

A Brief Explanation of the Holy Eucharist as currently celebrated at St Matthew's Holland Park .. [as at August 2025]



SOME PRELIMINARY POINTS

WHAT IS THE EUCHARIST?



Eucharist, or Holy Communion, is the sacrament commended by Christ for His continual remembrance [*'Do this in remembrance of me'*] and, as Anglicans, is our central act of worship.

'Eucharist' is derived from the Greek word for *'thanksgiving'* since this is our way of giving thanks to God for all his Mercy and Grace towards us - especially as we celebrate Holy Communion where we again *commune* [enter into relationship] with God and each

other.

THE CHURCH BUILDING ITSELF

The Church itself provides the setting for the Eucharist as well as all other services and parish ministries. Its architecture and

contents are all carefully crafted to be to us symbols of the Divine and our Anglican form of worship.

The form of the church is in the shape of a Cross, so as to be a significant visible symbol of the local Christian faith community being located here and as a place of sanctuary, pastoral care, spiritual guidance, refreshment and prayer for everybody in our community.

Within the church we find the *Sanctuary* [meaning a sacred or consecrated place] where our *Altars* [meaning the places of sacrifice] are located.

The Congregation are seated in the *Nave* [from the latin Navis meaning '*ship*']. The body of St Matthew's church, like many other churches, is made to represent an upturned boat whose keel line is the ridge-line of the church roof.



This is to symbolise that our church is a '*modern day Ark*' where all who come will be able to be metaphorically embraced by the local faith community and the wider church itself and can be guided and cared for as we all make our separate life journeys [but together as a faith community] and ultimately

transported safely to Heaven with our church being for us our '*Ship of Faith*'.

It also metaphorically presents the progress of our own *spiritual journey* from the church entrance [*our day to day world*] to the Sanctuary. [*Heaven*]. Most of us start our spiritual journey with baptism [represented by the font near the church entrance], then we deepen our faith week by week in the body of the church, our special times are celebrated at the '*Church Crossing*' [that area immediately in front of the first set of stairs and the low altar] where marriages, confirmations etc are conducted and weekly we receive Communion facing the most sacred area of our church - *the Sanctuary*. Ultimately, our coffins are also placed at this spot as we are farewelled from this life and continue our spiritual journey further into the closer presence of the Divine.

As we enter the church we are first confronted by the Church portal bearing the coat of arms of the Anglican Church and a



banner introducing us to the scriptural theme of that week. Thus, we enter into the sacred precinct from the outside world.

We then are met on the left by the Baptismal font, where we are made children of God and our Godparents make the promises of faith on our behalf. Thus, at the font we take our first step of faith.

Next to the font is our prayer space. Here our Candle Ministry is



situated surrounded by our Reflection Arbor. This space allows us to offer a quiet personal prayer before, after or during the Service whilst communion is being shared. *Votive Candles* are also available for your use. [Votive is derived from the Latin

meaning *'obligation'*. Thus if you promised to pray for something or someone you fulfil your vow by saying your prayer and lighting a candle.] Here is situated our 'Parish Years Mind' memory book. Weekly, during our intercessions, we uphold to God our parish saints of yesteryear who have passed and are resting in His closer presence. Votive candles are also often lit on the 'special day' of a loved one who has passed, upon Saint's days or other sacred days in the Liturgical Calendar.

These Candles, as well as representing the light of Christ, also represents the fire of the Holy Spirit in our lives, hearts and in



our faithful daily walk. They also remind us of the burnt animal sacrifices offered to God in Old Testament times. Nowadays, we offer a sacrifice of *prayer, praise and thanksgiving* - which may also be accompanied by the lighting of a candle. We often can

only take a moment to pray in church, but our candle will metaphorically continue our prayer for hours after we have departed.

Across from the Reflection Arbor is our Hospitality Corner where beverages and a welcoming small meeting place is placed featuring comfortable chairs and tables. We use these for pastoral meetings, Parish Council meetings and Spiritual Direction Conversations.



We then walk down the Nave where we worship weekly and deepen our faith during the whole of our lives.

Finally, we arrive at the Crossing Point of the cross shape of the church at the foot of the stairs in front of the Sanctuary. This is a special place where we come to the Sanctuary [our

metaphorical representation of Heaven]. This place is the closest place where laity [congregation non clergy members] usually can approach the Sanctuary.



This is the power position of the church where all special events [other than Baptism traditionally] take place including receiving the

eucharist, marriages, confirmations, funerals, traveller's blessings and other special blessings e.g. anointing of the ill. Thus, this is place where you can make your important promises to God in Confirmation and Marriage etc. Confirmation being the Sacrament where we ourselves take on the promises made to God on our behalf by our Godparents in Baptism.

The dividing line between the Nave and the Sanctuary is marked by the Communion Rails where the congregation receive Holy Communion.

Note that the sanctuary is uplifted by 2 flights of 3 steps. 3 being a reminder of the Trinity and first uplifts the Sanctuary [to separate it from the Nave] and the second flight uplifts the Sanctuary to the High Altar.

