

A Sunday Morning Explanation of the Liturgy

Colleagues,

Last week Amy Schiffrin blessed us with a good-news glimpse of Easter reality. Her focus was the Eucharistic assembly. She showed how the Holy Spirit keeps working there with quiet power to bring sinners to life. She also underscored how important it is to help these sinners notice what's going on so they can embrace it with faith and joy.

This week's writer, Steven Kuhl, aims to do exactly that. He sends along some work he shared this past Sunday with the Episcopal congregation he serves in Milwaukee. It comes with an introduction, designed for you, that covers all the bases of background and purpose, and obviates any need for me to comment further. I'm sure Steve would be glad for your reactions. You can reach him at skuhl1@wi.rr.com.

Peace and Joy,

Jerry Burce

The Eucharistic Liturgy Explained

by Steven C. Kuhl

Introduction

The following "Narrative Explanation of the Eucharist," as I call it, is meant to explain the theo-logic and meaning of Eucharistic Rite II in the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP), the so-called "contemporary rite" because it uses modern rather than

Elizabethan English. I wrote it for my congregation (St. Mark's Episcopal Church, South Milwaukee, WI) for use on the Fourth Sunday of Easter, 2016 (April 17), not because we are experiencing "worship wars"—Episcopalians seemed to have missed that battle that is raging in the contemporary Church—but because I think people would benefit from knowing more about the dramaturgical experience of the Word of God they enter into each week in worship. The liturgy helps us to be true Church, the Assembly of believers in Christ, by ensuring that we are gathered around the gospel and sacraments that Jesus himself established to make us Church and keep us in true faith. I am convinced that if people understood better the meaning of the liturgy in its overarching structure and its moment-by-moment ritual unfolding, they will find themselves personally engaged in a heightened way in the mystery and substance of faith, that is, in the Christ who died for our sins, who rose for our justification, and who will come again to consummate his promise. The liturgy, without explanation, can easily pass people by as a collection of pious things strung together. But when explained and understood, it can engage people in a remarkable pattern of call and response – of being called by the gospel and responding in faith and thanksgiving – that is life altering.

Because I am serving in an Episcopal congregation the explanation here focuses on the particular "setting" of the liturgy we use each week. But as you will see, the Eucharistic Rite in the BCP is very similar to the "traditional" Holy Communion liturgies that Lutherans are familiar with in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* and *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. This is so, historically, for several reasons. First, when Thomas Cramner (Archbishop of Canterbury and a key leader of the Sixteenth Century Reformation in England) undertook to revise the Roman Mass into what became the 1549 BCP, he consulted

closely with the Wittenberg Lutherans because he was convinced that the Lutheran insight on Justification by Faith (and its accompanying implication for liturgy and sacraments) was the hermeneutical key for reforming the Mass. Second, when Lutherans in America, in their different stages of immigration, recognized the need to drop their German and Scandinavian languages and adopted English (a phenomenon that happened as early as Muhlenberg in the 1750s), they drew heavily on the BCP for language and structure in shaping their own English language liturgy. (See Frank Senn, *Lutheran Identity: A Classical Understanding*, pp.62-76.) Third, when Lutherans and Episcopalians revised their worship books in the 1970s (The 1977 *Lutheran Book of Worship* and The 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*, respectively) they both did so by incorporating common accents retrieved from the early church by the Liturgical Renewal Movement of the 1940s. Whatever differences that exist in the structure and language of the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, the *Book of Common Prayer* or, for that matter, the most recent *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (2006) are matters of adiaphora (theologically neutral). One noticeable difference is that the Lutheran liturgy incorporated a "hymn of the day" after the Sermon to facilitate the congregation in a sung response to the message of the day, whereas the Episcopalian liturgy did not. A second difference is that the Lutheran Liturgy designed the Rite of Confession and Forgiveness to be a preparatory rite that precedes the gathering rite, whereas in the BCP it comes after the Sermon as a response to the Word. What is characteristic of both traditions' liturgy is the flexibility it allows while always maintaining the general pattern of being called by the gospel and responding in faith and thanksgiving.

What follows is exactly what I did with the congregation on Sunday morning. Worshipers encountered the liturgy (printed in regular typeface). Interspersed within it was an explanation of

the liturgy (in italics). I invite you to use and adapt whatever is here to fit your parish setting. My hope is that it will bring greater awareness and deeper appreciation for the meaning and practice of worship.

