

## THE INSTRUCTED EUCHARIST

*The Procession enters the Church as usual, and the narrator makes his way to the lectern immediately. When the procession is completed, say:*

Please be seated.

This morning, we are participants in what is known as an Instructed Holy Eucharist. The Service itself will be as always, but with commentary on its various parts and a brief explanation of the vestments of the celebrant. This is done to help us all better understand the “whys and wherefores” of our central act of Christian service—the *worship* of God in His holy temple.

Let us begin with the very word Eucharist: it comes from the Greek word meaning ‘Thanksgiving.’ This is perhaps the most ancient name for this Service, which was instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself when He took bread and wine and said, ‘Do this in remembrance of me.’ Our assembly here this morning to offer this Service, then, is in obedience to His command to the Apostles at the Last Supper, a command universally obeyed by all Catholic and Apostolic Christians every Sunday. The Holy Eucharist is also known by other names – the Holy Communion, the Divine Liturgy, and the Mass – ALL refer to the very same identical Service.

As we begin, we must be mindful that the circumstance in which we celebrate the Eucharist is a heavenly Mystery. Everything in place, or that is said and done in the sanctuary corresponds to a reality in God’s Kingdom. For starters, the Altar on which we offer the bread and wine to be consecrated is the center of our worship because it symbolizes Jesus Christ Himself, the subject and Lord of the liturgy. In our Anglican Churches, it remains at the eastern wall of the church for two important reasons. Firstly, it reminds us that Christ is the chief cornerstone of the Church, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Secondly, it orients us toward the direction from which we believe Jesus will return. Saint Augustine of Hippo calls facing East, ‘facing the Lord.’ In the Service, the priest and people face the same way: he leads them on their pilgrimage as they together

offer the same Sacrifice to God through Jesus Christ. The Altar is treated with the greatest reverence, not only because it is an Image of Christ, but also because it represents the once-for-all Sacrifice that He made for us on Calvary. On the Altar, that very same Sacrifice that Christ re-presents to His Father in heaven is exhibited sacramentally for all of us to see in the sanctuary. This sacrifice is accomplished using the sacred vessels—the chalice and paten—which now see covered by the veil and burse.

The Tabernacle, which contains the consecrated Elements of the Body and Blood of Our Lord, is located on the Altar at its center. In it is to be found the Blessed Sacrament, Our Lord's Real and Objective Presence in the Holy Mysteries. Therefore, when entering or leaving the church building, or when passing before the Altar, we always genuflect in adoration of Our Lord's Real Presence. The Sacrament is reserved in the Tabernacle both for the communion of the sick and those who cannot attend Mass and for adoration and prayer before the Lord Jesus.

The use of the Tabernacle for the reservation of the Sacrament is the fulfillment of many Scriptural passages which refer to the presence of God promised to His people. In particular, God's presence abode in the Ark of the Covenant, which was at the heart of the Israelite Tabernacle. In the fullness of time, God Himself, the Word, was made flesh and dwelt, that is, "tabernacled", among us. Now the Incarnate Lord, forever one with humanity, dwells permanently with His people in the Sacrament, indicated by the Sanctuary Lamp with its red globe that recalls the fiery pillar which journeyed before Israel through the wilderness to the Promised Land.

The Altar Cross—the great Sign of Salvation—is placed at the center above the Altar. The engraved letters "IHS" at the center of the Cross is a Latin abbreviation for the Holy Name of Jesus. Candles at either side of the Cross are lit from the Cross outward, beginning with those of the Epistle side to represent our Blessed Lord revealing Himself to the children of Israel; then the lights

on the Gospel side are lit to represent that Jesus Christ is the Light to all nations of the World. The larger “Eucharistic candles” resting on the altar itself signify that Jesus Christ is both fully God and Man, the central truth of His Incarnation.