The dividing line of the Altar rail is flanked on one side by a Crucifix. The left side of the church where the Crucifix is located is called the '*Gospel side*' of the church since this is where our pulpit was located in former times and from where the Gospel

was proclaimed. Thus, *the priest's sermon from the pulpit would be overseen by the crucifix* as a reminder that the central point of our faith and every sermon, is Jesus's sacrifice on our behalf to remove our sins.

Immediately in front of the Crucifix is a carving representing St Matthew pointing towards the Cross on the High Altar. This was carved by Fr Terry Booth a Locum of the parish as a gift to us. It is a reminder that the parish was dedicated to St Matthew on the 21st September 1919 and that our mission is to follow His example and by our words, deeds and attitudes be constantly pointing others towards Jesus.



On the right side we see our Eagle *lectern* [from the latin meaning 'to read']. Here, traditionally, the Readings are proclaimed during the service. Since the Eucharist readings will usually include a reading from these Epistles the right side of the church is known as the '*Epistle Side*'. [Epistle being derived from the Greek for 'letter' - literally meaning 'send news' . Many of the

books of the New Testament are letters from one of the Apostles and are therefore known as Epistles.]

To have an Eagle shaped Lectern is a particularly Anglican tradition. The Eagle shape has many symbolic meanings in Scripture. [e.g. Isaiah 40:31 where those who wait upon the Lord will *'rise up on the wings of eagles'*.] Thus, we wait upon the Lord as we listen to His word to us in the scripture readings from the lectern.

The eagle shape of the lectern is said to have been derived from the belief that, according to tradition, the eagle was capable of staring directly into the sun and that Christians similarly were similarly able to gaze unflinchingly at the revelation of the Divine Word in Scripture because of the Divine Grace to do so offered by Jesus. [Jesus is also known as *'the Word'* since He represented all that the Father has to say to us.]

Further, the eagle, again according to tradition, was the bird that flew highest in the sky and was therefore closest to Heaven. In an Anglican context, it also symbolised the role of the Anglican Church in carrying the word of God to the four corners of the world accompanying the spread of the British Empire.

Another reference is that the eagle is also the symbol of St John the Apostle, the author of that Gospel which illumines the more straight forward narration of Jesus's life of the other Gospels. Accordingly, St John and his symbol the eagle, has come to represent the inspiration of all of the gospels [and Scripture generally]. How appropriate then that this symbol then is used to be the receptacle on which the Church Bible and Lectionary is kept and from which the readings are proclaimed.

Entering into the sanctuary we immediately note the 'Table' or 'Low' Altar which we currently use for our major Eucharist

services. At this Altar, the priest celebrates the Eucharist facing the people and thus the Altar becomes for us a Christian family table [similar to that of the Passover table on Maundy Thursday where Jesus instituted the Eucharist as a Sacrament.]

Looking upwards, we note the 'High Altar' where in times past the priest would celebrate the Eucharist with their back to the congregation. Thus, the priest's attention would be focussed entirely upon the Altar and the freestanding Cross behind it. In this setting, the priest represents and leads the people in offering all of our God directed Eucharistic worship.



The High Altar is also uplifted by a flight of 3 steps on 3 of its sides, thus effectively placing it upon a pedestal. This is to remind us of the many 'High Places' that figure in Scripture where people met God [e.g. Mt Sinai, Mount of the Transfiguration, Golgotha - the Mount of the Crucifixion.] Thus, the placement of the free standing Cross upon this pedestal immediately behind the Altar of Eucharistic sacrifice is apposite.

The large free-standing cross is empty thus signifying Jesus' triumph over death at his Resurrection. The Cross is now no

more a symbol of death, torture, punishment and shame but becomes a symbol of Jesus' mighty victory over death and our hope in Him.

Immediately to the right of the Altar is the brass *Altar Gong* which is used to highlight the key parts of the Eucharist [particularly the moment of Remembrance and Consecration of the Bread and Wine - see further below].

In front of the Altar Gong is the Credence Table [from the latin meaning '*trusted one in whom we can believe*'] upon which the Sacred Vessels and implements are placed in preparation for use during the Eucharist service.

In medieval times, as was usual upon formal occasions such as the Eucharist [and in all rich households], it was necessary to have any food items that were to be offered to guests first tested for poisons, spoiling or irregularities some point beforehand by a senior household member known as the '*credentiarius*' [or 'trusted one']. This ceremony and the table upon which it was performed was known as the '*credentia*'. Thus, all could have *confidence and trust* that the food thus offered was safe for consumption if it was served from the credence table after it had been tested. The name for this table stuck- even after this practice ceased.

Also present in the Sanctuary are the various chairs for the Sanctuary Party with the Celebrant afforded the largest Chair in front of the Lectern.

The Sanctuary also has within it 2 lamps.

