The Eucharist: Its Story
National Bulletin on Liturgy
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Editorial commentary in the bulletin is the responsibility of the editor.

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It has been said about Christians in the fourth century that if anyone was absent on a Sunday when the community celebrated the eucharist, the absentee was confronted and reminded that because he or she was not there, a member of the body of Christ was missing. This sense of urgency about gathering on Sunday to celebrate the eucharist underlines that in the eucharist the Church becomes visible, that in the eucharist the Church expresses what it is.

The significance of the celebration of the eucharist in the life of the Church has not changed, if perhaps the sense of significance that seemed to be there in the fourth century is no longer there. The reform of the liturgy by the Second Vatican Council made the liturgy more accessible, and the hope was that this would bring about a renewal in the Church.

However, the eucharist is still not well understood as an action by the people of God gathered to give thanks and praise. Many still see the central action of the eucharist, the eucharistic prayer, as the prayer of the priest. There is much room for catechesis and preaching to help assemblies enter into the eucharistic celebration and experience transformation into the body of Christ.

To help their understanding, this bulletin offers the story of the eucharist, particularly its history, how it has been understood and misunderstood in the past, and how it has developed to what it is now. This story has been published in the National Bulletin on Liturgy before. Bulletin 54 looked at the origins and development of our current prayers, describing each part of the eucharistic celebration, and showing the various stages it has gone through from its origin to the present.

In the material in that bulletin one could see that great freedom for local development surrounded the eucharist for almost 1600 years. Although trends toward centralization and uniformity occurred every few hundred years, it was only in the past four centuries that there has been for the Roman Rite a universal ritual with printed books providing identical texts for all. An understanding of these developments will help to move to further adaptations with the perspective of 2000 years of experience.

Bulletin 54 is now out of print, but because of the importance of the topic, most of the material has been incorporated into this issue. It begins with a historical overview first, in the hope that it will help people to see that there is a core that is essential to the eucharist and that has been there from the beginning, but that there is also much surrounding this core which has changed throughout the centuries.
The final words of the eucharistic prayer, the doxology, proclaim once more the whole movement of prayer to the Father, through, with, and in Jesus, a movement possible because of the Holy Spirit.
The Centrality of the Eucharist

The eucharist is the central act of worship for the Christian and for the Church, the assembly of Christians. It is a celebration which lies at the centre of the Church’s life, giving to God an offering of praise and thanksgiving and at the same time receiving the life-giving blessings that make possible the continuing mission of Christ in the world. The history of the eucharist is essentially the history of the Church. As it is stated in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, “the liturgy, ‘making the work of our redemption a present actuality,’ most of all in the divine sacrifice of the eucharist, is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church” (no. 2).

God’s work of reconciliation, accomplished in the death and resurrection of Christ, is fulfilled in the assembly through the celebration of the eucharist. It is the eucharist that again and again invites individuals into community and then transforms this assembly, drawing it into the paschal mystery of Christ and into the unity and peace of the kingdom of God. The eucharist is the sacred meal that celebrates the memorial of Jesus, the sacrificial meal that recalls and makes present the saving sacrifice of Jesus, the passover meal in which the Church “passes over” with Jesus through death to life, and the sacred banquet which is the foretaste of the paschal feast of heaven. Of the eucharist it can be said that it is a celebration of the highest order, the transforming work of the Holy Spirit, the fulfillment of the world in the cosmic Christ, the experience of communion of life in the triune God, a sacrament of salvation, and an event of fullest joy.

When Jesus said, “Do this in memory of me,” he appeared to leave only the barest outline (according to New Testament accounts) of what the early Christians might do to memorialize the Last Supper. The nascent Church found in its Jewish roots the source of how it would continue this work. The blessing over food, particularly over the bread and wine at family meals and at the passover, became the eucharistia (thanksgiving) of the new order. The proclamation of the works of God and the prayers in the synagogue meetings provided the source for the Christians’ telling their story.

Names
Various names have been given from earliest times to the Church’s eucharistic celebration. None of them, however, described the essence of this eucharistic celebration; these names focused rather on certain aspects, on some characteristic that made this rite significant. Ultimately, the mystery celebrated is too great to be exhausted by any one name or idea.

