

1ST IN A SERIES OF ANCIENT LITURGIES

# A EUCHARISTIC RITE OF THE 2ND & 3RD CENTURIES

*THINKING ABOUT THIS EVENING'S LITURGY:*

- 1. What is missing from services you are used to?*
- 2. What seems unusual to you about this eucharistic service?*
- 3. Imagine yourself sharing this experience in danger of arrest and punishment. What would your focus be during the service?*
- 4. What might Christians of the first couple of centuries discuss among themselves at this liturgy?*
- 5. How do you imagine these people thought about Jesus?*

HEY, MARCUS. GET  
OFF MY FOOT!!



ADAPTED FROM THE "APOSTOLIC TRADITIONS" OF  
HIPPOLYTUS OF ROME

The goal of our exploration of these ancient liturgies during the early months of 2014, is to acquire sufficient knowledge and experience to create our own 21<sup>st</sup> century eucharist to be used (celebrated) later in the year. Experiencing these early liturgies and understanding the influences that shaped them, will give us a sense of what we may use in crafting our own eucharist.

We will take most of the year to prepare. The clergy will act as guides and resources, but will not participate in the making of the congregation's liturgy.

So, have you ever thought the service was too long or too short? Have you ever thought that it was too complex and hard to understand? Have you ever wished for different imagery in expressing Christian truths? Have you ever wished for it to be different in some way or another? Well, now's your chance to help make it what you would wish for. There will be a "facilitator" for this effort and right today you can start making notes and asking questions to sharpen your understanding of liturgy that you can make.

To begin, it might be helpful if each of you attending here today would *take and save* the leaflets produced for these ancient liturgies. They will contain a great deal of information that will be useful for you later as you make your own influence on the 21<sup>st</sup> century liturgy that we will produce.

For example, it's helpful to know that RITUAL is written. It is words and language. So, when we talk about the text of a service we're talking about ritual. CEREMONIAL is action . . . it's what we do before, after, and while we're talking. We'll see lots of examples of both in the ancient services.

*(At this time the bread is broken, the people receive, and the sacrament is carried by the deacons to those who were not present. The presider may lift or elevate the blessed bread and wine as a sign that the people should come forward and prepare to receive. In these early services, people would receive rather more bread and wine than we moderns, since for us these are more a symbol or token, but for them it was still thought of as a part of a meal)*

*After receiving the sacrament, the congregation turns to the rest of the meal, shares the bread, cheese, and olives and socializes . . . perhaps less hastily than we might today, and, I imagine, with somewhat more genuine depth and caring.*

The word LITURGY comes from the Greek, and means public service or public works (like the guys who fix our streets). It's the public work of the gathered church, which takes the raw materials of ritual and ceremonial to accomplish the purpose of praising God and bringing human beings into the divine life.

So, it's NOT a personal tete a tete with God, but a major **public** work.

From the beginning (although Christian beginnings are only dimly seen) the "shape" of the eucharist has been **WORD** and **MEAL**. The "Word" portion of scripture readings, teaching, and prayer was early adapted from what was familiar to those Jewish followers of Christ. It was the synagogue service in which they had grown up. The "Meal", as we will see later today, was a meal together that seems to have split into two meals – one a more formal remembrance of the victory of Jesus, and the other an informal, social meal shared by early believers exalted by that victory. They may have started together, but over time found that the two meals were somehow inappropriate together. Perhaps the feelings aroused in each were too different.

In our modern times, the formal meal, our Liturgy of the Table, has the same shape it has always had: take, bless, break, and give.

The other meal (the informal one) we call "coffee hour". Each meal was accompanied by various rites and ceremonies, which have been changed and altered this way and that, throughout history.

Now, looking at today's 2nd century eucharist, we should remember that there were no books, no fixed texts, no vestments, no church calendar, and few ceremonial actions.

Congregations were small and normally met in houses. They would meet in secret. After all, they were breaking the law. Folks would gather and visit among themselves until the readings began. The Liturgy of the Word reflected the synagogue services of the time and there would be readings from the Old Testament books (sometimes whole books would be read), psalms, and Christian writings, which might include many that never made it into the New Testament.

After the readings a sermon would follow.

Today, we will use the scheduled lections for the Third Sunday of Epiphany.

This liturgy will be simple, intimate, informal, relaxed, somewhat brief, and will have no music (which came later in the church's history).

## THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

A Reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah

There will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

flesh, and was manifested as your Son, born of the Holy Spirit and a virgin; who, fulfilling your will, and winning for you a holy people, spread out his hands when he suffered, that by his passion he might set free those who believe in you; who, when he was given over to his voluntary suffering, that he might destroy death and break the bonds of the devil, and tread hell under foot, and enlighten the righteous, and set up a boundary post, and manifest the resurrection, taking bread and giving thanks to you said, Take, eat, this is my body, which is broken for you.

