



Evangelion

Monthly Newsletter of St. Luke Anglican Catholic Church, Augusta, Georgia

July, A.D. 2017

A Little Lesson in Churchmanship #1

The Rev. Fr. Daniel S. Trout
“Seeing Christ Risen in the Mass”

“For a continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ...” Perhaps you remember how our Anglican Catechism answers the purpose of Holy Communion.

A lot of attention in our Mass goes into the passion of our Lord. Just stop and consider the number of times, especially in the Canon (when the priest consecrates the elements) that our words are concentrated on Jesus’ crucifixion. The **Institution Narrative** (“*For in the night in which he was betrayed...*”) rehearses the Last Supper and the words Christ said over the bread and wine, recalling the eve of His passion with recurring descriptions of the Cross and sacrifice.

Likewise, the two following sections, the **Oblation** (“*Wherefore, O Lord and heavenly Father, according to the institution of the dearly beloved Son ...*”) and the **Invocation** (“*And we must humbly beseech thee, O merciful Father ...*”) are predicated on His “blessed passion and “precious death.”

In fact, right through the **Prayer of Humble Access** (“*We do not come to this, thy table, O merciful Lord . . .*”) and the Thanksgiving the tone distinctly connects our communion with Calvary. We can hardly help it from evoking images of kneeling at the Cross as we cry out in mingled emotions of sorrow and gratitude “O Lamb of the God, that takest away sins of the world, have mercy upon us!”

Let’s not forget too, how our ritual complements the physical and the spiritual with dramatic highlights: the priest elevates both host and chalice, and then later fractures the host itself just before communion, poignantly recollecting how Jesus surrendered His body as a victim.

In all this, we very much represent Western Christianity’s focus on the Passion as the center of the **Atonement**: Christ’s Cross secures the forgiveness of our sins and reconciliation with God. Jesus dies that we might live. He suffers that we might have joy. The sad and fearful awe of approaching our suffering Lord is as stirring as it is transforming. However, our service also implies that more is involved here; it proclaims that we should similarly have in remembrance “his mighty resurrection.” This is the other side of the Atonement that we contemplate less. And yet, it is even more immediately tied to our communion in a manner that perhaps we never realized.

Jesus rose again! We can’t ever forget this part

of the story, otherwise we’re just pretending to eat and drink the body and blood of a two thousand year-old corpse. Thankfully, our ritual helps us remember that this is not the case! As was mentioned above, the priest fractures the Host: but that’s not the final time we see it before our communion, is it? No, something else happens just before everyone approaches the rail. It’s not in our 1928 Prayer Book, but a brief ritual was added back into the Missal to reveal the full Atonement mystery. What happens next? The priest takes the other half of the Host and unites it overtop the chalice, turning to present both Sacramental species to the congregation, now undivided. Have you ever wondered what this means? It’s Jesus’ testimony to us in the liturgy that He didn’t stay broken by the Cross. His Father restored Him whole again, as the joined elements of bread and wine confirm—in the Resurrection! The priest urges to look on with the familiar “Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him that taketh away the sins of the world,” but this isn’t the same sight as earlier when the Host was lying on the altar. At this point, Jesus is no longer the Lamb hanging in execution, but standing in heaven appearing before God. Here we see Jesus in majesty, showing Himself to us alive—and capable of giving life. As God “put Him back together” in resurrection, He is also able through His Son to “put us back together,” too. It’s a powerful affirmation, not only of Jesus’ Resurrection, but hope in our own as well.

How might bearing this in mind change our own view of Holy Communion? Perhaps it will broaden our vision of Jesus when we draw near to the rail. When we kneel there, God grants us access, not merely into the company of St. John and the Blessed Virgin at Calvary, but into the company of the Saints in heaven. We don’t just share in seeing Christ crucified, but glorified. The bread we eat and the wine we drink aren’t just living memorials of what happened two thousand years ago, but tokens of what happens in eternity now beyond our senses. What a message Jesus gives to us about Himself in the Mass! He doesn’t want us to merely believe in what He did in the past, but have an abiding faith in how He comes to us in the present. Contrary to the misunderstanding of many Protestant Christians, Jesus doesn’t die again in the Mass, but He certainly does live in it! Remember that truth next time we marvel at our Lord who willingly condescends to “come under our roof and heal our souls.”