The Sanctuary lamp is always lit and is suspended above the Church Crossing and symbolises the continuing presence of God in His sacred place - the Sanctuary . The *Shekhinah*, or the

Glory of God's presence, was seen in Old Testament times by fire or a Golden Cloud which surrounds a place where God dwells [e.g. see Ex. 40:34–38 concerning the Tabernacle and 1Kings 8:11 concerning the Temple.] But, the Shekhinah was also present at other special moments [e.g. leading the Hebrews through the Wilderness - Exodus 13:21; on Mt Sinai at the giving of the Law - Exodus 19 and in the New Testament upon Jesus' Transfiguration - Matt 17.1-9; Mark 9.2-9; and Luke 9.28-36]

The second lamp is the Aumbry Lamp [*Aumbry* being derived from the Latin meaning chest or cupboard for storage] The Aumbry is a small safe like recess in the wall next to the Vestry entrance on the left of the sanctuary [Vestry being the side rooms of the church where the sacred vessels and vestments are stored. Vestry is derived from the latin meaning 'wardrobe']

The Aumbry is generally covered by a curtain representing the Veil of the Temple that surrounded the Holy of Holies. The Aumbry holds some consecrated Sacrament, Holy Water and Anointing Oils. These are stored so as be available for pastoral use in the church or when parishioners who may be unwell or otherwise unable to come to church. The Aumbry lamp is lit whenever the Consecrated Sacrament is present in the Aumbry, thus representing the closer presence of God in that sacred storage place.

To the right of the Lectern is our Organ and our *Lady Chapel*.

This small Chapel is dedicated to Mary, the mother of Jesus - her life and example. We use this Chapel for our smaller services [such as our regular week day service and our meditation group sessions] and for vigils - particularly during Holy Week.



This Chapel's features include the original altar of St Matthew's, the beautiful stain glass window designed and installed by Canon Les Turner and 'The Magnificat' painting of Fr David Binns.

STYLE OF WORSHIP

The Anglican Communion is often called a 'Broad Church' as it incorporates a wide range of Worship styles and traditions.

These range from a '*High Church*' style where there is an increased focus upon a richer style of liturgy which incorporate sung parts of the service, traditional hymns and organ music, elaborate vestments [or sacred garments], numerous Candles upon or around the Altar,[the Candles symbolising Jesus as the light of the world and our offering of our prayer in this light back to God], the Priest may celebrate with his back to the congregation focussing upon the Altar, incense may be used [symbolising the rising of the faithful's prayers to Heaven] and there may be a focus upon the work and example of the Virgin

Mary. This style is also sometimes called an '*Anglo- Catholic style*' as it contains many elements that are shared with the Roman Catholic church.

Another Style is the '*Evangelical*' or '*Low Church*' style which deploy a simpler style of said liturgy and can incorporate more modern music and informal musical instruments, plainer vestments, fewer candles [if any], a collegiate celebration with the Priest facing the congregation, thus celebrating communion around the Lord's table, and a focus upon the role and importance of Scripture in the life of the faithful.

Many Anglican churches in our Diocese are more '*middle of the road*' and contain aspects of both these and other traditions and workshop styles [e.g. containing Charismatic, Celtic, Taize or other aspects].



St Matthew's has adopted a *middle of the road style* for its usual Sunday 9 am service consisting of a sung service with traditional hymns, organ and modest vestments. Our 9 am Messy Church services are informal and

feature guitars an

modern songs and hymns. We are however seeking to also introduce further informal styles of worship in order to make it our worship more familiar to those who may come to us from

our wider community and have had little exposure to traditional Anglican Liturgy. [E.G. Our Kiwi services are more of Low Church style, are partly in Maori and use the New Zealand Maori Eucharist Service.]

CHURCH SEASONS



As soon as you enter St Matthew's on a Sunday, you will notice that there is 1 predominate colour adorning the Sanctuary [or sacred enclosed area of the church containing the Altar] and perhaps also featuring in other places around the church. The Priest's vestments will also be of this colour.

These colours signify where that Sunday features in the *church calendar*.

The Church calendar commences with *Advent*, in order to prepare us for *Christmas* - the coming of Jesus into our world as a child. After Christmas comes *Epiphany* - the revelation of Jesus as the Saviour of the world to the Gentiles remembered by the coming of the Wise Men to worship Jesus.

Lent then follows to prepare us for *Holy Week and Easter* where we remember the passion [the torture and death of Jesus on the Cross for our sins] and His triumphal Resurrection.

For approx. 40 days thereafter we focus upon the early church's response to this miraculous event culminating in *Ascension Day* when we remember Jesus' return to Heaven. Then follows *Pentecost* [meaning 50 days after Easter] or *Whitsunday* where we remember the first coming of the Holy Spirit in power upon the Apostles. Thereafter, we celebrate *Trinity Sunday* and are reminded of the Triune nature of God. After this comes the 25 Sundays of growth - sometimes called '*Ordinary Sundays*' where different themes of scripture and faith are explored every week.

The Church's colours are :

WHITE: for joyful festivals such as Christmas and Easter;

RED: for Pentecost [symbolising fire] and Martyr's feast days [symbolising blood];

PURPLE: for Lent and Advent [symbolising penitence and preparation];

GREEN: for ordinary and non festival Sundays [symbolising growth in faith and learning];

BLACK: for funerals and solemn remembrance services [e.g. ANZAC day]; and

PINK: for *Mothering Sunday* [the Sunday half way through Lent where we honour our Mothers, Mother Church and the Virgin Mary] and '*Lady Day*' the 25th March [the celebration of the *Annunciation of the Virgin Mary* where Archangel Gabriel appeared to Mary and she became miraculously pregnant through Grace and the Holy Spirit.]