— Breaking of bread: This term was used to identify the whole eucharistic rite in Acts 2.42, 46; 20.7, 11. The gesture of the breaking of bread was the sign of recognition for the two disciples in Emmaus that the person who had joined
them was Jesus (Lk 24.28-35). The gesture was not just a practical one; it had a symbolic interpretation already in Paul's thinking and appeared to refer to more than simply that gesture: breaking the bread meant sharing in the body of Christ (1 Cor 10.16). The term is also used in the early second-century document, Didache (9.4). The gesture is one of the four actions, outlined by Gregory Dix,¹ that constitute the eucharistic rite.

- **Eucharist:** Derived from the Greek word *eucharistia*, meaning "thanksgiving," the word has been used since the beginning of the second century. In some writing of the time the word referred to the meal ritual as a whole, such as writing by Ignatius of Antioch; about a century later the word referred to the prayer of thanksgiving, that is, to a specific part of the celebration. Other writers, such as Justin, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine, used the word to refer to the consecrated elements. The term, used in this latter sense, has remained in use, and in the twentieth century it has again come to mean the whole eucharistic liturgy (see the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, no. 10).

- **Mass:** This word, used in the Western Church since at least the fifth century, is derived from the Latin *missa*, found in the dismissal of the Roman rite: *Ite missa est*. Giving the name to the whole of the eucharistic liturgy is a reminder that the eucharist has a dimension of mission and that it strengthens the Christian for this mission.

- **The Lord's Supper:** This phrase was used by Paul (1 Cor 11.20) and other early Christian writers; it highlights the meal aspect of the eucharistic liturgy and is associated with its eschatological dimension; it is the risen Christ who is present, and only those who do not put their own selfish interests first should share in this meal.

- **Liturgy:** In some communities in the early Church the word referred to both the ministry of those invested by the Church to provide this service for the believers and to divine worship itself. In the Eastern Church the word has, since the fourth century, referred to the eucharistic celebration specifically. The word fell out of use in the Western Church but returned during the eighteenth century, referring only to the Church's public worship in general. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy does not define liturgy but gives a number of descriptions (see nos. 2, 7, 10).

- **Other terms:** A number of other terms have been used to reflect various theological emphases: communion (Paul, in 1 Cor 10.16-17, makes the connection between the sacramental body and the ecclesial body); oblation (used in some parts of the Church until the sixth century), from the Latin *oblatio*, focusing on the material gifts of bread and wine which were to be offered later in connection with the anamnesis; sacrament of the altar, used in the Middle Ages.

Development of the Eucharistic Liturgy

Because of the significance of the eucharist as the centre of Christian life, each generation of Christians has enriched and embellished it with signs of reverence and respect of that time. The beginning of the eucharist is the command of Jesus himself, but the form this human encounter with God has taken was given by people of many languages and civilizations who brought their own piety and culture, and perhaps also their defects, to the celebration. Different visible forms were developed around a fundamental structure by people of different places and different times.

A brief tour through the centuries will emphasize the fact that Christians throughout the ages understood that fidelity did not mean copying exactly the models they inherited but to dig deeper into the mystery and to express that meaning in ways enriched by what their own age and culture had to offer. This overview will also bring home the point that no one form of a liturgical rite should ever become the ultimate form. Because the history of the Church and the history of the eucharist are inseparable, the Church, which changes to find its place in a changing world, will also find its highest expression in the liturgy changing in order to be authentic.

1. The Domestic Church (33—313)

Liturgical books as they are now used did not exist.

— New Testament: The history of the eucharistic liturgy begins with the command given by Jesus at the Last Supper: “Do this in memory of me” (1 Cor 11.24, Lk 22.19). These accounts, written years after the event, did not give a detailed description of what Jesus said and did but were intended to deepen Christians’ understanding of what they had already been doing. However, these accounts, together with the accounts of Matthew and Mark (which differ slightly from those of Paul and Luke), do provide a basic structure that can be summed up in four actions: Jesus takes the bread and the cup of wine, he blesses or gives thanks, he breaks the bread, and he gives the bread and the wine. This has become the pattern for the eucharistic prayer in the Mass: the preparation of gifts, the eucharistic prayer (including the institution narrative), the breaking of bread, and the communion. This shape was firmly established by the middle of the second century and has continued to be at the core of the various evolutions of the overall shape through the ages.

