



Sanctus

The Eucharistic Prayer



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“Why Eucharistic Prayer?” asks LeRoy Martinson. [Ed note: the word ‘eucharist’ is a transliteration of a Greek word that means to give thanks] He looks at church life and practice and writes:

Many Lutherans have learned that eucharistic prayers – the prayers surrounding the “words of institution” – are wrong. That makes me sad. What was Jesus doing when he said to his disciples, “Do this in remembrance of me”? What was “this”? Jesus did two things with the twelve. First he prayed with them a prayer of thanksgiving. Then he shared food with them and drank with them. The earliest Christians did as Jesus did on the night He was betrayed. They offered prayers of thanksgiving, then shared bread and wine. They understood that thankful prayer cannot be separated from sacramental eating and drinking.

Taking part in the sacrament is meeting with the living Jesus, the One who cannot be defined or described adequately in even the best of words. The pastor is not stating doctrine to the people, nor do the “words of institution”. They repeat Jesus’ invitation to his people. The pastor leads the people in a trusting, prayerful response to the presence of their Savior.

Surely that response includes giving thanks for some of the actions of our heavenly Father’s, some prayer modeled on Jesus’ own Israelite way of praying. There is so much to give thanks for, no single Eucharistic prayer can speak of more than part. It is good, therefore, for the prayers to vary from season to season, recalling different parts of salvation history and using the great variety of biblical images.

Prayer at a Eucharistic celebration goes beyond that, of course. Additional silent thanksgivings by gathered believers, prayerful thoughts of Jesus’ other brothers and sisters, and prayerful hymns sung by the gathered people are also offered. Thanks be to God!

Two of the thoughts that Pr Martinson lifts up: First, one is struck by the absence of “saying grace” before the meal when the Words of Institution alone are used. Most of us are in the habit of “saying grace” before meals. It is an ancient custom practiced by Jesus. The church has memorialized that act in the liturgy of the meal. “In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread and **gave thanks** ...” It seems strange not to have to say a prayer of thanksgiving before we eat together as the Body of Christ.

Second, he suggests the use of a variety of eucharistic prayers. As we approach the Lenten season, there are at least two alternative prayers which would be appropriate:

- Eucharistic Prayer III from LBW, *Minister’s Desk Edition*, p 225 and *Renewing Worship 6, Holy Communion and Related Rites*, p 15
- Eucharistic Prayer D from WOV, *Leader’s Edition*, p 68.

In this issue of the Sanctus we invite you to reflect on the eucharistic prayer. Susan McMahon offers her thoughts on children and giving thanks, and there are updates on *Renewing Worship* and other worship resources for congregations and worship leaders.

What's New at Renewingworship.org?

- *Revised Common Lectionary Daily Readings*, from the *Consultation on Common Texts*, is now available from Augsburg Fortress. This work completes the daily readings that were introduced in part in *Daily Prayer*, volume seven in the Renewing Worship series.
- Permission for local, non-sale reproduction of Renewing Worship provisional materials has been extended to December 31, 2006. In the first four volumes of the Renewing Worship provisional resources and in the Renewing Worship Songbook, the end date given for permission for local reproduction of materials eligible for this permission was December 31, 2005. This date has been extended to be consistent with the date of December 31, 2006, as given in Renewing Worship volumes 6-8.
- At its November 2005 meeting, the ELCA Church Council received a report on the liturgical review of the proposed content of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and commended this new primary worship resource to congregations of the ELCA. See the [news release](#) for additional information.
- A new [brochure from Augsburg Fortress](#) compares *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* to *Lutheran Book of Worship* and *With One Voice*. Pricing information for the pew edition of *ELW* is included. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* will be available in print and electronic form in October 2006.



