

The Christian Faith in the Anglican Catholic Tradition

AN INQUIRER'S GUIDE



*St. Matthew's Church
Newport Beach, California*

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INTRODUCTION

THE Inquirers' Class is designed to provide an introduction to what the church believes and does. One goal of the class is to provide space in the church for people who have questions to pursue answers. Another goal is that people who work their way through this material will be able to begin to participate meaningfully in the ministry and prayer life of the church.

The Inquirers' Class is not a Bible study. However, the main biblical truths of the faith are the focus of the class. The Inquirers' Class gives the foundation and framework for our practice of the faith. If the class has its desired impact, participants will begin the habit of daily Bible reading in the context of daily prayer.

The Need for An Inquirer's Class

People who come to the liturgy without any instruction will typically be lost or bored. Even if they are able to find and follow the words they will not understand what the liturgy means. This has always been the case in the church. In the early church, people went through an extended period of instruction before they were allowed to be present for the Eucharist; they would never see or hear the liturgy before they understood it.

In the modern world, people become Christians with far less instruction and preparation. Some people were baptized as infants and then raised in a nominally Christian environment. They have some measure of faith, but not much knowledge about it. Others have had some kind of conversion experience. But, again, this is often not followed up with systematic instruction and discipleship. The result is a person with a faith not fully formed or informed.

Even those who know things often don't really "know" things. For example, one may have learned the mechanics of how to receive the Sacrament without understanding what it means to live in communion with the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. One can memorize the Creed without understanding the significance and implications of God as Trinity.

In our culture, many fully committed Christians have been formed by churches that lack liturgy, symbols, sacraments and tradition. These Christians know the basic truths of the Bible but have been cut off from the fullness of the church's historical theology, worship, and life of prayer. Many people from this background are being drawn to the depth, beauty, and richness of the sacramental way.

Increasingly, there are people who have had no significant exposure to the gospel or were raised in another religion altogether. They need to learn about Christ from the beginning. The material in the class can be helpful to people in all of these categories.

Instruction Is Only the Beginning

Instruction is only part of the process of becoming a follower of Jesus Christ. Christianity is a communal faith—a truth that is often lost in the individualism of our time. When we become Christians we become members of the Body of Christ. Thus, to be authentically Christian requires a committed and meaningful connection to other Christians. One danger of contemporary Christianity is the temptation for people to become “free agent” Christians. They have their personal faith in Jesus Christ, but they live at an arm’s length from the church. They will consume the product of the church, but they will also feel free to move on when the product does not suit their tastes. The danger here is not only, or mainly, the lack of accountability; the real danger is that such distance from community precludes the possibility of experiencing real love.

To experience the fullness of the faith that is rooted in the Incarnation of the Son of God, it is necessary to be a part of an actual, flesh and blood community of Christians. In the church we come to know others and be known by others. We learn to love real people in real time, and we learn what it means to be loved by others. We learn how to use our gifts in a complementary relationship to the gifts of others in the body of Christ. We begin to participate in the church’s life of prayer. Apart from a commitment to live out the Christian faith in a specific church community over time, we will not become fully formed and mature Christians.

Anglican Faith and Practice

We are Christians who practice the faith according the tradition of the Church of England (to be Anglican is to be “English” or English in tradition). To be Anglican is to be Catholic because we believe the ancient and universal or “Catholic” faith of the church—what was believed “everywhere, always and by all.” In disputed matters, we are interested in what the church has always believed rather than more recent, novel interpretations. To be Anglican is also to be reformed. The Church of England went through a Reformation in which it rejected beliefs and practices that departed from the ancient and Catholic faith. The English Reformation was marked by a renewed emphasis on the Bible.

We call ourselves Anglican Catholics because of modern developments in the Anglican Church. The Anglican Church in America, historically, was called the Episcopal Church. In the last generation, the Episcopal Church, like many churches, came to openly embrace false teachings and practices. This has required faithful Anglicans to continue to practice the faith outside of that church. The Anglican Catholic Church was formed in 1976 as a place for faithful Anglicans to continue to believe and practice “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

Anglican faith and practice is rooted in the Book of Common Prayer. One goal of the Book of Common Prayer is to include all Christians in the prayer life of the church. The seven daily prayer offices of medieval monasticism were observed only by monks. The Book of Common Prayer reduced these to two (Morning and Evening Prayer) and envisioned participation by each and every member of the church. The ideal Anglican parish is an extended family unit in which all the members observe a

common rule of life under the direction of a spiritual father (typically, the rector). We read through the Bible together each year. We experience together the revelation of God in Christ as we observe together the feasts and fasts of the church year.

This common life of prayer is the center and heartbeat of Anglican faith. Many people erroneously think that Christian faith is mostly about doctrine. They envision progress in the faith largely in intellectual terms—acquiring more information about God. However, the essence of Christian faith is the experience of union with God the Father through his Son Jesus Christ by means of the Holy Spirit. Doctrine forms the necessary foundation for this experience; it helps us understand the truth about God and it establishes boundaries between the genuine experience of union with God and false experiences that are rooted in false teachings. However, the goal of faith is not to know about God; the goal of faith is to know God.

Consequently, the goal of this material is not merely to teach people information. The goal is to draw people into a new way of life—the life of prayer lived out in the community of the Body of Christ. We hope the material provided in this book can help in reaching that goal.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE CREEDS OF THE CHURCH

THE word *creed* comes from the Latin *credo*, which means “I believe.” The church composed creeds to clarify right belief or *orthodoxy* in response to the emergence of wrong belief or *heresy*.

The church uses two ancient creeds in worship: The Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed. **The Apostles’ Creed** is the earlier of the two. Though it did not reach its final form until the A.D. 400’s, some form of the Apostles’ Creed was likely in use in the 2nd Century (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4). **The Nicene Creed** is the product of two ecumenical councils: Nicaea in A.D. 325 and Constantinople in A.D. 381. A third creed, **The Athanasian Creed**, is named after the church father St. Athanasius, though it probably was not written by him. It was once required to be read on certain feast days, but has fallen into disuse. However, it remains an authorized statement of right belief, especially regarding the Trinity and the divinity and humanity of Jesus.

Why the Creeds?

People who say they believe in God have vastly different understandings of who God is. What at first glance appears to be a common faith in God, on further review, is shown to be a cause of great division. The creeds summarize the essential points of God’s identity and help distinguish Christian faith from other, contrary notions of God.

A right understanding of the doctrine about God necessarily precedes a relationship with God. For example, a woman cannot love a man if she does not know who he is or has false notions of his character. Just so, we cannot love and trust God if we are not clear about who he is and what he is like. True religion involves both head and heart.

But we have the Bible. Why do we need creeds? From the beginning of the church, there have been false teachers who twist the teachings of the Bible to their own ends (cf. 1 Timothy 4:1, Acts 20:29-30, 2 Peter 3:16). The church wrote creeds to distinguish true, biblical teaching from false teaching. The creeds are the church’s authoritative summaries of biblical doctrine on the central points of faith. They reflect the truth into which the Holy Spirit led the church (John 16:13). They are statements of faith to which the whole church says, “Amen.” Consequently, they are to be distinguished from sectarian “confessions” of faith, which highlight the distinctive beliefs of one church or another.

The Creeds and Tradition

The Creeds are part of the tradition of the church. “Tradition” is sometimes seen as a negative thing because of Jesus’ criticism of the Pharisees in passages like Matthew 15:6, “You have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.” But the New Testament also speaks in a positive way about tradition. St. Paul wrote, “Stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.” (2 Thessalonians 2:15, cf. 3:6).

Tradition teaches us what the early church believed about Bible passages that are unclear. Tradition informs us what the early church believed and practiced in areas where the Bible is silent. For example, St. Paul talks about having established the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23f.), but he never says exactly how the church was celebrating it. We can look to the tradition of the church in the writings of the church fathers to see what worship was like.

Of special importance for understanding tradition are the Seven Ecumenical Councils. These are gatherings of the church that took place between A.D. 325 and A.D. 787 (see addendum for a summary of these councils). The Ecumenical Councils met for the purpose of clarifying right doctrine in response to heresy. Since these councils met before the later divisions in the church, their decisions reflect the ancient consensus about the faith. As mentioned above, the Nicene Creed is the product of the first two of these councils.

The ancient and universal consensus that is called Tradition is to be distinguished from practices that may become "a tradition" in a church. We should examine the practices of the church in the light of the Bible and the ancient Tradition. For example, the English Reformation rejected the medieval "Romish Doctrine concerning Purgatory, Pardons, etc..." (Article XXII, BCP 607) because it was a departure from the faith of the Bible and the ancient Tradition.

A Look at the Creeds

Both creeds are composed of three paragraphs (shown side by side below); one each for the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Nicene Creed expands on the shorter paragraphs of the Apostles' Creed, reflecting the church's need to clarify orthodox faith as new heresies surfaced over time.

The Apostles' Creed

IBELIEVE in God the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth:

And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary: Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead, and buried: He descended into hell; The third day he rose again from the dead: He ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty: From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost: The holy Catholic Church; The Communion of Saints: The Forgiveness of sins: The Resurrection of the body: And the Life everlasting. Amen.

The Nicene Creed

IBELIEVE 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 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.

PARAGRAPH ONE - GOD THE FATHER

I Believe in One God...Maker of Heaven and Earth

Paragraph one of both creeds summarizes the monotheism (belief in one God) that is the foundation of the Old Testament revelation. Genesis 1, the creation narrative in the Bible, was written as a refutation of ancient polytheism or belief in many gods. Genesis teaches that the one and only God spoke into existence the very aspects of nature that the pagans believed were divine. There are other spiritual beings (angels) who were created by God but there is only one, eternal God. Every thing else, visible and invisible, was created by him.

The Bible teaches us that God was motivated by love when he created the world. The word used to describe the Holy Spirit “hovering” or “moving” over the face of the waters in Genesis 1:2 is a word that elsewhere describes a mother bird hovering over her young. Job 38:7 tells us that was joy among the angels over God’s creation. This contrasts with ancient pagan notions that the world was created by angry, warring deities and the modern notion that the creation of the world was a random occurrence, without meaning or purpose.

Our view of life is defined by our view of the origin of the world. If we think the world was created by forces that are hostile to us, we will live with a certain fear, not being able to trust that things will work out for our good. If we think the world is merely the product of random occurrences, then we will be uncertain about the present and future and life will seem meaningless. But if we believe the world was created and is sustained by a loving, all powerful God, we can trust that he intends things to work out for our good.

The Bible also teaches that the creation is “good” (Genesis 1:10, 12, 31). The problems in the creation result from man’s decision to disobey God (Genesis 3). Sin causes man to take the good things God made and use them for evil. This contrasts with the teaching of some religions that physical bodies and physical things are inherently bad. Some religions teach that to be saved we have to be freed from the physical creation. The Bible teaches us that the Son of God became a part of the creation and that the creation itself will be saved (Romans 8:21).

The Father

Both creeds state that God is Father. Whatever may be the limitations of gender distinctions applied to God, it remains the clear fact of revelation that God has chosen to reveal himself as Father, not as mother or in an androgynous category. The Bible makes it clear that gender is central to the revelation. God is a Father who has a Son. And God created man as male and female. The institution of marriage in Genesis 2:24 is used in the New Testament in Ephesians 5:31-32 as the pattern for understanding the union of Christ the Bridegroom (John 3:29) and his Church the Bride.

This is the principal reason the church does not ordain women as priests. The opposition to women’s ordination has nothing whatsoever to do with ability or equality. It has to do with an accurate repre-

sentation of the being and nature of God. The apostolic ministry represents Christ the Bridegroom (cf. John 3:29) at the altar. Because the mystery of our salvation is revealed in categories that involve gender, it is necessary that the apostolic ministry represent the maleness of Christ. To say that a woman can represent a man is to say that gender is interchangeable. This is the root of homosexual behavior. The ordination of women and the acceptance of homosexual behavior are related theological errors and it is no coincidence that they have appeared in the church at the same time.

Almighty

Both creeds state that God is Almighty. Almighty means all-powerful. It means that God is in control. There is no equal and opposite force of evil that can thwart the will of God. Revelation 12 reveals that the being who stands opposite of Satan is Michael the Archangel. God has no equal.

We can only trust God because he is Almighty. If God were not Almighty, how could we trust him to do what he says he is going to do? If God were not Almighty, and if Jesus were not Lord of all, some other, competing power or authority might be able to undermine our hope and salvation.

Of course, it is not self-evident that God is Almighty. There is crime and war. There is severe persecution of Christians in many lands. Sin and unbelief are rampant. Our world is marred by tragedy, misfortune, sickness and death. The Bible teaches us that all of the evil in the world is the result of human sin. God became man in order to conquer sin and redeem the world. The work of redemption has begun, but is not yet completed. The definitive victory in the battle against Satan, sin and death has been won on the cross, but the effects of that victory are not yet recognized universally (cf. Hebrews 2:8, 1 Corinthians 15:25-6).

The Bible teaches that Jesus will appear in glory and forcefully subdue all evil (cf. Philippians 3:21). Now is the time of mission and witness, when salvation is freely offered to all. Now is the time when hearts and minds can be changed by the grace and power of God.

The omnipotence of God is governed by the love of God. The love of God requires some continued measure of human freedom. God wants hearts to respond to his love, shown on the cross, with love. The free response of love can only be given by people who are also free to reject love. Indeed, acts of genuine sacrifice and holiness can only be carried out by people who are also free to do what is selfish and evil.

Nonetheless, the Bible teaches us that God's almighty power will prevail. Just as God brought the glory of resurrection out of the evil of Good Friday, so God will bring a glorious salvation out of all human sin. Almighty God is at work in the world right now, causing "all things to work together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). God's almighty power is shown in this: He is able to bring the creation and each of our lives to the redemptive end he has planned for us. He is almighty, and thus, we can trust him.

PARAGRAPH TWO - GOD THE SON

Jesus: Fully Man

The earliest issue in the church, addressed by the Apostles' Creed, was whether Jesus is genuinely human or "man." An early heresy held that Jesus, the Son of God, only appeared to be man for the purpose of revealing God, but was not genuinely human. The cadenced phrases in the second paragraph of the Apostles' Creed address this error. They assert that Jesus was conceived and born; that he suffered, died and was buried and that he descended into hell. These assertions highlight his genuine humanity.

The things said about Jesus in the Apostles' Creed pertain to every human. We are all conceived and born. We all die and are buried. At death, our spirits go to the place where departed spirits go. There are two exceptions to the general lot of humanity in the life of Jesus. First, he was conceived by the Holy Ghost. His mother was Mary, but he had no human father. He was conceived in the womb of Mary when the Holy Spirit came upon her (cf. Luke 1:35). Therefore, he is the Son of God. Second, Jesus rose from the dead the third day, unlike any human being before him. His resurrection expands the horizon of human life and gives us the hope of our own resurrection (cf. John 5:28-29, 1 Corinthians 15:52, 1 Thessalonians 4:16).

The genuine humanity of Jesus is different from our humanity in that Jesus is without sin (Hebrews 4:15). This is no small difference. When we talk about someone being "human," we usually mean that person is flawed or weak. However, Jesus is the New Man. He came to solve the problem that was created by the sin of the first man (see Romans 5:15-19, 1 Corinthians 15:21-22). His perfect humanity is the model for the Christian life. Salvation means not only becoming like God; salvation also means becoming genuinely human—that is, free from the defects of human nature that are caused by sin.

Jesus: Fully God

By the time of the Council of Nicea in A. D. 325, the pressing issue was no longer whether Jesus was truly man. The question was, "Is Jesus truly God?" Some in the church (most notably, a priest in Alexandria named Arius and his followers) taught that Jesus was the most exalted and important being in the creation, but was not God. These "Arians" taught that in the great divide that exists between God and the creation, Jesus belongs on the side of the creation.

The second paragraph of the Nicene Creed expands the second paragraph of the Apostles' Creed in order to deal with this error. In certain key statements ("begotten of the Father before all worlds," "begotten not made," "being of one substance with the Father") it affirms that Jesus is really and truly God.

The Son of God is eternal, like the Father. To use an ancient phrase, "There never was a time when the Son was not." In the New Testament, John's Gospel refers to Jesus as the "Word" of God. John 1:1-3 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. All

things were made through Him and without Him nothing was made that was made.” We see in Genesis that God created the world by speaking. The Father created the world through his Son, who is the “Word” of God.

Thus, Jesus is fully God and fully man. He is God because he is “begotten of the Father before all worlds.” He is man because he was “born of the Virgin Mary.” The English word that is used to refer to his divinity and humanity is “nature.” **Jesus has a divine nature and a human nature, which are united in his one person.** Because Jesus is God, his teaching carries the very authority of God (cf. Hebrews 1:1-2). Because Jesus is man, he can identify with the human condition and intercede with the Father on our behalf (cf. Hebrews 7:25). God and man are reconciled in the person of Jesus.

PARAGRAPH THREE - GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is God

Genesis 1:2 says, that in the beginning “the Spirit of God moved over the face of the waters.” The Spirit was present in the beginning with the Father and the Son. In Acts 5:3-4, lying to the Holy Spirit is described as lying to God. The Nicene Creed affirms the divinity of the Holy Spirit when it says, “who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified.” Since only God can be worshiped, the Nicene Creed is saying that the Holy Spirit is God.

God is Trinity: Three Persons, One Substance

Thus, the creeds teach that God is Trinity. The English word used to distinguish the three is “person.” The doctrine of the Trinity states that the one God who created the world exists, from eternity, in three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who are united in one substance of being.

A note: The word *substance* comes from the Greek word, “homoousious,” which means “one substance” or “one essence.” At the council of Nicea in 325, the Arians (those who did not believe that Jesus is God) taught that Jesus was of “like substance” or “homoiousious” with the Father. Thus, the difference between orthodoxy and heresy was one Greek vowel, the “i” or “iota.”

One way to understand the Trinity is provided by the church father, St. Augustine. He pointed out that a relationship of love requires three: a lover, a beloved and love itself. The Father loves the Son, the Son loves the Father and the Holy Spirit is the personification of their love (cf. Romans 5:5). Thus, God is love because he is, within his own being, a loving relationship. He is not merely an abstract principle of love. God created the world because of his desire to share his love with created beings. Love is also the motive for the cross (John 3:16). By contrast, a unitarian God might create out of a need for someone to love. Indeed, pagan stories taught that the god created or acted out of need or malice. The Bible and the creeds reveal one God whose motive is love.

All Christian theology builds upon these two cardinal doctrines: Jesus is fully God and fully man, and God is Trinity. Errors with regard to these doctrines are called, in classical Christian terms, heresies.

OTHER TEACHINGS OF THE CREEDS

He Descended into Hell

The word “hell” in the Apostles’ Creed is the English translation of the Greek word *hades*. This is the intermediate state of the dead. It is the equivalent of the Old Testament *Sheol*. **To say that Jesus descended into hell or hades is to say that Jesus died a normal death.** His body went into the ground and his spirit went to the place where departed spirits go. In *hades*, Jesus preached the gospel to the dead (cf. 1 Peter 3:19) and made it retroactive, confirming the salvation of the elect and confirming God’s judgment on the disobedient. The word *hades* is to be distinguished from the word *Gebenna* which refers to the place of eternal punishment (cf. Matthew 5:13).

The New Testament teaches that the redeemed are separated from the rest of the dead in the intermediate state (see the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, Luke 16:19-31). The New Testament teaches that at death the souls of the faithful departed go to a place described as “paradise” (Luke 23:43), “present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8), “with Christ” (Philippians 2:23) or “asleep” (1 Thessalonians 4:15). This reflects the teaching that in his descent into *hades* and subsequent resurrection, Jesus “led captivity captive” (Ephesians 4:8). He took those who were his out of *hades*, which is a state of captivity to death, and into Paradise to be with him.

He Shall Come Again, with Glory, to Judge

When Jesus ascended into heaven, the promise was given that he would return in the same manner as he left. (Acts 1:11). When he comes again he will judge the world. As Romans says, “God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ” (2:16). This is an important teaching to take to heart because we live in a world in which people frequently assume they will not be held accountable for their actions. All sin will be accounted for, either through repentance and the forgiveness that Jesus offers us through the cross, or on the Day of Judgement.

The Holy Catholic Church

The various statements of belief in the third paragraph of the creeds are listed after the Holy Spirit because they are things that we receive through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit created the Church when the Spirit descended upon the first believers (Acts 2).

The Four Marks of the Church

The Book of Common Prayer has the following questions and answers about the Church (BCP 291):

Question. How is the Church described in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds?

Answer. The Church is described in the Creeds as One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic.

Question. What do we mean by these words?

Answer. We mean that the Church is
One; because it is one Body under one Head;
Holy; because the Holy Spirit dwells in it, and sanctifies its members;
Catholic; because it is universal, holding earnestly the Faith for all time, in all countries, and for all people; and is sent to preach the Gospel to the whole world;
Apostolic; because it continues steadfastly in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship.

These are called the four marks of the Church.

The Communion of the Saints

The Apostles' Creed also expresses belief in the Communion of the Saints. This means that the Holy Spirit unites the members of the church into one, common body that cannot be separated by time and space. As Hymn 207 says, "One body we, one body who partake, with all thy saints on earth and saints at rest." This union answers the human need for genuine, intimate and mutually fulfilling relationships with others, as opposed to the false, shallow and selfish nature of fallen human relationships.

The greater part of the communion of the saints consists of those who have already died. Because death does not divide the Church, the Church prays for the faithful departed in the Liturgy, "beseeching thee to grant them continual growth in thy love and service." The Church also believes that the departed saints pray for the living, inasmuch as they are able. However, because the Bible is silent on this issue and because of historical abuses with regard to the invocation of saints (cf. Article XXII, BCP 607), Anglicans tend to be cautious about how they express this doctrine.

The Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting

The Christian hope is not merely that we will die and go to heaven. Death is the separation of the spirit from the body. The body is buried and the spirit goes to be "with Christ" (Philippians 1:23) or "in paradise" (Luke 23:43). This is the intermediate state of the soul—the state of the soul after death and before resurrection. Resurrection is the reunion of the spirit with the body. When Jesus comes again in glory he will give us new bodies like his resurrection body and bring us into his eternal kingdom (cf. Corinthians 15:52). Eternal life is life in a transformed body (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:2-4).

Additional Thoughts on the Resurrection of the Dead

Given the misunderstandings about the Christian hope that are so common and pervasive, some additional clarifications are necessary concerning “The resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.” Many, perhaps most, Christians think of the Christian hope as the promise that we will go to heaven when we die. Heaven is seen as the end-point of faith. We will live forever, with God, in heaven.

This is wrong. The Christian hope is resurrection. It is the hope that what happened to Jesus will happen to us. Jesus died on Good Friday. His spirit left his body. Jesus rose on Easter as his spirit and body were reunited. Likewise, our spirits and our bodies, separated in death, will be reunited when Jesus returns and the dead are raised. This is the central New Testament hope. It is proclaimed in passages such as Philippians 3:20-21 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-54. We do not hope for a disembodied “spiritual” existence. We hope to live forever in bodies that have been transformed after the pattern of Jesus.

The “going to heaven” part of the Christian hope is what is called the “Intermediate State.” It is what the New Testament calls being “in Paradise,” (Luke 23:43) “with Christ” (Philippians 1:23 or “asleep” (1 Thessalonians 4:13). It is intermediate because it is not final. The final state is resurrection. Those who are asleep in Christ, in Paradise, also await the resurrection.

The resurrection hope is not that we will live in heaven forever. The resurrection hope is that Jesus will return and establish his kingdom on earth. The whole creation will also participate in the resurrection (Romans 8:21). The resurrection of Jesus is the pattern for the whole creation, not just for individual believers. The Bible promises a new creation, a new heaven and a new earth (Isaiah 65:17, 1 Peter 2:1, Revelation 21:5).

The Christian hope is for the fulfillment of the creation. It is for life in a body in a physical world, about which God will again say, “It is very good” (Genesis 1:31). This is why Revelation 22 sounds so much like the Garden of Eden. The new creation restores what was lost through sin.

Many Christians speak of going to heaven in a way that implies that salvation is an escape from the physical world. That is actually an eastern, Hindu concept of salvation. The Hindus believe that one is reincarnated until all the bad karma is gone. Then one will not come back. One will have finally escaped from the physical world and become pure spirit. This is not the Christian hope!

The popular errors concerning the Christian hope make it hard for many to desire what God promises. Few people want to live as a spirit, floating on a cloud, playing a harp, and this is not what the Bible promises. The Christian hope is for the fulfillment of life in the body. There is no truly good thing in this life that does not have some corresponding fulfillment in the life that is to come. The good things in this world point us to the good things in the resurrection.

The biblical hope has been undermined by what is sometimes called “dispensationalist theology,” and a fictitious event referred to as “the rapture.” The idea, based on a misreading of 1 Thessalonians 4:17, is that salvation involves an escape from the creation. The church will be caught up or raptured, so they say, and taken away. However, the point of being “caught up in the air to meet the Lord in the clouds” in 1 Thessalonians is to join Christ in his triumphant return as the creation rejoices over the revealing of the sons of God (Romans 8:19). Those caught up are not to be spirited off to some distant place. They are coming with Christ to earth to reign with Christ in the new creation. As the prophet Zechariah says, “The LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.” 1 Thessalonians 4:17 is talking about resurrection, not “rapture.”

False views of the Christian hope are not just harmless differences of opinion. They can be harmful because they can lead people to live in the wrong way. If we believe the world will be completely destroyed and we will live forever in a non-physical state, we may come to despise the current physical creation. But if we see the whole creation as something that is being redeemed, we can affirm the goodness of God’s creation, even as we look for its renewal.

Because the resurrection hope proclaims the redemption of the whole creation, it leads us to ministry in the world. The kingdom of God has already broken into this world through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and the gift of the Spirit. Jesus is now Lord of the creation. “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ” (Revelation 11:15). At the resurrection, this conquest will be completed. As we pray, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,” we also work, by grace, to make it so.

(For a more thoroughgoing exposition of the biblical hope of resurrection, I recommend *Surprised by Hope*, by N. T. Wright.)

Bible Passages Related to the Creeds

God as Creator/Almighty: Genesis 1 & 2, Revelation 1:8

On the Divinity and Humanity of Christ: John 1:1-14, Galatians 4:4, Colossians 1:15-18, Hebrews 1

On the Crucifixion and Resurrection: Matthew 27-28, Mark 15-16, Luke 23-24, John 19-21

On the Ascension and Second Coming of Jesus: Acts 1:9-11, Titus 1:13, Philippians 3:20-21

On Christ as Judge: 1 Corinthians 4:5, 2 Corinthians 5:10, 2 Timothy 4:1, 1 Peter 4:5, 2 Peter 2:9

On the Holy Spirit: Genesis 1:2, Acts 2, Acts 5:3-4, John 20:21-23, Romans 5:5, 1 Corinthians 12:13

On the Communion of the Saints: Ephesians 4:4-6

On the Resurrection of the Body: 1 Corinthians 15

The Athanasian Creed

WHOSOEVER will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith. Which Faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the Catholic Faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity. Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is all One, the Glory Equal, the Majesty Co-Eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father Uncreated, the Son Uncreated, and the Holy Ghost Uncreated. The Father Incomprehensible, the Son Incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost Incomprehensible. The Father Eternal, the Son Eternal, and the Holy Ghost Eternal and yet they are not Three Eternals but One Eternal. As also there are not Three Uncreated, nor Three Incomprehensibles, but One Uncreated, and One Uncomprehensible. So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet they are not Three Almighties but One Almighty.

So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not Three Gods, but One God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not Three Lords but One Lord. For, like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by Himself to be God and Lord, so are we forbidden by the Catholic Religion to say, there be Three Gods or Three Lords. The Father is made of none, neither created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone; not made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father, and of the Son neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.

So there is One Father, not Three Fathers; one Son, not Three Sons; One Holy Ghost, not Three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is afore or after Other, None is greater or less than Another, but the whole Three Persons are Co-eternal together, and Co-equal. So that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity is Trinity, and the Trinity is Unity is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity.

Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting Salvation, that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man.

God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man, of the substance of His mother, born into the world. Perfect God and Perfect Man, of a reasonable Soul and human Flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His Manhood. Who, although He be God and Man, yet He is not two, but One Christ. One, not by conversion of the Godhead into Flesh, but by taking of the Manhood into God. One altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by Unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one Man, so God and Man is one Christ. Who suffered for our salvation, descended into Hell, rose again the third day from the dead. He ascended into Heaven, He sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty, from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting fire. This is the Catholic Faith, which except a man believe faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved.

Addendum on the Ecumenical Councils

The early church developed its authorized tradition as it encountered false teaching. When someone began to teach false doctrine, the church was forced to more clearly define what is right. In the first thousand years of Christianity, the undivided church convened seven councils for the purpose of clarifying doctrine. The councils are called The Seven Ecumenical Councils. Each of these councils clarified some aspect of doctrine. They can be summarized as follows:

Nicea: A.D. 325. Affirmed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, against the heresy of a priest named Arius and his followers who taught that the Son of God was created. The Nicene Creed (named after this council) says that the Son of God is “the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds. God of God. Light of light. Very God of very God. Begotten not made. Being of one substance with Father, by whom all things were made.”

Constantinople: A.D. 381. Affirmed that Jesus was fully human, against the Apollinarian heresy, which taught that Jesus was not genuinely human. This doctrine complements the teaching of Nicea. Jesus has been the Son of God from the beginning. Jesus became man about two thousand years ago. He is fully God and fully man. Constantinople also affirmed the divinity of the Holy Spirit, adding to the Nicene Creed the words, “who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified.”

Ephesus: A.D. 431. Affirmed that Jesus is one person, against the heresy of Nestorianism, which held that Christ could be separated into distinct divine and human persons. This council gave Mary the title “Theotokos”(meaning “God bearer” or “Mother of God”) because it insisted that Mary gave birth to the Son of God, not merely to a human part of Jesus that could be separated from his divinity.

Chalcedon: A.D. 451. Affirmed that Jesus is one person with two natures. In Christ, the divine nature and the human nature are united in one person. This was against the Monophysite heresy that said that the Jesus’ divine nature overwhelmed his human nature so that only the divine nature remained.

In the first four Councils, the church affirmed the orthodox understanding of the nature of God and Jesus Christ. God is three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, yet only one God. The three persons are united in one substance or essence of being. Jesus is fully God and fully man. His two natures are united in his one person.

Constantinople II: A.D. 553. Affirmed the earlier decisions about the person of Christ by condemning the writings of three theologians sympathetic to the Monophysites and Nestorians.

Constantinople III: A.D. 680-1. Affirmed that Jesus has two wills, one divine and one human, in opposition to the monothelites, who taught that he has only a divine will. This was a natural extension of the teaching of Chalcedon.

Nicea II: A.D. 787. Affirmed the use of pictures and images in worship, in opposition to the Iconoclasts, who objected to the use of pictures and images in worship and went about destroying and defacing them. The use of pictures and images was affirmed as an extension of the Incarnation. Because God has taken on human form, it is okay to use physical objects as aids in worship.

Questions for Review

1. Why did the church write the creeds? Why is it important to have an accurate understanding of who God is?
2. What is the significance of the biblical belief that God is “Almighty?” What would be some implications if he were not?
3. How can we reconcile God’s almighty power with the current state of the world?
4. Finish this sentence: Jesus is fully_____and fully_____. What does this enable him to do for us that he could not do otherwise?
5. How is the humanity of Jesus different from our humanity? Why is this important?
6. What is meant by “the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ”? How is this stated in the Creeds?

7. State the doctrine of the Trinity (BCP 79, 186).

8. What point is being made in the Nicene Creed when it says of the Holy Ghost, “Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified?”

9. What do we mean when we say in the Creed, “I look for the Resurrection of the dead.”? What exactly is it that we expect to happen?

10. What are some of the implications of the doctrine of the Communion of the Saints?

11. How can the church be described as “One” when there are divisions among Christians?

12. How can the church be described as holy when the church does not always look holy?

CHAPTER TWO: THE MORAL LAW AND THE GOSPEL

UNDERSTANDING what the moral law teaches us is central to the Christian Faith. When we talk about the moral law we mean the teachings given by God in the Bible, which are the standard of conduct for God's people. The moral law is rooted in the "decalogue," "ten words" or Ten Commandments (Exodus 34:28) that God gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 20:1-17).

Jesus did not cancel out the Law of Moses. He brought out its full meaning. Jesus said:

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. (Matthew 5:17-18, KJV).

To understand how the law is fulfilled, we can look at what Jesus said about the sixth commandment.:

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift (Matthew 5:21-24, KJV).

The point in this passage is that obeying the moral law is not just a matter of outward behavior. It is a matter of inner motive and intention. It is not enough to avoid the act of killing someone. Genuine obedience will also avoid the angry thoughts that are at the root of murder. Jesus said the same thing about the seventh commandment (Matthew 5:27-28). It is not enough to avoid the act of being unfaithful. Genuine obedience will also avoid the lustful thoughts that are at the root of adultery (Read all of Matthew 5:17-48 for additional examples).

Jesus emphasized that the moral law is not just about not doing what is wrong. The moral law is about doing what is right, from the heart. This is highlighted by "The Summary of the Law," which Jesus recited in response to a question from a man who was an expert in the Jewish law:

Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, 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. (Matthew 22:35-40, KJV).

This "summary" is a combination of two Old Testament Bible verses, Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. These verses express the true meaning of all the "Thou shalt not's" by giving two positive things that "Thou shalt" do. Thou shalt love God and thou shalt love thy neighbor.

Now, when the word “love” is used in our time, the tendency is for people to think about feelings or sentiments. Thus, to say that loving God and one’s neighbor fulfills all the commandments sounds to many like an easing of the law. “I don’t have to obey all those rules. All I need to do is love.” However, when the Bible speaks of love, it speaks primarily of actions, not emotions. To love, in biblical terms, is to seek the good of others; to do what is best for others, whether I feel like it or not. There is no biblical sense in which we can fulfill the commandments by having love in our hearts that does not lead to obedient and righteous action. Biblically, it is not merely “the thought that counts.” Thought and action must be in complete harmony to fulfill the law of love.

In other words, all we have to do to fulfill the moral law is to honor God in action and motive at all times and always desire and do what is best for others, even our enemies (Matthew 5:44-45). When we understand the full intent of the moral law we realize that we fall short of perfectly obeying it. This is the primary point of the moral law. It reveals that we naturally fall short of divine perfection. We are sinners who need to be forgiven and saved.

Jesus, the Son of God, became man precisely to deal with this problem of sin. Jesus did for us what we are unable to do for ourselves. Jesus is without sin. Thus, he was able to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law through his obedient life and death. On the cross, Jesus offered the “full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice” that takes away our sins.

In the Old Testament, God commanded that various sacrifices be offered to atone for sin. Chief among these were the sacrifices offered on the Day of Atonement (cf. Leviticus 16 & 23:26-32). These sacrifices were meant to point forward to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross (Read Hebrews 8:1-10:18 for an extended discussion of how the life and death of Jesus fulfilled all that was foreshadowed by the Old Testament temple and its sacrifices). The Law confronts us with our sin and leads us to Jesus Christ, whose death saves us from our sins. We are forgiven and reconciled to God when we turn away from our sins and put our faith in Jesus.

There are significant discussions of this topic in Romans 1:16-5:19 and Galatians 3:1-25. The main point can be summed up in the following verses:

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:23-24).

The law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith (Galatians 3:24).

All have sinned because all inherit sin from the first humans. Original Sin is a defect of human nature by which our wills and desires are naturally inclined towards disobedience. The doctrine of Original Sin does not teach that we can never do anything that is good. Rather, it teaches us that the best of human effort falls short of divine perfection.

There are three ways to deal with the problem of sin. The first is to deny that our actions and motives are flawed—a hard argument to sustain! The second is to develop some lesser standard of behavior by which we can attempt to justify ourselves before God; i.e., “I may not be perfect but I am better than most.” The third is to acknowledge the truth of the human condition and repent.

The call to repent is sounded at every significant starting point in the New Testament. John the Baptist began his ministry by saying, “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2). Jesus began his ministry by saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15). St. Peter concluded his sermon on Pentecost by saying, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38). The moral law highlights our sin in order to lead us to repentance.

To repent in the New Testament means, “To have a change of mind.” It means to think about life in a new way, in the light of Christ. To repent means to change our behavior and begin to live in a new way. We used to follow the impulses of our fallen nature. Now, we begin to follow Jesus.

When we repent and put our faith in Jesus Christ, God gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was given to the church on Pentecost (Acts 2). The Holy Spirit is given to us in baptism. The water of baptism is the outward sign of the inward gift of the Spirit (We will discuss this more fully in the next section on the Sacraments). The Holy Spirit enables us to do by God’s grace what we are unable to do by nature.

The gift of the Holy Spirit fulfills the prophesy of Jeremiah:

Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (Jeremiah 31:31-34, RSV)

And the prophesy of Ezekiel:

I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. (Ezekiel 36:25-27, RSV).

The Holy Spirit changes us so that we are able, more and more, to do the will of God. We do not believe that the Holy Spirit makes us instantly perfect so that we will never again be tempted or commit sin. Rather, sanctification, or the process by which we are made holy, is a gradual work of the Holy Spirit over time. It begins when we turn to Christ in faith and receive the gift of the Spirit. It will be completed on the day of resurrection when we are fully and finally changed (Philippians 3:21, 1 Corinthians 15:52). It is a work we participate in by seeking the grace of God in prayer, in the sacraments and in the fellowship of the church.

The Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1). This was the day on which the Jewish people celebrated the giving of the law to Moses on Mt. Sinai. The law of Moses was written on stone tablets. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, God writes his law on our hearts (2 Corinthians 3:3).

Turning away from sin and putting our faith in Jesus Christ is the Christian way of life. This is not a one-time event that happens only at conversion and baptism. We make progress in the spiritual life as we identify areas of sin in our lives, make good confessions, and replace the sin with new virtues and holy patterns of behavior—the fruits of the Spirit (cf. Galatians 5:22-3, 2 Peter 1:3-8).

God uses the moral law to make us aware of our sin and lead us to repentance. But once we have come to repentance and faith, and have been given the gift of the Spirit, God uses the moral law to teach us how he wants us to live. However, even as we grow in virtue and obedience by God's grace, our virtue and obedience do not justify us before God. Holiness is the consequence, not the cause of our salvation.

Nonetheless, we are called to grow in holiness. There was a bumper sticker in circulation some time back that said, "Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven." This is an inadequate vision for the Christian life. To be sure, we need to be continually forgiven. In our liturgies, we continually ask God to forgive us. However, we should not be content with less than what God requires. As Hebrews says, "Pursue... holiness without which no one will see the Lord" (12:14).

To grow in holiness, it is necessary to develop a vocabulary of sin and virtue. This will enable us to identify the things that are wrong within us, make good confessions and change our attitudes and behavior, by grace. The vocabulary of sin begins with the Ten Commandments. We should memorize these and have a sense of what each one teaches concerning the will of God.

The Ten Commandments state our duty towards God, followed by our duty towards our neighbor. This highlights that love for God is "the first and great commandment." Since man is made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), love for neighbor is integrally connected with love for God.

The Ten Commandments or The Decalogue

1. God spake these words, and said: I am the LORD thy God; Thou shalt have none other gods but me.
2. 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; for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, and visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and show mercy unto thousands in them that love me and keep my commandments.

Comment: Other gods are idols. The commandment against graven images is a commandment against idolatry. Idolatry is, by definition, to worship the creation rather than the creator (Romans 1:25). While we do not tend to carve wooden statues and bow down before them, we do make idols out of created things. What are our possible idols? Money, various possessions and pleasures, or whatever things cause us to neglect our duty to God and our neighbor.

3. Thou shalt not take the Name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his Name in vain.

Comment: The commandment against taking God's name in vain was originally aimed at swearing false oaths in God's name. If you said you were going to do something in the name of the LORD, and did not do it, you took God's name in vain. This relates to the oaths and promises we make in the name of Christ. If we bear the name "Christian" (one who belongs to Christ) but are not faithful in our discipleship, this is a vain use of God's name. We should also do what we say we will do, As Jesus said "Let your 'Yes' be 'Yes' and your 'No', 'No'" (Matthew 5:37). We also should avoid the use of "God" or "Jesus" or "Jesus Christ" in ways that do not honor God's name.

4. Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath-day. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God. In it thou shalt do no manner of work; thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, thy cattle, and the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it.

Comment: In the Bible, Saturday is the Sabbath. From the beginning of the church, Christians worshiped on Sunday because Sunday is the Day of Resurrection. In the course of Christian history, the church transferred much of the Sabbath Day observance from Saturday to Sunday, although Sundays never became literal Old Testament Sabbaths. The main thrust of the Sabbath Day commandment is that Christians should take a day off a week. It is a sin to work seven days a week without rest—or to require it of others over whom we have authority.

5. Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

Comment: Honoring father and mother deals with respect for authority. Legitimate authority is God-given. When we honor authority, we honor God. When we dishonor authority, we dishonor God (cf. Romans 13:1-2). This commandment has a promise and, thus, an implied threat.

6. Thou shalt do no murder.

Comment: Murder is the willful and unlawful taking of another life. It is distinct from killing in general. There are four kinds of killing that are not biblical murder: killing that takes place in battle, killing in self-defense when the force is a reasonable response to the threat, capital punishment enacted by the duly appointed authority and accidental killing. (See also the deadly sin of anger: Matthew 5:21-26).

7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Comment: The New Testament adds the word “fornication” to the word “adultery.” Adultery is sex outside of marriage when one of the parties is married to someone else. Fornication is sex between unmarried persons. Biblically, sexual relations are reserved for marriage (cf. Hebrews 13:4). It should be noted that in the Bible the sexual act itself creates the union (1 Corinthians 6:16). So, technically, promiscuity is serial adultery, each successive act being adulterous on the last union (See also the deadly sin of lust: Matthew 5:27-30).

8. Thou shalt not steal.

Comment: Christians should be conscious of subtle forms of theft such as theft of software by unlicensed use and theft of another person’s time by being habitually late for appointments.

9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

Comment: By extension this applies to honesty in sins of speech in general. Gossip may be, strictly speaking, true, but it is not charitable. See Ephesians 4:29 and James 3:1-12.

10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his servant, nor his maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is his.

Comment: A strong, ungovernable desire for what belongs to another. It implies more than merely, “I like his car.” It is sinful because it says to God, “You have not given me enough to be happy.” It erroneously connects happiness with possessions.

The Seven Deadly Sins

Another way to categorize sin is the Seven Deadly Sins. These definitions developed in the course of Christian history. It is also helpful to talk about the virtues that correspond to the Deadly Sins. As we have said, it is not enough to not sin. The goal is to grow in virtue (cf. 2 Peter 1:4-9). Sin not replaced with virtue will come back in some form. Thus, confession of sin should be accompanied by prayer for the corresponding virtue, which, when practiced, will lead to the absence of the sin. What follows is an introductory discussion of the deadly sins and some corresponding virtues.