The other sacred furniture has practical use, as well as having symbolic meaning. The credence table holds items needed for the celebration and is located to the right of the Altar on the Epistle side. Among the items on it are the cruets containing wine and water, a host box, and a lavabo bowl and towel (‘lavabo’ means ‘I shall wash’ in Latin). The pulpit serves for preaching and symbolizes the authority of God’s Word, the Holy Scriptures. The chair, on the Gospel side of the sanctuary, is usually reserved for the Bishop to remind us that we belong to a true Church in Apostolic Succession. This chair is often called the *Cathedra*.

The special clothes worn by the celebrating priest are called Eucharistic Vestments. The vestments he wears are not for show, but to lend dignity to the worship of God and to exhibit the priesthood of Jesus Christ through the celebrant. The priest is not an entertainer at the Altar, but a sacramental representative to play Our Lord’s role in the drama of the Service. He does this by wearing symbolic vestments which represent, not himself, but the Priesthood of Christ which he shares.

***As the priest puts on the Amice, say:***

The Amice is a rectangular piece of cloth worn as a head covering while vesting and then pushed back for the celebration of the Eucharist. It is symbolic of the ‘helmet of salvation’ Saint Paul speaks of. Salvation means life – and it is only in Jesus Christ that we find life.

**PAUSE**

***As the priest puts on the Alb, say:***

The Alb, coming from the Latin word *alba* meaning ‘white’, signifies the purity and holiness of the High Priesthood of Christ, which the priest received in the Sacrament of Holy Orders. It also

symbolizes the need for innocency in our own lives. “Blessed are the the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

**PAUSE**

*As the priest puts on the Cincture, say:*

The Cincture, or girdle, is a rope belt which gives shape to the Alb and reminds us of the ropes used to bind our Blessed Lord to the pillar at His scourging. It signifies the virtues of humility and chastity as Christ prepared to undergo His Passion.

**PAUSE**

*As the priest puts on the Stole, say:*

The Stole is the ‘badge’ of the Priest. It symbolizes the yoke of Christ which the priest undertakes. “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” The Stole, like the maniple and the chasuble, is always in the color of the day. As he dons the Stole, the priest kisses it at the cross sown into the top of it – honoring this blessed symbol of the Cross and Priesthood of the Savior, which he shares in Ordination. The priest arranges the Stole across his chest in the form of the Cross, demonstrating that he will function in the Person of Christ to re-present the Sacrifice of Calvary.

**PAUSE**

*As the priest puts on the Maniple, say:*

The Maniple was originally a towel carried by the deacon for cleansing the sacred vessels and symbolizes the humility which befits a servant of God. It reminds the priest that he is forever a deacon, a servant, for as Jesus said, “I am among you as one that serveth.”

**PAUSE**

*As the priest puts on the Chasuble, say:*

The last vestment is the Chasuble. It represents the seamless robe Our Lord wore as He was led away to be crucified. It is the supreme symbol of the Priesthood and of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. It is the sign of Christ's great love and His role as Mediator that He performs for us in heaven.

Garbed in these vestments, the priest is stripped of his individual identity. He enters the sanctuary as the living Icon of Christ. The priest is the Sacrament of our great High Priest who offered to His Father His Body, through His Cross and Passion, to be a Sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Jesus is the true Celebrant of the Holy Eucharist who offers Himself through his minister.

In a sung Eucharist, a processional hymn is sung as the celebrant and his assistants process to their appropriate places in the nave and sanctuary. In honor of the Lord's Sacrifice, we should always bow our heads to the processional Cross as it passes by. The procession symbolizes the Church's passing out of the world and into the presence of God and His gathered saints. When the altar party led by the crucifer marches down the *nave*, they express the whole movement of God's people through their earthly pilgrimage, led by the victory of Christ's Cross toward the throne of God's heavenly Kingdom. The Holy Eucharist is composed of two interdependent parts: The "ante-communion" or *liturgy of the Word* and the "communion proper" or *liturgy of the Sacrament*. This first part is from the ancient service of the Jewish Synagogue, consisting of the reading of Scripture and prayer. The Eucharist begins with the celebrant's invitation to pray with the verse "The Lord be with you," to which the congregation responds "And with thy spirit." This represents that the liturgy is not the private work of the priest, but a corporate effort in *dialogue* with God; prayer is always a conversation that we share with Him.

