

## Instructed Eucharist

April 7, 2019

### After the Prelude

Greeting; welcome everyone to this special service, an Instructed Eucharist

- Instead of a regular sermon, we will be pausing at several points in the service to reflect on what we're doing, what it means, and how it helps us pray, so that we may grow closer to God and to each other in the communion of God's love.
- The Holy Eucharist is the principal act of worship on the Lord's Day; it's the way we follow Jesus' commandment to "do this for the remembrance of me."
- The service is basically divided into two parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Table
- In this first part of the service, we gather together and prepare for worship.
- We enter with a song. During the season of Lent, our opening acclamation is *Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins*. The response is: *His mercy endures forever*.
- During Lent, we omit the *Gloria*, and instead sing the Kyrie, which centers us in God's mercy, early in the service. Kyrie eleison, which is Greek, means *Lord, have mercy*.
- We pray the Collect of the Day, which is a special prayer that gathers and *collects* all our thoughts and prayers and intentions, and focuses our attention on the theme for the day. It sets the tone for all the rest of the service.
- As we begin the service today, let this part of the service gather you into a prayerful and loving place.

### After the Collect / Before the Readings

When we've gathered and our minds and hearts are focused, we read from the scriptures.

- Every Sunday service has four passages from the Bible:
  - Old Testament (First Testament), the story of God's people Israel (except during the Easter season the first reading is from the book of Acts, found in the New Testament.)
  - Psalm, an ancient hymn, which we sing or say
  - New Testament, from the early church
  - Gospel, the story of Jesus
- We also sing a hymn before the Gospel, to praise God for the good news about Jesus.
- We sit for the readings, and stand for the hymn and the Gospel.
  - We stand for the Gospel as a sign of respect, because we believe that Jesus is truly present with us when the words about Jesus are read in church. If a deacon is present, she reads the Gospel.
- The readings from the Bible connect us with our past: they tell the stories of the faithful people who came before us and who passed on the faith to us: they remind us where we come from so that we can know where we are going.
- As we listen to the readings from scripture today, let this part of the service teach you about the faith.

### After the Gospel / Before the Creed

Reading from the Bible connects us to our past and tells us about our faith; but the next thing we have to do is to bring that *past* into the *present*, so we can live out our faith in the *future*.

- This is the part of the service where we usually have the sermon; and the sermon is all

about taking the ancient stories of the prophets and the apostles and Jesus, and helping us understand what those stories mean for us *today*, how they connect to the lives we live and the decisions we make and the experiences we have today.

- After the sermon we say the Nicene Creed. The Creed is an ancient summary of the faith: it brings together the most important basic things we can say about what we believe about God and about Jesus and about the Holy Spirit. When we say the Creed today, we are owning for ourselves *now* the same faith the church has held all along. We are bringing the past into the present and making it ours now.
- After the Creed comes the Prayers of the People. In these prayers we pray for the whole world. We pray for the people we know and care about, our friends and our neighbors and our families. But we also pray for leaders and churches and other countries and our enemies and for the earth and for the environment — we pray for *everybody*.
  - After we hear scripture stories about how much God loves us in Jesus, and after we proclaim our faith in God’s love in the Creed, then in the Prayers we ask for God’s love to be at work in the world here and now.
  - And in the Prayers we ask God to help *us* be people who work God’s love in the world.
- Following the Prayers of the People, we have the confession of sin and the absolution, so that we can hear the words of forgiveness and clear our hearts and minds so that we can come close to God.
- Then we exchange the Peace. We greet each other the same way Jesus greeted his disciples when he was raised from the dead: we say “Peace be with you.” Greeting each other in peace, and shaking hands or hugging or even just bowing to each other a little bit, is a way for us to act out in ourselves the peace and love we prayed for in the Prayers, and that we say we believe in in the Creed, and that which we read about in the Bible.
  - Exchanging the Peace is one of the ways we show Jesus is with us, not just in the past, but here and now in the present helping us to be Peace for the future.
- As we respond to the scriptures today, let this part of the service bring our traditional faith into the present.

### **Before the Great Thanksgiving**

- This next part of the service is called The Great Thanksgiving. We call the whole service The Holy Eucharist; *eucharist* is the Greek word for *thanksgiving*, so this is the central, most important part of the service.
- This is the part where we break bread and share wine, the way Jesus told us to, as a sign that Jesus is here with us now, and that Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit so that we can love each other and love God the *very same way* Jesus loves.
- If a deacon is present, she or he puts the bread and the wine on the altar, and arranges the chalice (a special cup for the wine) and the paten (a special plate for the bread) so that everything is ready to bless the bread and wine and share them with all the people.
- The priest then invites all the people to pray, saying “The Lord be with you” and “Lift up your hearts” and “Let us give thanks...”. So this is *everybody’s* prayer. The priest says it on behalf of the whole congregation, but it is *everybody’s* prayer.
- In the prayer of the Great Thanksgiving, I want you to listen for a couple of things:

- Listen for the story of what Jesus did at the Last Supper, how Jesus himself took the bread and the wine and taught us how to do communion. That's remembering our past.
  - And listen also for the prayer that the Holy Spirit will come and bless *this* bread and *this* wine, so that what Jesus did so long ago will happen right here and now for us today too.
  - Notice how during Lent we omit the "Alleluia's from the service" They will return at Easter!
- The Great Thanksgiving is a prayer that Jesus will be in us and we will be in Jesus, so that by that communion we will be able to love just like Jesus loves.
  - After the Eucharistic Prayer, everybody together says the Lord's Prayer, the prayer that Jesus taught us.
  - Then the priest breaks the bread, which is a reminder of how Jesus' body was broken on the cross, and also a sign that Jesus' gift is to be shared, so that everyone can have a piece.
  - We sing a song of thanksgiving for the gift of communion.
  - Then everyone comes forward to receive the bread and the wine, or a blessing, so that all together we can be fed and strengthened by the love of Jesus.
  - As we join in the Great Thanksgiving, let this part of the service let you see how the love of Jesus is in *you*.

#### **After Communion / Before the Postcommunion Prayer**

- Now that everyone has shared in the bread and wine, we prepare ourselves to be sent out into the world.
- The gift of communion in Christ's love isn't given to us just so we can enjoy it all to ourselves. The gift of communion in Christ's love is given to us so that we can go out and share it with all the people who need it, with a world that is broken and hurting and yearning for love.
- One traditional image of communion is that it is food *for the journey*, food that gives us strength to *go*; so that last thing we need to do in the service is get ready to go.
- We say a final prayer that says "Thank you" for communion; but that also asks God to "assist us with grace" so that we can really go live the love we talk about.
- The priest says a blessing for us.
- We sing a final song.
- If a deacon is present, she or he dismisses us, sending us into the world to live Jesus' love.
- As we go through this last part of the service, prepare yourself to go forth and be Christ's body for the world.

(Many thanks to Paul Nancarrow for sharing most of this instruction)