Deadly Sin

Corresponding Virtues

1. Pride

Humility

All sin is rooted in pride, which is a falsely exalted sense of self-thinking we are more than we are. Pride fills us with the need to be the center of everything. We combat pride with humility, which is a willingness to take a lower place in order to serve others after the pattern of Christ (cf. 2:3f.). Humility gives us an accurate sense of self. Humility understands that we stand before God as sinners, in need of forgiveness. Humility honors, and is not threatened by, the gifts of others. Pride is essentially competitive. It views the self as being in competition with others selves for recognition and honor. Humility is essentially cooperative. It views the self as being in mutually beneficial relationships with other people in the Body of Christ. Pride is the root cause of other sins. Envy, anger and covetousness are fueled by pride. Sin in any form is prideful, for it arrogantly claims the right to disobey God.

2. Envy

Kindness, thankfulness and contentment

Envy is jealousy of another's gifts and place in life-wanting to be who they are. It is combated by the practice of being thankful for the life and the gifts God has given us. Envy is also combated by the practice of being thankful for the gifts of others, even when they seem to be greater than our gifts. Envy leads to malicious intent towards others and, thus, is also combated by the practice of kindness.

3. Covetousness

Generosity and contentment

Covetousness is greed for gain. It is to believe the lie that having more will make us happy. It is combated by generosity. Rather than seeking continually to get more, generosity seeks to give. We begin with the tithe. We give the first part to God rather than spend the first part on more stuff. Then we look for other ways to give to those in need. We also combat covetousness by learning to be content (see 1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19).

4. Anger

Patience, charity

Anger is often fueled by the hectic pace of life and by pride-how dare he get in my way! Habitual prayer is essential to combating anger. We have to stay conscious of God's presence and, so, not let our emotions overcome us. We also need to forgive. The refusal to forgive another who has wronged us can result in continued anger. If we are struggling with anger towards another person, we need to practice charity. We can begin to get rid of the desire to harm by actively doing good. We can begin to look at the other person as one for whom Christ died, as one who also has sins that need to be forgiven. We can also begin by praying for the other person. We can pray for some good from God for them (Matthew 5:44).

5. Lust

Chastity, self-control

Lust involves the divorce of sexuality from responsibility. Lust desires to use another person as an object for our own ends. We need to learn to treat others as people and not merely as objects of our desires. When we think about what is entailed in loving our neighbor, we will recognize that lust does not serve the good of the other. Lust is combated by prayer for self-control and the virtue chastity (faithfulness within marriage, abstinence without). We must also be careful about what we watch, read and listen to. Provocative material, which is available everywhere in our culture, fuels the sin of lust. Thus, discipline of eyes and ears is a necessary part of this battle.

6. Gluttony

Abstinence, moderation

The excessive indulgence in things is combated by the practice of fasting and moderation. We cannot really enjoy the good things that God has given us unless we have the ability to say no to them. The alcoholic does not enjoy his drink and the person who habitually eats to excess does not enjoy his food. Overindulgence leads to more overindulgence. The practice of fasting or periodically abstaining from certain things helps us to develop self control and moderation. A good rule is that every good thing you enjoy you should do without for defined periods of time. The discussion about gluttony should extend to overindulgence in media such as TV, internet and radio. Many a soul has been harmed by TVs, radios and computers that are never turned off. Few have been harmed by creating time for reflection and prayer.

7. Sloth

Diligence

Sloth is laziness with regard to one's duties. Spiritual sloth is called accidie. It refers to a spiritual listlessness. It is combated by diligence, by faithful attention to one's duties—especially during the times when we do not feel like doing what we ought. Spiritually, it is combated by rule of life, and by praying faithfully through the dry periods.

A Closing Note on True Happiness

The biggest barrier to the pursuit of holiness is the lie that there is more “happiness” to be found in following our natural desires than in obeying God’s law. The testing that takes place in the Christian life involves a choice between the short term and the long term. Often, a temptation will promise, and actually deliver, some form of immediate satisfaction. The commandment of God calls us to forego some immediate gratification for a future reward. The short-term benefits of unfaithfulness give way in the long term to greater misery. And the short-term suffering that is required for obedience leads in the long term to life and peace (cf. Romans 8:18f.).

Deuteronomy says, “The LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always” (6:24). One cannot sustain the pursuit of holiness unless one actually believes this to be so. This means seeing through the silly notion that God is a sort of spoilsport who gives commandments to keep us from enjoying ourselves. God gave us the commandments to save us from all manner of evil and misery.

We also must be careful about the word “happiness.” Happiness in our culture is associated with the satisfaction of our desires in the present. Conversely, holiness requires that we forego the satisfaction of some desires in the present in order to obtain the future reward. The perspective of faith understands that our desires are wrongly ordered because of sin and, hence, must sometimes be denied and redirected towards ends that honor God. For those who are diligent in the life of prayer, faith will produce, increasingly, joy and peace. But faith will not always produce happiness as it is understood in our culture.

Additional Concepts and Definitions

The Theological Virtues

(1 Corinthians 13:13)

The teaching of the church is that the theological virtues are infused in us in baptism and developed in us by grace in the life of prayer.

Faith - An attitude of trust that accepts and obeys the word of God

Hope - Confidence, assurance and conviction of our future reward

Charity or Love - The divine energy and motive that fuels our love for God and neighbor

The Cardinal Virtues

The Cardinal Virtues were brought into the church from classical thought. Each takes on a new character in the light of Christ, but each has obvious application to the spiritual battle.

Prudence - practical wisdom, discretion

Temperance - moderation, self-mastery, restraint

Courage - strength, endurance, resoluteness

Justice - impartiality, fairness, equity, dispassion, giving to each his due

The Enemies of the Soul
Renounced in Baptism - BCP 276

Temptation to sin comes from three distinct sources: the world, the flesh and the devil. The foundational spiritual disciplines of prayer, almsgiving and fasting (Matthew 6:1-18) match up with each of these. We combat worldly temptation through almsgiving. We combat the temptations of the flesh through fasting. We combat demonic temptation through prayer.

The world - Fallen mankind in communal rebellion against God. The lure of wealth, power and status that this fallen community offers us is a substitute for God. (cf. 1 John 2:15-17).

The flesh - Not the body per se. We do not believe the body is inherently evil. In the Bible the word “flesh” refers to the desires of fallen human nature. God made mankind with certain desires, which are meant to be fulfilled through communion with God and through God-given means of fulfilment. Sin corrupts our God-given desires away from God and towards perverted and disobedient means which never really fulfill us (cf. Galatians 5:19-21).

The devil - An angel, created by God, who led a rebellion against God in heaven. The devil and his fallen angels attempt to undermine God’s work of redemption in Christ. They tempt believers to disobedience (1 Peter 5:8-9). They cause spiritual blindness so that people cannot see the truth about God as it is revealed in Christ (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). See also Matthew 4:1-11; Revelation 12: 7-9; Genesis 3; Job chs. 1, 2; Isaiah 14:12-15.

Questions for Review

1. List the Ten Commandments in order and discuss how each applies to life today.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

2. What is the Summary of the Law? (BCP 69). Where does it come from? (Look at Matthew 27:37-40, Luke 10:25-28). How is this related to the Ten Commandments?

3. List the Seven Deadly Sins and corresponding virtues. Discuss how each sin is best combated and how the practice of virtue does away with sin.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

4. What is the primary thing the moral law teaches us about ourselves?

5. How does Jesus Christ solve the problem of sin?

CHAPTER THREE: THE SACRAMENTS

THE Bible uses the word “grace” to describe how God saves us. Ephesians says, “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (2:8 KJV). The word grace describes both God’s attitude of undeserved favor towards us and also the divine energy or strength God gives us to accomplish his will in us. Sacraments are a means by which we receive God’s grace.

The Creation and Sacraments

A sacrament is “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace” (BCP 292). In sacraments, God uses visible and tangible created things to communicate invisible and intangible grace. The definition of a sacrament is rooted in the biblical teaching about creation. Romans says, “Ever since the creation of the world [God’s] invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made” (1:20). That is to say, the creation is an outward and visible sign of the glory of the Creator.

The Incarnation and Sacraments

In the New Testament, the Creator became a part of the creation. St. John says, “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (1:14). Colossians says that Jesus is “The image of the invisible God” (1:15). Jesus Christ is the definitive outward and visible manifestation of the invisible God. Jesus Christ is the archetype of all sacraments.

We refer to the phenomenon of God becoming man as the Incarnation. Incarnation means literally “enfleshed.” God took on flesh in Christ. Sacraments are extensions of the Incarnation into the present. In sacraments, God once again reveals himself to us in physical form. Jesus Christ is the means of grace for salvation. The sacraments are the most objective means we have of access to him.

The Objective Presence of Jesus in the Sacraments

We can understand the nature of sacraments by reflecting on the distinction between things that are objective and things that are subjective. Something that is objective does not depend upon personal opinions and feelings. To say “The world is round” is a statement of objective truth. It cannot be changed by what we think or feel about it. Something that is subjective depends upon feelings or opinions. Debates about which sport, wine, food or vacation spot is the best are matters of subjective opinion or feeling.

The sacraments are objective manifestations of the presence of Jesus. We receive grace from God in the sacraments whether we feel it or not. The objective grace of the sacraments will frequently produce a positive subjective response in us. This will be more and more the case as we mature in the faith and develop the spiritual vision to perceive the grace of the sacraments. Nonetheless, Christ is present in the sacraments whether or not we feel or think that he is present.

This truth is highlighted by 1 Corinthians 11:27-32, where the presence of Christ in the Lord Supper is said to have a harmful impact on those who receive him in an unworthy manner.

We live in an age that emphasizes subjective feelings. This is why many who are accustomed to non-liturgical forms of worship, which focus on the subjective response of the worshiper, don't understand sacramental worship, which focuses on the objective presence of God. The presence of Jesus in the sacraments does not depend upon whether we experience a sense of excitement. It does not depend upon the charisma of the minister. The presence of Jesus in the sacraments is an objective fact.

In this light, we can understand the sacraments as gifts from Jesus to the church that help us to avoid a roller coaster religion of up-and-down emotions. When we come to Jesus in the sacraments, in whatever state of strength or weakness we find ourselves, whether we feel good or bad at the moment, we receive Jesus. We know we receive him because in the outward and visible sign he pledges to us the inward and spiritual grace. In courtroom terms, we have evidence of his presence.

A Sacramental World

Sacraments are the fulfillment of the creation. In the world to come there will not be sacraments because the whole creation will, once again, be a sacrament. It is only because of sin that we think of things that are physical in opposition to things that are spiritual. In the fall, man took the creation and said, "This is mine." The consequence is that man pursues the creation as the end of life, as an idol, as something to seek apart from God, rather than as a sign of the creator. The answer to the fall is not to withdraw into the realm of pure spirit. The answer is the Incarnation. God became part of the creation in order to redeem it. The Incarnation is the beginning of the redemption of the whole creation. Sacraments, as extensions of the Incarnation, point forward to the fulfillment of the creation on the Day of Resurrection (Romans 8:22).

The Sacraments

The church has generally come to recognize seven sacraments. They can be summarized as follows:

<u>Sacrament</u>	<u>Outward Sign or Form</u>	<u>Inward Grace</u>
Baptism <i>Romans 6:4, Colossians 2:12, 1 Corinthians 12:13</i>	Water	Dying and rising with Christ through the gift of the Spirit
Confirmation <i>Acts 8:14-17, Hebrews 6:2</i>	Laying on of Hands	Strengthening (sevenfold) gifts of the Spirit
Holy Communion <i>1 Corinthians 10:16-17, 11:17-33; John 6 35-59</i>	Bread and Wine	Body and Blood of Christ Food for the life born at baptism
Confession <i>John 20:23</i>	Form of Confession/ Form of Absolution	Forgiveness
Unction <i>James 5:13-15</i>	Oil or Laying on of Hands	Healing
Marriage <i>John 2:1-11, Ephesians 5:31-32</i>	Ring	Strength to keep wedding vows
Ordination <i>John 20:21; 1 Timothy 1:6, 4:14; Titus 1:5</i>	Laying on of Hands	Strength to keep ordination vow

Because of the sacraments, we need not question whether we have received the gift of the Spirit. Jesus has pledged the saving and strengthening gifts of the Spirit to us in the objective signs of water in Baptism and the Bishop's hands in Confirmation. We need not ask, "Where is Jesus?" He said, "This is my body. This is my blood." We are given the objective assurance of forgiveness in Confession and the objective promise of healing in Unction. Married couples and those who are ordained to sacred ministry are given the grace they need to be faithful to their vows. We are called to respond to God's grace by living faithfully, but the presence of grace in the sacraments depends upon God's promise, not our response.

Objections to the Sacraments

Some people say they don't need the sacraments because they receive grace directly from God through personal prayer and Bible reading. We do not believe that grace comes to us only through the sacraments. Grace comes to us in many ways. Every Christian should have habits of personal prayer and Bible reading, but this should not keep us from receiving the objective grace of the sacraments. These are complementary aspects of a healthy spiritual life.

Some also object that they don't need the church or other individuals (bishops, priests and deacons) to be intermediaries between themselves and God. This is a misunderstanding of the nature of the church as the body of Christ. We are not saved as a collection of unrelated individuals. We are interdependent. Each part of the body depends upon the other parts (cf. Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Peter 4:7-11).

Each Christian is a sacramental person, a sign of Christ's presence and a mediator of grace. Each Christian is called to represent Christ to others through the gifts that God has given (1 Peter 4:10). When we are feeling low, Christ's presence is mediated to us through those who have the gift for encouragement. We grow in knowledge through the ministry of those who have the gift of teaching. We need the grace that comes to us from the other members of the body. The other members of the body need the grace that comes from our gifts. We all need the sacraments, which are mediated through the apostolic ministry. We have direct and personal access to God through Christ, but we are also served by Christ through the gifts of the members of his body.

Sacramentals

In addition to the sacraments, there are also various "sacramentals." These are tangible signs that remind us of God's presence and aid us in worship and prayer. The **palms** we use on Palm Sunday fall into this category. They are a physical reminder of Christ's march to victory on the cross. **Holy water** is another sacramental. We sprinkle ourselves with the sign of the cross as we enter and leave the church as a reminder of baptism and as a symbolic prayer for protection and guidance. **Statues and pictures** are sacramentals. As we look at them, our hearts are lifted to contemplate the realities they represent. People wear crosses and medals and hang icons and pictures in their homes as visible reminders of their faith.

Some people are concerned that the use of statues, crosses and pictures in worship runs into the danger of violating the second commandment concerning idolatry. However, a close examination of their use reveals that few people actually worship the physical things. Rather, the physical things we can see point us to things we can't see. A representation of Jesus on a cross calls to mind what he has done for us. An icon calls to mind some aspect of Christ's person or work or the witness of a saint who points us to Christ. There is some danger that use of an object might become excessive so that one comes to view a devotional aid as the end of devotion, and not a means to the end of God. However, this does not seem to be a great danger in our culture. Our devotional practices tend to be relatively reserved.

The greater danger is that a devotional aid might be viewed in a magical sense, as a sort of "good luck charm." The practice, for example, of burying a statue of St. Joseph in the yard of a home that is for sale might be an example of this. Objects used in Christian devotion are meant to point us to what they represent and cultivate faith. They are not meant to be substitutes for faith. For example, the wearing of cross should be a sign of genuine faith in Jesus, not a thing worn for good luck.

A Closing Note on Sacraments

The sacraments focus on the presence of God in the ordinary. Though we pray for and at times experience miraculous healing and extraordinary signs of God's presence, we also see Christ in ordinary water, bread and wine, in ordinary Christian people and in God's sovereign control of daily life. The greatest miracle from the sacramental perspective is Christ's redemptive presence in all things (Romans 8:28), rather than the odd moment when something unusual happens.

A Note on Holy Orders or Apostolic Ministry

Apostolic Ministry in the Bible

IN a sense, the sacrament of Holy Orders is the source of all the sacraments since all the sacraments are administered by those duly ordained—with the exception that a lay person may administer baptism in extreme situations.

The word apostle means, “one who is sent.” In John 20:21, in the upper room on Easter night, Jesus said, “As the Father has sent me, even so I send you” (see also Matthew 28:16-20, Acts 1:2-8). Thus, apostolic authority comes from Jesus himself.

The apostles exercised spiritual authority in the early church as a result of their commission from Jesus. St. Paul wrote, “I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction” (2 Corinthians 13:10). In Acts, the apostles govern the church based on the authority they have been given by Christ, not by popular vote.

The apostles who were sent by Jesus, in turn, sent others. St. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 1:6, “I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” Those sent by the apostles in turn are instructed to send others. St. Paul writes in Titus 1:5, “For this reason I left you [Titus as Bishop] in Crete, that you should...appoint elders [The Greek word for elder is *presbyter*, which later became known as priest] in every city as I commanded you.” And again in 1 Timothy 5:22 he writes, “Do not lay hands on anyone hastily” (see also 1 Timothy 4:14). Instructions are given as to the qualifications for those being ordained (1 Timothy 3, Titus 1:7ff.). Spiritual authority in the Bible flows from Jesus through the apostles.

The Development of Holy Orders in the Church

The New Testament mentions four orders of ministry: apostles, bishops, elders (or presbyters) and deacons (1 Timothy 3, Titus 1:5). It appears that the titles “bishop” and “elder” were used somewhat interchangeably (cf. 1 Peter 5:1, where Peter, who is an apostle, calls himself an elder). After the death of the apostles, the title of bishop was used for the men who were said to have succeeded the apostles in their office. By c. A.D. 110, St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, speaks of a three-fold ministry of bishops, presbyters (who later came to be known as priests) and deacons.

The Doctrine of Apostolic Succession

The authority Jesus gave the apostles for ministry was passed on by the apostles to successors through the laying on of hands. These successors are the bishops who stand in lineal succession from the apostles. Authority for ministry today in our church flows through the bishop and is derived ultimately from Christ himself (Ordination of Priests, BCP 546). The bishop is our tangible link with the apostolic church. The Apostolic Ministry is the pledge of sacramental grace.

However, authority for ministry does not exist in separation from the proclamation of the true faith. It is an authority of Word and Sacrament (Matthew 28:16-20, Acts 1:2-8). The origin of Apostolic Succession was the succession of authentic teaching in opposition to heretical or false teaching. If a bishop comes to deny the faith or teach false doctrine, he acts contrary to the very nature of his office. The early church taught that Christians must separate from heretical bishops.

During the Reformation, the continental reformers (Lutherans and Presbyterians) threw out the visible succession of bishops and said that only a succession of teaching was important. Anglicans hold that both lineal succession and right doctrine are essential to the fullness of the church's ministry.

Sacramental Grace Is Not Dependent Upon the Minister

The character or worthiness of the individual sacramental minister does not affect the flow of sacramental grace. This teaching was worked out in the church by the great church father St. Augustine in his debates with the heretical teachers known as the Donatists. It is expressed in Article xxvi of the Articles of Religion (BCP 608). The church teaches that the minister in every sacrament is Christ, for whom the visible minister is but an [inadequate] icon. Our personal opinions and feelings about the priest are irrelevant to the flow of sacramental grace. However, this doctrine does not mitigate against the need to discipline ministers who misbehave.

What Bishops, Priests and Deacons Do (BCP, p. 294)

1. Bishops
 - a. Are the focus of the church's unity—Chief Pastor.
 - b. Ordain all ministers. (Note: priests and deacons are ordained, bishops are consecrated.)
 - c. Confirm those who are baptized.

2. Priests
 - a. Preach and exercise pastoral care over the congregation. (Note: One need not be ordained to preach or to exercise pastoral gifts.)
 - b. Consecrate the communion elements.
 - c. Give blessings.
 - d. Pronounce absolution.

3. Deacons
 - a. Read the gospel in the Holy Communion.
 - b. Administer communion in church and take the reserved sacrament to the sick.
 - c. Function directly under the authority of the bishop.

A Note on Baptism and Confirmation

BAPTISM is the sacrament of entry into the Body of Christ. We are baptized “into Christ” (Romans 6:3). Through the outward sign of water, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). Through the Spirit, we die and rise with Christ (Romans 6:4, Colossians 2:12). Our inherited sin is washed away (1 Corinthians 6:11, Titus 3:5) and we die to sin. The Spirit plants new life in us and we are raised with Christ to live in a new way. We are “born again” (John 6:3-8).

From the beginning of the church, children born into Christian families were baptized. Though some Christians object to infant baptism, it has been the universal practice of the church. There were no objections to the practice by any of the church fathers. The major reformers of the sixteenth century, Martin Luther and John Calvin, both retained infant baptism, and the Church of England continued to do as it had always done. The first objection to infant baptism came after the Reformation from a group called the Anabaptists, who were heretical in some of their beliefs. The ancient and universal tradition unambiguously bears witness that infant baptism is part and parcel of “the faith once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3).

The church does not believe that baptism is a guarantee of salvation. It is the bestowal of a gift that must be received by faith. It is the planting of a seed that must be grown. It is the planting of new life that must be nurtured and fed. As suggested by the Parable of the Sower and the Seed (Luke 8:4f.), it is possible for the planted seed to become unfruitful. Infants who are baptized must come to faith and conversion of the heart when they come of age. St. Augustine wrote:

In baptized infants the sacrament of regeneration comes first and, if they hold fast to Christian piety, conversion in the heart will follow, following on the sacramental sign of it in the body. This all shows that the sacrament of baptism is one thing, the conversion of the heart is another; but the salvation of man is effected by these two (*de bapt.* 4:31-32).