Then follows the Collect for Purity which we pray in our hearts while the priest prays aloud, asking God to cleanse us of all thoughts which would bar the way to our worship. Following the Collect for Purity, the priest greets the Altar with a kiss, honoring the Holy Table of the Lord on which the

Sacrifice of the Cross will be pleaded in the Holy Mysteries. Then follows the Introit, a passage of Scripture establishing the liturgical theme of the day which includes the ‘Glory be.’

**PAUSE**

*The reader then remains at the lectern while the priest prays the Collect for Purity and Introit.*

*Once he is finished, then say:*

Once a month, we recite the Ten Commandments to remember our moral and spiritual duty to God and neighbor. Christians are not under the Law, but honor Christ for fulfilling the requirements of the Law. According to the Summary, the Church follows the spirit of the Law by obeying His commandment to “love God and one another.” However, recognizing that we frequently fail to obey our heavenly Father as we should, we ask for His mercy as we say or sing the Kyrie Eleison, ‘Lord have mercy upon us.’

**PAUSE**

*The reader remains standing at the lectern while the priest says the Decalogue or Summary; then is sung the Kyrie. When finished, say:*

The Collect for the day changes with every Sunday or feast day in the Christian Year. The collect is a “summary prayer” that sets forth the theme of that particular Service. Collects generally have a three-fold structure: First, an opening address to God with a clause expressing some aspect of His nature by reason of which we address our petition to Him; Second, the petition we make; Third, a concluding phrase asked through the mediation of Jesus Christ, reminding us that all of God’s blessings come through His promises and are based on His merits and advocacy on our behalf.

**PAUSE**

*The priest prays the Collects of the Day. Afterwards, the narrator continues, saying:*

The reading of an Epistle comes from the ancient tradition of sitting to hear an apostolic letter during the Holy Eucharist. Collectively, the epistles of the New Testament represent the Holy Spirit's inspiration of the Apostles to teach with authority equal to the Old Testament Scriptures. They are the written record of their teaching that prepares the Church for living in this age with instructions, exhortations, biblical interpretations, and prophecies about these last days. The Collect of the Day, the Epistle, and the Gospel form the major Propers of the day.

### **PAUSE**

*The reader remains standing while the Epistle is read. Immediately after the Epistle (but before the Gradual), the narrator continues:*

Before the Gospel, there is read or chanted a Psalm selection called the Gradual, which is derived from the ancient tradition of responsorial Psalm-singing in this part of the service. The Gradual also accentuates the day's theme and functions as a sequence between the Epistle and the Gospel.

While we sit for the Epistle and for the sermon, we stand for the reading of the Holy Gospel which literally means 'Good News.' By standing, we give honor to our Blessed Lord who Himself is the Word of God Incarnate. The Altar Missal is moved from the Epistle side to the Gospel side, symbolizing the carrying of the Good News to those who do not know Christ. It is then carried into the nave at the Gospel Procession, symbolizing that God's final revelation came through Jesus Christ from heaven to earth. Some Christians continue the ancient tradition of making three little Signs of the Cross as the Holy Gospel is proclaimed. A small Cross is traced with the thumb of the right hand – first on the forehead, in the same place where it is traced at our Baptism; a second one is traced across the lips, and a third one is traced on our heart. We pray in effect that the Gospel may be in our minds, on our lips, and in our hearts. The responses said or sung before and after the

Holy Gospel, show our respect and thanksgiving for receiving the Gospel. At the conclusion of the Gospel, the priest kisses the book from which the text was read, venerating the Word of God.

**PAUSE**

*The reader remains standing for the Holy Gospel. When it is finished, say:*

The Nicene Creed is the essential corporate statement of our Faith in the Blessed Trinity and the Incarnation. This Creed is the product of the first two Ecumenical Councils of the ancient Undivided Church (the First Council of Nicea in AD 325 and the First Council of Constantinople in AD 381), and is still used at the celebration of the Eucharist in all Apostolic Churches, both East and West, with only minor variations.