HYMNS

We sing Hymns, Sacred and Spiritual songs because the Bible instructs us to do so in several places e.g. Ephesians 5:19 '*Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord.*' ['Hymn' being Greek for a song of praise to the Divine.]



The Hymn is selected to illumine the Church's theme for the day but it also must supplement the relevant stage of its use in the liturgy.

The Entrance or Processional Hymn is intended to lift us up away from our day to day pursuits, to prepare us for worship and to accompany the Sanctuary party as they move from the body of the church into the Sanctuary.

The Gradual Hymn is designed to welcome and illumine the gospel reading of the day. [From the Latin 'Gradus' meaning 'step'. In some churches there is a Gospel procession into the body of the church - hence the hymn occurs during this procession. It also refers to a step or ledge upon which cantors sang this hymn in ancient times.]

The Offertory Hymn intends to focus us upon the offering of ourselves to Jesus in worship [of our time, talents and treasures] and this is the time where our weekly donations are collected.

The Post Communion Hymn is a more reflective hymn and seeks to complement and illumine our personal experience of Jesus's presence in the Bread and Wine.

The Recessional Hymn accompanies the procession by the Sanctuary party to the back of the church and is generally missional in nature reminding us of our calling to fulfil Jesus command to *'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations ... [Matthew 28:19 and 20]*

VESTMENTS

The Sanctuary party, namely the Priest and acolytes (members of the church who assist the priests during services including Liturgical Assistants [LA's] and servers) wear distinctive sacred garments during the service. This is to symbolise that they are dedicated in service to God for the duration of the Eucharist. They are derived from first century Roman and Byzantine garments of ordinary wear.

At St Matthews, Revd Morris celebrates in a white Alb [signifying the righteousness and Holiness of Jesus attributed to us by His Grace] with a Stole [or long scarf] of seasonal colour [signifying the '*yoke of Christ*'. This means that a Priest is to be a servant leader like Jesus and to seek to follow and promote Jesus' ways and teachings. These recommended teachings were called a '*Rabbi's Yoke*' in biblical times - see Matthew 11: 28 -30 '*Come to me all who labour .. Take my Yoke upon you .. and find rest for your souls*']



There are many other more ornate Vestments which may be used on special occasions.

IMPORTANCE OF PRIVATE PRAYER AND PREPARATION

St Paul exhorts us to not take communion in an *unworthy manner* but rather to *prepare and examine ourselves before we do so* [I Corinthians 11:27- 32] We are therefore encouraged to enjoy private prayer before, during and after the Eucharist's public prayers.

Thus an important first step is for us to come to the Eucharist *prepared to worship*. Perhaps invest some time before the

service in prayer in confession [so as to be 'prayed up to date' as it were] and seeking God's Grace to worship faithfully to His Glory? Perhaps take a moment to walk the Labyrinth before the service in prayerful meditation seeking to let go of our day to day concerns in order to be free and focussed upon worshipping Him in Spirit and Truth? [John 4:24].

There are many quiet times during the service for private prayers. e.g. What *one thing* could you praise God for, confess, thank God for and pray for someone as you are moving up the aisle to receive Communion?

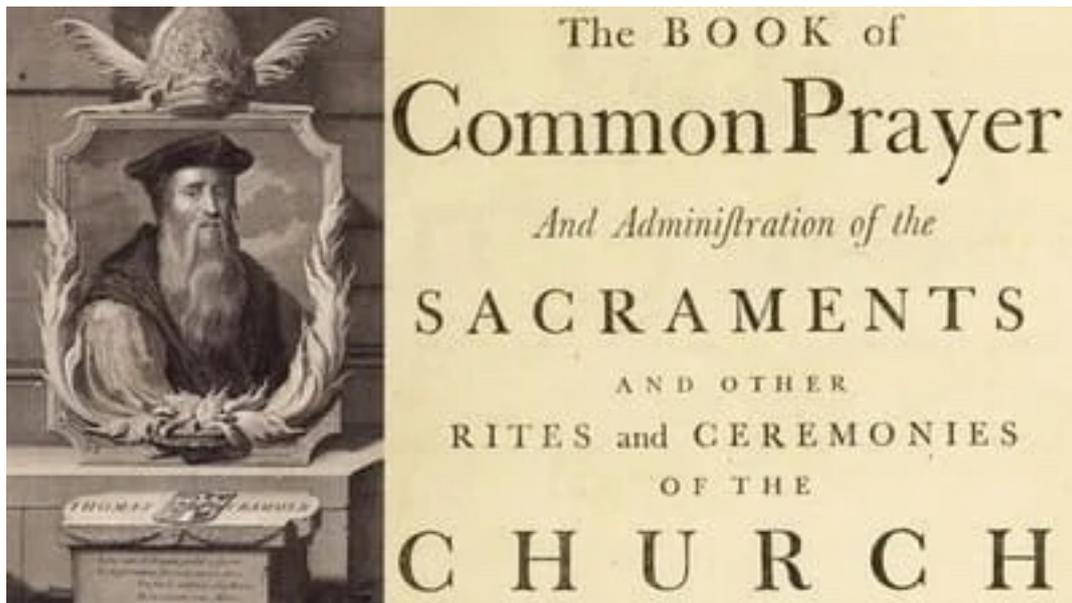
Perhaps a prayer of thanks after the service concludes drawing together what you may have received from God during the Eucharist? Perhaps a labyrinth walk asking God what action points you may need to '*take on board*' this week?

