too rigid about only celebrating westwards. Both have some value and teach something about the nature of Presidency and the Eucharist.

West – gathering the people around the altar – the gathered church of God

East – leading the people to God – the pilgrim church of God.

Censing

They then cense the altar if incense is being used.

Thurible – charcoal, incense.

Number of swings 1, 2, 3

Represents our prayers - Let my prayer rise before you as incense (Ps 141) - but also designating the holy, the sacred.

Making the sign of the cross

The priest begins by saying 'In the name ...'. Before anything else is said we set ourselves within the context of the Trinity.

Since earliest times Christians have made the sign of the cross both as a public acknowledgement that we glory in the cross of Christ and as a means of calling down a blessing upon ourselves. Some choose to make the sign of the cross at significant moments in the liturgy and especially in the opening greeting and the final blessing.

The Greeting

Having set us in the context of the Holy Trinity, our community being incorporated in the divine community, included in the perichoresis – the divine dance in which the three persons of the Trinity eternally engage – the President greets the people.

The Lord be with you
And also with you.

Or an alternative

Grace, mercy and peace ...
The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ ...

The response is always the same.

The Easter Greeting

During Eastertide the normal greeting made by the President to the congregation is supplemented by the words of the Easter greeting. This greeting picks up the enthusiasm with which the disciples greeted one another with the news that Jesus had risen.

The introduction to the celebration

This is when the priest should leave the formal text and say hello. This is because it is most important to place the celebration in the centre of that divine dance and then after greeting to establish the relationship and remind people why we are gathering. At times such as Christmas Day, Ash Wednesday etc, there will be a scripted 'Pastoral Welcome' but not usually.

The Collect for Purity

This is the first form of the prayer that we now know as the Collect for Purity.

God, unto whom alle hertes ben open, & unto whom alle wille spekiþ, & unto whom no priue þing is hid: I beseche þee so for to clense þe entent of myn hert wiþ þe unspeakable 3ift of þi grace þat I may parfiteliche loue þee, & worþilich preise þee.
Amen.

The Cloud of Unknowing, prologue.

Author unknown, English late 14th century

The modern form of the prayer, which we can use as a form of personal preparation for the Eucharist, is as follows:

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy

Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Collect for Purity – Common Worship

The Ten Commandments

The BCP service begins with the priest reciting the Ten Commandments and the people responding. This sense that we were all sinners in need of repentance was very much the spirituality of the day, rather than now the emphasis being that we are all deeply loved Children of God who loves us unconditionally. Has the pendulum swung too far? But there remains the option to include the Commandments or the Summary of the Law at the beginning of the service.

A big change

One big change that happened in the 70's as liturgical renewal began to affect most of our services was placing the Penitential Rite at the very beginning of the service rather than in the middle, after the Intercessions. Some of you may remember it being there. It was a very odd place for it to be. Now we deal with what we bring to the gathering at the place where we enter the liturgy.

The Comfortable Words

The Comfortable Words have been part of Anglican Liturgy since the first prayer book of 1549. They have been variously used as a response to or a preparation for an act of penitence. The use of the word 'comfortable' to our ears suggests cosiness. To sixteenth century ears the word would have suggested 'strengthening'. The Lord strengthens us against sin.

Confession

Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus we have a lot to talk about – 'all these things that had happened' – they are the burden we carry and what we need to lay aside, at the foot of the cross. This is why before we do anything else we enter into the Penitential Rite – we deal with the sin first – the sin that clings so closely as the Letter to the Hebrews describes it – and then be free to move on.

It has not been the Anglican tradition to insist upon an act of Sacramental Confession before coming to Communion. As a result, people have imagined that individual Confession is not practised in the Church of England. However, this is not the case. Many people make use of this form of confession during the year and particularly before major feasts. A priest is always available for those who wish to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The Confession that is made within the service is corporate, "we have sinned...".

It is about the fallen nature of the whole creation in which we share, past and present. The congregation are together, acknowledging their common failure and asking God to put aside everything which stands as a barrier to full communion with him.

Kyries

Whilst we are very much part of the western church and its liturgical tradition there are elements to the liturgy which are reminders of the beginnings of the church when east and west shared tradition and practice.

Traditionally we sing or say the Kyries in their original Greek – Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison. Lord have mercy. Christ have mercy. Lord have mercy.

In Advent and Lent they replace the Gloria. At other times of the year they can be sung/said in addition to the Gloria. They are often included as part of the penitential rite, as a response to three penitential petitions. If they are used in this way they then replace the kyries after the absolution.

Absolution

Following the absolution the priest/president pronounces the absolution. The authority for the church to forgive sins is a gift of Christ post-resurrection given in the appearance in the Upper Room in John 20.23

'If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

The big difference between CofE Mass and RC Mass is that the default for Anglicans is that absolution is given; in Rome it is promised.

Traditionally the priest makes the sign of the cross over the people as the words 'pardon and deliver you from all your sins,' or their equivalent is said.

CW also permits the RC form

Almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive us our sins,
and bring you to everlasting life.

In both instances the congregation make the sign of the cross but in the latter the priest also joins them.

The question is, is this 'cheap' grace for Anglicans?

The Gloria

The hymn 'Glory to God in the highest' dates from the third quarter of the fourth century.

(NB I keep mentioning the 4th century – this is because in 313 Emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Milan which ceased the persecution of Christians and made Christianity mainstream and increasingly dominant in Europe. This then became an impetus to everything become formulated eg doctrine in the first 7 Ecumenical Councils

the First Council of Nicaea (325), the First Council of Constantinople (381), the Council of Ephesus (431), the Council of Chalcedon (451), the Second Council of Constantinople (553), the Third Council of Constantinople (680-681), and the Second Council of Nicaea (787).

The Gloria was firstly known as ‘morning hymn’. By the Sixth century it was part of the Western Eucharistic Rite but only used when a Bishop was presiding. By the Eleventh century the Gloria was an established part of the Communion Service as a great hymn of praise to God with which to begin the worship.

After the austerity of the Lenten services we mark Eastertide by once more singing the Gloria in Excelsis. This hymn was first introduced into the Eucharistic Liturgy for festive occasions by Pope Symmachus (498-514). By the time of Gregory the Great it had become an established part of the Eucharist. On Easter Day our joy at singing the Gloria once more is often marked by the ringing of bells and fanfares on the organ. The choir often uses the Latin text when they sing the Gloria.

This where we end. We have entered the liturgy; now we listen.

Let us pray.

God of community,
you draw us into your house
and welcome us into your presence.
May we lay aside all that we bring with us
the burden we carry
and the sin that clings so closely
and so be free to worship you
in spirit and in truth.
Amen.

Listening

We are unpacking the Eucharist, The Lord’s Supper, Holy Communion, the Mass, the Liturgy – call it what you will.

Last week we entered the liturgy and we did that also by looking at the post-resurrection appearance that St Luke records for us as the Road to Emmaus.