The Creed especially demonstrates how we use actions to express the Faith we confess. At the mention of the Name of Jesus and at the phrase ‘worshipped and glorified’ in the Creed, we should bow our heads in worship. As we say the words ‘and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man,’ we should bend our right knees all the way to the floor in honor of God’s Son assuming our human nature. Finally, the Sign of the Cross should be made at the last phrase ‘and the life of the world to come’ to express our hope in God’s promise of eternal life.

**PAUSE**

*Again, the reader remains at the lectern for the Creed. When it is ended, say:*

The Prayer Book directs that the sermon be preached here. But since our instructed Eucharist *is* the sermon, no sermon proper will be given. We now begin the second and most sacred portion of the Holy Communion Service.

The rite of this latter half corresponds to the four-fold action Jesus performed at the Last Supper:

First, He took the Bread, which corresponds to the Offertory.

Second, He gave thanks – the Consecration.

Third, He broke the Bread – the Fraction.

Fourth, He gave it to His disciples – the Communion.

With this four-fold shape, the liturgy of the Sacrament or the Holy Communion reproduces Our Lord's original institution. It makes present for us today Christ's Sacrifice of 2000 years ago.

The first action is the bringing of the offerings to be set apart in the liturgy, bread and wine for use in the Holy Sacrament, and our alms. These are the "firstfruits" of our labor that God has commanded His people to present before Him since Old Testament times. Since they come from us, the gifts represent the offering of ourselves and of all creation to be a "living sacrifice" offered to God to be united with Jesus' Sacrifice. The celebrant prepares the gifts for the Consecration, offering private prayers at the Altar as each element is readied. The priest first offers the bread to God, and then mixes wine and water in the chalice. The mixed chalice of water and wine symbolizes the union of the divine and human natures in Christ that restores dignity to fallen Man. The mixed chalice also reminds us of the blood and water which flowed from Christ's side.

The priest next offers the contents of the chalice to God, and then blesses the gifts with the Sign of the Cross. After this, the priest washes his hands in the 'lavabo,' asking God to cleanse him from his sins. At the presentation of the alms, they and the unconsecrated elements of bread and wine are offered with a hymn of thanksgiving, customarily the Doxology.

## **PAUSE**

*The offertory sentence is read by the celebrant. The Anthem ensues while the alms are collected.*

*After the gifts are presented at the Altar, the narrator continues:*

Turning to the people, the priest announces the intentions for which this particular Service is offered. Then, turning back to face the altar, he leads the congregation in praying for the unity and well-being of Christ's Body, remembering especially the clergy, all people involved in affairs of state,

the living in every need, and the faithful departed that rest in Christ. This is the Church's way of presenting Her entire self before God for His love and watch-care. Prayer brings us into God's presence and acknowledges our dependence upon Him. In this prayer, we acknowledge that we are *One*: one with each other and one with God, as Jesus asked His Father to make us.

***The reader remains standing as the priest prays the Prayer for the Church. After the 'Amen,' he says:***

In approaching God, we must recognize our sinfulness and confess our individual sins by joining together in the General Confession. We cannot worthily receive our Lord's Body and Blood or fellowship with one another unless we are in a state of repentance and amendment of life. God commands us: "be holy as I am holy" if we wish to inherit eternal life. Now we have this chance to examine our consciences, humbly acknowledging where we have fallen short of God's glory. Without this admission, we make the Holy Communion not a blessing, but a curse upon us for not taking seriously the call to inward purity and peace in the assembly. The cry for mercy pleads for the pardon and reconciliation that we do not deserve and begs for the chance to cast off the old nature and put on the new that is pleasing to God.