Your private prayer should illumine and bring to life our public prayers in the Eucharist.

THE EVOLUTION OF ANGLICAN EUCHARIST

The basis of the liturgy comes from Scripture itself - the earliest probably being 1 Corinthians 11: 23- 26. The words of consecration of the Bread and Wine on Maundy Thursday features in all of the Gospels.

The Church of England's *Book of Common Prayer's [BCP] Eucharist Service* was initially derived principally from the Roman Catholic Latin Mass with significant Protestant adjustments. The BCP Prayer book was first authorised for use on the 21st January 1549. The key architect of the project was Thomas Crammer, the first Protestant Bishop of Canterbury.



The Prayer Book was significantly revised in 1552 [under King Edward VI with a more Protestant focus], after its abandonment under the Catholic Queen Mary, in 1559 Queen Elizabeth I oversaw a further revision with a more ‘middle way’ focus and introduced the ‘Real Presence’ context to the Eucharist]. A further revision was authorised in 1662 after the restoration of King Charles I [who reinstated the Prayer Book after its proscription under Cromwell’s Puritans.]

A 1926 / 27 BCP revision was ultimately not accepted by the English Parliament.

The Anglican Church in Australia published an *Australian Prayer Book* in 1978 for use in conjunction with the BCP. In 1994, *A Prayer Book for Australia* was also authorised for use and remains the current prayer book in use at St Matthew’s. Its’ amendments to the 1978 prayer book were based upon feedback received from Clergy and Laity and adopted gender neutral language.

THE EUCHARIST EXPLAINED

The Celebration of Eucharist has two main parts, Sharing the Word of God and the Holy Communion.

I. Sharing the Word of God

Entrance Rite and Gathering together of God's people.

The priest and acolytes enter behind the Cross of Christ into the Church sanctuary as the congregation stands and sings a hymn. The procession reminds us that the People of God, through time and history are



moving toward God's Kingdom — following the Cross of Christ, and bringing the Light of the Gospel into all the world.

Greeting

The Priest then greets and welcomes the congregation and may say a short prayer of acknowledgement if it is a special Sunday [e.g. ANZAC Sunday]

The Priest may also offer the Diocesan Acknowledgement of Country as a part of our Church's commitment to reconciliation.

The Priest then uses the ancient prayer '*The Lord be with you*' .. to which the people respond '*And also with you*' .. this is the heartfelt blessing of all believers that the Lord Jesus will be with us, everyone, in all we think, say and do.

Then the LA offers the sentence of the day - a sentence from the readings that seeks to summarise their message and outline this week's scriptural theme for our service.

PRAYER OF PREPARATION

In order to ensure that we are all ready to fully participate in the service we then say together the prayer of preparation, led by the LA, asking God to grant us His Grace to cleanse our thoughts and properly praise Him in today's worship service.

THE 2 GREAT COMMANDMENTS

The LA then recites the 2 Great commandments i.e Jesus's summary [See Matthew 22:36-40] of the Mosaic Covenant of the Law [See Exodus 20:1- 17]. This is to remind us of God's Laws and standards of conduct towards Him and each other. Thus reminded, we move to confess where we have fallen short of His standards.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

This is where we move to tell God of our sins and ask His forgiveness using the words of general confession. The general corporate confession should be preceded by our own detailed private confession and therefore seeks to offer up to God a common prayer seeking forgiveness. Thereafter, the Priest expresses this forgiveness using the words of the Absolution.

The Priest can provide the Absolution in confidence because of the Mercy and Grace of God [see 1 John 1:9 .. *'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness'.]*



THE KYRIES - *'Lord have mercy'...*

We then say the Kyries [derived from the opening words of the ancient Greek Orthodox invocation post confession - *Kyrie Eleison*] meaning literally *'Lord, soothe me, comfort me, take away my pain and show me your steadfast love'*

This prayer provides further assurance that our sins are in fact forgiven.

By the way, the Greek word for *Anointing Oil* shares the same derivation as *Eleison*. Anointing Oil was used in the ancient world for blessing, healing and celebratory purposes. Thus we are seeking all of these blessings in restoration of relationship with God after that which blocks this relationship [our sins] are absolved.

We address this prayer towards all 3 members of the Trinity in turn. Thus, the last 'Lord' being addressed is the Holy Spirit.

HYMN OF PRAISE AND TRISAGION

Thus Divinely pardoned, comforted and restored, we in response then praise God using the words of the *Gloria in Excelsis* [this ancient hymn is based upon the Angel's praise upon the Incarnation of Jesus in "*Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to people of good will*" (Luke 2:15). Gazing on Christ, we rapturously join in with millions who have prayed and continue to praise God and we recite all that He has done for us.

