

## The Liturgy Of The Sacrament.

Text: 1 Cor 11:23-26

Suggested Hymns:

311, 246, 326, 848, 343

- 1) The Preface
- 2) The Sanctus
- 3) The Lord's Prayer
- 4) The Words of Institution
- 5) The Pax Domini
- 6) The Agnus Dei
- 7) The Distribution
- 8) The Post-Communion
- 9) The Salutation and Thanksgiving
- 10) The Benedictamus and Benediction

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, <sup>23</sup> *For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; <sup>24</sup> and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."*

<sup>25</sup> *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."* <sup>26</sup> *For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today we shall consider the third and final part of our Worship Service, the liturgy of the Sacrament.

Christ is indeed present in our Worship and speaks to us in the reading and preaching of His Word. This proclamation of the Gospel is, of necessity, a very general thing addressed to all people, offering them His pardon and salvation. However, this is not intended to be the end of the Service, for the liturgy continues on to the celebration of the Lord's Supper in which Christ comes to

address each member individually, assuring them of the forgiveness of all their sins and eternal life in Him.

Yes, Christ comes to each one of us in the Sacrament, but not only does Christ address each communicant personally but He even gives Himself – His very body and blood to them through the visible elements of bread and wine so that they might truly live as members of His body to share in His life here in time and hereafter in eternity. This close communion with Christ her Lord is the climax of the Church’s Worship. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. The Preface**

But now, as usual in the liturgy, we do not simply plunge from the proclamation of the Word to the reception of the Lord’s Supper, but this is preceded by what is known as the *PREFACE*. The pastor turns to the congregation and chants: “*The Lord be with you.*” and the congregation responds, “*And with your spirit.*”

But haven’t we had the same thing before in the liturgy of the Word before the Scripture readings? Why should it be repeated here? Well, the reason is the same as before. Because of the overwhelming gravity of what is about to happen.

Those taking part in this sacred act simply remind each other of the importance of this sacred action with that historic biblical greeting, “*The Lord be with you,*” and the congregation responds, “*And with your spirit*” which simply means “*May He be with you too.*”

But it does not stop here for the pastor says, “*Lift up your hearts,*” that is, forget about the things of this world, its problems and financial troubles and look up to the throne of God. And the congregation responds, “*We lift them up to the Lord,*” that is to say, “Yes we will look up to God with you.”

Then the minister says, “*Let us give thanks to the Lord.*” In other words, let us prepare to thank the Lord for His goodness, and the congregation responds, “*For that is fitting and right.*” It is the right thing to do.

We do not treat God like a sulking child might treat its father only thanking him and taking any notice of him when he gives us a special gift but ignoring him for the rest of the time.

And so the pastor says, *“It is truly fitting and right, and for our lasting good that we should at all times, and in all places give thanks to Thee O Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

And then follow the *PROPER PREFACES* which change from season to season according to the special emphases of the church year. And finally the Preface concludes by joining with all the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven to laud and magnify the glorious name of God.

We might sometimes feel as if we are such a small handful of people in this vast world who come here to Worship while the vast majority have their sports and other entertainment. But that is not really so. We in fact join here with all the angels of heaven – ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands as well as with all creatures in heaven and earth and the saints of all ages to Worship and praise God.

## 2. The Sanctus

And so, with this mighty and majestic host, we now adore Christ in the words of the *SANCTUS*, found in the sixth chapter of Isaiah, where the prophet saw the Lord *sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.* <sup>2</sup> *Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.* <sup>3</sup> *And one cried to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!”*<sup>1</sup>

To this praise of the angels is added the praise of men, taken from the Palm Sunday procession into Jerusalem, *“Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ Hosanna in the highest!”*<sup>2</sup>

Someone has suggested that here we should picture Jesus as hanging upon the cross surrounded by the whole of His creation. At this awe-inspiring moment, when God accomplished the salvation of fallen mankind, by the sacrifice of His Son, every voice in the universe is lifted up in praise to God for His great goodness. This puts the celebration of the Sacrament in its proper setting – remembering the Lord’s death, as Jesus directs us here in our text.

## 3. The Lord’s Prayer

Before the consecration of the elements comes the Lord's Prayer which has always been the distinctive prayer of the Christians. In fact, in the early church only believers were permitted to pray the Lord's Prayer and its use was almost confined to the Sacrament among the faithful – only the fully instructed and confirmed members, as we would say, were allowed to remain in the Service during the celebration of the Sacrament.

All the others had to leave, and it was in connection with the Sacrament that the Lord's Prayer was used. And so it was a prayer of the faithful.