+ + +

Advertisement, Parish Bulletin, in the weeks preceding—

A Special Worship Service on Sunday, April 17.

Have you ever wondered why the order of worship we use (what we call, The Eucharist) is structured as it? To help us understand and appreciate our Anglican approach to worship we will be doing a “Narrative Setting of the Eucharist” on Sunday, April 17 at both the 8 and 10 a.m. service. It is a worship service that explains itself. It is the service we always do but with a step-by-step explanation of the meaning and logic of the various parts of the worship service as we do it. Plan to be there! You will not want to miss this!

+ + +

A NARRATIVE SETTING OF THE EUCHARIST: Rite Two of the Book of Common Prayer

THE ENTRANCE RITE

Entrance Hymn (*All Stand*)

*Jesus promised that wherever two or three are gathered in his name, he would be there. The **Entrance or Gathering Hymn** is sung with that expectation in mind, and the procession into the midst of the congregation of the cross and the ministers of Word and Sacrament symbolize that it is so! These ministers find themselves in a peculiar role. Even as they are to represent Christ to the community (through the administration of Word and*

Sacrament), they are also part of the community of faith needing what Christ has come to give them. The dialogs that happen throughout the liturgy are filled with this peculiarity.

The dialog that immediately follows the entrance hymn changes seasonally. It is a **Greeting** or an **Acclamation** to the Triune God whose kingdom has come to us on earth in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and whose rule is carried out among us through Word and Sacrament. The **Prayer of Humble Access** asks God to make us receptive to what God has come to give us in this liturgy. The **Kyrie** (or Lord Have Mercy) places on our lips a plea for God's mercy, which will be satisfied throughout the course of the liturgy. It places us in communion with all those biblical outcasts and sinners who looked to Christ for mercy and received it: the ten lepers in Luke (Lk 17:11-19), the Canaanite woman whom the disciples wanted to chase away in Matthew (Mt 15:21-28), and Bartimaeus, the blind man and representative believer in Mark's Gospel (Mk 10:46-52) to name a few. The **Gloria** (or Glory to God in the Highest) places on our lips our full-throated praise to God which is our appropriate worship. It places us in communion with the angels who heralded Christ in the presence of Shepherds at Christmas and the saints who assemble with them around Christ and his throne in heaven. The Triune God's gracious offer of mercy and our faith-filled response of praise is the pattern that informs all Christian worship, including the Eucharistic Liturgy, both as a whole and in all its various parts. Let us begin...

Stand

Greeting

Alleluia. Christ is risen!

The Lord is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

Blessed be God: Father, Son (+), and Holy Spirit.

Blessed be his Kingdom, now and forever. Amen.

Prayer of Humble Access

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Kyrie

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have Mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Hymn of Praise

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth. Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

THE SERVICE OF THE WORD

Everything up to this point has been part of the entrance or gathering rite of the liturgy. Its purpose is to gather us together and prepare us for what is to come, the heart of the liturgy, which consists of two chief parts: The Service of the

Word and the Service of the Table. The Service of the Word inserts us as believing hearers into Jesus' teaching ministry; the Service of the Table inserts us as trusting participants into Jesus' death and resurrection, his saving work on our behalf. In this way the pattern of the liturgy follows the pattern of the Gospels: First, through hearing biblical testimony and preaching, Jesus teaches us who he is as the incarnate Son of God who entered human history for our salvation; second, he invites us to participate tangibly in his saving work of dying and rising for us through the sacramental signs that he instituted for us: Baptism at the beginning of our Christian walk, Holy Communion for every step in that walk, and confession and forgiveness because we stumble in that walk. Through these activities Christ invites us to trust him for our salvation and to love one another as he has loved us.

The Service of the Word begins with the **Collect for the Day**. Listen closely. Here, in the form of a prayer, the Celebrant "collects" or summarizes the basic message for the day in the presence of God and the gathered congregation. Think of the prayer as Jesus interceding on our behalf before the Father with the Holy Spirit so that this message may be taken to heart by us. Our response of "Amen" (which in Hebrew means "So be it!") is our affirmation that we do take it to heart. The **Lessons** and **Sermon** which follow set forth the message of the day. The Lessons consist of an array of readings from Sacred Scripture, beginning, usually, with an Old Testament text, accompanied by the recitation of a Psalm (the ancient hymn book of Israel), followed by a reading from one of the New Testament Letters, culminating in a reading from one of the Gospels. This pattern of readings is meant to show the harmony between the Old and New Testaments: that God's promise of salvation announced to ancient Israel is fulfilled through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The acclamations around these readings demonstrate

the central role they play in guiding the Christian community. The Scripture readings contain "the word of the Lord" for which we say "Thanks be to God." The Gospel reading points us directly to Jesus Christ our Savior to whom we offer "glory" and "praise." The purpose of the Sermon, then, is to take that biblically preserved promise of salvation and apply it to us present day hearers. Let us listen attentively...