This celebratory hymn of Praise is considered inappropriate during the more solemn seasons of Advent and Lent.

Accordingly, the Trisagion ['Holy God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal have mercy on us'] is to be preferred.

The Trisagion is an 'entrance prayer' used to welcome in the next stage of liturgy - *Trisagion* is derived from the Greek meaning 'thrice holy' and was often used, along with Psalm 80, to accompany the entrance procession. During Lent and Advent, this ancient prayer thus prepares the way for the metaphorical 'entrance' of the Collect and the Readings.

COLLECT OF THE DAY

The Celebrant (the priest who will consecrate the bread and wine at the Eucharist) now leads us in a special prayer. This short prayer is called a *Collect* because it serves to help all us *collect our thoughts* to prepare us for the lessons and Gospel. It is derived from the central core of ancient prayers and is different each Sunday. The Collect is derived from the readings of the day and the weekly theme is synchronised with the Church's season.

We now move into that part of the service known as '*The Ministry of the Word*' [The Bible being known as the '*Word of God*' to us. Jesus being also known as '*the Word*' meaning that He is the literal embodiment of all that God has to say to us and is the ultimate object and fulfilment of Scripture].

The Readings

Two readings from the Bible are read, usually one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament. A lay person (a member of the church who is not ordained clergy) usually reads the lessons.

Between the lessons and the Gospel reading, a psalm will be read with an invitation for the congregation to join in parts of the reading. The Book of Psalms in the Bible is a collection of Jewish Hymns largely written by King David and were intended to be sung by both a song leader [Cantor] as well as the congregation present.

The Readings and the Gospel are set by the Anglican Church's use of a shared Lectionary which seeks to ensure that on a day any day basis the readings used cover the vast majority of Scripture and cycle through each of the 3 Synoptic Gospels in

depth each year. Year A focusses upon the Gospel of Matthew, Year B upon the Gospel of Mark and Year C the Gospel of Luke. The Gospel of John is also used but interspersed though each of the 3 years.



The first 3 Gospels are called '*Synoptic*' [meaning *similar* in that they focus upon the narrative and sayings of Jesus in a similar way and often in a similar order]. The Gospel of John however is highly symbolic and is known as the '*Spiritual Well Gospel*' from which we can drink regularly and which further illumines the Jesus Narratives found in the Synoptic Gospels.

The Holy Gospel

Between the lessons and the reading from the Holy Gospel we sing a 'Gradual Hymn'. This Hymn can be used to accompany the carrying of the Gospel Book into the centre part of the Church so as to be read in the very midst of God's people.

The Latin 'Gradus' was the name of the step upon which the Cantors stood at this point of the ancient mass service as the Gospel Book was processed. It also refers to the 'steps' being taken in the Gospel procession.

The Gospel Procession teaches us that it is our responsibility to carry the Good News of Jesus Christ into all the world.

The Gospel is read by a member of the clergy. Wherever we are in the church, we turn to face the Gospel book and reader. This is to acknowledge the supreme importance of the Gospels to the faithful and to ensure that we are totally focused upon its message in the service.

Sermon and the Nicene Creed

A sermon follows the Gospel. Its purpose is to explain some of the teachings in the Gospel and the other readings and to place them with in our own day to day context and application.

After the sermon we stand and recite one of the Church's Creeds - usually the *Nicene Creed*.

A Creed [from the Latin meaning '*I believe ...*'] is a formula of words agreed upon by the Ancient Church in Council as representing correct Christian belief. There are several creeds used by Anglicans as representing their faith. In addition to the Nicene Creed, the Apostle's Creed and the Athanasian Creed are also accepted.

The Nicene Creed derives from the deliberations of the First Council of Nicaea in 325 AD, which was a meeting of Church Bishops in the city of Nicaea [now in modern Turkey] which sought to proclaim a uniformly accepted affirmation of faith for

the whole Church. The Nicene Creed states the Church's teachings concerning God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the Creed remains one of the core pillars of our faith.

We recite a Creed at this time in the service, so as to be reminded of our faith as illumined by the preceding Sermon.

The Prayers of the People

The intercessions are how we ask in prayer for help and also give thanks to God. These prayers rightly fall in the Ministry of the Word part of the service as they seek to *reflect back to God our learnings from the weekly readings* and bring together the prayers of all present.

These prayers also seek to bring together the prayers of all present and are designed to resonate with current happenings impacting upon the congregation. Be these events within the parish where we uphold our loved ones who are ill or have passed [including those recorded upon our yearly remembrance list] or other parish initiatives, our wider church [using the Anglican Communion and our own Diocese's suggested prayer points] our community, nation and the world.

It is important to recognise that these prayers, and indeed all prayers, are us joining in with Jesus's continual prayers to the Father and we are also joining with those prayers being constantly offered of all the faithful throughout the world.

Our prayers are brought to a conclusion using the prayer given us by Jesus Himself - the Lord's Prayer. This is used to draw together all our prayers using His words.