Other types of passages in the gospels have contributed to the Church’s understanding of the eucharist: Jesus’ meals with outcasts, the accounts of the multiplication of loaves (including Jn 6), and Jesus’ meals with his apostles after he rose from the dead. Other passages in the New Testament make reference to the Lord’s Day (1 Cor 16. 2, Rev 1.10).

— The Didache: This brief document, a “church order” written sometime
Development of the Eucharistic Liturgy

between 70 and 150 and apparently based on much older texts, describes what is done at Mass in simple terms: Christians assemble on the Lord’s Day, and they break bread and offer thanks. The word eucharist is used in the technical sense, and a prayer of thanksgiving connected to food and drink is given; this food and drink is reserved for those who are baptized. (There is no institution narrative in this prayer of thanksgiving, which does not necessarily mean it was not used, according to scholars.)

— St. Justin: Writing in Rome about the year 150, Justin gives a description of what the Christians did on the day called Sunday. After a reader proclaimed texts from the memoirs of the apostles and from the prophets, the president exhorted everyone to put into practice the teachings of the Lord. Those assembled then stood for prayer. Then bread, wine and water were brought forward; the president offered prayers and thanksgiving (the eucharistic prayer) according to his ability, and the people gave assent by saying “Amen.” The deacons gave communion to those present and brought it to those who were absent. Offerings were collected from those who had the means and given to the president, who looked after those in need.

— The Apostolic Tradition: This “church order,” which goes back to the year 225 and is attributed to Hippolytus, includes the first eucharistic prayer (also called an anaphora) with most of the elements that are found in it today; not included are the Sanctus and the intercessions. It begins with a dialogue exactly like that still used today, inviting those present to give thanks, to “make eucharist.” The text was a model only, since the oral tradition was still the practice. The whole text is one long sentence, making the whole of it a prayer of “eucharist.” Communion is given under both forms.

Other aspects of this period, sometimes described as the “creative beginnings” of the history of the eucharistic liturgy, are:

• The eucharist was celebrated in Christian homes and later in what was designated as “house churches.”
• The bishop was the normal presider (“president”) in the community.
• At first the service of the word, based on the Jewish synagogue service, was held on Saturday morning and only later attached to the eucharistic meal itself.
• The breaking of bread was at first embedded in a meal, then attached to a meal, and finally separated from a meal, when it moved from Saturday or Sunday evening to Sunday morning.
• The language used at first was Greek, but as the language spoken by the people gradually shifted to Latin, the language used in worship also shifted to Latin.
• The only feast celebrated by the Christians was Sunday, and around the turn of the first century, the annual pascha.
• Receiving the eucharistic bread in the hand was the normal practice; Tertullian wrote about people coming up to the president at the altar and holding out their hands, and Clement of Alexandria spoke against those who picked it up by themselves.
• Weekday sharing in the eucharist was made possible by the Christians’ taking home with them some
eucharistic bread (and in Hippolytus' time even some eucharistic wine) which they received before eating any other food. It was to be treated with reverence; it was not to be eaten by unbelievers, and it was not to be left where mice or other animals could eat it. This practice continued until the eighth century.

2. The Basilican Church
(313 to the ninth century)

During this period the liturgy lost some of its primitive simplicity as its solemnity increased and the music became more and more ornate. The bishop was still the presider of the prayer of the people and of the life of the people as a whole.

This period overlaps with the period known as the Middle Ages, which covers the time when the ancient Roman empire ended (approximately 500) to the beginning of the modern age (about 1500).

The Peace of Constantine, effected by the Edict of Toleration in 313, supported a new stage in the history of the celebration of eucharist by ensuring that the numbers of Christians would continue to increase. Christians had just begun to construct buildings (e.g., house-churches) especially for the liturgical assembly, and the increasing numbers made this more urgent. When builders began to look for an appropriate space, they could not use the temple that housed a god; they needed a space that housed the people because the people themselves were the dwelling place of the Lord. They found their answer in the basilicas, that is, the public buildings where courts and public gatherings were held. These basilicas, which were rectangular in shape with two or four rows of columns dividing it into three or five naves (halls) and an apse (a semi-circular projection) with a chair for the magistrate at one end, were easy to adapt for liturgical use. The space provided an open nave dominated by the episcopal chair, the ambo, and one altar.