The priest then obeys Our Lord's command to the Apostles and pronounces the forgiveness of sins to those who are truly penitent. In this moment (the Absolution), the priest, as a Minister in Apostolic Succession, is given authority and power from Christ to forgive sins in His Name, as we read in St. John chapter 20. We make the Sign of the Cross on ourselves as we receive the Lord's Absolution, recognizing that our sins have been "loosened" or "unbound" from us. Following this, the priest strengthens our confidence with the Comfortable Words that explain how God's grace and mercy have reconciled us with God once more. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ at Calvary and in heaven, we are no longer recipients of His judgment, but of His favor as adopted children.

**PAUSE**

***KNEEL for General Confession, Absolution, and Comfortable Words – then stand and say:***

The Canon of the Mass will now follow. Since it is the most sacred part of the liturgy, we do not wish to interrupt it with comments. Before it begins, here are a few remarks about it.

An exchange of versicles and responses, called the *Sursum Corda* (Latin for ‘lift up your hearts’) begins this part of the Eucharist called the “Anaphora.” Anaphora means “carrying up” and acts as the Church’s call to pass beyond time and space to the assembly of Christian saints and angelic choirs in the heavenly Mt. Zion. More than at any other time, we must remember that our worship truly takes place in an unseen realm that we must enter in faith. This leads to the Proper Preface, which commemorates the theme of the day, and to the *Sanctus* (the ‘Holy, Holy, Holy’) the hymn of the Seraphs recorded in Isaiah chapter 6 that the whole Church joins to adore the thrice-Holy Trinity. Following that, we say the words “Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord, Hosanna in the Highest”. We repeat this acclamation of Palm Sunday now because we believe that at His Ascension, Christ entered into the heavenly Jerusalem to assume the rule of His Father’s Kingdom. The Canon proceeds to recall before the Father the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross and then recites the Words of Institution, which is the heart of the Eucharistic Prayer. By the very Words of Christ and the power of the Holy Ghost, the bread and wine are consecrated into the living Body and Blood of Christ. In this action, the one perfect Sacrifice of Christ, which He once offered on the Cross and eternally exhibits in heaven, is made-present, pleaded, for us, and applied to us in the Eucharist. The priest, representing Our Lord, says: ‘This is my Body, This is my Blood.’ The bread and wine become what Our Lord says they are. After each element is consecrated, a bell is rung as the host or chalice is raised to be seen and adored. The elevation gives us an opportunity to say with St. Thomas “My Lord and My God!” at the wonder of witnessing

Jesus become truly present “in, with, and under” the forms of bread and wine. Next, the Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ is re-presented to the Father in the paragraph entitled, ‘the Oblation.’ With “these thy holy gifts which we now offer unto thee,” the Memorial of Christ is set forth before the Father on behalf of the whole Church in thanksgiving for the redemption wrought by Our Lord. When we repeat, ‘Do this in remembrance of me’ the historical events of Christ’s Atonement are brought into our time and space. Under the form of bread and wine, Our Lord allows us to join in and receive the benefits of His life, Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension.

Another essential part of the Canon is the ‘Invocation’ in which we ask the Father to bless and sanctify His gifts with His Word and Holy Spirit, so that the Bread and Wine may become the blessed Body and Blood of His Son. In this part of the consecration, we believe that the Holy Spirit comes similarly as He did to Blessed Mary at the Annunciation. He descends to miraculously make present the full life of Jesus Christ, this time by transforming bread and wine into His Body and Blood for us to receive. In the next section, the priest makes several petitions for us, especially asking that God might accept “our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving,” in order that we might receive the sacrament and acquire its benefits. Of special note here is that we not only memorialize Christ’s oblation, but we make one of our selves by offering our souls and bodies to be living sacrifices. Many worshippers bow at the words, “here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, our selves.” Only by offering our whole being to be crucified with Jesus is it possible that “He might dwell in us and we in Him.” A moment later we make the Sign of the Cross, indicating that we wish to ‘be filled with thy grace and heavenly benediction.’ We acknowledge that we are not worthy, but trust God to accept our “bounden duty and service” through the merits of Christ. The Prayer of Consecration concludes with a doxology to the Holy Trinity.