At St Matthew's, we follow the tradition established in St George's Anglican Cathedral in Jerusalem, where those of

many languages meet and share Communion. We are all encouraged to pray Jesus' prayer of unification using our own '*heart language*', namely, the language in which we can most freely worship. This is usually our first language.

In this way, we symbolically *undo the Babel Curse* and celebrate our communal unity in Christ the midst of each of the congregation's own unique diversity, [See Genesis 11:1–9]

The Preparation

Sometimes we also use either some preparatory scripture readings or the famous prayer of preparation for Communion by Thomas Cranmer.

This prayer and the preparatory readings are designed to prepare us to receive Communion, provide reassurance of Divine acceptance as we do this. However, they also remind us of the serious nature of taking communion and that we have an obligation to take communion faithfully, reverently and in a prepared manner.

The Peace

A part of our preparation for Communion is to follow Jesus' exhortation to be reconciled with others prior to making an offering to God [see Matthew 5:23 and 24 ... "*So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.*"]

So accordingly, we now greet one another joyfully in the spirit of friendship, reconciliation and in the love of God, exchanging Jesus's Peace with one another.

We are now ready to move in to the second phase of the service .. The Communion.

II. The Holy Communion

The Offertory

The bread and wine (as gifts of the people) are brought to the altar in preparation for the Communion. We sing an Offertory hymn as the collection plates are passed and physical donations collected for St Matthew's designated Charity - Anglicare's Insync .

The bread, wine and money offered at the Altar represent our lives, our work, our recreation, our families and our community. In other words, we offer to God all that we have, all that we are and all that we do. This is true Stewardship of our time, talents and treasure.

The Priest then intones the famous Jewish *Berakah* prayer that features in the Jewish Passover Seder Meal.

[Berakah prayers being those Jewish prayers of continual thanks and blessing to God that begin with '*Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe ...*' and then identify the subject of the prayer. There are over 2,500 common Berakah prayers which represent almost every aspect of Jewish Life from birth to death and from day to day].

This Berakah prayer we use in the Eucharist is derived from the prayer used at the Passover Seder to accompany the toasts of thanks and Blessing to God for his Grace and Mercy towards His people when he delivered them from Egypt. It recalls the saving of the Jews from the Angel of Death [the final plague of Egypt] if they would mark their door posts with the blood of a sacrificed lamb. [see Exodus Chapter 12ff] This prayer therefore reminds us that Jesus was our sacrificial lamb upon the Cross thus removing our sins and taking us into a New *Covenant* [fresh relationship] with God if we but believe in Him.

Before the service, the Liturgical Assistant would have placed all the sacred Communion vessels on the Altar or close at hand in the Sanctuary on the Credence Table. Now, the Priest 'sets the table' of the Altar by laying first a corporal (a white linen cloth) on which are placed a chalice (a cup for the wine) and a paten (a plate for the bread). Next, wine is poured into the chalice and a little water is added. This reminds us of the blood and the water that appeared when Jesus' side was pierced by a spear at the crucifixion. Tradition says that the wine and water together represent both the humanity and the divinity of Jesus, that he is both Man and God and that we are called to share with him in his risen life.

Before the Eucharist begins, the Liturgical Assistant or server pours a little water over the priest's fingers. This reminds us that we should all come to God's altar with clean hands and pure hearts.

The Holy Table or Altar having been prepared, the Eucharist continues with the Great Thanksgiving prayer.

The Great Thanksgiving or the Prayer of Consecration

The prayer commences with "*Lift up your heart*" - the "*Sursum Corda.*" [an ancient Latin prayer] This is followed by the "*Sanctus*",[also an ancient Latin prayer commencing with "*Holy, Holy, Holy,*"] followed by the "*Benedictus*": "*Blessed is he who comes in the Name of the Lord...*" [see Matthew 21:9]. The blessed one is indeed Jesus. This prayer reminds us that our Lord does indeed come to us in the Holy Communion and that he is made known to us in "*the breaking of the bread.*" [e.g. as the Disciple's eyes were open to recognise Jesus upon their Emmaus walk - see Luke 24].

The thanksgiving prayer then continues and reminds us of God's love for us, that we turned away from him, that he sent his son Jesus Christ to share our human nature and to live and die as one of us, so that we might be brought back to God.

We are also told of Christ's death on the cross, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world, and we are reminded of the Last Supper and the words Jesus spoke over the bread and the wine.

The Gong sounds at the 2 moments that we celebrate the key parts of the consecration aspects of the Eucharist. We share the Eucharist because Jesus asked us to do so ... '*in remembrance of me*' and the Gong is sounded is the point of the consecration of each of the Bread and Wine.

We then recite the summary of our faith - the memorial acclamation - *Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again!* This sometimes referred to as '*the mystery of faith*'. This mystery is none other than the revelation of the New Covenant

of our relationship with God the Father made possible by Jesus's death upon the cross, His resurrection and the promise of Jesus' second coming in triumph at the end of the age.

Finally, we ask for the gift of God's Holy Spirit and that we might faithfully receive the precious gift of Christ's Body and Blood in the form of Bread and Wine.

The Thanksgiving prayer concludes with 2 very important prayers.