We all know that if one baptized in infancy does not believe when he comes to years of discretion, and does not keep himself from lawless desires, then he will have no profit from the gift he received as a baby (*de pecc. merit.* 1.25).

From the beginning, Christian initiation was completed by the laying on of hands by the Bishop (Acts 8:17, 19:5-6; Hebrews 6:2). Baptism and the laying on hands were initially two parts of one rite of initiation. Over time in the western church, the laying on of hands by the bishop came to be separated from baptism. When those baptized as infants came to the age of discretion (generally thought to be 7 or 8) they were brought to the bishop for confirmation and began to receive communion. Confirmation came to be understood as the giving of the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit (Isaiah 11:2-3, BCP 297) which prepared the baptized for active service as disciples of Jesus.

Many Christians today have not been confirmed because they were baptized in churches that do not have bishops in Apostolic Succession. The normal pattern for them is to complete their baptism by being confirmed by the bishop and beginning to receive communion at that time. (cf. BCP 299).

A Note on Confession

WE do not believe that a person has to make a confession to a priest in order to be forgiven. However, the sacrament of confession can lead to a greater sense of repentance and a more profound experience of forgiveness. There are many things we don't have to do that are, nonetheless, good for us.

The person making a confession is confessing sins directly to God. The priest is present as a representative of God to pronounce absolution in the name of Jesus. The priest is also present as a representative of the church to welcome the penitent person back into the fellowship of the church. In the early church, confessions were made to the entire congregation. As the church grew, public confession became less practical. The priest came to stand in for the church in private confession.

St. James exhorts us to “confess our faults one to another” (5:16). This seems to refer to our common failings and shortcomings. However, not everyone is able to deal wisely with the knowledge of another's sin. Friends may make one of two errors. They may be shocked at what we've done and refuse to extend grace and forgiveness. Or they may be too soft, excusing our sin rather than helping us conquer it. A priest is one who is called and trained to deal with the reality of human sin, and a priest has been given authority from Christ to forgive (John 21:21-23).

Many are afraid that a priest will look at them differently after a confession. Two things must be highlighted here. First, no one's sins are all that unique. Typically, the priest hears a confession that sounds very much like his own. Second, the penitent soul is the attractive soul. Thus, the attitude of the priest hearing an honest confession is like the attitude of God and the angels (Luke 15:10).

Confessions are made under the “seal” of the confession. Nothing said in confession will ever be mentioned by a priest outside of confession. It will not even be brought up in private conversation with the person who made the confession unless that person asks specifically to talk about it.

Confession should be seen as a normal and natural thing to do. We take care of sin by confession the same way we take care of sickness with medicine. Confessions are typically made during Lent and at other times as is necessary and beneficial. A good confession will focus on specific acts of wrongdoing and neglect, and on our characteristic sinful patterns of thought and behavior. These are what we call “besetting sins.” A good confession is not a laundry list of everything, but concentrates on what is at the forefront of the spiritual battle right now. Self-examination for confession can begin with the a review of the Seven Deadly Sins (Chapter 2).

Confession is sometimes made in a confessional “box” or room, or sometimes it is done in the nave or sanctuary of the church. It depends upon the set-up of a given church. Confessions are not typically made face to face. Rather, the person making the confession faces the altar or a cross to make his confession to God. The priest faces the same direction or sits to the side as witness for the church and to represent Christ in giving absolution.

A typical form of confession is as follows:

A Form for Confession

The person making the confession (the penitent) says:

Bless me, Father, for I have sinned.

The priests responds:

THE Lord be in your heart and upon your lips, so that you may worthily confess all your sins; In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

The penitent continues saying:

ICONFESS to Almighty God, to all the Saints, and to you, Father, that I have sinned very much, in thought, word, deed, and omission, by my own great fault. I have committed these sins:

The penitent confesses in his or her own words, and then says:

For these and all my other sins which I cannot now remember, I am very sorry, I will try to do better, and I humbly ask pardon of God; and of you Father, I ask for penance, counsel and absolution.

The Priest may offer words of counsel. Then he assigns a suitable penance. Penance having been enjoined and accepted, the Priest shall say:

The Form of Absolution

ALMIGHTY God have mercy upon thee, forgive thee thy sins, and bring thee to everlasting life. Amen.

THE Almighty and merciful Lord grant thee pardon, absolution, and remission of thy sins. Amen.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to his Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive thee thine offenses: And by his authority committed unto me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Go in peace. The Lord hath put away all thy sins.

A Note on Unction

ONE of the challenges of promoting the Sacrament of Unction (to anoint or lay hands upon a person with prayers for healing) is its historical association with the Roman Catholic practice of “extreme unction,” administered as part of the “last rites.” The person receiving this form of unction, quite far from being healed, died shortly thereafter. Thus, a priest once said to a parishioner whose husband was at home sick, “May I come by and pray for him?” She responded, “He’s not that sick.” She meant that he wasn’t about to die—and she did not want to hasten his departure with a priestly visit!

We must emphasize that the sacrament of unction is for healing. The church regularly prays for the sick with the intention that God will grant them restoration of health. Any one who has any kind of significant ailment should receive unction. When people become sick to the point of being unable to attend church, the normal and natural thing is for a priest to regularly visit to give communion and pray for healing.

James 5:14-15 specifically connects unction with forgiveness. The person desiring healing should use the opportunity of the sickness or ailment to confess his or her sins. The Bible teaches that some ailments result from specific sins (Luke 5:22-25), but also makes it clear that this is not always the case (John 9:1-3). In any event, since the human condition of weakness and mortality results from the fall, sickness can always be used as an opportunity to reflect on our general condition of sin.

We do not believe that God heals every sickness. We will all die eventually. However, God does sometimes grant miracles of healing. We should believe that this is possible, if it is God’s will. We believe that God always gives grace to the afflicted through unction. The grace may be full healing, partial healing or spiritual healing that occurs because the afflicted person gains some new spiritual insight or makes progress in the faith through the affliction.

The Prayer Book form for unction (320) is as follows:

UNCTION OF THE SICK

¶ *When any sick person shall in humble faith desire the ministry of healing through Anointing or Laying on of Hands, the Minister may use such portion of the foregoing Office as he shall think fit, and the following:*

O BLESSED Redeemer, relieve, we beseech thee, by thy indwelling power, the distress of this thy servant; release him from sin, and drive away all pain of soul and body, that being restored to soundness of health, he may offer thee praise and thanksgiving; who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

I ANOINT thee with oil (or I lay my hand upon thee), In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; beseeching the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all thy pain and sickness of body being put to flight, the blessing of health may be restored unto thee. Amen.

Questions for Review

1. What is a sacrament?
2. How are the sacraments related to the Creation and the Incarnation (God becoming man)?
3. List the Seven Sacraments, giving for each its outward sign or form and its inward grace.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
 - 6.
 - 7.
4. Why do we baptize infants?
5. What is the doctrine of the “Objective” or Real Presence?

6. What is Apostolic Succession? What are the two essential components of it?

7. What are the three orders of the Apostolic Ministry?

1.

2.

3.

8. Which two sacraments must be administered by a bishop?

9. What three things does a priest do in the liturgy of Holy Communion that a deacon does not do?

1.

2.

3.

10. What two liturgical functions does the deacon traditionally carry out in the Holy Communion?

1.

2.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE CHURCH AND ITS SYMBOLISM

The Church Building and Sacramental Worship

THE church is the body of Christ. It is people, not a building. This is one of the significant developments from the Old Testament to the New Testament. In the Old Testament, God dwelt in the temple. In the New Testament, the Incarnation fulfills the temple. The glory of God dwells in the person of Jesus Christ. On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came to dwell within God's people. Thus, we are now the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16).

However, to say that God dwells in his people is not to say that all there is of God is contained within the church. The earthly temple in Jerusalem did not fully contain God either (1 Kings 8:27). There is still a sense in which God's people, in whom his Spirit dwells, enter into his presence in a fuller way through worship. This can be seen in Revelation 4 and 5. St. John, "in the Spirit," is called up into heaven, where he sees, among other things, God's throne, the cherubim and the "lamb as though it had been slain."

In the Old Testament, only the anointed priests were able to enter into the presence of God and offer sacrifice. In the New Testament, the whole church is anointed and is able to exercise a priestly ministry (1 Peter 2:5, Rev. 1:6). The gift of the Spirit is just the beginning of our ascent to God. The Spirit makes it possible for us to offer sacrificial worship, but worship is still a movement from earth to heaven.

The Son of God became man to reveal God more clearly and unite us with him through the gift of the Spirit. After the resurrection, the Son of God ascended back into heaven. Since we are united with him through the Spirit, we ascend with him. In one sense, Christ lives with us on earth, but, in another sense, we live with Christ in heaven. Worship highlights our ascent to the Father through the Son. When our redemption is complete, we will live in God's presence (Revelation 21:3). There will be no more need for worship to bridge the gap between earth and heaven, between time and eternity. But we are not there yet.

Thus, from the beginning, the church worshiped in places that were arranged and furnished in such a way as to call to mind the presence of God in the heavenly temple. Even when the early church met in the homes of its members, it still furnished those rooms with an altar, candles, censers and such things that enabled the space to be sacramental, to point to the reality of heaven. The worship of the church can be offered "in every place" (Malachi 1:11). However, it is best when the place of worship is arranged to mirror the reality of heaven.

The symbolic world of the church is important because sacramental worship involves our whole person. Worship is not merely a mental act of thinking about God or grasping propositional truths. Worship is an experience of union with God that involves the ascent of our whole being, mind, body and spirit, into his presence. This is why the fullness of worship engages all of the senses.

The symbolism of the church engages the eyes. Incense engages the sense of smell. The Word of God and music engage the sense of hearing. We will hold a book and hymnal and we will actually touch the Sacrament. We will taste the Body and Blood of Christ. Our resurrection hope is not freedom from the body. It is freedom in the body. Thus, the worship that is a foretaste of resurrection involves our bodies as well. It is not merely a “spiritual” or mental act.

The Church as an Image of Heaven

The form of the church follows the Old Testament idea of the temple. God told Moses to build the tabernacle (and, later, the temple) in a very specific way (Exodus 25:40, Hebrews 8:5) because the temple on earth was built to be a mirror image, a copy of the true temple in heaven (Hebrews 9:24). The worshiper, entering the earthly temple, learned the truth about God in heaven.

The sacrificial system of the Old Testament taught the Jewish people that sacrifice was necessary to atone for sins and reestablish fellowship with God. One could not approach God in any way one chose. One had to approach God through the system of sacrifices and offerings he had commanded. Historically, Christian churches have been built, like the temple, to reflect the reality of heaven. Christian worship is temple worship carried on in the light of the fulfillment of all sacrifice by Jesus on the cross. As Hebrews says, we have “boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us” (Hebrews 10:19).

The symbolic world of the church helps the worshiper to enter into the reality of heaven. The worship of the church is modeled on the worship described in Revelation 4 and 5. We “lift up our hearts” to join in the eternal Sanctus, the “Holy, Holy, Holy” of angels, archangels and all the company of heaven (Rev. 4:8, Isaiah 6:3). The centerpiece of worship is “The Lamb as though it had been slain” (Rev. 5:5) whose sacrifice we recall and present before God on the altar. In the liturgy, we come to the Father through the sacrifice of the Son (John 10:1, 14:6).

Authentic Worship and the Eucharist

The life and death of Jesus Christ are the perfect acts of worship. Jesus offered himself to God through his sinless life and his sacrificial death. We participate in his perfect offering because we have become members of his body in baptism. As we follow Christ in faith and obedience, our lives become an offering to God.

The church’s central act of worship is what the New Testament refers to as the Lord’s Supper. The early church referred to the Lord’s Supper as the “Eucharist,” a Greek word that means “thanksgiving.” The Eucharist is our most objective way of proclaiming and participating in Christ’s authentic act of worship. In the Eucharist, the church remembers and presents before God the perfect sacrifice of Christ, and the members of Christ’s body offer themselves to God in Christ and through Christ.

There are a couple of ways that this is shown in the liturgy. First, we offer bread and wine to God. These represent the creation (wheat and grapes) modified by human labor (turning wheat into bread

and grapes into wine). Our offering is made acceptable by the act of consecration, as it is united with and sanctified by Christ's offering. Our offering becomes the Body and Blood of Christ just as we become the Body of Christ by the gift of the Spirit.

Second, after we remember and present before God the sacrifice of Christ, we "offer ourselves, our souls and our bodies to be a reasonable, holy and living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1). In our natural state of sin, we are not able to offer ourselves to God. Our inadequate offering of self is made acceptable because it is united with Christ's perfect offering. As St. Augustine wrote in his book, *The City of God*,

The whole redeemed city, that is to say, the congregation or community of the saints, is offered to God as our sacrifice through the great High Priest, who offered Himself to God in His passion for us, that we might be members of this glorious head, according to the form of a servant...this also is the sacrifice which the Church continually celebrates in the sacrament of the altar, known to the faithful, in which she teaches that she herself is offered in the offering she makes to God.

Eucharist as New Creation

Man was made to take the creation God had given him and offer it back to God in thanksgiving. Man was made to worship God "Eucharistically," or with thanksgiving. Through sin, man took the creation God gave and said, "This is mine!" The result is all of the disorder and chaos of the fallen world we live in. In Christ we are restored to communion and fellowship with God and to our original vocation. The Eucharist reflects the restoration of right order to the creation. We take the creation God has given us and offer it back to God in thanksgiving through the symbols of bread and wine. We participate in God's new creation that has begun "in Christ" (cf. Revelation 21:5).

Eucharist as Remembrance

The Eucharist is the church's central act of sacrificial worship. The idea of the Eucharistic sacrifice is not that Jesus is offered again in a manner that somehow adds to the one sacrifice of Calvary. Rather the idea of Eucharistic sacrifice is that the past event of Calvary is brought into the present so that we can experience its benefits now. This follows the Jewish understanding of Passover. The rabbis taught that each generation of Jewish people participated in the past event of the Exodus from Egypt through the Passover celebration, which commemorated the original event. It was, the rabbis taught, as if each Passover participant set his feet on the bottom of the Red Sea. This is how each subsequent generation of Jewish people were united with the Exodus generation in a common experience of salvation. This is what is meant when Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me." The past event of the cross is experienced in the present moment. The whole church is united in a common experience of salvation.

The Eucharist also looks forward to the future banquet of heaven (cf. Revelation 19:9). As we receive the sacrament, we are united with God in Christ in a manner that looks forward to that more perfect union that we will enjoy in the Resurrection (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:12). Thus, in the Eucharist the past

and future are experienced in the present. We receive the benefits of Christ's past sacrifice and we receive a foretaste of future glory. The Eucharist thus captures the balance between fulfillment and expectation that is at the heart of the life of faith.

The Road to Emmaus: Luke 24:13-35 - A Pattern for the Eucharist

St. Luke's account of the appearance of the Risen Christ to the two men on the road to Emmaus reveals the pattern for worship in the church. We will read it first, then reflect on what it reveals to us.

NOW behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him. And He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?" Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have you not known the things which happened there in these days?" And He said to them, "What things?" So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see." Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. But they constrained Him, saying, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." And He went in to stay with them. Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread (NKJV).

Word and Sacrament

The Road to Emmaus story reveals the basic pattern for the liturgy: Word and Sacrament. Jesus explained the Scriptures to the two men. Then, after his instruction on the road was completed, he took

bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to them in a manner that clearly recalls the Last Supper. St. Luke tells us, “Their eyes were opened and they knew him.” St. Luke wrote this story to a church that had already been gathering to celebrate the Lord’s Supper each week for some time (cf. Acts 20:7). This story reflects the early church’s understanding of worship. From the beginning, the liturgy of the Lord’s Supper included two main parts. The reading of Scripture followed by an explanation on the part of the bishop or priest. This was followed by communion: The taking, blessing, breaking and giving of bread.

The risen Christ is revealed to the church throughout history in the same manner as he was revealed to these first disciples. The road to Emmaus is a pattern for his revelation for all subsequent generations of Christians. As the church gathers for her central act of worship, the Scriptures are read and explained. Then, the church takes, blesses, breaks and gives bread. Our eyes are opened. We know Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

It is a sequence of Word, then Sacrament. We come to know Jesus through the Bible so that we can experience communion with him in the Sacrament. This is reflected in the setup of the church. The pulpit and the lectern can be seen as the gateway to the altar. The Bible, read and preached, leads us to the altar where we experience communion.

A bishop once said, “If we do not know the Jesus of the Bible we meet a stranger in the Eucharist.” This is why daily Bible reading and prayer is so important. When we know and believe what the Bible says about Jesus, and when we know and respond to what the Bible requires of us, we are lead to genuine communion with God at the altar.

A Tour of the Church

What follows is a glossary that identifies and defines the various items of furniture in the church. This lists begins at the back of the church and moves towards the front. Many of these items are common to all sacramental churches. All will have an altar, a central image of the cross, a sanctuary and a nave. However, each church will have its own arrangement of statues, stained glass windows and pictures of Jesus and the saints.

Baptismal Font. Traditionally by the entrance because we enter the church through baptism (1 Cor. 12:13). When we pass by the font, we should remember our baptismal vows.

Holy Water. Holy water is water that has been blessed with prayers asking that the water be a defense against evil. Typically, one will dip one’s finger in the holy water and make the sign of the cross. This acts as both a reminder of baptism as we enter the church, and a prayer for God’s grace and protection as we leave the church.

Nave. The nave is the body of the church where the people sit. From the Latin *navis*, meaning ship.

Sanctuary. The area around the altar, which represents the Holy of Holies in heaven (cf. Heb. 9:3). It is separated from the nave by the communion rail.

Altar. The place where sacrifice is offered. There were various Old Testament altars where the patriarchs of Israel offered sacrifice before the tabernacle and temple were built. The tabernacle and Solomon's temple both had two altars: An altar of burnt offering, and an altar of incense. In the Christian tradition, the altar is the place where Christ's sacrifice is remembered and represented before God in the liturgy (cf. Hebrews 13:10, Malachi 1:11).

Tabernacle. A safe-like structure atop the altar that contains the Reserved Sacrament—the body and (less frequently) the blood of Jesus that have been consecrated at a previous celebration of Holy Communion. The sacrament is reserved so that it can be taken to the sick and also to foster contemplative prayer in the church.

Sanctuary Lamp. A candle that burns continually to indicate the presence of the reserved sacrament in the tabernacle.

Credence Table. A table on which the elements are placed in preparation for Holy Communion. Also contains water and a bowl for washing the priest's hands before the consecration.

Lectern. A desk on which the Bible sits, from which are read the lessons at Morning and Evening Prayer and, sometimes, the epistle at Holy Communion.

Pulpit. The desk from which the sermon is usually preached.

Crucifix. A cross with an image of the body of Jesus on it. This helps us to call to mind the death of Jesus (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:26).

Candles. Symbols of the presence of the Holy Spirit (cf. Rev. 1:12). The six candles on the re-table (back shelf of the altar) are called "office lights." These are lit for Morning and Evening Prayer ("the daily offices") and for choral celebrations of Holy Communion. The two candles on the altar are Eucharistic candles and are lit for every celebration of Holy Communion.

Statues and Pictures. At the seventh ecumenical council, Nicea II, 787, the church formally approved the use of pictures and images in worship as an extension of the principle of the incarnation. God himself took on form; therefore, it is okay to use art as an aid in worship.

St. Matthew's Church has four focal pieces of art in the sanctuary:

The stained glass window of Jesus enthroned in heaven complements the image of Jesus on the cross. His death is shown along with his victory over death and his position as Lord and King. It is based on the image of Jesus in Revelation 5. He has in his hand the scroll with seven seals. He is surrounded by the cherubim (cf. Ezekiel 1:4-10, 10:3) which indicates that Jesus is God because God dwells between the cherubim.

The statue of the Blessed Virgin with Child reminds us of the genuine humanity of Jesus and the faith of Mary—“Be it unto me according to the word” (Luke 1:38). Her faith stands in contrast with the disobedience of Eve and is a model for all Christians in their acceptance of Jesus Christ.

The statue of our Patron St. Matthew calls to mind his conversion. He left his lucrative tax collecting career, symbolized by the coins on the ground, to follow Jesus, symbolized by the pen and book—he is writing the gospel.

Moving from left to right, these summarize the Creed: The Blessed Virgin with Child portrays the conception and birth of Christ. The Crucifix portrays his suffering and death. Jesus on his throne in heaven portrays the resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God. St. Matthew portrays the Holy Ghost and the Communion of the Saints because he represents the church, which is created by the gift of the Spirit.

A Glossary of Vestments

Cassock. A black garment worn under the other garments. A red cassock is sometimes worn by servers.

Surplus. A white garment worn over the cassock.

Cassock and surplus are the normal vestments for Morning and Evening Prayer and for servers at Holy Communion.

Alb. A white garment worn under the chasuble and other Eucharistic vestments.

Cincture. Rope worn around the waist over the alb.

Maniple. Cloth vestment that hangs over the priest's arm like a waiter's towel. It reminds him that he is called to serve.

Stole. A long thin vestment worn around the neck. It is worn over the front by a priest and over the side by a deacon. It represents the yoke of Christ.

Chasuble. The celebrant's overgarment for the Eucharist. It represents the seamless garment of Christ.

The alb, cincture, maniple, stole and chasuble are the standard vestments worn by the priest when he is celebrating the Holy Communion.

Dalmatic.* Overgarment worn, on occasion, by a Deacon at a High Mass.

Tunicle.* Overgarment worn, on occasion, by a Subdeacon at High Mass.