Collect of the Day

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray...

Sit

The Lessons

The First Reading

The Psalm

The Second Reading

Stand

The Alleluia Verse

Refrain: Alleluia, Alleluia! Give thanks to the risen Lord. Alleluia, Alleluia! Give praise to his name.[Verse 2] Spread the Good News o'er all the earth: Jesus has died and is risen. Repeat Refrain.

The Gospel Reading

The Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to

Glory to you, Lord Christ.

The Gospel is read...

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you. Lord Christ.

Sit

The Sermon

*The proclamation of the Word is followed by a series of responses to the Word. The first response is **The Nicene Creed**. It is a Fourth Century ecumenical symbol or summation of the heart of Christian faith that was created in response to numerous false understandings that existed at the time. In reciting the Creed we profess with the Church around the world our belief in the Triune God: that the God who is the Almighty Creator of the world is also the Father of Jesus Christ, the Son of God... who "for us and for our salvation" took on our human nature, endured death for our sins, and rose for our justification... and who, with the Holy Spirit, keeps us in this one true faith and gathers us into one, holy, catholic and apostolic church where the gospel is proclaimed purely, sins are forgiven daily, and eternal life is promised confidently.*

*The second response to the Word is **The Prayers of the People**. We pray because through the Word we know that God is eager to hear and come to our help in accordance with his good and gracious will made known in Jesus Christ. In these prayers we pray for whatever comes to mind – the church, the world, and all who are in need – trusting that no concern of ours is outside the concern of God, trusting that God knows better than we what we need.*

The third response to the Word takes the form of **Confession and Forgiveness**. Through the Word, we hear of God promises to forgive sins freely on account of Christ. Trusting this promise, we examine our lives, confess all manner of sin, believe in the words of absolution (that we are truly forgiven for Christ's sake) and strive to live amended lives, knowing that all this happens because of the power of the promised Holy Spirit working in our lives.

The fourth response to the Word is the **Passing of the Peace**. This is not simply a friendly greeting. It is an expression of the mutual forgiveness and reconciliation we have with God through of Jesus Christ becoming the glue that holds us together as the People of Christ. The "passing of the peace" means that we are a people reconciled to one another through Christ, that we love one another as Christ has loved us.

The fifth response to the Word is the **Announcements**. Yes, the announcements! That's because they both, a) highlight the kinds of service we, the community of faith, are doing in response to the Word and b) invite each one of us to participate in that service as we are able. The announcements remind us that good works are part of the Christian's natural response to the grace we have received in Christ.

The sixth response to the Word is **The Offering**. The gospel is free, we do not pay for it. But we do respond in thanks to God for it – and in wanting others to have it also, we give of ourselves, our time and our possessions to this end. This is what the offering is all about. To be sure, the offering, like all the other liturgical responses to the Word, is only a token of the service we offer everyday in our church, in our family, in our work, in our neighborhood, in our citizenship, and in our

world. But the fact that all these responses are real responses to the Word should not be minimized!

Of course, there can be other kinds of activities included in this series of responses to the Word as special occasions and recognitions arise in the community of faith. But let this list suffice for now as we, now, begin our response to the Word by confessing our faith in the words of the Nicene Creed...

Stand

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look

for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Prayers of the People

Let us pray for the Church and for the world.

Grant, Almighty God, that all who confess your Name may be united in your truth, live together in your love, and reveal your glory in the world. *Silence.* Lord, in your mercy...

Hear our prayer.

Guide the people of this land, and of all the nations, in the ways of justice and peace; that we may honor one another and serve the common good. *Silence.* Lord, in your mercy...

Hear our prayer.

Give us all a reverence for the earth as your own creation, that we may use its resources rightly in the service of others and to your honor and glory. *Silence.* Lord, in your mercy...

Hear our prayer.

Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours, and grant that we may serve Christ in them, and love one another as he loves us. *Silence.* Lord, in your mercy...

Hear our prayer.

Comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit; give them courage and hope in their troubles, and bring them the joy of your salvation. *Silence.* Lord, in your mercy...