Then joining in the prayer Our Lord taught us to pray, we prepare to make our own Holy Communion beginning with the Lord's Prayer. We particularly declare that we now kneel at the intersection of this world and the next when we say "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Likewise, we pray that our "daily bread" be the food from the altar to feed us with Christ's own immortality.

Finally, before the administration of Communion, the priest breaks the Sacred Host into two pieces in a re-enactment of Our Lord's breaking of the bread at the Last Supper. This is called the Fraction. As he does so, he prays silently. Then, having made the Sign of the Cross over the chalice with a small piece of the host, proclaims the *Pax*: "The Peace of the Lord be always with you." The priest is offering to God's people the promise of reconciliation in Christ, just as Our Lord gathered His Disciples around Him at the Last Supper. The priest then places a fragment of the Host into the Chalice at this time, signifying the reunion of the Body and Blood of the Lord in His Resurrection. This is called the commingling or commixture.

We then offer the Prayer of Humble Access, confessing to God our unworthiness to approach the altar. Just as the Canaanite woman asked for Jesus to heal her daughter without presumption, to we confess that we lack any intrinsic goodness to even gather up crumbs under the Lord's Table. And yet, trusting in His mercy and grace, we expect so much more. Based on Jesus' own words in St. John 6, we humbly ask to eat His flesh and to drink His blood that we might have eternal life.

A traditional hymn, the '*Agnus Dei*' follows. Recalling St. John's vision in Revelation chapter 5, the hymn reminds us of Jesus' persona as a slain Lamb in the heavenly liturgy, offering to the Father His scars as a testimony of His Passion. His character in the redemptive drama is only reinforced when the priest turns to present the Sacrament, repeating the '*Ecce Agnus Dei*'—the words of St. John the Baptist when he declared, "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him that taketh

away the sins of the world.” Next, to make our Communion, we answer this invitation by thrice saying the *Centurion’s Prayer*, “Lord I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof, but speak the word only and my soul shall be healed.”

We all then go to the altar rail to make Our Communion, not just as individuals seeking personal salvation, but as the Bride of Christ yearning for Our Husband in this foretaste of the “Marriage Supper of the Lamb.” We are many members, but one Body; and in the unity of this Mystical Feast we recommit ourselves to God and to one another as a family in one Covenant Communion. The glory that we share now veiled from sight, we affirm in faith and hope to witness in unveiled heavenly bliss. The words of administration remind us of the holy gifts that we are receiving: “The Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.”

After the Holy Communion of the Faithful, the sacred vessels are cleansed during what is called the ‘ablutions,’; a Communion Sentence, followed by the Prayer of Thanksgiving are said in gratitude for the heavenly food we have shared. We thank the Father for the sacramental mysteries, for the grace of His Goodness, and for our mystical incorporation into the Body of Christ that strengthens to do the good works He has prepared for us. This reminds us that the Eucharist does not really end with the Communion service, but continues through our perfection in godliness and evangelistic mission in the Gospel.

Then follows the *Gloria in Excelsis*, an ancient doxology sung on all Feast Days and on all Sundays outside of Advent and Lent. We should stand at the Gloria because it is a hymn of praise to God based on the angelic antiphon that the heavenly host sang at Our Savior’s birth. In anticipation of all that will follow in the Service, we proclaim in the Gloria that the Eucharist will bring to the world the same peace and good will as Our Lord’s Nativity—God is with us!

Then follow the traditional Post-Communion Collects and the final Blessing. The Blessing is pronounced by the priest, but not before we are dismissed to go out into the world in peace: ‘Depart in peace.’ ‘Thanks be to God.’ We then make the Sign of the Cross on ourselves as we receive the blessing, but not to acknowledge the conclusion of the Service. Rather, we are ritually accepting our calling as God’s ambassadors to carry His message of reconciliation to the world. The altar party then recesses down the nave symbolizing the Church’s descent from heaven back into Her earthly labors. As the hymn ends, the candles will be extinguished in the opposite order which they were lighted. The light that began at the altar now proceeds through *us* who have been illuminated by God. Now, without further interruption then, let us continue with the Eucharist.

***STOP: The reader rejoins the congregation.***