**These are not normally used at St. Matthew's Church.*

Chalice. The cup from which the Blood of Christ is administered.

Purificator. Linen cloth used to wipe the chalice.

Paten. The dish from which the body of Christ is administered.

Pall. A firm, square piece used to cover the chalice.

Veil. The cloth, of seasonal color, that is draped over the chalice.

Burse. An cloth folder that sits on top of the veiled chalice.

Corporal. Square linen cloth upon which the bread and wine are consecrated.

These items are stacked together before and after the celebration of Holy Communion. The purificator is draped over the chalice. The paten sits over the chalice on top of the purificator. The pall sits on top of the paten and is covered by the veil. The burse sits on top. It contains the corporal and an extra purificator in case of a spill.

Lavabo Bowl. Bowl for washing the priest's hands before communion.

Lavabo Towel. Linen towel used for drying the priest's hands.

Bread Box. Box that holds the bread before it is consecrated.

Cruets. Vessels that contain wine and water.

These items sit on the credence table during a celebration of Holy Communion.

An Overview of the Liturgy: Three Parts

What follows is an outline of the main parts of the liturgy. Having a sense of how the liturgy progresses helps us to meaningfully participate in each part. Each worshiper should become familiar with purpose and meaning of each part. These will be covered in greater detail in the next chapter.

1. The Rite of Entry. Preparing for Worship

- Opening hymn
- Collect for Purity and Introit
- Summary of the Law (or Decalogue)
- Kyrie and Gloria in excelsis (*if the Gloria is said or sung here*)

2. The Liturgy of the Word

- Collect, Epistle and Gospel
- Creed and Sermon

3. The Liturgy of the Eucharist

Offertory - “He took” - Bread and wine are offered on the altar.

- Prayer for the Church
- Confession, Absolution and Comfortable Words

Consecration - “He blessed” - The bread and wine are consecrated by prayer.

- “Lift up your hearts” through the Prayer of Consecration
- The Prayer of Consecration includes a recalling of the Last Supper; an *Oblation* or prayer by which the memorial sacrifice is offered to God; and an *Invocation* or a calling down of the Holy Spirit upon the elements.
- The Lord’s Prayer is the culmination of the consecration. We come to God through the sacrifice of Christ and, thus, have the privilege of calling God “Father.”

Fraction or the Breaking of the Bread - “He broke”- The consecrated bread is broken.

- As the Body of Christ is broken, the following is said:
 - Priest:* “The peace of the Lord be always with you.”
 - People:* “And with thy spirit.
- Prayer of Humble Access
- Agnus Dei (O Lamb of God...)

Communion - “He gave” - The Sacrament is given to the people.

- Reception of the Sacrament
- Post communion Hymn - Optional
- Prayer of Thanksgiving
- Gloria in excelsis (*If Gloria is said or sung here*)
- The Blessing

Questions for Review

1. If the people are the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit, why do we still worship in church buildings that have symbolic meaning?
2. Where does the pattern or model for the structure and symbolism of church buildings come from?
3. How does Eucharistic worship reflect the restoration of man's original vocation?
4. How does the appearance of the Risen Christ to the two men on the road to Emmaus establish a pattern for the church's worship?
5. What are the distinct parts of the liturgy? How does the liturgy mirror what Jesus did at the Last Supper?

CHAPTER FIVE: COMMENTARY ON THE LITURGY OF THE HOLY COMMUNION

THIS chapter contains the liturgy of Holy Communion from the Book of Common Prayer, with certain historical additions, on the right-hand page, and a commentary on each part of the liturgy on the left-hand page. It is intended to help worshipers grow in their understanding of the Eucharist and lead them into a deeper experience of worship.

A Note On Liturgy

THOSE unfamiliar with liturgical worship often object that it is repetitive and, thus, devoid of the spontaneity they desire. But repetition is precisely the point of liturgy. C. S. Lewis wrote:

Every service is a structure of acts and words through which we receive a sacrament, or repent, or supplicate, or adore. And it enables us to do these things best—if you like, it “works” best—when, through long familiarity, we don’t have to think about it. As long as you notice, and have to count the steps, you are not yet dancing but only learning to dance. A good shoe is a shoe you don’t notice. Good reading becomes possible when you need not consciously think about eyes, or light, or print, or spelling. The perfect church service would be one we were almost unaware of; our attention would have been on God. (*Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*).

As we learn the words and actions of the liturgy and come to understand what they mean, we develop the ability to pray from the heart.

A Note On Language

LITURGICAL English is necessarily different from everyday language. There are words in the liturgy with a long history of theological meaning that cannot be translated into modern English. If a word is unfamiliar, look it up in a dictionary. It will help you learn the faith.

Liturgical English retains the “thees” and “thous” because they are poetic, reverent and more precise than “you.” The body of Christ is “given for thee,” meaning the particular individual.

While it is not necessary or desirable to use liturgical English in personal prayer, it is highly desirable and appropriate to retain a majestic, reverent and theologically accurate language for liturgical prayer. Liturgical English reflects the “beauty of holiness” (Psalm 96:9) and has the capacity to lift the heart, mind and soul to God in worship.

A Note on the Reception of Holy Communion

THE requirements for the reception of Holy Communion fall into two categories: The first concerns the rites of Christian initiation, and the second concerns one's current manner of life.

A person becomes a member of the Church, the Body of Christ, through baptism (BCP 290, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Colossians 2:12). Since the beginning of the Church, the sacrament of baptism has been completed by confirmation, the laying on of hands by a bishop in Apostolic Succession (Acts 8:14-17, Hebrews 6:2). The Prayer Book says, "And there shall none be admitted to the Holy Communion, until such time as he be confirmed, or be ready and desirous to be confirmed" (299).

The Invitation to Confession invites to communion those "who do truly and earnestly repent...and are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God." Those receiving Communion should believe the Catholic and Apostolic Faith expressed in the Bible and the Creeds. They should come to the altar having confessed all known sins. They should be reconciled with their neighbors, as much as it is in their power. They should be faithful in daily prayers and in attendance at the Eucharist (Hebrews 10:25), or should intend to be faithful from now on.

This does not mean that the communicant must be free from the struggle with sin and temptation. It means that the communicant must want to conform his life and behavior to God's will and commandments. God welcomes the penitent and is patient with us in our struggles with sin, but God does not welcome the willfully disobedient.

We meet Jesus Christ in the sacrament. He said, "This is my body" and "This is my blood." Therefore, St. Paul instructs us, "Let a man examine himself and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup" (1 Corinthians 11:28).

Baptized and practicing adult Christians who fulfill the requirements of the Invitation but have not yet been confirmed may be admitted to Communion by permission of the rector. Those who are not receiving Communion are invited to come to the communion rail, with arms folded across the chest, for a blessing.

Bible Passages on the Eucharist

WHEN the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine flake-like thing, fine as hoarfrost on the ground. When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, What is it?...And Moses said to them, It is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat (Exodus 16:15, RSV).

Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh (John 6:49-51, RSV).

I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst (John 6:35, RSV).

Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed (John 6:53-5, RSV).

He went in to stay with them. Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him (Luke 24:31, NKJV).

I recieved from the Lord that which I also delivered unto you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks [*eucharist*], he broke it and gave it to them saying, "Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same manner he also took the cup after supper saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. This do as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till he comes (1 Corinthians 11:23-25, NKJV).

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? For we, being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread (1 Corinthians 10:16-17, KJV).

Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me (Revelation 3:20, RSV).



Preparation for Worship

WORSHIP requires preparation. Sunday worship cannot be isolated from the life of prayer that we live during the week. If the only prayer we practice is the time we spend in church on Sunday, worship is not likely to have a transforming impact on our lives. The habit of daily Bible reading will lead us to glean more from the Sunday lessons and sermon. The daily experience through prayer of communion with the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit will lead us to a greater experience of communion at the altar. The Eucharist on the Lord's Day is the beginning and ending of the life of prayer, for Christ is the Alpha and Omega.

Be in church at least five to ten minutes early for personal prayer. Allow time before worship to "be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46). Consider where you are in your relationship with God. What sins do you need to confess? What thanksgivings and petitions do you want to offer?

The symbols of the church aid us in the practice of remembrance. They remind us of the true nature of things—the way heaven really is. The altar of God is the centerpiece because we come to the Father through the sacrifice of the Son. The cross is exalted. The risen Christ sits enthroned as Lord of all. Statues and icons of the saints remind us of our participation in the communion of the saints.

Christ is present in the Sacrament, which is reserved on the altar in the tabernacle. The presence of the reserved sacrament is indicated by the sanctuary lamp. This is a candle that burns continuously near the altar. As we enter the pew, we genuflect (touch the right knee to the ground) before the Sacrament to acknowledge that Jesus is Lord.

The time before the liturgy begins should also be used for practical preparation. Look at the bulletin, mark the prayer book and hymnal for the lessons and hymns so that you are prepared to participate in the liturgy.



The Liturgy of Holy Communion

From

The Book of Common Prayer

With Commentary

The Collect for Purity

The Collect for Purity calls to mind Psalm 139:

Lord, thou hast searched me out and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising; thou understandest my thoughts long before. Thou art about my path and about my bed; and art acquainted with all my ways. For lo, there is not a word in my tongue, * but thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether.

In the Garden of Eden, after the first sin, Adam and Eve hid from God in the bushes (Genesis 3:8). As their descendants and inheritors of Original Sin, we continue to try to hide from God.

The work of redemption begins in us when we come out from hiding and expose our sin to the light of God's redeeming presence. Only then can the Holy Spirit cleanse us so that we can begin to love and magnify (exalt) God as we ought to.

Psalm 139 concludes with a prayer that can be used in preparation for worship:

Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart; prove me and examine my thoughts. Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me; and lead me in the way everlasting.

***Kneeling is the common posture for prayer in the Anglican tradition. In general, we will stand to praise, sit to listen and kneel to pray.*

The Summary of the Law

The Summary is a direct quote from Matthew 22:37-40. The law is an appropriate beginning to worship because it is the beginning of the gospel. Galatians 3:24 says, "The law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

The law shows us that we are sinners because we have not loved God and neighbor as the law instructs us (cf. Romans 3:20, Matthew 6:17-30). The law leads us to repent and turn to Christ for forgiveness.

As we come to the altar of God, we should also be mindful of our current areas of struggle and progress with regard to the law and the command to love. What particular sins are we struggling with? What particular virtues do we want to acquire? It is helpful in this regard to be familiar with the seven deadly sins: pride, anger, lust, gluttony, covetousness, envy and sloth. This is another way of looking at the moral law. They are ways we fall short of the ideal of love. There are virtues that correspond to the deadly sins, such as humility, charity, chastity, self control, generosity, contentment, and diligence. As we pray for and practice these virtues, we sin less.

The Procession to the Altar

¶ *The service begins with a procession to the altar by the Priest and servers. The People stand for the procession.*

¶ *A hymn may be sung. Hymnals are in the pews. The hymn numbers are on the hymn board.*

The Collect for Purity

Priest. The Lord be with you.
People. And with thy spirit.
Priest. Let us pray. (¶ *The People kneel.***)

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.

Introit. ¶ *A portion of the Psalter is sung or said.*

The Summary of the Law

¶ *On occasion, the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) is recited in the place of Summary of the Law. See addendum (page 102-103) for Decalogue and Comment.*

¶ *The Priest or Deacon says,*

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.

Kyrie Eleison

The verdict of the Law leads us to ask for mercy and prepares us for the experience of redemption that follows in Word and Sacrament. Kyrie Eleison is Greek for “Lord have mercy.” It was an ancient hymn to Caesar that was adapted for Christian worship by the addition of the middle phrase, “Christ have mercy upon us.” The prayer for mercy will be answered. Christ will have mercy upon us. He will forgive us and feed us with his body and blood.

The Gloria in excelsis

The Gloria in excelsis is an ancient Christian hymn based on the hymn of the angels in Luke 2:14. It was written as a companion to the Kyrie. It raises the penitential note of the Kyrie to praise and makes clear that the Lord we are asking for mercy is Jesus Christ.

The Gloria in excelsis proclaims the Incarnation. The angels announced the birth of Christ with these words. We use the same words to herald his presence in the Eucharist.

The second Book of Common Prayer (1552) moved the Gloria in excelsis to the end of the service where it serves as a post communion hymn of praise. It is Anglo-Catholic custom to restore the Gloria in excelsis to its ancient position after the Kyrie.

During the Gloria in excelsis:

**A bow is made at the words, “we worship thee” in paragraph one.*

***A bow is made at the words “Jesus Christ” (cf. Philippians 2:10) at the beginning of paragraph two.*

****A bow is made at “receive our prayer” at the end of paragraph two.*

+ A sign of the cross is made at the end of the Gloria as a personal affirmation of what has been said.

Kyrie Eleison

¶ *The Priest and the People sing or say the Kyrie.*

Lord, have mercy upon us. *(Three times)*

Christ have mercy upon us. *(Three times)*

Lord, have mercy upon us. *(Three times)*

¶ *The Gloria in excelsis which follows below may be sung at the end of the liturgy, in which case the service continues here with the Liturgy of the Word on the next page. The Gloria is also omitted during Advent and Lent.*

Gloria in excelsis

¶ *The Priest and the People stand to sing,*

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.

The Liturgy of the Word

The Collect(s)

The lessons are preceded by a prayer called the collect. The collect is introduced with the Apostolic Greeting (“The Lord be with you.” *“And with thy Spirit.”*). This verse and response is found in the earliest liturgies and follows the biblical custom (cf. Ruth 2:4) of greeting one another in the name of the Lord.

The collects are addressed to God the Father. An attribute or aspect of God’s person or work is recalled. A petition is made. And the prayer is offered through the person of Jesus Christ. Some collects are offered directly to Christ. There will be more than one collect when there is an octave (an eight day celebration of a feast), when two or more feasts occur on the same day, or when there is seasonal collect to be said after the collect for the day (Advent and Lent).

The Epistle and Gospel

The epistle is read from the right (traditionally south) end of the altar, or from the lectern. Hence, this side of the altar is called the epistle side. It is ancient tradition to have a gospel procession in which the gospel book is carried from the sanctuary (the front part of the church, within the communion rail, where the altar is) to the nave (the main body of the church where the people sit). This symbolizes Christ’s bringing of the gospel to the people. When there is no gospel procession, a remnant of it remains in the moving of the book from the right side of the altar to the left (traditionally north) end of the altar. Hence, the left side of the altar is called the gospel side.

The lessons speak to the whole church, but they also have something to say to each worshiper. Try to discern what God is saying to you each week through the lessons. Come to church expecting that God will speak to you. The lessons will have greater impact if you are in the habit of reading the Bible in a disciplined manner during the week.

** The People stand in special reverence for the words of Christ in the gospel.*

*** By ancient tradition, the gospel is read by the Deacon. If there is no Deacon present, it is read by the Priest, who was a Deacon before he was ordained Priest.*

+++ While the gospel is announced, the People make three small crosses with the thumb, one on the forehead, one on the mouth and one on the heart. This represents a prayer that the words of the gospel will transform our thinking, speaking, and our heart.

The Liturgy of the Word

Priest. The Lord be with you.
People. And with thy spirit.
Priest. Let us pray.

The Collect(s)

¶ *The Priest says the Collect (prayer) of the Day and any other collects (prayers) appropriate for the day or season.*

The Epistle

Reader. The Epistle is written in the ___ chapter of ___, beginning at the ___ verse.

¶ *The People sit for the reading of the Epistle. After the Epistle is read,*

Minister. Here endeth the Epistle.
People. Thanks be to God.

Gradual. ¶ *A portion of the Psalter is sung or said during the procession of the Gospel.*

¶ *The People stand for the reading of the Gospel.**

The Holy Gospel

***Deacon or Priest:* +++The Holy Gospel is written in the ___ chapter of ___, beginning at the ___ verse.

¶ *After the Gospel is announced, the People sing or say,*

Glory be to thee, O Lord.

¶ *After the Gospel is read, the People sing or say,*

Praise be to thee, O Christ.

The Nicene Creed

The Nicene Creed is the authoritative summary of the Faith. In the liturgy it serves as our assent to the faith expressed in God's Word.

The Nicene Creed was written by the Church in the fourth century in response to the Arian heresy. The Arians said that Jesus is part of the Creation. The Church said, No! Jesus is part of the Creator. The essential distinction is between "made" (the Creation) and "begotten" (the Son of God). The begetting of the Son by the Father is referred to as "The Eternal Generation of the Son." To use an ancient phrase, "There never was a time when the Son was not."

The Nicene Creed identifies Jesus as the agent of creation: "By whom all things were made." Romans 1:25 defines idol worship as the worship of the creation instead of the creator. It would be wrong to worship Jesus unless he is God. The Nicene Creed also affirms the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the Creed sets forth our Trinitarian faith. The Nicene Creed also teaches us that Jesus is genuinely human ("And was made man"). Thus, it asserts the two foundational doctrines of the faith. God is Trinity. And Jesus is fully God and fully man.

The third paragraph extends belief in the Holy Ghost to belief in the Church, which the Holy Ghost created (Acts 2). The true Faith is the Catholic and Apostolic faith into which the Holy Ghost led the Church (John 16:13).

* *Bow at the name of Jesus (cf. Philippians 2:10).*

** *Genuflect (or bow) to acknowledge that Jesus humbled himself to be made man (cf. Philippians 2:5-7).*

*** *Rise to acknowledge that the exaltation of Jesus came on the cross (John 3:14).*

**** *Bow to acknowledge that we worship the Holy Spirit because he also is God.*

+ *The sign of the cross is made at the end of the Creed. This is an outward acknowledgment that one accepts the truth just recited. The sign of the cross is the most ancient Christian gesture of worship. It is recorded that the early Christians made the sign of the cross as they witnessed the deaths of the martyrs.*

The sign of the cross is made by touching the finger tips in succession to the forehead, chest, left shoulder and right shoulder.

The Sermon

The sermon will generally be an exposition of either the epistle or gospel, but may pick up some other theme of the season or the faith. As with the lessons, the key to the sermon is determining what God is saying to you. It is not necessary for the sermon to be the best ever preached for it to speak to you. What God says to you may be something different than the sermon's main point. Avoid being defensive or critical. Be open to what the Holy Spirit has to say (cf. I Corinthians 2:1-5).

The Nicene Creed

¶ *The Priest and the People say,*

IBELIEVE 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 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 worshiped**** 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 Homily or Sermon

¶ *The People sit for the sermon.*

THE OFFERTORY

The Offertory is the first of the four parts of the Eucharist. At the Last Supper, Jesus took bread, blessed bread, broke bread and gave bread. We take bread and wine (Offertory), bless bread and wine (Consecration), break bread (Fraction), and give bread and wine (Communion).

The Offertory refers to the offering we make to God on the Altar. Having heard the Word of God we are moved to respond by offering ourselves to God. On Sunday, two visible actions take place. There is a collection of alms (money), and bread and wine are placed on the altar. The second of these is the essential part of the Offertory. The bread and wine are the people's gifts. The acolytes represent the people in presenting the elements to the celebrant.

We offer back to the Creator that which he gave (wheat and grape) modified by human effort (making the wheat into bread and the grape into wine). Through the tokens of bread and wine, the people (the creation) offer themselves back to God (the Creator). The alms are an appropriate complement. They are used to purchase the bread and wine. And, as Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21).

Use the time during the Offertory to reflect on the lessons and sermon and to prepare for the confession and prayers that follow.

Prayer for the Church and General Confession

The Prayer for the Church and the General Confession and Absolution are parts of the Offertory. In the prayer for "the whole state of Christ's Church" we pray for the well-being of the church, which is offering herself to God. In the confession we pray for the purification of the Church so that our offering may be worthy.

Prayer for the Church

The "holy Apostle" spoken of is St. Paul. The first sentence refers to 1 Timothy 2:1. The first paragraph ends with a prayer for unity, which should be taken to heart by all who participate in the sacrament. This was Jesus' own prayer for the Church in John 17.

The prayer for rulers spells out what the Church wants from government, based on the Bible's teachings (Rom. 13:1-7). "To the maintenance of thy true religion and virtue" does not mean it is the government's responsibility to establish religion. The point is that when the government does its God-given job of administering justice, it provides a setting in which true religion will flourish.

The prayer for "Bishops and other Ministers" covers all who minister in the name of Christ. And it makes the point that Christianity is taught by example as well as by verbal instruction. The "lively" or living Word comes from Hebrews 4:12. The ministry, like the Eucharist, consists of Word and Sacrament.

A meek heart (paragraph 4) is not a timid heart—the implication in modern English. The meek person "hears the word of God and does it" (Luke 11:28, see James 1:21). For "reverence" see Hebrews 12:28.

THE OFFERTORY

¶ *The Offertory begins as the Priest recites a verse of Scripture. During the Offertory the communion elements are prepared on the altar. On Sunday, an offering is usually taken. However, the monetary collection is not the essential part of the offertory. A collection is not usually taken at mid-week celebrations.*

¶ *The choir may sing sentences of Scripture (the Offertory Verse) and/or an anthem.*

Prayer for the Church

¶ *The Priest mentions the prayer intentions for the day, then says,*

Let us pray for the whole state of Christ's Church.

¶ *The People kneel.*

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.

These various adversities mentioned occur in this “transitory life” (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:17). Comfort is God’s strength. Succour is help, assistance or relief. A short silence may be kept at the end of this paragraph for each worshiper to mention those in need of prayer. Bring your prayer list to church and mention the names of those for whom you are praying.