13 Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, 14 and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. 15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, 16 but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

That was where we left the story. It continues like this

17 And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. 18 Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" 19 He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. 21 But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. 22 Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, 23 and when they did not find his body there they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. 24 Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him." 25 Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! 26 Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" 27 Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

The stranger then takes them into the scriptures, into Moses and the prophets and interprets everything for them. Later on in the story they comment to one another

They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"

There is another powerful NT description of this, not within a liturgical shape of experience but instead on a road, the road to Gaza. Acts 8.28-39

26 Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south^[a] to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) 27 So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship 28 and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." 30 So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. 32 Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

*"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,
so he does not open his mouth.*

³³ *In his humiliation justice was denied him.*

Who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken away from the earth.”

³⁴ *The eunuch asked Philip, “About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?”* ³⁵ *Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus.* ³⁶ *As they were going along the road, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?”* ³⁸ *He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip^[1] baptized him.* ³⁹ *When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more and went on his way rejoicing.*

We encounter our Living God in God’s Living Word. Our hearts burn within us, our eyes are opened to God’s truth and it brings us into the body of Christ. Hearing the scriptures read and expounded, interpreted, explained to us, broken open for us is exhilarating, converting.

We talk about how Jesus is present in the Eucharistic Gathering. We are used to talking, especially in more catholic circles about the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist but that is not the only manifestation of Christ’s presence when two or three gather together.

Christ is present

- in the liturgical assembly
- in the proclaimed scripture and especially the Gospel when it is the voice of Jesus we hear
- in the presiding priest
- and in the consecrated bread and wine.

All of these have implications for how we behave

- in the liturgical assembly – by treating one another as bearers of the divine image and with the kiss of peace
- in the proclaimed scripture – by standing when the Gospel is proclaimed, looking to where the Gospel is being read, carrying candles, honouring with incense. (Armenian Mass)
- in the presiding priest – by bowing as the priest passes by in procession
- and in the consecrated bread and wine – by genuflection, by making the sign of the cross, in silent adoration and awe and wonder.

We left the shape of the Eucharist at the end of the Gloria – the great song of thanksgiving that we say or sing every Sunday outside of Advent and Lent and on greater feasts and festivals.

We then enter into the next of the parts of the Eucharist that focus our attention on the Word of God, on scripture and our response to it.

The Collect

We come to the Eucharist with particular needs and prayers we wish to offer, for others and for ourselves. The priest says 'Let us pray' and then we pray, in silence. In the silence before the Collect we bring our own intentions for Mass to the Lord that they may be gathered up, 'collected' together, in this particular celebration of the Eucharist.

Occasionally the priest will suggest what it is that we are praying for. So at Easter CW says

Let us pray that we may reign with the risen Christ in glory.

And on Ascension Day

Let us pray that our risen and ascended Lord will lead us to eternal life.

As the name of this prayer suggests, it collects together the intentions of the people as they gather to worship. In the silence after the President invites us to pray we make our own intention for this celebration.

Traditional Collects have a formal structure

- We address God
- We attribute to God some action
- We ask for something
- We conclude in the name of Jesus or the Trinity.

Then the congregation assents with the Amen – 'So be it'. Amen is used in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic practices as a concluding word, or as a response to a prayer.

The Calendar and Cycles

The Collects and the readings and psalm that follow are set out in what is called a Lectionary. The first thing to note is that these follow various cycles.

The Christian year is divided into seasons and Ordinary Time.

There is a three year cycle A, B and C – the synoptic gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke. John is read at particular times each year.

The weekdays are in a two year Cycle – Year 1 and Year 2

At the moment we are in Sunday Year C and Weekday Year 1. This changes on Advent Sunday when the new church year begins and we change cycles – so 2026 will be A and 2.

The seasons have their liturgical colours and Ordinary Time is Green.

The Liturgy of the Word

Although for the purposes of this course I have divided the eucharist into 4 the Eucharistic Liturgy is in fact formed of two major parts, the first of which is called the Liturgy of the Word. This comprises a number of elements but principally three readings, a psalm and the sermon.

The readings are common to the whole church and are based on the Revised Common Lectionary, a cycle of readings used by most Anglican provinces, the Methodist Church and the Roman Catholic Church worldwide. The pattern of readings focuses on the principle of ‘lectio continua’, the continuous reading of the Scriptures. There is a three-year cycle in which each of the synoptic Gospels - Matthew, Mark and Luke - are read in turn and in which John is read from Passion Sunday through to the end of Eastertide.

The powerful thing is that all Christians in the western tradition are reading the same readings each Sunday with only minor variations.

There are some churches, mainly in the evangelical tradition that prefer not to be tied to a lectionary but to read the scriptures in a different – a sermon series on Romans for instance, or an Old Testament book. The CofE permits this but within the following rules

During the period from the First Sunday of Advent to the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, during the period from Ash Wednesday to Trinity Sunday, and on All Saints' Day, the readings shall come from an authorized lectionary. During Ordinary Time (i.e. between the Presentation and Ash Wednesday and between Trinity Sunday and Advent Sunday), authorized lectionary provision remains the norm but, after due consultation with the Parochial Church Council, the minister may, from time to time, depart from the lectionary provision for pastoral reasons or preaching or teaching purposes.

Readings

From 1549 through to the 1960's there were only two readings at the Eucharist. These were almost invariably (there are a couple of occasions in the year when this is not the case): a passage from one of the epistles (the letters to the early church from Paul, James, Peter and John; hence the name Epistle for the first of the Readings) and a reading from one of the Gospels. With the development of the Parish Communion as the main act of worship, many felt that the majority of the congregation were missing out on the Old Testament.

The CofE provides two routes through the lectionary which apply in Ordinary Time. These are called Continuous and Related.

Continuous – both the OT and NT readings are read continuously as is the Gospel.
Related - the first reading from the Old Testament is chosen to relate to the Gospel of the day, and the Second Reading – usually from one of the Letters – is read semi-continuously, as is the Gospel.

This is the Word of the Lord

The versicle and response at the end of the first two readings first appear in the post-Vatican II Eucharistic Rite of the Roman Catholic Church. The Latin text ‘verbum Dei’ (the word of God) was translated for the English speaking churches as ‘This is the word of the Lord’. The ancient response ‘Deo gratias’, in use since the 8th century, was given to the people to say.

The Responsorial Psalm

The first Christians adopted the practice of the synagogue of singing the psalms.

St Paul in writing to the church in Ephesus encourages the people there to ‘sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs’ (Eph. 5.19). In a variety of ways psalms have been said and sung bringing into the liturgical life of the church the richness of these texts. Psalms play a part in all Christian worship and are an important element in the Liturgy of the Word of the Eucharist. The use of a congregational response is one of the earliest ways in which psalms were sung and the practice has been recovered in recent years whilst the use of Anglican and Gregorian Chant remains part of the Choral Offices of Mattins and Evensong.