The purpose of the Lord's Prayer here is both as a confession of faithfulness to the Lord, much like table grace, and as a prayer of preparation.

#### **4. The Words Of Institution**

The *WORDS OF INSTITUTION* which follow are more than a recital of an historical event or the citation of authority to engage in this solemn rite, but rather a liturgical celebration in which the Worshipping congregation is reminded of the divine mystery of the real presence and assured of its reality. It identifies the present action with that of Christ when He instituted the Sacrament at the Last Supper.

If our reason prompts us to, ask how it is possible, for the Lord Jesus here to give us His true body to eat and His true blood to drink, under the bread and wine, we need to be reminded that this is not possible because of any special ritual that the church may use, or because some robed celebrant has said so, or because the pastor, by virtue of his ordination, has some special powers to bring this into effect, or even because of the strong faith of the communicants, but it is possible only because of the power and Word of Christ our Lord spoken on that night when He instituted the Sacrament with His disciples – the same Word and power by which the entire universe was called into being.

When the almighty, all-knowing Creator says in Matthew 26:26-28, *“Take, eat; this is My body,”* and again, *“Drink from it, all of you.”*<sup>28</sup> *“For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins,”*<sup>3</sup> then no human doubt or unbelief, no scholastic or scientific denial can ever prevent it from being so.

Because the Lord God has spoken in His Word, it must be so. This is the guarantee of the words of institution.

And so the church of God must know and realise that this Sacrament is not simply some memorial supper by which it remembers the Lord's death in the sense of recalling it intellectually. We surely do not need a Sacrament for that. In fact a vivid picture would probably serve that end just as well or better, but it is a sacred act or Sacrament by which we actually re-enact or celebrate the Lord's death and its whole purpose, partaking of the same body and blood that was given and shed for us on Calvary's cross.

The words of institution themselves are not taken from any one passage of Scripture, but are really an amalgamation of the four passages of Scripture which record the institution of the Sacrament.

But the mere citation of the words of consecration do not in themselves bring the Sacrament into being, or effect the presence of the Lord's body and blood, for the Lord said, "*Take, eat; this is My body,*" and "*Drink from it, all of you.*"<sup>28</sup> and so the eating and drinking is an essential part of the Sacrament, so that there is no Sacrament at all unless these elements are received, eaten and drunk by the communicants.

### **5. The Pax Domini**

The words of institution are followed by the *PAX DOMINI* which simply means "peace of the Lord." The minister sings, "*The peace of the Lord be with you always.*" Since Christ has given His holy body into death and shed His precious blood for the forgiveness of all our sins, we can now have true peace with God.

And the effect of the Sacrament should be that we come to experience this true peace. If we have true peace with God, then we will, led by the Holy Spirit, also be reconciled with our fellowmen for whom Christ gave His life, gladly forgiving them as Christ has forgiven us. And so the congregation can respond with a hearty "*Amen.*"

### **6. The Agnus Dei**

Before the individual worshippers come forward to receive the Lord's Supper they offer up a special prayer which summarises the whole content of the Sacrament – the *AGNUS DEI* (meaning "Lamb of God." They sing, "*O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, who takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us,*" repeated in substance three times, just as is the *KYRIE*.

Because this is a confession of a great and most sacred truth, and three is a sacred number in liturgical usage, the *AGNUS DEI* and the *KYRIE* are chanted three times. The words are clearly taken from John the Baptist's confession of Jesus, "***Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!***"<sup>4</sup> The expression "Lamb of God" also indicates that Christ is an innocent victim offered up for the sins of the world.

## 7. The Distribution

The climax or high point of the Worship Service, of course, is the actual *COMMUNION* when Christ the living Lord actually gives us His own body and blood as we partake of bread and wine, and therefore the minister says to the individual communicant as he hands them the bread: "*Take and eat, this is the true body of our Lord Jesus Christ, given for you,*" and as he gives them the wine he says: "*Take and drink, this is the true blood of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, which was shed upon the cross for the forgiveness of sins.*"

*The body of our Lord Jesus Christ and His holy precious blood strengthen and preserve you in body and soul unto eternal life. Go in peace.*"

When the Lord says to us in our text, "***This do in remembrance of me,***" He is not telling His church simply to recall Him and what He did for us, but He is telling them to do something – ***this do*** – to do what He did in remembrance of Him.

In the next verse Christ says, "***you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.***" He wants to give us more than an intellectual reminder of His death for us. He gives us Himself, His own body and blood sacrificed for our sins as a guarantee that He truly died to atone for our sins and won eternal life for us.

No loving wife would be satisfied simply with a letter or mere picture of her husband to remind her of their marriage. She wants to have him with her and to have close communion with him. Only in this way does their marriage become meaningful and satisfying.