We pray for the departed in Christ. This expresses the doctrine of the Communion of the Saints. Death does not separate the body of Christ (see Hymns 207 v. 3 & 396 v. 5). The Church has always prayed for the departed. The church does not believe that prayers for the dead can save a person’s soul after death. Rather, prayer expresses our continued concern for and fellowship with the faithful departed. We pray for their growth, which assumes that they are still alive in and with Christ (cf. Luke 23:43, Philippians 1:23).

+ A sign of the cross is made as we remember the departed and, generally, whenever we invoke a blessing during the liturgy.

Invitation to Confession and General Confession

The biblical basis for a confession of sin in the context of Communion is 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. St. Paul says that unworthy reception of the sacrament can cause harm. Therefore he writes, “let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread or drink of that cup.” The requirement that we be in love and charity with our neighbors comes from Matthew 5:23-24, where Jesus mandates that we be reconciled with our brother before we offer our gift on the altar. These requirements are set forth in the longer exhortation (BCP 85) and are stressed in the Offices of Instruction (BCP 292).

The familiar routine of general confession should not keep us from practicing specific confession. Specific confession means that we not only admit we have sinned in thought, word and deed; it means we also confess the specific thoughts, words and deeds. Part of our preparation for worship is self-examination, which should bring to mind the specific sins for which we will offer this prayer. It is highly profitable to augment general confession with the regular practice of making a specific confession to a Priest.

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.

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.

Invitation to Confession

¶ *The Priest or Deacon says,*

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.

General Confession

¶ *The Priest and the People say,*

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.

Absolution

In the upper room on the night of the resurrection, Christ gave the apostles authority to forgive sins (John 20:22-23)—the very authority that caused scandal when Christ exercised it (cf. Mark 2:1-12). This authority is passed on by the bishops (the successors to the apostles) to the Priests in ordination (BCP p. 546).

The Priest gives absolution in the name of Christ. The point emphasized by Priestly absolution is that forgiveness does not depend upon whether one feels forgiven. Forgiveness depends upon the promise of Christ, of which the Priest is an outward and visible sign.

+ The sign of the cross is made by the worshiper at the same time the Priest pronounces forgiveness and makes the sign of the cross towards the congregation. This gesture is an outward sign that the worshiper receives the absolution.

Comfortable Words (BCP 76)

The comfortable words give the biblical basis for the forgiveness of sins. They allow the worshiper to reflect deeply on the promise of forgiveness. They also provide a transition to the Prayer of Consecration. Each promise of the Comfortable Words is received in the sacrament. Here we who travail and are heavy laden come to Jesus. Here we receive the promise of eternal life through faith. Here Christ comes into the world to save us. Here we proclaim that Christ is the propitiation for our sins.

Absolution

¶ *The Priest says,*

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.

Comfortable Words

¶ *The Priest or Deacon says,*

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.

Sursum Corda

Sursum Corda is Latin for “lift up your hearts.” These verses and responses mark the transition from Offertory to Consecration. These responses are an ancient part of the liturgy. We lift up our hearts to the throne of God and join our earthly worship with the heavenly worship described in chapters 4 and 5 of Revelation.

The Preface

The general preface acknowledges the appropriateness of thanksgiving before God. “Meet” means fitting or proper. It leads into the Proper Preface.

Proper Prefaces

The Prayer Book provides various Proper Prefaces to highlight the themes of the seasons. The Proper Prefaces state the theological meaning of each season or feast. Careful attention should be paid to the words. The Proper Prefaces provide a tour through the central doctrines of the faith.

Christmas

The Christmas preface stresses the main theological point of Christmas and the Incarnation. Jesus was made very (truly) man by the working of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1: 35), without the agency of a human father in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He was born without sin (2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 4:15) to cleanse us from all sin (1 John 1:9).

Epiphany

The theme of Epiphany is the revealing of the One who is born at Christmas. The preface uses the theme of light based on 1 Peter 2:9 (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:6 and Luke 1:79).

Purification, Annunciation and Transfiguration

The feasts of the Blessed Virgin focus on the “Mystery of the Word made flesh” because Jesus (The Word, John 1:1) received his humanity (flesh) through Mary. The preface is based on 2 Corinthians 4:6.

Sursum Corda and Preface

Priest. The Lord be with you.

People. And with thy spirit.

Priest. Lift up your hearts.

People. We lift them up unto the Lord.

Priest. Let us give thanks unto our Lord God.

People. It is meet and right so to do.

¶ *The Priest says,*

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,

¶ The Priest says or sings the Proper Preface from the following,

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, and TRANSFIGURATION

BECAUSE in the Mystery of the Word made flesh, thou hast caused 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.

Lent

Lent is the fast that prepares us for Easter. The preface for Lent focuses on the rewards of genuine fasting. Self-denial trains the soul in virtue. The biblical basis for this preface is Matthew 6:16-18.

Preface of the Cross (Passiontide)

Passiontide is the last two weeks of Lent, which focus on the cross. The preface draws out the contrast between the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:9, 3:1-7) through which the serpent tempted Adam and Eve, bringing death into the world (Romans 5:12-17), and the tree of the cross through which Christ overcame the devil, sin and death (1 Peter 2:24, Hebrews 2:14-15).

Easter

The Easter preface succinctly states the theology of Easter. It is based on John 1:29 and 2 Timothy 1:10. Jesus is the true Paschal (Passover) Lamb who fulfilled the rite described in Exodus 12, destroyed death (cf. Hebrews 2:14-15), and gave us everlasting life.

Ascension

The Ascension preface summarizes Acts 1:3-9 and reflects the thought of Colossians 3:1-3, the Easter Day epistle.

Whitsuntide

The Whitsuntide (Pentecost) preface summarizes the descent of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 and describes aspects of the Spirit's work. He is the Spirit of Truth (John 16:13). He gives boldness (Acts 4:31) and zeal.

LENT

WHO By bodily fasting dost curb our sinfulness, uplift our hearts, and bestow both virtue and its reward upon us, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PREFACE OF THE CROSS (PASSIONTIDE)

BECAUSE on the wood of the Cross, thou gavest mankind salvation; that so, whence death arose, life might also rise again: and that the foe, who by a tree had conquered, by this Tree might be overcome, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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.

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 of thy Son Jesus Christ.

Trinity

The Trinity preface states the Nicene doctrine of the Holy Trinity. God is three persons but only one substance or essence.

The alternative Trinity preface is a simpler expression of the doctrine of the Trinity.

All Saints

The All Saints preface is based on Hebrews 12:1-2. It reminds us that death does not divide the body of Christ. The unfading crown of glory is taken from 1 Peter 5:4.

Requiem

The preface for a requiem (funeral) is based on 2 Corinthians 5:1-4. While the body we have in this life (“tabernacle of our earthly habitation”) is taken away in death, we will not be left as disembodied spirits. God has prepared for us a “house eternal” in the heavens. This refers to the resurrection body we will be given when the dead are raised by Christ on the Last Day.

Sanctus

All the company of heaven includes the saints of ages past and, indeed, the faithful of all ages (the elders of Revelation 4:4). For another biblical image of this assembly in heaven, see Hebrews 12:22-24.

Sanctus is the Latin word for holy. The Sanctus is the hymn of the Seraphim in Isaiah 6:3 and the Cherubim in Revelation 4:8. The Sanctus is Trinitarian. There is one Holy for each divine person of the Holy Trinity.

Benedictus Qui Venit

Benedictus qui venit is Latin for “Blessed is he that cometh.” This comes from Psalm 118:26 as it was applied to Jesus during his triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matthew. 21:9). Just as these words heralded Christ’s entry into Jerusalem, so they herald his coming among us sacramentally in the consecration that follows.

The Eucharistic coming of Christ foreshadows his Second Coming in glory. As we prepare to meet Christ in the sacrament, we prepare to meet him when he comes again. The faithful are gathered for his coming at the altar on the Lord’s day (cf. Revelation 1:9), just as the faithful will be gathered for his coming on the Day of the Lord (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:16, Matthew 24:30-31).

+ *The sign of the cross is made during the Benedictus at the word “Blessed.”*

TRINITY

WHOO, 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.

Or this

FOR the precious death and merits of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, and for the sending to us of the Holy Ghost the Comforter; who are one with thee in they Eternal Godhead.

ALL SAINTS

WHOO, 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.

REQUIEM

THROUGH Jesus Christ our Lord; in whom the hope of a blessed resurrection hath shone upon us; that we, who are saddened by the certainty of dying, may be comforted by the promise of immortal life to come. For the life of thy faithful people, O Lord, is not taken away, but changed and through the tabernacle of their earthy habitation is dissolved, thou preparest them a house eternal in the heavens.

¶ *The Priest continues,*

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

Sanctus and Benedictus Qui Venit

¶ *The Priest and the People sing,*

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

+ Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

PRAYER OF CONSECRATION

Words of Institution

The words Jesus used at the Last Supper are called “The Words of Institution.” Through the Prayer of Consecration the elements become what Jesus meant them to become when he said, “This is my body” and “This is my blood.” Christ’s presence depends on his promise, not on whether the communicant thinks or feels that Jesus is present. The Greek word for remembrance is *anamnesis*. It means to bring something from the past into the present. In the Eucharist the historical event of the Cross is brought into the present moment so that we can receive its benefits now. The Greek word used in the New Testament for “giving thanks” is *eucharist*. Hence, the early church called the Lord’s Supper “The Eucharist.”

The words “a full perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world” address the medieval notion that the Mass somehow added to the sacrifice on Calvary (Article XXXI BCP 609).

1 Corinthians 11:25 says “as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord’s death *till he comes*.” The Eucharist looks forward to the Second Coming and the heavenly feast (Revelation 19:9). When Jesus comes again in glory, the eucharistic foretaste will give way to the reality of heaven.

+ After reciting the words, “This is my body...Do this in remembrance of me,” the celebrant genuflects, elevates the host, then genuflects again. He repeats the same action after reciting the words, “This is my blood...Do this in remembrance of me.” The worshiper makes the sign of the cross at each elevation in reverence for the words of Christ and his presence in the sacrament.

The Oblation

Oblation means sacrifice or offering. The eucharistic oblation succeeds the Old Testament temple sacrifices. As the prophet Malachi wrote,

From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my Name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name and a pure offering. For my name shall be great among the Gentiles, says the Lord of Hosts (1:11).

The Church’s sacrifice is not another sacrifice that adds to the cross; it is the cross itself recalled and represented before God. We plead the merits of the one sacrifice of Christ once offered. As Hebrews says, “We have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he opened for us.”

PRAYER OF CONSECRATION

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. +

The Oblation

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.

The Invocation

The ancient liturgies all contained a prayer asking God to make the gifts what Christ intended them to be. God is asked to “bless and sanctify, with thy Word [Jesus Christ] and [Holy] Spirit.” This recalls the Creation in Genesis 1 where the Father created by his Word through the Spirit.

The Invocation recalls Pentecost (Acts 2). The descent of the Spirit sanctified the first Christians. So, by invocation of the Spirit, the elements are sanctified to be holy food. The Invocation also recalls the “fire from before the Lord that consumed the burnt offerings” (Leviticus 9:24, cf. Hymn 376 v. 2).

There is a logic to the Prayer of Consecration. The consecration of the gifts begins with the Words of Institution. The gifts are offered to God in the Oblation; then they are sanctified for our use through the Invocation.

The Oblation of the Church

The last paragraph is sometime called the Oblation of the Church because it sums up the people’s participation in the eucharistic offering. We offer “our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving” (Hebrews 13:15). We also offer “ourselves, our souls and bodies” (Romans 12:1). In his book *The City of God*, St. Augustine wrote:

The whole redeemed city, that is to say, the congregation or community of the saints, is offered to God as our sacrifice through the great High Priest, who offered Himself to God in His passion for us, that we might be members of this glorious head, according to the form of a servant....this also is the sacrifice which the Church continually celebrates in the sacrament of the altar, known to the faithful, in which she teaches that she herself is offered in the offering she makes to God.

“That he may dwell in us and we in him” (cf. John 17:22-23).

The ancient commemoration of the departed is said in some places. It expresses our ongoing concern for the faithful in Christ who have died and our desire to be given a place among the company of the blessed.

The Amen signals one’s assent to, and participation in, the prayers that have been said. The Amen should be said audibly and boldly.

+ *A sign of the cross is made during the petition “be filled with thy grace and heavenly benediction.”*

+ *A sign of the cross is made at the end of the prayer when the Priest lifts up the body and blood of Christ.*

The 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.

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, ourselves, 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.

¶ *In some places, the following commemoration of the departed is added,*

Remember also, O Lord, thy servants and handmaidens who have gone before us with the sign of faith and are at rest in the sleep of peace (esp.). To these, O Lord, and to all who rest in Christ, we beseech thee to grant a place of refreshment, of light, and of peace. And vouchsafe to give unto us some portion and fellowship with thy holy Apostles and Martyrs; with John, Stephen, Matthias, Barnabas, Ignatius, Alexander, Marcellinus, Peter, Felicitas, Perpetua, Agatha, Lucia, Agnes, Cecilia, Anastasia and with all thy Saints; within whose fellowship we beseech thee to admit us.

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.*

The Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer comes at the climax of the Consecration. The words "bold to say" mean that we have confident access to God through Christ. The thought comes from Hebrews 4:16.

We are able to call God "Our Father" because we have become his adopted children in baptism. "When we cry Abba! Father! It is the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:15-16). In the Eucharist, having just remembered the sacrifice of Christ that reconciles us with God, we renew the privilege of calling God "Father."

THE FRACTION

The Priest breaks the bread as he says, "The peace of the Lord be always with you." This mirrors the "He broke" of the Last Supper. The Fraction represents the total offering or "breaking" of Christ in sacrifice to the Father. It also represents our being broken with him in sacrifice. The proper attitude at this point of the liturgy is complete surrender to God.

Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei means "Lamb of God." This hymn is a traditional part of the liturgy. It calls to mind the connection between Eucharist and Passover. Jesus is the Passover Lamb (Revelation 5:6, 1 Corinthians 5:7). It is a fitting climax to the preparation for Communion. We want two things from Christ: mercy and peace. Peace is the Jewish *Shalom*. It means spiritual and psychological wholeness. During Eastertide, the Pascha Nostrum (a chant based on 1 Corinthians 5:7-8) may be substituted for the Agnus Dei.

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

¶ *The Priest and the People 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 FRACTION

¶ *As the Priest breaks the Consecrated Bread he says,*

Priest. The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People. And with thy spirit.

Agnus Dei

¶ *The Priest and the People sing or say,*

OLAMB of God, that takest away the sins of the world,
Have mercy upon us.

OLAMB of God, that takest away the sins of the world,
Have mercy upon us.

OLAMB of God, that takest away the sins of the world,
Grant us thy peace.

The Prayer of Humble Access

This prayer is based on the healing of the centurion's servant (Matthew 8:5-13) and the healing of the Canaanite woman's daughter (Matthew 15:21-18). It expresses clearly what it means to be justified by faith (cf. Luke 18:9-14). Its petition for worthy reception of Christ's body and blood is based on John 6:56.

COMMUNION

Presentation of the Lamb of God

This is a quote from John 1:29. Just as John the Baptist presented the Incarnate Son of God to the people and invited them to receive Christ, so the Priest presents Jesus Christ, sacramentally present, to the people, who then come forward to receive him.

+ A sign of the cross is made when the Priest presents the sacrament before the people.

The Words of Administration

These are products of the Anglican Reformation. They stress the two aspects of the sacrament: the objective gift of Christ's body and blood and the subjective disposition with which we are to receive him.

After communion, time should be spent in prayer reflecting on the gift we have been given. Prayers of praise and thanksgiving are most appropriate here, as opposed to intercession or petition.

** See "A Note on the Reception of Holy Communion" on page 64 of this booklet.*

A genuflection to the altar is made when leaving the pew because of Christ's sacramental presence on the altar.

*** Communion is received with outstretched hands, the right hand supporting the left. Communion is taken into the mouth directly from the palm of the hand. It is not picked up with the fingers. If one prefers to receive Communion by intinction, the host is left in the outstretched hands. When the Priest or Deacon comes by with the chalice, the host will be dipped and placed on the tongue.*

The cup is received by gently holding the base of the chalice between the thumb and middle of the index finger and gently assisting the Priest or Deacon in bringing the chalice to the mouth.

Communion may also be received directly on the tongue. When the Priest comes by, the mouth is opened and the tongue extended. The Priest places the host on the tongue. The chalice is received as above.

The worshiper may make the sign of the cross before and/or after receiving communion.

The Prayer of Humble Access

¶ *The Priest and People say,*

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.

COMMUNION

¶ *The Priest says,*

BEHOLD the Lamb of God. + Behold him who takes away the sins of the world.

¶ *The People come to the altar rail by rows, beginning with the front row, to receive Holy Communion. Those who are not receiving Holy Communion are encouraged to come to the altar to receive a blessing. To receive a blessing, kneel at the altar rail with your arms folded across your chest. **

Communion. ¶ *A portion of Scripture or the Psalter is sung or said.*

The Words of Administration

¶ *When the Priest administers the Body of Christ, he says, ***

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 delivers the Cup says, ***

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.

¶ *After Communion, a hymn may be sung.*

Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Prayer of Thanksgiving is one of the most theologically loaded prayers in the liturgy. The sacrament is spiritual food (1 Corinthians 10:3-4). It provides tangible assurance of “God’s favour and goodness towards us” (Luke 1:30, Ephesians 1:5-8); that we are members in Christ’s body (1 Cor. 12:27) and heirs of the kingdom (Titus 3:7). The prayer points us back out into the world. We have been renewed by grace to “do all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in” (Ephesians 2:10).

Many people get the Christian life backwards. They think they have to be good enough before they can be accepted by God. The liturgy teaches us that we come to God as sinners, in repentance and faith, to receive the gift of eternal life (Roman 6:23). It is only through the experience of forgiveness and the strength God gives us through the Holy Spirit that we are able to live the Christian life. Prayer always precedes holy behavior. We worship on the first day of the week. The Christian life begins at the altar of God.

The Bible teaches that there is a profound connection between the presence of Christ in the sacrament and the presence of Christ in other Christian people. Man was made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). Christians are recreated in the image of Christ. If we reverence the presence of Christ in the sacrament, we must also reverence his presence in others. As 1 John says, “He who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God, whom he has not seen?” (4:20). The good works spoken of in the thanksgiving prayer are a necessary consequence of genuine worship.

Gloria in excelsis

The Gloria in excelsis is an ancient Christian hymn based on the hymn of the angels in Luke 2:14. It was originally a companion to the Kyrie. The second Book of Common Prayer (1552) moved the Gloria in excelsis to the end of the service where it serves as a post communion hymn of praise. We stand, which reminds us that we are risen with Christ.

During the Gloria in excelsis:

** A bow is made at the words, “we worship thee” in paragraph one;*

*** A bow is made at the words “Jesus Christ” (cf. Philippians 2:10) at the beginning of paragraph two.*

**** A bow is made at “receive our prayer” at the end of paragraph two.*

+ A sign of the cross is made at the end of the Gloria as a personal affirmation of what has been said.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Priest. Let us pray. (¶ *The People kneel.*)

¶ *The Priest and People say,*

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.

Gloria in excelsis

¶ *The Gloria in excelsis is omitted during Advent and Lent, and it may be sung at the beginning of the liturgy—see page 4.*

¶ *The Priest and the People stand to sing,*

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.

Closing Prayers

The closing prayer may be a seasonal post-communion prayer, a prayer appropriate to a saint's day or a prayer for a particular need.

The Blessing

The language for the closing blessing comes from Philippians 4:7. Peace is *Shalom*. It is the inner peace that results from being reconciled with God in Christ. We are not promised the absence of problems or pain in life. We are promised the redemptive presence of Christ in all things. As Jesus said,

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you (John 14:27).

These things I have spoken unto you that in me you might have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

Peace is also what Jesus invoked upon the disciples when he appeared to them in the upper room after the resurrection (John 20:21, 26). After we meet the risen Christ in the Eucharist, we leave with the same invocation of peace.

+ *The sign of the cross is made during the closing blessing as the Priest gives the blessing with the sign of the cross. This is an outward sign by which we receive the blessing.*

** *The People stand as the Priest, the representative of Christ in the liturgy, departs.*

Concluding Thoughts

In the Eucharist, the fullness of the faith is revealed. It proclaims the Incarnation. The Word of God who was made flesh two thousand years ago comes to us again in physical form. It proclaims the Cross. The Eucharist is the Church's sacrifice through which we recall and represent the Lord's death until he comes. It proclaims the Resurrection. What we receive is living bread; the Risen Christ himself is made known to us. It proclaims the Ascension. In the Eucharist we lift up our hearts to heaven, where Jesus is Lord and King. It proclaims Pentecost; through the heavenly food we are filled again with the Holy Spirit. It proclaims the Second Coming because it is a provisional feast, a foretaste of the glory that awaits us. It proclaims the Communion of the Saints: "We who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17).

¶ *A prayer may be said before the blessing. The People kneel for the prayer and the blessing.*

The 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.

¶ *Announcements are made, if there be any. The service then concludes with a procession out of the church by the Priest and servers. The People stand for the procession.** A hymn may be sung.*

Addendum

The Decalogue (Optional)

On occasion, in place of the Summary of the Law on page 71, the Ten Commandments are read according to the form on page 68 of the Book of Common Prayer (cf. Exodus 20:1-17). The responses to the Decalogue express the appropriate two-fold response to the law: “Lord have mercy upon us” for our failure to obey the law in the past “and incline our hearts to keep this law” in the future. The response after the tenth commandment is, “Lord have mercy upon us, and write all these thy laws in our hearts, we beseech thee.” This is based on the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:31, “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the law is no longer something external, written in stone; it is internal, part of our very nature.