Three other web sites to check out:

www.sundaysandseasons.com

Now available at Sundays and Seasons.com:

- All Year B proper material (prayers, psalms/psalm tones, seasonal texts, etc.) as well as Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Vigil services.
- Formation in Faith rites from Renewing Worship's Holy Baptism volume. These rites are related to inquirers, those who are preparing to affirm their baptism, and those who wish to affirm their Christian vocation.
- Many services from the LBW Book of Occasional Services are now available for the first time online. Installation and Commissioning of Associates in Ministry, Consecration and Installation of Diaconal Ministers, and Ordination liturgies are now posted for your use.

www.onelicense.net

At this site you can purchase copyright permission for single songs or for an event.
The site now contains 32 church music publishers.

www.morningstarmusic.com/november_enewsletter_05.pdf

Check out new keyboard/instrumental music and Choral Music for Spring 2006

www.augsburgfortress.org/store/itemset.asp?CLSID=129908&CategoryID=2531

Augsburg Fortress has silk screen banners for \$98 apiece.

The Institute of Liturgical Studies at Valparaiso University will hold its Fifty-Eighth Session on April 24-26, 2006: "Saying and Doing the Gospel Today: Mass, Ministry, Mission". This is the third year under this title, and the focus will be on "Mission". For more information and registration info go to www.valpo.edu/ils/index.php.

Transfiguration Sunday is February 26. You may want to use "*Farewell to the Alleluia*". See the February 2004 ("The Great and Holy Week") issue of the Sanctus at www.iksynod.org/ministry/sanctusFeb04.asp for that Rite.

Children in Worship: Eucharistic language for children

By Susan McMahon



Thank you! Thank you!! Thank you!!!



A child's simple question can be the doorway to fresh understanding. "Why do we do the bread and wine like *this*? It's not the same when we go to church with Grampa Joe and Gramma Gina!"

It's a question that comes up frequently in First Communion classes for children and their parents. Joe and Gina could well be members of another ELCA congregation, or they might be Episcopalian, UCC, Moravian, or Presbyterian— someone with whom the ELCA officially shares table fellowship— so... *why indeed?* What should we be teaching our very young children?

At its best, liturgy helps people of all ages make contact *through all of our senses* with the deep truth of our human condition – our utter dependence on God's grace. In making the experiential connections, the words we use matter. As Luther reminded his Latin speaking associates, people need to hear and speak the words of the Great Thanksgiving and Eucharistic prayers in language that "makes sense" for their daily lives. We must all take in the meaning of "for you."

We don't need the phrase "right and salutary" to help children learn the foundational meaning of the Eucharist, but we do need to use age-appropriate "salutary" language. The translation is not difficult if we keep two concepts in mind: gratitude and justice.

Gratitude: From a surprisingly early age, children easily learn to say "thank you." (They may even mean it!) If you ponder the peacefulness of a just-fed infant, you might well conclude that newborns arrive "hard-wired" for the state-of-being that we label gratitude and ready to learn words to match. But we can go a step further in helping children make connections to the liturgy and lay a Trinitarian foundation for a later understanding of "gratitude" and "grace" when we teach young children to say "Thank you! Thank you!! Thank you!!!" when they give thanks to God.

Justice: Young children also readily grasp the meaning of "it's not fair!!"— at least as it applies to *themselves*. Although children easily learn the pain of personal injustice, it takes time and teaching (along with some physiological maturity) for children to learn that "it's not fair" also applies to other people. We lay down salutary words and prepare children to understand the catechism for the third petition of the Lord's Prayer when we teach them that God loves us, *AND God loves everyone and everything else in God's good creation!*

The ELCA's resources on hunger include a short prayer which can help adults lay a Eucharistic foundation for children's thinking and behavior:

**Blessed be God who is our Bread;
May all the world be clothed and fed!**

This prayer can be recited as the second verse of the familiar "Come, Lord Jesus" table prayer, but the prayer will remain only words unless we also help children make sense of it with their lives. Even young children can help adults serve in a soup kitchen or get involved in fund-raising for Heifer Project. Tell the story of the child who shared his lunch!

Regardless of the form "daily bread" takes in our lives, it is a gift of God which we are given to take and break and share, trusting that God can multiply our offering.