So the Christian too, who was born into the Church of God, the Bride of Christ in holy Baptism, needs not only to hear from Christ occasionally in His Word, but to have a close, living communion with Him – to be nourished by His own body and blood in the Sacrament.

Memories are not enough, but true strength comes from repeated experiences of such a joyous relationship with Christ, so that He lives in us and we in Him. This is the purpose of the Sacrament.

And we ought to be conscious of this as we come to the Lord's table. That is no place to think about how we might look from the back, or who is next to us, but we need to remind ourselves that here the Lord gives us His own body and blood, that same body and blood which was sacrificed for the sins of the world hundreds of years ago, so that we might be forgiven, and live with Him eternally.

We ought to realise also that this Sacrament links us with the saints of all ages, with Adam and Eve, Moses and Elijah, Mary and Joseph, St. Paul and Luther and all the saints who are members of the body of Christ. When the people of the Old Testament made a sacrifice this pointed forward to, and had its meaning, only in the great sacrifice of Christ for the sins of the world.

And just as those Old Testament sacrifices were not totally burnt, (but God directed the people to eat of the sacrifice so that they might share in its blessings), so we still today, in the Lord's Supper eat of the great sacrifice of Christ for us on Calvary so that we too might share in all its benefits and blessings.

When we really appreciate this, the Lord's Supper ought to be a source of great joy and strength to us, for there is no earthly event which can compare with this glorious experience.

### **8. The Post Communion**

After communing, the congregation sings the *CANTICLE* "*Lord now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples*" etc.<sup>5</sup> These are the words of Simeon who held the baby Jesus in his arms, knowing that in that act his life had reached its zenith.

So we too who receive the body and blood of Jesus in the Sacrament, know that we have received the same incarnate Lord, and because we have true communion with Him, we too are ready to depart this life in peace.

### **9. The Salutation And Thanksgiving**

Then, in preparation for the special duty of closing the Worship Service with the thanksgiving prayer and pronouncing the Lord's blessing upon the

congregation, they again chant the *SALUTATION* of Biblical greeting, “*The Lord be with you, and with your spirit.*”

This proceeds at once to the thanksgiving *VERSICLES*, “*O give thanks to the Lord for He is good, Hallelujah, for His mercy endures forever, Hallelujah.*”

### **10. The Benedictamus And Benediction**

And then once more, before the Service closes, the congregation, at the suggestion of the pastor, blesses the Lord in the words of the *BENEDICTAMUS*, which simply means, “Let us bless.” This is simply giving to God the honour and praise that are due to Him for His rich blessings as we close our Worship.

The final act of the Service is the *BENEDICTION*. As our Lord was taken up into heaven from His people, His departing gesture was one of blessing upon His disciples. And so it is also in the Service.

The final act of the liturgy is a threefold blessing of our Lord with whom we were privileged to meet in a special way in our Worship. The pastor, as the mouthpiece of the Lord, raises his hand to pronounce the threefold blessing as the Lord commanded Aaron in Numbers 6:22-23.

These three verses all mean the same thing. They are Hebrew poetry which, instead of having the last word of a verse rhyming with the last word in the previous verse, consists of parallel thought.

Thus “*The Lord bless you and keep you*” means the same thing as “*The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you*” and this means the same as “*The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.*” The countenance, of course, is the face, and to lift up the countenance is to look upon someone with favour.

This is the Lord’s own blessing upon His people and we ought to regard it as such. Sometimes people wonder what benefit little children can get out of our Worship. It is hard enough for us to understand let alone for little children. But even if they got nothing else than this benediction at least they would receive the special blessing of the Lord, and what can compare with that?

That is why people ought not to leave the Worship Service early but be sure to stay for the benediction where the Lord Himself gives us His special blessing



before we leave. In the threefold “*Amen*,” the congregation responds in simple faith to receive this blessing.

The Worship of the congregation should not really come to an end with the benediction, but it should rather come to a new beginning, for as the worshippers go to their individual homes and separate spheres of activity, their whole life is to be one of true Worship.

Having experienced their Lord speaking to them in His Word and giving Himself to them in the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper so that He lives in them and they in Him, they should live for Him and seek to serve Him with all that they are and have.

Wherever they go and whatever they do they are to know, and let it be known, that they are not of this world, but belong to Christ who has redeemed them out of this world, by His atoning life and death. God help us all, in this way, to be renewed and strengthened in our public Worship Sunday after Sunday. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 6:1-3

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 21:9

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 26:26-28

<sup>4</sup> John 1:29

<sup>5</sup> Luke 2:29