Hear our prayer.

We commend to your mercy all who have died, that your will for

them may be fulfilled; and we pray that we may share with all your saints in your eternal kingdom. *Silence.* Lord, in your mercy...

Hear our prayer.

The Celebrant adds a concluding Collect.

Confession of Sin

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

Kneel or sit. Silence may be kept.

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life.

Amen.

Stand

The Peace

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you

Sit

Announcements

Brothers and sisters in Christ: Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God.
Ephesians 5:2

The Offering is Collected

THE SERVICE OF THE TABLE

*The Service of the Table (also known as the celebration of the Lord's Supper) begins with the **Offertory**, when the collected offerings and the gifts of bread and wine are brought forward. A profound message is embedded in this action. God takes what we give him and returns it to us better than ever, because by his blessing they become bearers of the promise. The bread and wine we bring forward will be returned to us in the distribution of Holy Communion as the body and blood of Christ, nourishing us with the forgiveness of sins. The other things we offer, usually money, is blessed and dedicated also in service of the gospel, both for supporting the inward needs of the congregation and the outward needs of the world.*

*The whole focus of the Service of the Table is "Thanksgiving." That is why it is called the "Eucharist," the Greek word for "Thanksgiving." **The Great Thanksgiving** is a dialogue in which God through the ministry of the presider invites us to "give God thanks and praise." **The Proper Preface** amplifies just how fitting and right it is to give thanks and praise. But note: this is not mindless praise. It has a specific focus – and that focus is what God does for us through Christ and the Holy Spirit. In the Proper Preface that focus is shaped relative to the themes of the seasons of the Church Year – Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost. But even then, it never loses its primary connection to that ONE theme that anchors our understanding of all themes: the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ as God's definitive act of*

salvation. This is reinforced as we sing the **Sanctus** (The Holy, Holy, Holy), and the **Benedictus** (Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, Hosanna...), recalling the hymn the crowds sang on Palm Sunday as Jesus entered Jerusalem to make his rendezvous with the cross. The liturgy is thus inserting us into the saving work of Jesus which we will participate in explicitly in the distribution of Holy Communion.

The **Eucharistic Prayer** (which is both a mix of our remembrance before God of what he has done for us AND God's direct address to us of what he is doing for us now) is a bold statement of the logic (the why and the how) of salvation: God created us good that we might live in harmonious relationship with him and all that he has made. But we sinned, breaking relationship with God, bringing turmoil into the world, and leaving a legacy of disgrace and death. Not content with this state of affairs, God the Father sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to rescue us by confronting, on the cross, our legacy of disgrace death and by creating a new legacy for us of grace and resurrection. The Service of the Table is all about participating in that legacy. Therefore, at the center of the Eucharistic Prayer is the Words of Institution, recalling how on the night of his betrayal Jesus established the Lord's Supper as a sure sign that he is truly present with us believers today and that we are participating in his legacy of forgiveness and resurrection as surely as we eat the bread (his promised body) and drink the wine (his promised blood). The Eucharistic Prayer asserts that the full reality of the deity is employed in the logic of salvation, including the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit unites us with the promise of Christ given in the Words of Institution. He takes what is Christ's (his legacy of grace and resurrection) and applies it to us by making true faith in Christ a reality and true love for one another our way of life. Nothing illustrates more clearly the hardwiring connection the Spirit makes between us and Christ

*than when we conclude the Eucharistic Prayer by bold saying together the prayer Jesus taught us, **The Lord's Prayer.***

To be sure, the mystery behind the logic of salvation cannot be overlooked: and so the Eucharistic Prayer emboldens us to acknowledge that by inviting us to name the mystery through words like "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again" (Eucharistic Prayer A) or "We remember his death, We proclaim his resurrection, We await his coming in glory" (Eucharistic Prayer B) that we use today. But just because something is a mystery to us – that is, not fully comprehended by us – does not mean that it is not apprehended by faith: as being true for us and the foundation of our thanksgiving. So let us give thanks beginning with the Great Thanksgiving...

Stand

Offertory and Hymn

The Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We Lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. [Easter Season:] But chiefly are we bound to praise you for the glorious resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; for he is the true Paschal Lamb, who was sacrificed for us, and

has taken away the sin of the world. By his death he has destroyed death, and by his rising to life again he has won for us everlasting life.

Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed (+) is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

We give thanks to you, O God, for the goodness and love which you have made known to us in creation; in the calling of Israel to be your people; in your Word spoken through the prophets; and above all in the Word made flesh, Jesus, your Son. For in these last days you sent him to be incarnate from the Virgin Mary, to be the Savior and Redeemer of the world. In him, you have delivered us from evil, and made us worthy to stand before you. In him, you have brought us out of error into truth, out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life.

On the night before he died for us, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore, according to his command, O Father,

We remember his death, We proclaim his resurrection, We await

his coming in glory.

And we offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to you, O Lord of all; presenting to you, from your creation, this bread and this wine.

We pray you, gracious God, to send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts that they may be the Sacrament of the Body of Christ and his Blood of the new Covenant. Unite us to your Son in his sacrifice, that we may be acceptable through him, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In the fullness of time, put all things in subjection under your Christ, and bring us to that heavenly country where, with [_____]and] all your saints, we may enter the everlasting heritage of your sons and daughters; through Jesus Christ our Lord, the firstborn of all creation, the head of the Church, and the author of our salvation.

By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever.

Amen.

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

*Now the time has come for us to receive the promised Body and Blood of Christ and participate in this tangible way in the legacy of Christ's cross and resurrection. The meaning of the meal is clearly proclaimed in the **Fracture** with the words,*

*"Alleluia, Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us," and our response, "Therefore, let us keep the feast, Alleluia." The instruction on how to make use of this feast is also clearly stated in the **Invitation**: "Come, for all things are ready. These are the gifts of God for you the people of God. Receive them in your hearts with faith and thanksgiving." The **Agnus Dei** (The Lamb of God) may be sung as our way of asserting that Christ's sacrifice is the grounds for our forgiveness. Then the moment arrives. We, the people of God, come forward and receive the bread and the wine along with the simple declaration: "The Body of Christ, the Bread from Heaven"; "the Blood of Christ, the Cup of Salvation." Equally simple is our response: "Amen," by which we mean, "It is so! I believe." Other gestures may be employed to express the meaning of the moment, such as, a) making the sign of the cross, symbolizing that the legacy of Christ's cross and resurrection is also our legacy or b) offering a simple prayer of your own in thanksgiving for what you have just receive. Let us now with ado, ready ourselves to come and receive this great Gift of gifts...*

The Breaking of the Bread

[Alleluia.] Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

Therefore let us keep the feast. [Alleluia.]

Agnus Dei (*Lamb of God*)

The Invitation

Come for all things are ready. These are the Gifts of God for you the People of God. Receive them in your hearts with faith and thanksgiving.

Amen.

The Distribution

Having been graciously fed on the Body and Blood of Christ and lovingly nourished by the Paschal (Good Friday and Easter) fruits of his labor, we once again return thanks through the words of the **Post-Communion Prayer**. But that prayer also turns our attention to the outside world and to the places where we will find ourselves in the week to come. Those places are not a distraction from our life in the Lord, but the locations where we live it, where our Lord sends us to love and serve him by loving and serving others. Although the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Table have come to an end, you might say that the Liturgy of the Week, our service in the world, is just beginning. This is the meaning of the Sending Rite that concludes our worship. It is a hurried affair, symbolizing our eagerness to be Christ's disciples in the world. First is the **Benediction** (a hurried blessing in the name of the Saving God, the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit); then we quickly sing a last parting **Sending or Recessional Hymn** while the ministers of the liturgy scurry their way out, only to pause long enough to proclaim a last, brief word of **Dismissal**: "Go in peace; love and serve the Lord." To which we respond, fittingly, "Thanks be to God." We are thankful, not because our weekly assembly around Word and Sacrament is finally over, but because the purpose for which we gathered has been fulfilled. We are thankful that we have been fed and strengthen in faith and, thereby fortified for service in Christ's name. But we are also thankful that we will gather again next week. Knowing that the Liturgy of the Week is exhausting – both physically and spiritually – we are thankful that the arc of the week will lead us back to next Sunday's gathering. And therein lies the pattern of the Christian life: gathered and sent, gathered and sent. So let us conclude ...

Post-Communion Blessing and Prayer

The Body and Blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

strengthen you and keep you in his grace unto life everlasting.

Amen.

Let us pray. Almighty and everliving God,

we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; and for assuring us in these holy mysteries that we are living members of the Body of your Son, and heirs of your eternal kingdom. And now, Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord. To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and forever. Amen.

Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord let his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son (+) and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Recessional Hymn

Dismissal

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

The Lord is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

Let us go forth in peace, to love and serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!