The Gospel Acclamation

We used to sing a Gradual Hymn. The term “Gradual” comes from the Latin for “step” (*gradus*; hence the word “gradually” means “step by step”.) Traditionally, this was a psalm sung by a solo cantor on the steps of the ambo (an elevated platform, pulpit-like in structure, from which the Gospel was read or sung by the deacon). The congregation would have responded with “Alleluia” or a verse from the psalm itself. (St Augustine once spoke of “The psalm which we have just heard sung and to which we have responded in song.”)

In more recent usage, a hymn has been sung instead of a psalm, but it would still be referred to as the “Gradual”. In the context of the hymn immediately before the Gospel, the purpose of the term is, in short, to signify the proclamation of the gospel to the people of God. It serves both a doxological and preparatory purpose, building to the reading of the Gospel, which is, of course, the climax of the Ministry of the Word.

This has now been replaced by an Acclamation – an Alleluia except in Lent when a different response is used

Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.

The Holy Gospel

Whereas we sit to hear most readings of the scripture, we stand for the proclamation of the Gospel. We turn to face the place from which it is being read. This is because we believe that Christ is present when the Word is proclaimed. Jesus speaks to us as

directly and intimately through the words of the Gospel as he spoke to his friends and the crowds.

We stand for the reading of the Gospel and turn to face the place from which the Gospel is being read because we acknowledge that Jesus speaks to us through the words we hear. Christ is present in his Gospel proclaimed as he is present in his people who gather as he is present in the bread that is broken.

As the Gospel is proclaimed Jesus speaks to us. In acknowledgement of this we turn to face the Gospel, candles are carried, incense may be used and the book of the Gospels is honoured.

The Sermon

An important element in the Liturgy of the Word is the sermon. It is the aim of the preacher to reflect upon, re-present and interpret for their own time and their hearers the scripture that has been read. The interpretation of the Word of God in the context of worship is older than the Christian tradition. We read of Jesus speaking in the synagogue and St Paul, in preaching both to the Jewish community gathered for worship and to non-Jewish congregations, draws on and develops this practice.

Sometimes we hear used the word Homily instead of sermon. In the RC church it is defined as

The Homily is part of the Liturgy and is strongly recommended, for it is necessary for the nurturing of the Christian life. It should be an exposition of some aspect of the readings from Sacred Scripture or of another text from the Ordinary or from the Proper of the Mass of the day and should take into account both the mystery being celebrated and the particular needs of the listeners.

What we often mean, however, is a short sermon.

The two following elements that I include in this part of the Eucharist I see as a response to the scriptures that we have read together and reflected on.

The Creed

Confessing the faith publicly grew out of the practice of candidates for Baptism being asked to give testimony to their belief. In the face of heresy in the early centuries of the life of the Church it was seen to be necessary to establish doctrine in a formal way. The Creeds were the result of this process. The Nicene Creed that we use at the Eucharist was the product of the Council of Constantinople in 381 but expresses the faith of the preceding Council of Nicea in 325. It has been part of the Eucharistic Rite since 473.

Saying the Creed was a vital part of the Easter celebrations because the Creed began as a statement of belief by those to be baptised. As baptisms took place at Easter the Creed was an important element in celebrations of the resurrection. Canon law

requires that we join together in saying the Creed each Sunday and major Holy Day. This reminds us that we are gathered to celebrate the faith we share in the resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the faith into which we were baptised and in which we live and grow.

These few words ‘suffered under Pontius Pilate’ that form part of the Creed fix Our Lord Jesus Christ in history. We know when Pontius Pilate was Governor in Palestine. Contemporary records tell us about him. He is an historical figure. Jesus enters into human history at a particular time but changes history for all time.

The Nicene Creed begins, ‘We believe ...’. This is a translation of the Greek version of the Creed as opposed to the Latin version, still used in Order Two of Common Worship, which begins ‘I believe...’. In the form we use it expresses the fact that this is the faith of the Church – this is our faith - a faith shared.

Prayers of intercession

Justin Martyr (100-165) records that intercessions were offered during the Eucharist by the faithful. However, the place and role of intercessory prayer within the service of Holy Communion has changed over the years. Intercessions, by the 6th century, were within the Eucharistic Prayer. When this was said inaudibly, as was the mediaeval practice, the prayers of intercession, as far as the faithful were concerned, seemed to have disappeared.

The Reformers replaced the intercessions, putting them between the sermon and the Eucharistic Prayer. The prayer ‘for the church militant’ in the Book of Common Prayer is a wonderful piece of writing drawing together passages and phrases from Scripture, the Roman Canon and other sources.

In more recent reforms those offering the intercessions on behalf of the gathered people of God have been encouraged to think creatively and to reflect upon the issues and needs of the day, to pray for individuals by name and to reflect the concerns of the local church.

Prayer takes many forms - praise, adoration, contrition, thanksgiving - and intercession. Each has a place in the life of the Christian both as individual and in community. As we celebrate the Eucharist we respond to the proclamation of the word in prayer. Prayer for others is perhaps, in the words of Bishop Peter Selby, ‘the most common and instinctual prayer that men and women offer’.

The invocation of the saints

Towards the end of the prayers the person leading them will often say something like

We rejoice to join our prayers with those of Our Lady, St ??? and St ??? and all the saints and ask Our Lady to join her prayers with ours as we say together

Hail Mary ...

We believe that the saints intercede for us, that their heaven is spent in prayer and adoration and especially Mary. That is the vocation that she reveals after the Ascension of the Lord. In Acts it says

All these (the apostles) were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers. (Acts 1.14)

The prayer we call the Hail Mary is based on two biblical passages found in the Gospel of Luke: the Angel Gabriel's visit to Mary (the Annunciation) and Mary's subsequent visit to Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist (the Visitation). It is also called the Angelical Salutation, as the prayer is based on the Archangel Gabriel's words to Mary. The Hail Mary is a prayer of praise for and of petition to Mary, regarded as the Theotokos (Mother of God). Since the 16th century, the version of the prayer used in the Catholic Church closes with an appeal for her intercession. The prayer takes different forms in various traditions and has often been set to music. It is an essential part of the Angelus and the Rosary but also the general intercessions of the church.

Let us pray.

Blessed Lord,
who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:
help us so to hear them,
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them
that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word,
we may embrace and for ever hold fast
the hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Receiving

As we have been unpacking the Eucharist together we have looked so far at the shape by reflecting on 'Entering', how we come into the divine presence in liturgy bringing all our baggage with us and preparing ourselves to worship as a whole person before God, and then 'Listening', how as a community we listen to, engage with and respond to scripture.

Each week we have begun with a reflection on the passage from Luke 24 which tells the story of the Road to Emmaus. I always see this resurrection appearance as a eucharistic encounter just as we might interpret the Feeding of the Five Thousand and

the Last Supper in that way. The shape of the story reflects the shape of the liturgy which is the holy work of the holy people of God.