In the same manner, also, the cup, saying, This is my blood, which is poured out for you. When you do this, you make remembrance of me.

Therefore, remembering his death and resurrection, we offer to you the bread and the cup, giving thanks to you because you have counted us worthy to stand before you and to minister as priests to you.

And we pray you to send your Holy Spirit upon the oblation of the holy church, gathering into one all who received the holy mysteries, that we may be filled with Holy Spirit, to the confirmation of faith in truth, that we may praise and glorify you, through your Child Jesus Christ, through whom be glory and honor to you, with the Holy Spirit in the holy church, both now and world without end.

**AMEN.**

*(At this point the cheese and olives to be used for the congregational meal are blessed)*

Sanctify this milk which has solidified, solidify us in your love, and let not your sweetness depart from this fruit of the olive tree, which is a type of your mercy which you caused to flow from the Tree for life to those who hope in you. Glory to you, Father and Son with the Holy Spirit in the holy church both now and always and world without end. **Amen.**

*(Members of the congregation may ask the prayers or the thanksgivings of those present)*

I ask your prayers for \_\_\_\_\_ .

I ask your thanksgiving for \_\_\_\_\_ .

Praise God for those in every generation in whom Christ has been honored [especially \_\_\_\_\_ whom we remember today].

Pray that we may have grace to glorify Christ in our own day.  
**Amen, Lord. Hear our prayers.**

*(Here, the Liturgy of the Word is concluded with the kiss of peace)*

## THE LITURGY OF THE TABLE

*(A cloth is spread upon the table, the gifts of the congregation are collected, and a sufficient amount of bread and wine are placed upon the table by the deacons. The communion vessels would likely be a simple earthenware plate and goblet. The presider and the presbyters gather about the table and place their hands momentarily on the elements.)*

The Lord be with you.   **And with your spirit.**

Lift up your hearts.   **We lift them up unto the Lord.**

Let us give thanks unto the Lord.   **It is meet and right.**

We give you thanks, O God, through your beloved Child Jesus Christ, whom in the last times you sent to us, a Saviour and Redeemer and Messenger of your will, who is your Word, inseparable from you; through whom you made all things and whom, in your good pleasure, you sent from heaven into the womb of a virgin, and who, conceived within her, was made

Psalm 27 *(said together)*

**The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? \* the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid?**

**One thing have I asked of the Lord; one thing I seek; \* that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life; To behold the fair beauty of the Lord\* and to seek him in his temple. For in the day of trouble he shall keep me safe in his shelter; \* he shall hide me in the secrecy of his dwelling and set me high upon a rock. Even now he lifts up my head \* above my enemies round about me. Therefore I will offer in his dwelling an oblation with sounds of great gladness; \* I will sing and make music to the Lord. Harken to my voice, O Lord, when I call; \* have mercy on me and answer me. You speak in my heart and say, "Seek my face." \* Your face, Lord, will I seek.**

**Hide not your face from me, \* nor turn away your servant in displeasure. You have been my helper; cast me not away; \* do not forsake me, O God of my salvation.**

A Reading from Paul's First letter to the Church in Corinth

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say that you were

baptized in my name. (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power. For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

### The Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to Matthew

Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned." From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him. Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news

*(At this point the presider would offer a homily based on the readings, After the homily, those who were preparing for baptism [catechumens] and those who were penitents [recovering sinners] were dismissed)*

*(The prayers of the people were then bidden by one of the deacons. There was not a set form at this time, but we will use Form 2 from the Book of Common Prayer as a typical example, and will add a congregational response)*

I ask your prayers for God's people throughout the world; for our Bishop(s) \_\_\_\_\_ ; for this gathering; and for all ministers and people.  
Pray for the Church. **Amen, Lord. Hear our prayers.**

I ask your prayers for peace; for goodwill among nations; and for the well-being of all people.  
Pray for justice and peace. **Amen, Lord. Hear our prayers.**

I ask your prayers for the poor, the sick, the hungry, the oppressed, and those in prison.  
Pray for those in any need or trouble.  
**Amen, Lord. Hear our prayers.**

I ask your prayers for all who seek God, or a deeper knowledge of him.  
Pray that they may find and be found by him.  
**Amen, Lord. Hear our prayers.**  
I ask your prayers for the departed [especially \_\_\_\_\_ ].  
Pray for those who have died.  
**Amen, Lord. Hear our prayers.**