The Decalogue

¶ Recited on occasion in the place of the Summary of the Law on page 71.

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 neighbor.

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.

CHAPTER SIX: THE CHURCH CALENDAR

THE church follows a liturgical calendar. The calendar details the various seasons, feasts, fasts, saint's days and celebrations of the church year. The church does not experience time merely in terms of the movement through winter, spring, summer and fall, with various "holidays" mixed in. The church experiences time in an annual cycle that moves through the major events in the life of Christ and the drama of our redemption.

The use of a calendar is rooted in the creation narrative. In Genesis 1:14, "God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years." God created the division of time for the observance of significant events pertaining to creation, redemption and judgement. These observances give meaning to time. God saves his people by acting in time. Then God establishes memorial days that look backward to his saving acts and forward to their future consummation.

In Leviticus 23, God commanded Israel to mark the passage of time by the observance of specific days and feasts. The following is a summary of these days and feasts followed by a summary of their fulfillment in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Old Testament Days and Feasts

1. Sabbath. The Jews observed the seventh day (Saturday) as the Sabbath each week. God commanded Israel to work six days and rest on Sabbath according to the pattern established by God at the creation (Genesis 2:2, Exodus 20:9-10).

Spring Feasts:

2. Passover. The Passover commemorated Israel's redemption from slavery by the blood of the Lamb (Exodus 12:1-27). The Passover also celebrated the **Feast of the First Fruits** of the harvest. The first sheaf of grain was offered in the temple (Leviticus 23:12). This feast began on the fourteenth day of the first month (Leviticus 23:5).

3. Pentecost. The Feast of Weeks. The completion of the grain harvest was celebrated on Pentecost, fifty days after Passover. Two loaves of baked bread were offered (Leviticus 23:17). Pentecost was also the day on which Israel commemorated the giving of the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

Fall Feasts:

4. Rosh Hashanah. Rosh Hashanah means, literally, "head of the year." This is a "new year" celebration, which is curious since it took place on the first day of the seventh month. The trumpet (a ram's horn, or *shofar*) was blown.

5. Yom Kippur. The Day of Atonement. (See Leviticus 16 for details). This was the one day of the year when the High Priest went into the Holy of Holies to offer the sacrifices which atoned for the sins of the people for the whole year. It was observed on the tenth day of the seventh month.

6. Succoth, Booths or Tabernacles. This was the celebration of the fall harvest of tree fruits. It was also a time when God commanded Israel to dwell in booths to remember the wilderness wanderings. It was a seven day feast, which began on the fifteenth day of the seventh month.

Each of these observances commemorated something God had already done for Israel and also looked forward to a future time when God would do a greater work.

New Testament Fulfillment

1. Sabbath. The Sabbath rest is fulfilled in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross and also in his resurrection, which is beginning of the new creation (cf. Hebrews 4:1-10). Jesus died on Good Friday. His last words were, "It is finished" (John 19:30). He was buried and he rested on the Sabbath in the grave, in fulfillment of the Sabbath day commandment. We rest in Christ because he has finished the work of our salvation. We begin new life in him. We gather around that altar on the Lord's Day to mark the beginning of the new creation. In the church, Sunday, the Lord's Day, replaced the Saturday Sabbath as the central day of worship. Sunday is the first day, the beginning of the new week, the time of the new creation.

2. Passover. Jesus is the Lamb of God, whose blood saves us from slavery to sin. God saved Israel from Egypt by the lamb's blood. This freed a particular nation from slavery at one point in time. God saves his people from slavery to sin and death by the blood of the Lamb of God (John 1:29). This frees God's people from sin and death for all time. The Feast of the First Fruits is fulfilled in the resurrection. Jesus is the first-fruits of God's harvest of souls (1 Corinthians 15:20).

3. Pentecost. The gift of the Holy Spirit completed the harvest of souls because we are raised from the dead through the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is given to us in baptism (cf. Romans 6:2). The gift of the Holy Spirit also fulfills the Law given to Moses. In the Old Testament the law was written in stone. In the New Testament the law is written in our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Jeremiah 31:33).

4. Rosh Hashanah points to the end of time. The trumpet, or *shofar*, of Rosh Hashanah is the trumpet of the end of time in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 15:52, 1 Thessalonians 4:16, Revelation 8:2). This explains why the new year occurs in the seventh month, at the end of the harvest. The new creation will be completed at the end of time (cf. Revelation 21:5).

5. Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement. The annual sacrifices on the Day of Atonement were fulfilled by the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. Jesus offered himself on the cross and now presents himself in the Holy of Holies in heaven as the sacrifice that takes away sin once and for all so that no further sacrifices are necessary. Read Hebrews 9 and 10 for an extended discussion of how Jesus fulfills the various details of the Yom Kippur observance. This observance also points forward to God's final act of redemption at the end of time when God's people will be completely cleansed of sin.

6. Succoth/Booths/Tabernacles points to final gathering or harvest of souls at the Second Coming of Jesus.

A note on the later Jewish feast of Hanukkah. In time between the end of the Old Testament and the coming of Jesus (c. 170 B.C.) Israel was invaded by a Syrian general named Antiochus who desecrated the temple with pagan sacrifices. Certain valiant Jews fought back and won independence for Israel. They rededicated the temple. This rededication is celebrated on the feast of Hanukkah, which is also called the “Feast of Lights” (cf. 1 Maccabees 1-4).

The Birth of Jesus (Christmas) has theological correspondence with the Feast of Lights or Hanukkah. Christ is the new and rededicated temple of God. He is the place where the glory of God now dwells among mankind (cf. John 1:14). His advent renders the old temple obsolete and replaces it with a new and better temple, the temple of his body (cf. John 2:19-21). This fulfills the promise of the rededication of the temple at Hanukkah.

Through the church calendar, the church celebrates the feasts of Leviticus in the light of their fulfillment in the revelation of God in Christ. We celebrate the Eucharist on the first day of the week, the Lord’s Day, in fulfillment of the Old Testament Sabbath. Time begins and ends in Christ. He is the alpha and omega (cf. Rev. 1:8, 17). Thus we worship on the first and eighth day.

The calendar sets forth the seasonal observances of the major events of our redemption from Advent through Trinity (See chart on next page). Advent anticipates Christ’s coming. Christmas celebrates the Incarnation, God become man. Epiphany celebrates the revelation of Christ as the Son of God. Lent is a season of fasting that prepares us for the cross. During Holy Week, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday commemorate the last days of Christ’s life and then his death and burial. Easter celebrates the Resurrection. Forty days later, on Ascension Day, Christ ascends to heaven. On Pentecost, fifty days after Easter, the Holy Spirit comes. Finally, we celebrate Trinity, the revelation of one God in three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Sanctification of Time

We do not live merely through winter, spring, summer and fall—an endless cycle of time. We live through Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost and Trinity—an annual cycle that points backwards to God’s saving acts and forward to their fulfillment at the Second Coming of Jesus. Our corporate observances and the prayers, lessons and themes of daily prayer cause us to experience time in terms of our redemption. Our personal life stories are transformed by our connection with God’s story. Our minds are transformed and renewed (Romans 12:2, Ephesians 4:22-24) by constantly remembering and experiencing again the drama of our redemption.

This relates to the Jewish understanding of a Memorial Day. The Jews believed that in remembering the saving acts of God through memorial observances, each generation participated anew in the original event. This is how God could be said to have “saved” from Egypt a generation that was born hundreds of years after the Exodus. They experienced the past redemption through the annual feasts that united them with God’s saving acts. We participate in God’s redemptive work through our seasonal observances. We experience again each year the drama of incarnation, revelation, death, resurrection, ascension and the coming of the Spirit.

Rather than merely trying to bring a Christian emphasis into secular time, the church transforms the day, the week and the year into the very means of experiencing God's saving work. Apart from Christ, time is merely a countdown to the day of our death. In Christ, time is a way of experiencing God's redeeming work in the world. In Christ, time continually looks backward to what God has done, and forward to what God will do. Time itself become a means of grace.

An Outline of the Church Calendar

<u>Season</u>	<u>Theme</u>	<u>Color</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Advent	Getting ready for the coming of Jesus at Christmas and at the end of time.	Violet	Begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas.
Christmas (Dec. 25)	The birth of the Son of God. The Incarnation.	White	A twelve-day season, 12/25-1/5 inclusive. Meditation on the goodness of creation.
Epiphany (Jan. 6)	Manifestation (revealing) of Christ to the Gentiles and as the Son of God.	White on the feast and through the octave. Subsequent Epiphany Sundays are green.	Magi appear in (and shepherds depart from) our manger scenes and remain through octave.
Pre-Lent Septuagesima Sexagesima Quinquagesima Pre-Lent ends on Shrove Tuesday	Focus shifts away from Incarnation and towards the cross and Easter. Party before the fast.	Violet Violet	Eases us into Lent. A call to get ready. Origin of Mardi Gras Carnival, "Fat Tuesday."
Lent begins on: Ash Wednesday	Cross & penitence. Fast commences.	Black	40 day fast (w/o Sundays) Day of complete fasting.
Holy Week: Palm Sunday	Triumphal Entry	Red/Violet	Palm procession.
Maundy Thursday	Last Supper / Betrayal	White (for Last Supper)	Foot-washing and stripping of altar.
Good Friday	Cross	Black	Good Friday Liturgy preceded by day of complete fasting.
Easter Even	From death to life.	Violet to White	Easter Vigil. Renewal of baptismal vows.
Easter	Resurrection	White	Christ is risen! A forty-day season.
Ascension	Christ ascends to heaven.	White	Acts 1 Chronology, Forty days after the Resurrection.
Pentecost	The Holy Spirit comes.	Red (tongues of fire)	Acts 2
Trinity	Doctrine of Trinity	White for day, green for season.	Climax of the revelation, a season of teaching.

Questions for Review

1. How does the life of Jesus fulfill the main Old Testament feasts and how is this reflected in the church calendar?
2. How does the calendar takes us through the drama of redemption each year?
3. What is meant by the term “the sanctification of time” and how does the calendar accomplish this?
4. What are the four main liturgical colors and what does each symbolize?
5. When is the color black used and what does it symbolize?
6. What is the difference between a solar and a lunar feast? What is the main solar feast? What is the main lunar feast?

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE LIFE OF PRAYER

The Incarnation and Behavior

THE sacramental approach to Christian faith is rooted in the Incarnation. “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” Therefore, what we do in our bodies matters. Faith cannot be separated from activities of daily life. The word must become flesh in our lives so that our behavior reflects our faith.

The call to discipleship teaches us this. Jesus said to Matthew, “Follow me” (Matt. 9:9). When Matthew arose and followed him, he began a new way of life. Following Jesus meant much more than simply adopting certain points of doctrine.

This same point is made by the New Testament word frequently used to describe the Christian life. Colossians says, “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him” (2:6). A quick check of the concordance reveals more than two dozen references to one’s “walk.” One can “walk in darkness” or one can “walk in light” (1 John 6-7). Our walk is our manner of life. It is the way we go about living from day to day.

The Christian Life Begins with Prayer

The beginning of the Christian walk is a commitment to a life of prayer. It is only by grace that we are able to rise above the limitations of our fallen nature and do the will of God. The grace of God comes to us chiefly through the sacraments and prayer. If we neglect the life of prayer, the Christian life is reduced to a merely human attempt to obey moral rules. This is a source of frustration in the Christian life. People try, by mere human effort and will power, to obey the moral commandments. They fail, try harder, and fail again. They end up being frustrated rather than making progress in the faith.

Many people think that to be a Christian means to “try to be good.” This is wrong. To be a Christian is to live in communion with the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. This living relationship begins in baptism and is renewed and experienced through Holy Communion and prayer. Changed or holy behavior is the fruit of this relationship (cf. Galatians 5:22f.).

This is why we begin the week in prayer with the Eucharist on Sunday, the first day of the week. We begin by remembering who we are in Christ, by confessing sins and receiving grace. Then, and only then, are we prepared to “do all such good works as [God] has prepared for us to walk in” (BCP 83, Ephesians 2:10). This is the pattern for life “in Christ.” Behavior follows prayer. As we integrate patterns of prayer into the very fabric of daily life, our behavior is changed as a consequence.

Daily Prayer in the Bible and the Church

The Jewish tradition observed fixed hours of prayer morning, noon and night. These hours of prayer corresponded to the times when sacrifice was supposed to be offered in the temple. This pattern of prayer is seen in the Old Testament Book of Daniel. The reason Daniel was arrested and thrown into the lions' den was that he refused to stop his practice of praying toward Jerusalem "three times a day" (Daniel 6:10).

In the New Testament, in The Acts of the Apostles, St. Peter and the centurion Cornelius both bear witness to this tradition. God spoke to both of them during their fixed times of prayer so as to bring about the inclusion of the Gentiles into the church (Acts 10:3, 9, 30).

The Christians of the next generation continued the practice of praying at fixed hours. An early Christian writing called *The Didache* ("The Teaching of the Twelve") instructs Christians to pray the Lord's prayer three times a day (Chapter 8). Over time, these hours of prayer came to include Scripture reading, praying of the Psalms and hymns of praise.

The monastic movement in the early church expanded the hours of prayer by establishing seven daily times of prayer. This was based on the teaching of Psalm 119:64, "Seven times a day do I praise thee." The monastics eventually developed fixed forms and names for each of the seven hours.

The average person was not able to participate fully in the seven monastic hours of prayer. This is why the Book of Common Prayer reduced the seven monastic hours of prayer to two, Morning and Evening Prayer. The goal was to make the prayer life of the church accessible to all the members of the church.

During the Middle Ages, people did not typically read the Bible. The liturgy and the Bible were both written in Latin, which most people did not understand. One foundation of the English Reformation was the translation of the Bible into the language of the people. It was the goal of the great English Bible translator, William Tyndale, that the ploughman would know more Bible than was standard for the clerics of his day. One way this goal is achieved is through the lectionary for daily Bible reading that is integrated into Morning and Evening Prayer.

The Prayer Book Offices

The foundation for daily prayer in the Anglican tradition is the practice of praying Morning and Evening Prayer (BCP 3 & 21). These "daily offices" of prayer include several key elements.

1. Opening sentences of Scripture that highlight the seasonal themes of the church year.

2. Daily reading of the Psalms. More accurately, the Psalms are prayed. The praying of the Psalms has always been the heart and soul of the daily office. The Psalms are prayed in the light of their fulfillment in Christ, and the light of our membership in the body of Christ. Our spiritual battle is

experienced and prayed through in the light of Christ's triumph. The constant petitions against our enemies are applied to the enemies of the soul—the world, the flesh and the devil. The Psalms contain depths of meaning that continue to unfold over a lifetime of prayer.

3. Two Bible lessons at each office, one from the Old Testament and one from the New

Testament. The daily lessons are tied into the themes of the church year and, so, highlight the church calendar and the experience of the church year. The lessons for each day are listed in the lectionary in the beginning of the prayer book. Following the lectionary will cause one to read through the Bible each year, with a few exceptions. The lectionary skips some sections in order to provide lessons from the Old Testament that are not unduly long. One can note where sections are skipped and read the skipped sections as well. Nonetheless, if one reads the lectionary “as is” one will still cover the major points and themes of the Bible and will read much more Scripture than one would otherwise read.

4. Canticles of praise that provide a lofty and beautiful language with which to pray to God.

The canticles each express biblical themes that can be applied to the life of each Christian. For example, Benedictus es at Morning Prayer is from the Song of the Three Children. It is a hymn attributed to Daniel's three friends who were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. They sang praise to God in the midst of their fiery trial. So we can sing Benedictus es mindful of how God delivers us from our various afflictions.

5. A General Confession of a General Thanksgiving. These remind us, and give us opportunity daily, to confess our sins and give thanks to God.

6. The Creed and the Lord's Prayer.

7. Collects or prayers that highlight the feast day or season or provide a reflection on a significant theological theme.

8. An opportunity to pray for our own needs and the needs of others. Each Christian should maintain a prayer list: a list of people for whom you are praying. This is part of your work as a member of the body. The daily offices provide a regular time to offer up names and causes to God in prayer. Your list should not be too long and you should renew the names weekly or monthly.

9. A form of common prayer. Each Christian can participate in the common prayer life of the church. We read common lessons and experience in common themes of the church year which creates a basis for fellowship and reflects the communion of the saints. This highlights the truth that even when we pray alone, we pray as members of the church. Thus, the language of liturgy is corporate. Jesus taught us to pray “Our” Father. In the office we pray using the words “Our” and “We.” Each of us adds our individual contribution to the corporate prayer of the church.

Benefits of the Daily Offices

We begin to pray habitually. Many Christians have not been taught to develop habits of prayer. Consequently, prayer is offered only when some need arises or when one feels like praying. As the desire to pray diminishes, so does the practice of prayer. The discipline of the offices gives us a form, like a routine of exercise, that we can follow whether we feel like it or not. The daily offices make prayer a normal and natural part of the day, like getting up and getting dressed. Prayer ought to be this normal and natural in the Christian life.

We develop a language of prayer and praise. As one habitually prays the Psalms and says the canticles, they become fixed in one's memory. One can use them for prayer at any time.

We establish a regular pattern for Bible reading. The only way to learn what the Bible teaches is to read it. The only way to read it is to read it regularly and habitually. Habitual reading provides an opportunity for God to speak to us through his Word each day.

We achieve greater balance in the life of prayer. A common mnemonic for prayer is ACTS: A for adoration and praise, C for confession, T for thanksgiving and S for supplication. A healthy life of prayer will continually cover all of this ground. It is not necessary that we pray in each category every time we pray. But our life of prayer should be characterized all these aspects.

Morning and Evening Prayer provide forms for each of these aspects of prayer. If, for example, one uses the General Confession, the Prayer for all Conditions of Men and the Thanksgiving each day, one will cover the basic themes of prayer: Adoration (in the Psalms and Canticles), Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication (or intercession).

Other Issues

The point of liturgical prayer is not "mere" recitation. The goal is to make the prayers of the daily offices one's own. The church's liturgy provides us with a language of prayer to learn so that we can cease thinking about praying and actually pray. As we learn the prayers of the daily offices, they will become prayers of the heart. The words of the confession will express our penitence. Te Deum, Benedictus es, Benedictus, Magnificat and Nunc dimittis will become our own hymns of praise. The fixed prayers are aids to true devotion.

Liturgical prayer also teaches us how we ought to feel. Our natural feelings toward God may be defective. The liturgy trains our hearts and minds to approach and respond to God in the right ways. The liturgy scripts for us the role of perfect worshiper and invites us to learn the part.

The daily offices are not meant to replace extemporaneous and conversational prayer. However, extemporaneous prayer is best built on the foundation of the church's liturgical prayer. When prayer consists only of extemporaneous prayer, one's life of prayer tends to be less consistent and to drift towards intercession at the expense of praise, confession and thanksgiving. The daily offices

provide a structural balance. One can use the fixed forms of Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication as points of departure for extemporaneous prayers in each category.

Silence, Meditation and Contemplation. In this discussion we have just scratched the surface of the topic of prayer. We have not talked about meditation, in which we reflect deeply and prayerfully on a passage of Scripture. We have not talked about contemplation, in which we are still and silent before God. It is important to have times of silence in which we turn off the TV and radio—the noise of the world—and listen to God. These higher forms of prayer will develop out of good daily disciplines of prayer. The more time we spend with God in prayer, the more at home we become in God's presence and the more we advance in our ability to pray.

Time. If we are to pray, we must set aside time for it. This is the most important point of this session. If Jesus is our Lord and Savior (BCP 297), if we are depending upon him for daily bread, guidance, protection, forgiveness and peace, we must make time for prayer. This challenges our priorities. We can usually find time for things we consider to be important. Many people can easily spend thirty minutes with the morning paper or on the internet but can't find fifteen minutes for prayer.

We live in a busy world, and in our “busy-ness” the essentials of the spiritual life get crowded out. This is a demonic element of the modern world that we must be militant and diligent to combat. If we will not pray, we cannot do what Christ asks of us and we will tend to drift in our faith. Therefore, if we are serious about our faith, we must establish certain times during the day when we will pray and plan the rest of our activities around this commitment. We must continue to fight the spiritual battle to make prayer a priority.

When? Different people have different schedules. Each person should schedule prayer in a manner that will work. There are morning people and evening people. There are parents with many children and there are others who live alone. There is not one rule that will work for everyone. But there are some principles that should govern the enterprise.

Number One: Pray first. Have a time for morning prayer first thing. If it is necessary to have a cup of coffee or a shower first, then do so. But make time for prayer before the activities of the day begin. Once they begin, there will be no time for prayer. Evenings can be trickier, especially in a family setting. However, make every effort to have a time for prayer in the transition between the activities of the day and the night. The main peril of saying the office at bed time is that it is hard to stay awake.

Number Two: Establish reasonable patterns of prayer. In beginning to pray the daily offices, avoid the error of the overly enthusiastic person who begins a far too ambitious exercise program and burns out within a month. It is better to have two very brief fixed times of prayer each day, with abbreviated forms of the offices, and actually pray this way for a year or two, than it is to attempt all of Morning and Evening Prayer each day, get overwhelmed and quit in two weeks.

Number Three: Include the family in the habits of prayer. Even if the rest of the family is not ready for all of Morning and/or Evening Prayer, establish some daily family habit. Perhaps a short Bible reading, followed by the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, one of the two fixed collects from one of the offices and the grace. Or see the short forms on BCP 592 and 593.