Just to remind you, two disciples, one who we have learnt is called Cleopas, the other I think is his wife, who stood at the foot of the cross with Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary - but that's just my reading of it - have left the febrile and dangerous city of Jerusalem and made the journey to their home in the village of Emmaus.

If you go pilgrimage to the Holy Land you might be taken to Emmaus, except there are at least three contenders for the title. The most visited, however, is a place called Abu Ghosh. The interesting thing is that this is also probably the place where the Ark of the Covenant rested, in which the presence of God was recognised and worshipped by the Israelites, the one who tabernacled with them. To mark this, on the hill above the town is a huge statue of Our Lady. One of the titles she has is Ark of the Covenant in recognition that she is Theotokos, God-bearer.

Anyway, the two are on their way home and talking about what has happened. They are joined by a stranger who walks with them. He asks them what they are talking about and they tell him. He then explains to them everything in the scriptures that can shed light on their experience. The story continues at verse 28.

28 As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. 29 But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. 30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight. 32 They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"

What we see in these verses are four essential actions in the third part of the Eucharist that I have called 'Receiving'. These 4 actions

- he took bread,
- blessed
- and broke it,
- and gave it to them.

These four essential elements are what the presiding priest essentially does. Strip away everything else that have attached themselves like limpets to this part of the Mass and this is what you have

- Taking
- Blessing
- Breaking
- Sharing

The other important part in the story is of course the effect it will have on us who are seated, standing, kneeling in the congregation or serving at the altar. The disciples speak of their 'hearts burning within us' as the stranger opened the scriptures to them but also how 'their eyes were opened, and they recognized him' as the bread was broken and shared. Later on they will tell the others how they recognised Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

We have already talked about how we respond to the scriptures and the presence of Jesus in his word proclaimed but in this section we will need to think how we respond to the Real Presence of Jesus in the Sacrament, the one who tabernacles with us.

Before I go any further, I want mention something which you may – or may not - have noticed.

Secret Prayers

There is a tradition of the Priest saying 'secret prayers' during the rite. These arose from the private devotions of the clergy which in the pre-reformation church did get in the way of the participation of the rest of the congregation. They are not necessary but they do add to the devotional manner in which the Priest presides. They should be said in a low voice, not so that others can't hear – they are not 'secret' in that sense - but that they are not part of the main rite and are intended for the personal devotion of the minister.

The first two of these prayers are more public than 'secret' and are specific blessings:

Prayer of blessing of the incense

May this incense be blessed by him in whose honour it is burnt.

Prayer of blessing of a Deacon before the reading of the Gospel

The Lord be on your lips and in your heart that you may worthily proclaim his Holy Gospel, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The remainder of the prayers are as follows:

Prayer before reading the Gospel

The Lord be on my lips and in my heart that I may worthily proclaim his Holy Gospel, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

As the water is added to the wine

By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity.

After the offertory prayer

Lord God, we ask you to receive us and be pleased with the sacrifice we offer you with humble and contrite hearts.

As the lavabo is offered
Lord wash away my iniquity; cleanse me from my sin.

At the commixture
May this mingling of the body and blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ bring eternal life to us
who receive it.

Before the invitation to Communion
Lord Jesus Christ, with faith in your love and mercy I eat your body and drink your blood.
Let it not bring me condemnation but health in mind and body.

Let's pick up where we left the Eucharist last week. I concluded the Ministry of the Word, as it's often called, with the Prayers of the Faithful, the intercessions. We need to pick up the liturgy at

The Peace

The Peace is the expression of our Shalom, our wholeness in Christ. The words shalom, salaam, peace, mean the same thing.

Where the Peace is located in the service has significance. The CofE places it here, after the prayers and before the Offertory. The rationale comes from Matthew 5.

²³ So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.

This is your chance to make peace in and with the community.

The RC liturgy places it later, after the Lord's Prayer and before the Agnus Dei. I think it's a less satisfactory place for it but it emphasizes there something of our nature as the body of Christ and places us in the Upper Room. The Roman text draws on John 14 and the discourse before going out to the Garden of Gethsemane.

²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.

The priest says in introducing the Peace.

Lord Jesus Christ,
who said to your Apostles:
Peace I leave you, my peace I give you;
look not on our sins,
but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with your will.
Who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

The existence of the rite of peace during the Eucharistic celebration is known of since the first centuries both in the East and the West. During the fourth and fifth centuries in Rome, the gesture took place immediately after the Eucharistic prayer and was related to it. Later on, it was linked with the petition of forgiveness in the Our Father, becoming a preparatory rite for Communion.

The sign of peace

Primitively the exchange of peace was made among the faithful. Later on, it started at the altar and was made in a hierarchical order. Christ communicated peace to the priest (through the gesture of kissing the altar), the priest communicated it to the deacon, the deacon to the subdeacon. In today's liturgy, the sign of peace is given among the faithful. It should be a religious gesture, penetrated with sacredness. It is appropriate "that each one give the sign of peace only to those who are nearest and in a sober manner".

In the CofE the Peace began to be introduced with the revision of the Liturgy that began in the 1960s. The vicar of St Wilfred's Halton was Fr Ernie Southcott. He went on to be one of my predecessors at Southwark Cathedral. Fr Ernie was a leader of the Parish and People Movement sometimes called the Parish Communion Movement which began post-war and in the '60's led to the growth of Communion as being the principal service on Sunday. Fr Ernie also celebrated the Eucharist in people's homes on the Halton Moor estate. It was revolutionary.

But as part of it the exchange of the peace began to be introduced. This met with a lot of resistance from the indigenous English in congregations on the basis that we find physical contact with strangers challenging. Shake someone's hand!!!

But it caught on, thanks in part to the development of diverse congregations, many people being more relaxed and at ease with themselves than white brits! Covid revealed though that the practice never got into our bones – there seems a strange reluctance to get back to shaking hands let alone kissing!

The image of the peace that I have is of the visitation of Our lady to St Elizabeth. Luke tells us about it.

39 In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, 40 where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

Psalm 85 touches on this – verse 10

Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

So whether we kiss, or hug, or shake hands, or wave or 'namaste' we are peace sharers and therefore peacemakers.

The Offertory

The rubrics of the BCP say about the Offertory

Whilst these Sentences are in reading, the Deacons, Churchwardens, or other fit person appointed for that purpose, shall receive the Alms for the Poor, and other devotions of the people, in a decent bason to be provided by the Parish for that purpose; and reverently bring it to the Priest, who shall humbly present and place it upon the holy Table.

And when there is a Communion, the Priest shall then place upon the Table so much Bread and Wine as he shall think sufficient.

Later it says

The Bread and Wine for the Communion shall be provided by the Curate and the Church-wardens at the charges of the Parish.