As graceful reminders of the liturgy, the few words of this prayer could help feed a multitude by keeping people of all ages in touch with the needs of all of God's treasured creatures.

A Brief History of Eucharistic Prayers

By Rudy Mueller

The roots of the eucharistic prayer are found in Jewish table prayers, such as the berekah (*blessing*) and the todah (*thanksgiving*). These Jewish prayers recall the acts of God in narrative form and offer intercession for God's blessing. Christian prayers of blessing include the story of Jesus Christ. As part of those prayers that story came to include the narrative of the institution of the Lord's Supper, that is, the Words of Institution.

An important connection between Jewish prayers and the Christian eucharistic prayers is the element of anamnesis. The Greek word means "to remember", not just in the sense of a mental recall, but to make present by that remembrance the benefits and blessings of the event remembered. Who is to remember? We would obviously say that the gathered assembly is to remember. But J. Jeremias argues in *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, p. 249, that the focus of "in remembrance of me" is God, that is, that God would remember the acts of Jesus and bestow the promised blessings. It is not unlike the sign of the rainbow in Genesis 9. There God promises that when the rainbow is seen, *God will remember* the covenant.

Jesus himself is the bridge between the Jewish table blessings and the thanksgiving over the bread and wine of Holy Communion. The "last supper" was a continuation of the table fellowship that Jesus practiced with his disciples and others throughout his ministry. This practice reached its high point in the Easter meals the risen Jesus shared with his disciples. Both the table fellowship of the "last supper" and of the Easter meals included table blessings, or thanksgivings (Luke 22.15-19 and Luke 24.30). The "last supper" was set in the context of Jesus' impending death and the Easter meals in the context of the eschatological joy and presence of the risen Christ. These two motifs influenced the direction of the church's worship life, including its thanksgivings.

The first complete text of a eucharistic prayer is the Liturgy of Addai and Mari, which dates to the third century. Prior to that prayer, we do have bits and pieces of eucharistic liturgies, including prayers in two chapters in the late first century *Didache*. We also find pieces of liturgy in the Bible, such as "marana tha" in 1 Corinthians 16, which is also in the *Didache*.

Eucharistic prayers are found in the ancient liturgies of both the eastern and the western church. While there are similarities of pattern, Frank Senn, *Christian Liturgy*, p 65, points out that the prayers of the western church, following the prayer of Hippolytus, focused on "thanksgiving for redemption in Christ". The prayers of the eastern church followed more closely Jewish prayers of blessing and gave thanks "for the work of creation, ... God's work of salvation culminating in the Christ-event, and supplication for the Holy Spirit..."

The word used to describe the complete text of the eucharistic prayer with all its elements, is the "canon". (In the East, the "anaphora".) The canon of the western rite includes the preface (dialog + proper preface), the Sanctus, the prayer of thanksgiving proper – which includes the Words of Institution, the Great Amen, the Lord's Prayer, the Agnus Dei, and the fraction.

Martin Luther, of course, inherited the rite of the western church. In the *Formula Missae* he excised all the eucharistic prayers because of the abundance of sacrificial imagery, which in his mind had turned the sacrament from a gift of God into a work of the people. While there were some traditions in Lutheranism that sought to maintain the eucharistic prayer, the majority of American Lutherans did not experience it as part of their liturgy until the publication of the *Service Book and Hymnal* in 1958. [The Church of Sweden had a form of the eucharistic prayer and epiclesis (prayer for the Holy Spirit) which formed a complete unit and did not include, but preceded the words of institution (see Rubric 33 in the LBW communion rite).]

The *Lutheran Book of Worship*, and the materials published by the Inter Lutheran Commission on Worship, restored the eucharistic prayer as the principal text of the communion liturgy. There are many resources that provide these prayers, but one should use caution. Be sure and pray them out loud before using them to make sure they are a corporate prayer. Some may be well written, but are more stream of consciousness or a dialog than a public prayer of thanks and proclamation. In the next issue we will continue with further discussion of content and style.