It is also to be noted that Sunday was declared by Constantine in the year 321 as a day of rest; the markets and the courts were to be closed.

The eucharistic liturgy itself took on new forms; the essential actions were expanded by new forms of expression, many taken from the customs of the court and of the government. The culture of various regions shaped various forms, resulting in the development of major liturgical families, which in spite of their diversity have retained the basic structure inherited from the first centuries.

Among the developments were:

- The introduction of new elements into the eucharist: the procession with the offerings (gifts), the introductory chants, the sanctus, the Lord's Prayer; in the sixth century the Glory to God (originally used at morning prayer) began to be used, and in the seventh century the Lamb of God was added.

- The fermentum: a portion of eucharistic bread consecrated by the bishop of Rome and sent to priests celebrating the eucharist in the neighbourhood; this piece, dropped by the priest into the cup during the breaking of bread, was a sign of ecclesial unity.

- Continued delineation of ministries: readers (who read from the Bible), cantors and choirs all had their specific roles.
Development of the Eucharistic Liturgy

- Participation: full participation by the people; sometimes so enthusiastic that they were out of control; deacons directed their participation.
- Vestments: no distinctive vesture at this time; however, ceremonial garments used in court were often chosen, and in time, when fashion changed, these were retained because the long robe was considered to be more dignified.
- Liturgical books: at first, only the Bible; eventually prayers handed on through the oral tradition were written down and circulated in booklets (called libelli) under the supervision of various councils to guard against unorthodox formulas; around the beginning of the sixth century these were gathered in collections, and each minister could then have his own book (in the West the book became known as the sacramentary); a book of the gospels was developed for the deacon, refrains for the psalms and the entrance and communion were collected in antiphonaries, a book for cantors was also developed, and eventually also a book of epistles for the reader. Later, instructions on how to carry out the ceremonies (as done at the papal liturgy) were also put into written form in various ordinæ or ordos.

Order of Mass in sixth-century Rome

- Introductory rites
  - Psalm sung by choir as clergy enter, in the papal Mass by alternating choirs; ends with doxology; psalm varies during year
  - Litany of some 18 petitions sung, with people answering in Greek: Kyrie eleison (Gelesius I, 492-496)
  - Glory to God sung, in Masses by the pope on feasts, by other clergy on Easter; people join in singing this hymn
  - President concludes entrance rite by a prayer: "Let us pray," silent prayer, collect, Amen.

- Liturgy of the word
  - First reading*
  - Responsorial chant: psalm
  - Second reading*
  - "Alleluia," cantor alternating with people
  - Gospel
  - Homily; presbyters permitted to preach in Gaul.

(Prayer of the faithful, used in the Good Friday form in the fifth century, now replaced by the litany at the beginning)

* Clerics replaced readers in Rome in the sixth century; readers still active in Gaul.

- Liturgy of the eucharist

  A. Preparation of the gifts (unchanged from the fifth century)
  - Singing of psalm (varied during year) by choir as people bring gifts to altar or as clergy collect their gifts
  - President concludes with prayer over the gifts, aloud.

  B. Eucharistic prayer
  - Variable preface with dialogue
  - Sanctus
  - Rest of canon:
    - intercessions included
    - variable hanc igitur in special Masses
    - memento for the dead (outside of Sundays and feasts)
    - occasional blessing before per ipsum
  - Doxology and great Amen.
C. Communion rite
- Break loaves for communion
- Our Father, "Deliver us ..."
- Singing of psalm by choir as people go to communion or as they remain in place and clergy go to them
- President's prayer of conclusion.

• Concluding rite
- Dismissal.

At the end of the sixth century Gregory the Great (590–604) made a few minor changes: he shortened the petitions at daily Mass to a response only (by the eighth century the triple Kyrie, the triple Christe, and another triple Kyrie was all that was left); interchanged the Lord's Prayer and the breaking of bread so that the Lord's Prayer began the communion rite, and changed the hanc igitur in the eucharistic prayer to a general form. Gregory also took away the singing of the psalm from the deacon because of abuses and designated sub-deacons to sing it; later the psalm became known as the “gradual” because it was customary to sing it on the “step” (gradus) of the ambo.