We make it clear that the elements and the monetary offerings are from the people of the parish they are brought to the altar and presented. This normally happens just at a principal celebration – not a Low Mass. Instead, the bread and wine will be on the credence table along with the vessels to be used – perhaps – and the Lavabo bowl and water.

Bread – normally unleavened wafers but real bread can be used.

Wine – has to be alcoholic but can be red or white. It tends to be fortified – like sherry – so that the bottle keeps once opened. Methodists use grape juice; we are not allowed to by Canon B17

B 17 Of bread and wine for the Holy Communion

1. The churchwardens of every parish, with the advice and direction of the minister, shall provide a sufficient quantity of bread and wine for the number of communicants that shall from time to time receive the same.

2. The bread, whether leavened or unleavened, shall be of the best and purest wheat flour that conveniently may be gotten, and the wine the fermented juice of the grape, good and wholesome.

3. The bread shall be brought to the communion table in a paten or convenient box and the wine in a convenient cruet or flagon.

However, we are permitted to use gluten free wafers to meet the needs of those with an intolerance but not non-alcoholic wines to meet the needs of recovering alcoholics.

In the offertory, all our life is given to God as the bread and wine, fruit of the earth, work of our hands, is taken up; as the money we offer is accepted to be used.

The priest may say some Offertory Prayers. These are based on the berakah prayers, in Judaism, a benediction (expression of praise or thanks directed to God) that is recited at

specific points of the synagogue liturgy, during private prayer, or on other occasions. Blessed are you ...

Mixing the Chalice

The priest adds a few drops of water to the wine in the chalice and says the Secret Prayer whilst doing so

By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity.

Incense

As the Deacon receives the gifts of the people, the thurifer presents the thurible to the President so that incense can be put on to the hot coals. The use of incense at this point in the service symbolises both the offering we make in the Eucharist and the prayer of the Church rising to God. As the priest puts incense into the thurible, the following words are said: 'May this incense be blessed by him in whose honour it is burnt'.

The censuring of the oblata, the altar and the people can be complicated or simple!

The Lavabo

After censuring the altar the President is presented with the Lavabo. This part of the ritual has a very practical function in that it allows the President's hands to be washed before proceeding with the service. As the water is poured the President may say quietly 'Lord wash away my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin'. The Lavabo therefore has a spiritual significance in being part of the President's preparation before praying the Eucharistic Prayer on behalf of the church.

Offertory Prayer

Often seasonal which concludes the offertory rite.

The Eucharistic Prayer

There are a number of climaxes or high points in the Liturgy. The Eucharistic Prayer is one of them. This is the very heart of what we are doing – the point towards which the service has been directing us.

It is properly called The Anaphora. The Greek means 'repetition'. Each time we gather we repeat the same words and bring the same events to mind. That is why it is important that the eucharist is always a repeat of what you have done before. This is very counter-cultural when we are always looking for something new to keep us interested!

The anaphora has its roots in the Last Supper – the dominical words

Paul tells us in his First Letter to the Corinthians that the church there was celebrating the Eucharist

23 For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for[f] you. Do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11)

The prayer developed into a more complete and formal structure until the Prayer of St Hippolytus AD 215

Bishop: The Lord be with you.

People: And with your spirit.

Bishop: Lift up your hearts.

People: We have them with the Lord.

Bishop: Let us give thanks to the Lord.

People: It is proper and just.

Bishop: We give thanks to you God,
through your beloved son Jesus Christ,
whom you sent to us in former times
as Savior, Redeemer, and Messenger of your Will,
who is your inseparable Word,
through whom you made all,
and in whom you were well-pleased,
whom you sent from heaven into the womb of a virgin,
who, being conceived within her, was made flesh,
and appeared as your Son,
born of the Holy Spirit and the virgin.
It is he who, fulfilling your will
and acquiring for you a holy people,
extended his hands in suffering,
in order to liberate from sufferings
those who believe in you.
Who, when he was delivered to voluntary suffering,
in order to dissolve death,
and break the chains of the devil,
and tread down hell,
and bring the just to the light,
and set the limit,
and manifest the resurrection,
taking the bread, and giving thanks to you, said,
"Take, eat, for this is my body which is broken for you."

Likewise the chalice, saying,
This is my blood which is shed for you.
Whenever you do this, do this in memory of me.

Therefore, remembering his death and resurrection,
we offer to you the bread and the chalice,
giving thanks to you, who has made us worthy
to stand before you and to serve as your priests.
And we pray that you would send your Holy Spirit
to the oblation of your Holy Church.
In their gathering together,
give to all those who partake of your holy mysteries the fullness of the Holy Spirit,
toward the strengthening of the faith in truth,
that we may praise you and glorify you,
through your son Jesus Christ,
through whom to you be glory and honour,
Father and Son,
with the Holy Spirit,
in your Holy Church,
now and throughout the ages of the ages.
Amen.

The Prayer divides into a number of sections.

- The Dialogue
- The Preface
- The Sanctus and Benedictus
- The Epiclesis
- The Dominical Words
- The Acclamation
- The Anamnesis
- The Great Amen.

The Eastern Church still uses the prayer of St Basil the Great (d. 379).

Salvation History

Telling the story of God's actions on behalf of his people is what we always do. At the Seder meal held in a Jewish household to mark the Passover, it is the head of the house who stands at the table and recounts the story of salvation. In the Eucharistic Prayer it is the President who tells the story of God's saving acts through history - the covenant relationship with the Father, the incarnate activity of the Son, and the invocation of the Spirit. Telling our story in relation to God's story and recognising where we have been travelling together is an important part of our own growth in corporate and individual spirituality.

BCP and CW

1549, 1552 under Edward VI and 1662 under Elizabeth I. Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury was the chief architect and writer. It was the product of the Reformation but was changed over time and the final version reflected more of our real tradition which is catholic and reformed. But the Prayer of Thanksgiving appears disjointed. In 1922 a revised Prayer Book was proposed but rejected by Parliament. Nevertheless, the eucharist in its revised version became very familiar to congregations.

For catholic Anglicans the English Missal was published in 1912 but before that Dr Hook, Dr Pusey and others had been introducing High Church practices, mixing the chalice, lighting candles on the altar and wearing stoles and other vestments. The English Missal provided an unauthorised shape to the liturgy based on the RC rite but drawing from BCP texts as well.

Alternative Services Second Series

This 'second series' of alternative services began in 1966, and was the first attempt at a new direction in liturgical reform. This series began the process of restructuring and revising services, but retained the word 'thou' when addressing God, rather than the modern 'you'.

Alternative Services Series 3

Series 3 was the name given to the Church of England experimental liturgical material authorized at various times between 1973 and 1980. Its characteristic, revolutionary at the time, was the use of the word 'you' when addressing God, rather than the traditional 'thou'.