Number Four: When you fall, get up and start again. The key word is when, not if. Once you establish habits of prayer, there will be times when all things conspire against you so that you begin to neglect prayer. The point of establishing times for prayer is to aid in your spiritual growth, not to make you feel guilty when you don't pray. When you fail to pray as you planned, simply begin again with your pattern of prayer the next day. Don't make the next day's prayers longer and harder to try to make up for lost time. Accept God's grace and start anew.

Number Five: Persevere. If there is one overriding biblical message concerning prayer, it is that we should continue to pray (cf. Luke 11:1-13, 18:1-8). However meager your efforts at prayer seem to be, keep working at the life of prayer. It will bear much fruit.

Conclusion: A Rule of Life

The church refers to one's habits of prayer and worship as a "Rule of Life." One's rule states how often and according to what form or pattern one will pray each day. It states one's commitment to worship God in his church each week, one's frequency of confession, one's habits of fasting (cf. BCP pp. 1-li).

Developing your Rule of Life is a central part of becoming a disciple of Jesus. Take some time to establish one. Write your rule down on a piece of paper and put it inside the prayer book or Bible that you use each day. Please note that a rule is a guideline and not a legal document. When you fall short of fulfilling your rule, simply begin again the next day. One's rule of life may need to be adjusted from time to time as life circumstances change.

Addendum: How to Pray the Daily Offices

Morning Prayer

1. Pages 3-5. The Sentences of Scripture. These are read according to the season. The seasonal sentences begin on page 4 with Advent and end on page 5 with Trinity Sunday. In the long season of Trinity (The weeks following Trinity Sunday until Advent) and during the season of Pre-Lent (Septuagesima, Sexagesima and Quinquagesima), Morning Prayer begins with one or more of the general verses on page 3 or the first sentence on page 4.

2. Page 5 (bottom) through page 7. The General Confession. When Morning Prayer is read alone, the introduction “Dearly beloved...” (page 5) is not said. One may say, “Let us humbly confess...” (page 6) before the confession. The absolution “Almighty God...” (page 7) is skipped unless a priest is present to give absolution. If one desires a substitute for the absolution, the Collect for Trinity 21 (page 218) can be used. **The Lord’s Prayer** is recited immediately after the General Confession. Thus, when praying alone, one would go from the opening sentences directly to the confession (middle of page 6) and then directly to the Lord’s Prayer (bottom of page 7) and skip everything else.

The General Confession may be skipped. It is a good practice to recite the confession at least once a day. If one is going to use the Book of Common Prayer for Evening Prayer, one may skip the confession at the morning office and say it in the evening. If the General Confession is skipped, the Lord’s Prayer on BCP 7 is also skipped. The Lord’s Prayer is then recited before the Preces on page 16.

3. Page 7 (bottom) to page 8 (top). The Versicles. When reading the office alone, the verses are all recited by the one reading.

4. Page 8. Invitatory Antiphons. These verses provide an introduction to the Venite and are said as noted during certain seasons and on certain feast days.

5. Page 9. The Venite is then recited followed by the Psalm(s) appointed for the day. The Psalms for the day will be found in the lectionary. Alternatively, the prayer book divides the entire Psalter into a thirty day reading cycle so that it can be prayed through each month.

Note: The Gloria Patri (Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen) is said after the Psalms and after all the canticles except Te Deum. The Gloria Patri gives the Psalms and canticles a distinctly Trinitarian reference. It is not necessary for the Te Deum because it is Trinitarian in its very wording.

6. Page 10 through page 14. The lessons and canticles. The sequence is 1st lesson, canticle, 2nd lesson, canticle. The lessons for Morning Prayer are listed in the lectionary (BCP x-xlv) on the left page. First find out what week it is on the calendar. Then find the lesson for the appropriate day of that week.

A. Pages 10-13. Read the first lesson, then say either *Te Deum laudamus* or *Benedictus es, Domine* (BCP 10-11). The *Te Deum* is, in general, recited on feast days and on saints days (when the color of the day is white or red). The *Benedictus es* is recited on ordinary days when the color is green or in the penitential seasons, when the color is purple. The third canticle given as an option after the first lesson, *Benedicite, omnia, opera Domini*, is not frequently used, but may be used as well.

B. Pages 14-15. Read the second lesson, then say either *Benedictus* or *Jubilate Deo*. The standard canticle is *Benedictus*. The *Benedictus* may be ended at the break after the fourth line, except on the Sundays in Advent. The *Jubilate* is appointed especially for the one day each year when the *Benedictus* is part of the reading in the second lesson, but it may be used whenever, at the discretion of the reader.

Note: If one desires to shorten the office, the easiest way to do this is to eliminate one lesson along with the canticle that follows it.

7. Page 15-16. Say the Apostles' Creed, followed by the verses on BCP 16 (called the Preces). The Apostles' Creed is the standard creed for the daily offices. The Nicene Creed is the standard for the Eucharist. The Nicene Creed is listed here for use on Sunday in settings where there will be no Eucharist. Of course, it is always okay to say the Nicene Creed instead.

8. Page 16 (bottom). The Apostolic Greeting and Preces. When saying the office alone, the apostolic greeting (*The Lord be with you. And with thy Spirit.* BCP 16) is not said. One simply says, "Let us pray." We say, "Let us pray," even when we are alone because we are praying with the church. If you are praying alone, say all of the responsive verses that are called The Preces—"O Lord show thy mercy..." through "And take not thy Holy Spirit from us."

9. Page 17. Say the Collect for the Day and "A Collect for Peace" and "A Collect for Grace." The collect for the day is, generally, the collect for the preceding Sunday. If it is a saint's day, the prayer book collect for that saint is said. If there is no prayer book collect for the day's saint, the collect for A Saint's Day (BCP 258) may be used. Advent (90) and Lent (124) have seasonal collects which are said throughout the season. The two collects on page 17 are always said.

10. Pages 17 (bottom) through page 20. Additional Prayers and the Grace. After the Collect for Grace, Morning prayer may be ended with "the grace" (2 Cor. xiii. 14) on BCP 20, along with the sign of the cross. **One may add other intercessions before the grace.** Morning and Evening Prayer provide prayers for our government and nation, the clergy and people, all conditions of men and a

general thanksgiving. Also, when praying alone, the end of Morning Prayer can be used as a time for extemporaneous, conversational prayer.

The Prayer for all Conditions of Men (BCP 18-19) is especially suitable for intercession. It is desirable that each person maintain a prayer list. Praying for others is part of our work as Christians. This prayer provides a pause during which specific names and intentions can be mentioned.

The General Thanksgiving (BCP 19, 33) ought also to be said daily, either at Morning or Evening Prayer. It is a classic Anglican prayer. It provides a pause during which which one can mention the specific gifts and graces God has provided that day. Saying the thanksgiving also reminds us to be thankful and to avoid making times of prayer the occasion merely to tell God all the things we want.

Evening Prayer

Evening Prayer follows a similar pattern to Morning Prayer and will not be discussed in detail, save to highlight a few of the differences.

- 1. Page 21. Opening Sentences.** These follow the same pattern and usage as at Morning Prayer.
- 2. Pages 23-25 (top). General Confession.** This follows the same pattern of morning prayer. When praying alone, skip the introductions and the absolution. Say the confession and the Lord's Prayer. The confession should be said once a day. If skipped in the morning, it should be said in the evening.
- 3. Page 25. The Psalms.** There is no Evening Prayer equivalent for the Venite. One passes straight from the Versicles into the Psalms. Evening Prayer provides the Gloria in excelsis as an alternative to the Gloria Patri after the Psalms (but not after the canticles).
- 4. Pages 26-29. The Lessons and Canticles.** The sequence is the same as at Morning Prayer: 1st lesson, canticle, 2nd lessons, canticle. The lessons are listed in the lectionary (BCP x-xlv) on the right page. The traditional canticle after the first lesson is Magnificat (26). The traditional canticle after the second lesson is Nunc dimittis (28). There is nothing wrong with the Psalm canticles that are provided as alternatives. However, the Psalms have already been read before the lessons. One may, on occasion, use one of the Psalm canticles as the Psalm for the day.
- 5. Evening Prayer has a slightly longer series of verses for "The Preces" (BCP 30-31).** The same usage applies here as at Morning Prayer. Say, "Let us pray," then all of the Preces.
- 6. Evening prayer also has two fixed collects after the Collect for the Day (BCP 31).** Say the collect of or collects for the day as in the morning. Evening Prayer may be ended after the two fixed collects with the grace (BCP 34). Other intercessions may be added in between, as at Morning Prayer.

Questions for Review

1. Why must the Christian life necessarily begin with prayer?
2. How many fixed daily times of prayer were there in the monastic tradition? Why did the Book of Common Prayer reduce these to two?
3. What is meant by the acronym ACTS? How does this relate to the daily offices?
4. Is it possible for fixed, liturgical prayers to also be prayers of the heart? How?
5. What is a “rule of life” and what is its function in the life of prayer?

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE DUTIES OF A CHRISTIAN



Question. What is your bounden duty as a member of the Church?

Answer. My bounden duty is to follow Christ, to worship God every Sunday in his Church; and to work and pray and give for the spread of his kingdom.

(from The Offices of Instruction, Book of Common Prayer, 291).



Our “bounden duty” is the behavior that is appropriate to our status as followers of Christ. Apart from Christ, we are free to do as we wish (Romans 8:20-22). As followers or servants of Christ, we are “bound” to practice new behavior that is characterized by prayer, service and stewardship. These are not onerous obligations. They are joyful privileges. We should want to do these things. But they are duties because we are called to do them whether we feel like it or not. In the last chapter, we discussed how to pray. In this chapter we will discuss what it means to “work” and “give” for the spread of the kingdom.

Working for the Spread of the Kingdom: Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts

How do we “work” for the spread of his kingdom? One principal way is through the use of spiritual gifts. A “spiritual gift” is a special talent or ability that God gives to each Christian for use in service to others. There are four principle passages in the New Testament that speak about spiritual gifts.

Romans 12:6 says, “Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us.” Romans then lists prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, giving of money and acts of mercy as representative gifts of the Spirit.

Ephesians 4:8 says, “He gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”

1 Peter 4:10 says, “As each one has received a gift, employ it for one another as good stewards of God’s manifold grace.”

1 Corinthians 12:27 says, “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

The primary word used for gift in these passages is the Greek word *charisma*. A person who has a gift from the Holy Spirit has a charisma. The word “charismatic” is frequently used to refer to Christians who emphasize the particular gift of speaking in tongues. However, the term “charismatic Christian”

is redundant in the same manner as “born-again Christian.” One cannot be a Christian without being charismatic—that is, without having a charisma—any more than one can be a Christian without being born again (cf. John 3:5).

The concept of charisma is related to Jesus’ identity as the Messiah. The Hebrew word *Messiah*, and its Greek equivalent *Christ*, mean “the anointed one.” To say that Jesus is the Messiah or the Christ is to say that he is the one anointed by God to save his people. Jesus’ Messianic identity is revealed in his baptism (Luke 3:21). The Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove. He was revealed to be the one anointed with the Holy Spirit. He is revealed as the Messiah or the Christ. On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon the first Christians. The church became anointed. 1 Corinthians says, “By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...and were all made to drink of one Spirit” (12:13). In the outward sign of water in baptism, God gives us the gift of the Spirit. In Confirmation, the Bishop prays that we will “daily increase” in the Holy Spirit. In receiving the gift of the Spirit, we became “anointed” or “charismatic” (cf. 1 John 2:27). In receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, we receive a gift or gifts to use for Christ in service to others.

A Ministry Based on Gifts

Your gifts are things that God enables you to do naturally in service to others in the body of Christ and in the world. The person who has a gift is able to exercise it without needing anything in return.

A spiritual gift should not be confused with a “need to be needed.” Some people volunteer for things because the work fulfills a personal need to be at the center of activity, and have others depend upon them, or because they like to be in control. Those being served in these circumstances are not typically edified by the work that is done. The work typically creates as many problems as it solves. People with a genuine spiritual gift are willing to do the work, but are not over eager. They do not demand or lobby for the job or task.

A spiritual gift is not the same thing as a natural talent, although the Holy Spirit may cause a natural talent to become a spiritual gift. Your gifts may or may not be related to your occupation. We should not assume, for example, that those who teach for a living will necessarily have the spiritual gift of teaching. It may or may not be so. To assume that what people do for forty to sixty hours each week is what they will also do in the church is a sure way to burn people out.

One aid we use to help people discern their spiritual gifts is a spiritual gifts inventory. We have found the “Wagner- Modified Houts Questionnaire” to be particularly helpful. This is a separate handout. We encourage you to complete this inventory and reflect upon what it says about your gifts.

Ministry works best when the people doing the ministry are exercising their spiritual gifts. If we think God is calling the church to do something, the way to test the call is to see if there are people in the church with the necessary gifts. If there is no one in the body with the gifts, the time and the willingness to do the work, we can conclude that it is not something God is calling us to do.

Of course, there is no particular spiritual gift for setting up and taking down tables and chairs, or for cleaning up after church activities. It is the common responsibility of the body. All Christians are responsible for helping the needy, loving others—including our enemies—and fulfilling the general obligations of obedience. We cannot excuse ourselves from some general duty of Christian faith by saying we don't have a gift for it. This reveals a lack of charity or love (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

It is also possible to be lazy or slothful in the use of our gifts. A church might well have the gifted people it needs to carry out some ministry, but the gifted people may be unwilling to get involved. That is a separate spiritual problem. Each Christian must make responsible and faithful decisions about how to serve. There are errors in two directions. We might be lazy and leave undone things that we ought to have done. Or we might be over-involved, always feeling responsible and not being able to say "no" when our plate is too full. The answer to these faulty tendencies is to be faithful in the life of prayer so that we might hear the voice of God and rightly discern what God is calling us to do, and what God is not calling us to do. We also need counsel from other faithful and wise Christians, who will hold us accountable for our unhealthy inclinations.

To use our spiritual gifts in the right way, we must develop a true understanding of the nature of the church. Many people view the church as a building or an organization to which they give money or time. They fail to understand that the people are the church. In the Old Covenant, God lived in the midst of his people in a temple building. In the New Covenant, God lives within his people. The people of God are the new temple (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19).

Another way this truth is communicated in the New Testament is through the teaching that the church is the body of Christ. In first century Israel, Jesus did the work of the Father. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, we are extensions of his incarnate presence throughout the world. You are a living member of a living body. You are the hand, the foot, the ear, the eye. If you don't understand this and fail to exercise your ministry in the body, then the body is without a hand, a foot, an ear and an eye. Other parts of the body must compensate for the absent or inactive parts (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:12f.).

A story told by one minister illustrates the wrong and the right view of the church. He was approached after church one Sunday by a member of his congregation. She was indignant. She said, "I met a man last week who needed food and a place to stay. I called the church on Wednesday several times but no one answered the phone. I had to give him food and put him in a hotel myself." Then she said, "Don't you think the church should be available to help people like this?" The minister responded, "It sounds to me like the church did a very good job of helping him."

Wherever you are, Jesus is present through the gifts and resources he has given you. Sometimes people will say, "What is your church doing for people?" What they want is a catalogue of the church's charitable activities. However, it is wrong to think of the church merely as a list of programs. What the church is doing for people is not defined merely by extent of our corporate charities. What the church is doing for people is determined by the sum total of the daily ministries of its members. It should be emphasized that most of the ministry of the church takes place outside of the church building. We are

called to use our gifts in service to others as we go about life from day to day. Our sense of Christian vocation must transcend the idea of volunteering for things at church.

We are also called to serve God in our life's work. One consequence of sin and the fall is that work becomes either drudgery or merely a selfish attempt to accumulate. In God's economy, the primary concern is what we have to contribute to the good of society. Indeed, we will find our life's work fulfilling only inasmuch as our primary aim is service to God and others, and gain is seen as the by-product. As Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

Giving for the Spread of his Kingdom: The Stewardship of Money

The word "stewardship" is often used in church, but it is less frequent that people really think of themselves as being responsible for the care and use of resources that belong to God. Consequently, talk about giving in church can become an exercise in attempting to extract money from reluctant givers. The church aids and abets this faulty view when it resorts to guilt and gimmicks in stewardship campaigns. If Jesus is Lord in any meaningful sense of the word, then he is Lord of all that we have. What we do with our money is necessarily a matter of faith.

The Biblical Pattern for Giving

The world views money as something to pursue and accumulate in order to get and do more things. The assumption of the world is that having more things will make us happier. From the perspective of the world, giving to God is what we do after we have satisfied our needs and wants.

This pattern is the consequence of sin and is the exact opposite of the pattern revealed in the Bible. The rule that God established in Israel was that the first part of all the increase belonged to God. Leviticus says, "All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the LORD's; it is holy to the LORD" (27:30). Tithe means "tenth." Israel tithed by measuring out one tenth of all the grain and giving it back to God. In Exodus God says, "Consecrate to me all the first-born; whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine" (13:3—see also Leviticus 27:32 for the tithe of the flock).

The story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4:3-7, the story of Melchizedek in Genesis 14:14-20 and the story of Jacob in Genesis 28:22 confirm the principle that the first and best, the tithe, belongs to God. This standard of giving was assumed in the New Testament. Jesus, as a pious Jew, tithed. While Jesus criticized the motives of the scribes and Pharisees, the religious leaders of Israel, he commended their meticulous practice of tithing (Matthew 23:23).

The people of Israel were also instructed to be generous to the needy (Deuteronomy 15:7, 8, 11). They were told not to harvest their entire field, and not to pick up what fell to the ground. They were to leave some fruit on the vine, on the tree and on the ground for the poor to eat.

These giving priorities match up with the Summary of the Law. Jesus said the two great commandments are to “love God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” and to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:36-40). God’s people are to honor God with the first part of their income, the tithe, and are to be generous to those who are in need.

Tithing and Covetousness

Tithing is part of the answer to covetousness, which the New Testament explicitly links with idolatry (Ephesians 5:5, Colossians 3:5). To be an idolater is to worship the creation rather than the creator (Romans 1:25). Psalm 24 says, “The earth is the LORD’S and all that is therein.” However, in the Original Sin, man said of the creation, “This is mine.” Giving the first part back to God is the symbolic way we acknowledge God’s ownership of all that we have. It is the way we undo the Original Sin and say to God, “This is yours.”

Tithing helps to detach us from our money. One company CEO said in a Forbes Magazine article, “When I began to tithe, I found a freedom from my possessions. I don’t hold on to things as tightly anymore” (“Irrational Act,” Rich Karlgaard, Forbes.com, 02.14.05). As Jesus said, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:21).

The Blessing Promised for Faithful Giving

One problem we have with the practice of tithing and generosity is that the devil has done a good job of teaching us his faulty math. The devil teaches us that giving is a zero sum game in which one person’s gain must lead to another’s loss. Thus, if I give money to someone in need, he is richer and I am poorer.

The Bible teaches that generous giving enriches both the giver and the recipient. There are numerous Bible passages that make this point. For example:

Proverbs says, “Honor the LORD with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase; So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine” (3:9).

In Malachi, God says, “Bring all the tithes into the storehouse...And try me now in this, says the Lord of hosts, If I will not open for you the windows of heaven, And pour out for you such blessing, That there will not be room enough to receive it.” (3:10).

In 2 Corinthians we are told, “He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully” (9:6).

Jesus said, “Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back” (Luke 6:38).

The Evidence in the Lives of the Faithful

The evidence for these promises is found in the lives of those who have made tithing and generosity part of their practice of the faith. There is a well known story of a man who began to tithe from the proceeds of his business and gradually increased his giving over time. God so blessed his giving that he came to the point where he was able to give away ninety percent and kept ten.

There are also stories of people whose faithful stewardship lead to a different kind of blessing. One man began to tithe from the proceeds of his business, which subsequently went broke. He was asked, “Did you lose everything?” He replied, “No. I still have all the money I gave away.”

God does not promise us a particular outcome for our faithfulness in giving. Rather, he says, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). Because God always rewards our faithfulness in ways that more than compensate for what we have given, we will always be better off for having been faithful stewards.

The Tithe as an Act of Faith

The biggest barrier to the practice of tithing is fear. We are afraid that if we give the first part to God we won't have enough left for the needs and wants of life. This is why tithing is an act of faith. We have to give to God first and trust that he will be faithful to his promises. As Hebrews says, “Without faith it is impossible to please [God], for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

The Rest of our Finances

Tithing is the beginning, not the end of stewardship. Responsible use of money also includes making a budget so that we live within our means and save for the future. It includes avoiding excessive debt, spending money in responsible ways and being diligent not to get caught up in the consumer and marketing culture that teaches us that we must have more things to be happy. Giving God the first part does not excuse us from being faithful with the rest.

God gives varying amounts of material wealth to different people. God calls us to be content with what he has given us and avoid covetousness. The world sees money as something to pursue as the goal of life. The Bible teaches us that money is a temptation, of which we must beware (1 Timothy 6:8-10). We will not be judged on the basis of how much we had, for “We brought nothing into this world and it is certain that we can carry nothing out” (1 Timothy 6:7). We will be judged on the basis of how faithful we were with what God gave us.

Questions for Review

1. What, according to the Prayer Book, is our bounden duty as a member of the church? (BCP p. 291)
How does one fulfill each of these duties?
2. Why is every Christian a “charismatic”?
3. What does the discussion of love in 1 Corinthians 13 have to do with the exercise of our spiritual gifts?
4. What is, or should be, the relationship between our spiritual gifts and our vocation in life?
5. How does the biblical teaching about giving relate to the Summary of the Law?
6. Beyond tithing and charitable giving, how should faith in Jesus Christ influence our use of money?