The first is the *Doxology* [from the Greek - 'to praise God'] an ancient prayer of praise *'through Jesus Christ our Lord, with whom, and in whom, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit we worship you, Father, in songs of never ending praise'...*

The last is the *'Great Amen'*. *'Blessing and honour and Glory and Power are Yours for ever and ever Amen.'*

This prayer is derived from the praise of God in heaven of the angels and the redeemed recorded in Revelation 5:13. The purpose of this prayer is to give the congregation an opportunity to affirm the full text of the thanksgiving prayer offered by the Priest using an ancient hymn of affirmation and praise.

Note, *'Amen'* in Hebrew means solemn concurrence or agreement. Literally, it can best be translated as *"Truly--power to all these statements— may they be the source from which all my actions grow. These are sealed by me in all my trust and faith."*

The Breaking of The Bread



In the early Church, it was necessary to break the loaves or cakes of bread so that they could be distributed for Communion. For many this breaking of bread has a special meaning: it has become a reminder of the breaking of our Lord's body on the Cross. To symbolise this the celebrants may also break the bread saying "*Alleluia, Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.*" to which the people respond: "*Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.*"

The breaking of the bread also symbolises that the community of faith in all its diversity is also brought together and made one - just as grain is brought together and made one loaf. In our community, this unity is celebrated as we symbolically share from the same loaf .. all together as the body of Christ.

Immediately after this comes the anthem commencing '*Jesus, Lamb of God have mercy upon us ...*' Known as the '*Agnus Dei*' [Latin for 'Lamb of God'] It is an anthem of praise and acclamation acknowledging that Jesus is the sacrificial Lamb of God of the New Covenant who has Mercy upon us, bears our sins, redeems the world and grants us His Peace. [See 1

Corinthians 5:7 '*Christ our paschal Lamb has been sacrificed*' and 1 Peter 1:18 and 19 "*You were ransomed . . . not with perishable things like silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ as of a spotless unblemished lamb.*"]

This New Covenant fulfils and supersedes the Old Covenant of the Law which necessitated the sacrifice of lambs for removal of sins in the Tabernacle or Temple. It also reminds us of the sacrifice of the lamb to provide the blood for the doorpost and the cooked meat for the Seder Meal at the time of the passover. Thus, Jesus becomes for us truly our *Paschal* [or Passover] lamb.

The Communion of the People

The gifts we gave at the offertory, the bread and the wine, are now returned to us in Holy Communion. But because God has accepted them and used them for his purpose, they are changed. They are now for us the Body and Blood of Christ, His Power, Love and His strength.

Anglicans believe in the *Real Presence* of Christ in Holy Communion. All communicant Christians of any Christian denomination are welcome to share with us in this sacred meal.

Our custom is to kneel or stand at the altar rail and receive bread in the hand and wine from a common cup. If you wish to receive the bread, please extend your hands and receive the bread from the Priest. If you wish to receive the wine, please receive the wine from the common cup from the Liturgical assistant. If you wish to not receive communion [or the Cup] simply cross your arms over your chest.

Our Diocese has advised communicants against *instincting* [or dipping] the bread into the wine to avoid inadvertent contamination of the wine.

If you wish to receive a blessing from the priest, please come forward and again cross your arms over your chest.

Children are encouraged to come forward and receive a blessing from the Priest. When the parents feel that the time is right [say around 7 or 8] Children can receive instruction and be admitted into receive Holy Communion. Again, when the time is right [say at 12 or 13+] children can be Confirmed and take on themselves the promises made for them in their Baptism by their Godparents. If they haven't previously been admitted into communion, they may then take communion from this point.

Post-communion Prayer and Dismissal

Post communion, we say a prayer of thanks as we go out in to the world to do the work that God has called us to do.

We then together affirm we are ready to go into the world as Divinely bidden using the words of Romans 12:1 offering ourselves as *a living sacrifice* - dying to self and seeking to live Jesus' risen life.

We then share our parish notices to be kept up to date with parish happenings and events.

Following this, we are sent on our way with God's blessing for today and always by the Priest.

Our recessional hymn accompanies the Priest and acolytes processing out of the Sanctuary and into the rear of the Church.



This recessional procession symbolises that having now been in sacred communion and being thereby refreshed and renewed, we now return to the world to minister in His name.

The LA then brings the service to a close with the invitation to *'Go in peace to love and serve the Lord'*

We are to no longer live according to our own agendas, but rather to be peacemakers with all whom we encounter and serving God as He directs.

The congregation then responds “*Thanks be to God*” thus signifying not only agreement to the LA’s invitation but also grateful thanks for the privilege of worshiping God in the service.

There is a moment of silence for private prayer and then music swells accompanying our moving from the church into our hall for fellowship.

Acknowledgments : The Holy Eucharist Explained - The Anglican Diocese of Montreal [<https://www.montreal.anglican.ca/holy-eucharist-explained#:~:text=Eucharist, or Holy Communion, is,God and the Holy Communion.>], The LA Handbook - The SEQ Anglican Diocese, In His Presence by Denise Taylor Published by Religious Education Press Oxford 1967.

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