The first Series 3 service was for Holy Communion, which built on the radical changes to the structure of the rite that had been made in the Second Series of alternative services (or Series 2). Through the 1970s a range of services and supporting resources (collects and lectionaries) was authorized, culminating in a thorough revision of the Communion service, light revision of the other material – and the publication of all these texts in the Alternative Service Book 1980.

The Alternative Service Book 1980

The Alternative Service Book 1980 was authorized from November 1980 until 31 December 2000. Its continued use was permitted in a few parishes which had explicit permission from the diocesan bishop, but this has now ceased. The Ordinal in the ASB had its authorization further extended until the new Common Worship form was available. The ASB forms for Morning and Evening Prayer are still valid under the Common Worship Service of the Word provision. The Psalter is still authorized under the Versions of the Bible Measure.

Towards Common Worship

From the mid-1990s the Church of England began to issue draft texts for a replacement to the Alternative Service Book. These culminated in the authorization and publication of the Common Worship series, beginning in 1997.

In Common Worship we have 8 Eucharistic Prayers, 3 of which A, B and E can be used with extended prefaces. Some are very responsive. In addition there are 2 prayers written with congregations that have a lot of children ie a school Mass.

How the priest uses their hands

We call the use of our hands – manual acts. The BCP stipulates manual acts in the text

a Here the Priest is to take the Paten into his hands:

b And here to break the Bread:

c And here to lay his hand upon all the Bread.

d Here he is to take the Cup into his hand:

e And here to lay his hand upon every vessel (be it Chalice or Flagon) in which there is any Wine to be consecrated.

RC rite stipulates manual acts; CW doesn't. This means clergy do very different things and a lot depends on how they understand what is going on and what their role in it is. I will come to some of that next week.

The Lord's Prayer

From the 4th century onwards this prayer has been part of the Eucharistic Rite and it was Pope St Gregory the Great (540-604) who established it in the position in which it is now said – after the Eucharistic Prayer and before the Fraction. The phrase 'daily bread' was often interpreted by the early Fathers of the Church as referring to the Eucharist.

The Lord's Prayer holds a special place in Christian spirituality as the model of prayer. There are two forms of the prayer in the gospels - Matthew 6.9-13 and Luke 11.2-4. St Cyprian called it 'the public and common prayer' and Tertullian described it as the 'epitome of the whole gospel'. We know that it has been a part of the Eucharist since c.350 and perhaps long before that.

The Breaking of the Bread

The text for the breaking of the bread comes from St Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 11.26). In this letter Paul gives specific teaching on the Lord's Supper – how it should be celebrated, how the bread and wine should be received. He wrote this letter around the year AD 57 and so we see that within only twenty years after the death of the Lord the Eucharist was well established in the life of the church beyond Jerusalem and Palestine.

The Agnus Dei

The Syrian custom of a chant addressed to the Lamb of God was introduced into the Roman Rite Mass by Pope Sergius I (687–701) in the context of his rejection of the Council of Trullo of 692 (which was well received in the Byzantine East), whose canons had forbidden the iconographic depiction of Christ as a lamb instead of a man.

The Invitation to Communion

CW provides us with a number of invitations to communion. The most commonly used by catholics picks up on the language of the Agnus Dei

Jesus is the Lamb of God
who takes away the sin of the world.
Blessed are those who are called to his supper.
**Lord, I am not worthy to receive you,
but only say the word, and I shall be healed.**

But this doesn't just pick up on the image of Jesus as the lamb of God but also echoes the discourse of one of the miracles in Luke 7

6 And Jesus went with them, but when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to say to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; 7 therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed.

The Prayer of Humble Access

The Prayer of Humble Access, like the Collect for Purity, is a distinctly Anglican, reformation prayer. It reflects deeply and profoundly our spirituality – a bit grovelling, breast-beating, unable to accept that God loves us – but very powerful.

The prayer finds its roots in a prayer of "worthy reception" which appeared in the Order for Communion in 1548 and was retained in the 1549 Book of Common Prayer published during Edward VI's reign. The prayer was not apparently a translation of a pre-existing prayer found in the Sarum Rite - but was a unique combination of several sources, including phrases or concepts from Mark 7:28, the Liturgy of Saint Basil, a Gregorian collect, John 6:56, and the writings of Thomas Aquinas.

Having moved around the liturgy in various stages of revision it has ended up in its correct place, as a response to the invitation and especially after this text

Draw near with faith.
Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.
Eat and drink

in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

The Receiving of Communion

It is our time to come forward

Returning to our seat

What do we do, what do we say, what do we pray? Silence is often the only true response we can make.

Thomas Aquinas – antiphon for Corpus Christi

At this sacred Banquet
In which Christ is received
The memory of his Passion is renewed
Our minds are filled with grace
And the promise of future Glory is given to us.

Leaving

This is the session when we look at the final part of the Eucharist, which in many ways is very simple as it's all about leaving. You may remember that at the very beginning we were looking at the names that we give to this service – the Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, the Eucharist, the Liturgy and the Mass.

This last one, the Mass comes from the ecclesiastical Latin *missa* 'dismissal' - the most missional name for the service. We enter to leave; church is a fuelling station for mission. Without the grace of the sacrament we cannot be disciples, missionaries, witnesses. There's a wonderful line in 1 Kings 19.8

Elijah got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food for forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God.

We have been unpacking the Eucharist by reflecting on St Luke's telling of the story of the road to Emmaus. We left the account at the table in the home of the two disciples. The stranger had, strangely, become the host, had taken the bread, blessed, broken it and shared it with them – and their eyes were opened and they recognised him – but he disappeared. The story continues.

32 They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" 33 That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. 34 They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has

appeared to Simon!" 35 Then they told what had happened on the road and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Even though it was now dark outside, even though there were obvious risks involved in walking back through the countryside late at night – wild animals and bandits along the way – even though it meant breaking the law, and even though the city was seen to be a hostile place for the disciples of Jesus, they felt compelled to go back. There was a missional drive, a missional imperative in them. They had to tell others, the others, about what they had experienced.

We usually end the reading there but the next verse is also significant when we are thinking about leaving.

36 While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

Jesus always goes before us, just as he was ahead of them going to Galilee. When we leave church, we don't leave Jesus who is the shalom, the salaam, the peace that will be with us. Like Elijah we travel in the strength of the food and meet God wherever we are led.

This all means that we leave the Eucharist with joy and thanksgiving, not with regret that it is all over but fired up to be disciples, witnesses, apostles.

Let's get back to the Eucharist.

We left it, sitting in silence, reflecting on what we had received, what we had experienced. Ideally, the silence needs to be long enough to do this in. We may hear an anthem, a communion motet, we may sing a hymn or two but we also need that time of silence, deep silence that we can enter into.

That deep reality is pointed to in C S Lewis' book 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe'. If you've read it or seen the film you will know that the lion, Aslan, is killed but in the dawn of a new day the children discover he is alive.

"But what does it all mean?" asked Susan when they were somewhat calmer.

"It means," said Aslan, "that though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know. Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of Time. But if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness and the darkness before Time dawned, she would have read there a different incantation. She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards."

We don't use the word 'magic' but that deep truth and reality is what the Eucharist draws us into, encountering the real presence who conquered death.

Post Communion Prayer – Prayer after Communion

CW provides a Post-Communion prayer for each Sunday and major Feast Day. These reflect on the season but also respond to what we have just done and received. These are written in that same formal structure that we looked at when we were thinking about the Collect at the beginning of the Eucharist.

This can be followed by a congregational prayer – but we don't have to have a congregational prayer – after all, the Amen is our assent to what has been said. But if we do want a congregational prayer, and this now tends to be the norm, there are a number of these. The default appears to be

Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out
in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.

The alternative in the main text is a longer but beautiful prayer.

Father of all,
we give you thanks and praise,
that when we were still far off
you met us in your Son and brought us home.
Dying and living, he declared your love,
gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory.
May we who share Christ's body live his risen life;
we who drink his cup bring life to others;
we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world.
Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us,
so we and all your children shall be free,
and the whole earth live to praise your name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

In a recent review of a book on liturgical language it says this of this prayer

Foremost among the characteristics that he [David Jasper] identifies is the ability to stretch the imagination of worshippers, to offer them a way of praying that refers beyond itself and makes illuminating connections to the whole milieu of Christian heritage and

practice. In his judgement, David Frost's well-loved post-communion prayer, "Father of all, we give you thanks and praise . . .", achieves all these things.

For me it is the way in which it resonates with the story of the Prodigal son that makes it so powerful. In Luke 15 the story contains this powerful verse.

²⁰ So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.

But there are plenty of other prayers we can use at the end of the Eucharist.

Dismissal Gospel

A more recent introduction is the Dismissal Gospel. This tends to be a few verses of a gospel reading, sometimes the conclusion of the main Gospel, often read by the Deacon from the altar steps that, in a sense, gives us something to go out with, encouragement for mission.

The Blessing

There are two forms of the blessing.

The first is what I would call for any better term, the ordinary blessing. There are many introductions to it, seasonal, thematic but each concludes in the same way

... and the blessing ...

The blessing is of course trinitarian in nature and as the priest makes the sign of the cross over us whilst saying the words; we make the sign of the cross on ourselves as a sign that we receive the blessing and recognise that through the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ we are blessed.

The other form of blessing, which was familiar in the Roman Rite, is what is known as a Solemn Blessing. These are reserved for 'solemn' occasions – the really big days. A solemnity is a feast day of the highest rank celebrating a mystery of the faith such as the Trinity, an event in the life of Jesus, his mother Mary, his legal father Joseph, or another important saint. The observance begins with the vigil on the evening before the actual date of the feast. Unlike feast days of the rank of feast (other than feasts of the Lord) or those of the rank of memorial, solemnities replace the celebration of Sundays outside Advent, Lent, and Easter (those in Ordinary Time).

The Solemn Blessing takes the form of three prayers, each one addressed to a different person of the Trinity and each ending with a congregational Amen. The fourth element is then the blessing in the standard form.

The priest may stand with arms extended towards the congregation throughout the three prayers. This is a gesture reminiscent of Moses in Exodus 17. The Israelites were

fighting the troops of Amalek. He sat on the hill with Aaron and Hur watching them and praying for them.

11 Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. 12 But Moses's hands grew heavy, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on either side, so his hands were steady until the sun set.

The priest may also preface the whole thing by saying 'Bow your heads and pray for God's blessing.'

The Dismissal

The very last part of the Eucharist – it should end with this and not another hymn – is the Dismissal.

CW provides for

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.

(or)

Go in the peace of Christ.
Thanks be to God.

In 'Times and Seasons' there are other embellished dismissals.

The Easter Dismissal

There is a special form of dismissal for the Easter season. The text follows more closely the one that has been used in the western church since the eighth century. Both the Deacon and the people conclude what they say with alleluias. The Easter Eucharist therefore begins and ends with a sense of great joy and celebration.

Our own prayers

The procession passes – we bow to the cross and the President. Then we sit or kneel and say our prayers.

We had a wonderful head server when I was a kid, Bob Hawkins. He seemed to know everything about church and he also knew every pub and church between where we lived and the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham. Every time we went there on a coach he would give us a running commentary on the microphone! But he also gave us a commentary on the Mass. Each month after the High Mass there was a children's conducted Mass. The priest presided and Bob stood in the nave and explained to us everything the priest was doing.

He always ended in the same way and taught us a prayer to say at the end of Mass which I still say, always.

Now we leave you altar, Lord
where your Son we have adored
let our thanks again arise
for this Holy Sacrifice.
And if thoughts have entered in
which have mixed our prayer with sin
let your Son's pure blood and grace
all our sinfulness efface.
Sweet it is to worship here
soon may that bright day appear
when your glory we may see
and unhindered worship thee.
Amen.

You don't have to say Bob's prayer but you need to say thank you.

There are other elements that have a relationship to the Eucharist that I just want to mention as, as it were, addenda.

Angelus and Regina Coeli

Many churches in the catholic tradition will conclude a Choral Eucharist with a procession to wherever the principal statue of Our Lady is. I say principal because in churches like this you find many statues, images and icons of lots of saints and not least Our Lady. But there will be a statue that is the most important.

On arrival the President censes the statue. Then, depending on the season of the year either the Angelus or the Regina Coeli are said or sung.

During the year apart from Eastertide it is the Angelus that is used. We have already noted that the Hail Mary is very scripturally based as is the Angelus – which begins as the name suggests with the greeting of the Archangel Gabriel.

Angelus

℣. The Angel of the LORD brought tidings to Mary,
℞. And she conceived by the Holy Ghost.

Hail Mary, full of grace; the LORD is with thee: blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

Ÿ. Behold the handmaid of the LORD.
R. Be it done unto me according to thy word.

Hail Mary, full of grace; the LORD is with thee: blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

Ÿ. And the Word was made flesh.
R. And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary, full of grace; the LORD is with thee: blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

Ÿ. Pray for us, Holy Mother of God.
R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray,

Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O LORD, Thy grace into our hearts; that, we, who have known the Incarnation of Thy Son, Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, may by His Cross and Passion be brought to the glory of His Resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Regina Coeli

This is sung in Eastertide to 'Jesus Christ is risen today' and after the Ascension to 'Hail the day that sees him rise'.

Joy to thee, O Queen of Heaven. Alleluia!
He whom thou wast meet to bear. Alleluia!
As he promised hath arisen. Alleluia!
Pour for us to God thy prayer. Alleluia!

V. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, alleluia.
R. For the Lord is risen indeed, alleluia.

Let us pray.

O God,
who through the resurrection of thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ
didst vouchsafe to give joy to the world:
grant, we beseech thee,
that through his Mother, the Virgin Mary,
we may obtain the joys of everlasting life.
Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Concelebration

You may have seen large celebrations at which there are a number of priests wearing chasubles. They will then later on join the Principal Celebrant around the altar. This is a concelebration.

The technical explanation is that -

Concelebration is the practice by which “several priests, in virtue of Christ’s own Priesthood and in the person of the High Priest, act together with one voice and one will; so also do they confect and offer a single sacrifice by a single sacramental act and likewise partake of the same.”

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council recommended concelebration as an expression of “the unity of the priesthood” and chose to extend permission for the practice to a number of particular instances, granting the Bishop of each diocese the authority to decide when concelebration was opportune at other times. The Council further directed that “a new rite for concelebration...be drawn up and inserted into the Pontifical and into the Roman Missal.”

In his book ‘Concelebration in the Christian Church’ A A King writes

A concelebrated liturgy is, to the whole people of God, a sign of their unity and a sign that helps them to be more aware that ‘they are the body of Christ, not many bodies, but one body, as John Chrysostom affirms.’

What I think is emphasised in a concelebration is that

- Priests are members of a college and should act collegially
- That we all have ministries to which we are called
- We should exercise those ministries as often as we can
- Any celebration is enacted by the whole people of God, together, not hierarchically but equal in humility.

Concomitance

The doctrine of concomitance is a Eucharistic teaching primarily held in Catholic and some Protestant (e.g., Anglican) traditions. It states that when a communicant receives either the consecrated bread (Body of Christ) or the consecrated wine (Blood of Christ) during the Eucharist, they receive the entirety of Christ – both his Body and Blood, as well as his Soul and Divinity – not just the element they physically consume. Essentially, Christ is indivisible, and his presence in the Eucharist is complete under each species.

I became very aware of this doctrine on the Feast of St Ninian, 16th September 2009 when the Archbishops withdrew the chalice because of Swine Flu. They dusted off this doctrine so that we could explain to our congregations how they would still

receive the fullness of the sacrament. This was the first time since the Reformation that this had happened. It was practice for Covid! But it's important if we are gluten intolerant and the church doesn't have the wafers, or if we can't drink alcohol for one reason or another – concomitance is our saviour.

Transubstantiation

We spoke about the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist and not least in the bread and wine. The catholic doctrine for how this happens is called transubstantiation. But there are a variety of ways that people can understand what happens.

Transubstantiation and consubstantiation are two different theological interpretations of the Eucharist (also known as Communion or the Lord's Supper) in Christianity. Transubstantiation, held by the Catholic Church, posits that during consecration, the bread and wine transform into the body and blood of Christ, while the appearance remains unchanged. Consubstantiation, on the other hand, suggests that the body and blood of Christ are present alongside the bread and wine, without the bread and wine changing substance.

There is also receptionism.

Receptionism, in Eucharistic theology, is the doctrine that during the Eucharist, the bread and wine remain unchanged after consecration, but the communicant receives the body and blood of Christ by faith when they partake of the elements. Essentially, it posits that the bread and wine are not transformed into the actual body and blood of Christ, but rather, the faithful believer experiences a spiritual union with Christ by faith upon receiving the sacrament.

There is also the idea that it is a memorial act in which we participate and so there is no change in substance at any time, in any way.

Reservation of the sacrament depends on either transubstantiation or consubstantiation, as does Benediction.

We reserve the sacrament for two reasons

- To take to those who are in need and cannot get to Mass.
- For the purposes of adoration.

Reservation takes place in either an Aumbry – a safe set into the wall – or a Tabernacle – usually on the altar but maybe set apart on a plinth. It can be called a Sacrament House. It reminds us of God, tabernacling with his chosen people.

St John Vianney is better known as the Cure d'Ars. There is a story that goes like this.

An old farmer in Ars would spend hours in the church, often before the tabernacle. St. John Vianney, curious about the farmer's prayer, asked him what he did during these

visits. The farmer simply replied, "I look at Him, and He looks at me". We are called to adore God as God adores us.

I am duty bound to remind you of the Articles of Religion which are one of the Historic Formularies of the Church of England and can be found in the Book of Common Prayer.

XXVIII. Of the Lord's Supper

The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another; but rather is a Sacrament of our Redemption by Christ's death: insomuch that to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same, the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ; and likewise the Cup of Blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ.

Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of Bread and Wine) in the Supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by holy Writ; but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

The Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is Faith.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped.

Benediction

Given all of that, one of the services that marks out catholics is a love of Benediction. To explain it simply this is an extended form of adoration and blessing which might be celebrated at the end of a Solemn Mass, as on Corpus Christi, or after Evensong or even Compline.

The shape of the liturgy is:

- The Sacrament is brought in and exposed on the altar in a monstrance.
- We sing the O salutaris 'O saving victim' by Thomas Aquinas
- We are led in devotions – a meditation, intercessions, silence
- We say the Agnus Dei (optional)
- We sing the Tantum ergo 'Therefore we before him bending' by Thomas Aquinas
- There is a responsory – Thou gavest them bread from heaven'
- The Collect – usually for Corpus Christi
- The Blessing over the people – Benediction
- We say the Divine Praises – 'Blessed be God ...'
- We sing a final hymn or response – 'Blessed and praised be Jesus Christ' as the sacrament is removed from the Monstrance and replaced in the tabernacle.
- All leave in silence.

"Go with Him, as His inseparable companion, to the wedding feast of Cana, and drink of the wine of His blessing. Let you have ever before you the Face of the Lord, and look upon His beauty, and let your earnest gaze turn nowhere away from His most sweet countenance. Go before Him into a desert place and see the wonder of His works, where He multiplied in His own Holy Hands the bread that sufficed the great multitude. Go, my brother, go, my sister, go forward, and with all the love of your soul follow Christ wherever He may go... And lovingly behold Him as taking bread into His hands, He blesses it, and breaks it, as the outward form of His own Immaculate Body; and the chalice which He blessed as the outward form of His Precious Blood, and gave to His Disciples; and be you also a partaker of His sacraments."

- St. Ephrem of Syria

"The time you spend with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the best time that you will spend on earth. Each moment that you spend with Jesus will deepen your union with Him and make your soul everlastingly more glorious and beautiful in heaven, and will help bring about an everlasting peace on earth."

- Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Grace before meals

Finally, I want to encourage you to think of every meal as a shadow, an echo of the eucharist. Back to Emmaus

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.

Every time we are at the table, on our own or with another, we give thanks, we say Grace. It is one of the privileges I still have to say Grace before meals in the City of London. Each Company has Grace twice in the meal, at the beginning and at the end, like a religious community would have. In what is perceived as a very secular city Grace is being said and sung around tables daily

For these and all Thy mercies given,
We bless and praise Thy Name, O Lord;
May we receive them with thanksgiving,
Ever trusting in Thy word.
To Thee alone be honour, glory,
Now and henceforth for evermore. Amen.