3. The Carolingian Church (ninth to twelfth centuries)

Some of the developments of the time had a deep influence on the celebration and spirituality of modern times. The sense of the eucharist being connected to a gathering of the baptized was lost, as was the sense that the assembly was the manifestation of the Church. Although the western world followed the rites as they were used in Rome, a certain flexibility developed in the entrance rites, the offertory, the communion, and the concluding rites.

The liturgy as it was celebrated in Rome had already spread throughout Italy, except in the area around Milan. Through the efforts of Charlemagne (ca. 742–814), the Gregorian Sacramentary which he obtained from Pope Hadrian I was imposed on the churches in the Frankish kingdom. It was not adequate for these churches, however, and a missal was prepared which incorporated some local practices. Roman ordos also had to be obtained and adapted. When, in the tenth century, the Roman liturgy fell into decadence, its revival came about through the return of these books—with French adaptations.

Some specific developments that characterized these centuries and brought about a spiritual turning point.

• Application of Jewish concepts: About the ninth century the image of the presider gradually shifted from that of being at the service of the praying community to that of the Jewish high priest entering the holy of holies alone. The power a bishop or priest received gave him a status that was not given to other Christians, and what was considered essential liturgical action belonged to him alone. This prompted priests to begin to say the most important prayers silently, beginning with the most important one, the canon. Other prayers were soon included in the silent prayers, such as the prayer over the gifts, a prayer which in time became known as the “secret.” This new focus also led to clerical celibacy.

• Celebrating with the priest's back to the people: Roman basilicas faced west, and therefore the presider automatically faced the direction from which the sun rises when he stood behind the altar. However, when the Roman liturgy spread
into Gaul, the architecture made it necessary that the presider stand in front of the altar, with his back to the people, in order to face east. Because of the climate of the time, the assembly did not object to being isolated from the minister's entering into the mystery.

- Privatization of the Mass: Private prayers of all sorts said silently by the minister were introduced in the churches in Gaul; many were declarations of unworthiness, and their purpose was to purify the minister. Some accompanied actions that had been done in silence: uncovering the chalice, placing incense in the censer, using the incense, the washing of hands, etc. Others were added to the times that lent themselves to privacy, such as the entrance rites, the preparation of the gifts, and before communion. As the priest's role as "celebrant" became elevated, the celebration of a "private" Mass became more and more common, private meaning that it is celebrated at the sole initiative of the priest with no reference to a community, even if it is celebrated for an intention requested by someone else. The growing desire for votive Masses resulted in the ordination of many more monks and the inclusion of many altars in monastic and parish churches. Gradually the private Mass, with the priest alone as the "celebrant" and saying all the parts that should have been read or sung by other ministers, was accepted as the norm, also when a congregation was present.

- The plenary missal: Because priests were celebrating privately, it was not convenient to use a whole collection of liturgical books: the sacramentary, the lectionary, the antiphonary (the readings and chants were now read by the priest). All the texts were collected into one book and soon incorporated into the sacramentary, forming the complete or "plenary" missal. It was popular by 1200.

- Latin language: Latin was no longer the language of the people and was understood only by those who were educated, most of whom were clergy, and it was retained in the liturgy. The readings were repeated in the vernacular, the sermon (homilies were no longer required), the ceremonies, and the decor of the church were used to teach about the faith and bridge the gap between the Latin ritual and the people. Since the people no longer had access to the heart of the liturgy, they were forced to find spiritual nourishment in the marginal elements, in imaginative interpretations of the rites, in moralizing, and in allegorization.

- Tropes: Liturgical music had become quite ornate, quite melismatic, and extra phrases and sentences were added between and following the words of the liturgical texts, called "tropes." Some of these tropes, especially the "Alleluia," gradually developed into independent compositions with their own metered texts, such as the sequences. These additions were a distraction and focused people's attention away from the liturgical action of the moment.

- Allegorization: Since people no longer had access to the liturgical action because they no longer understood the language and the heart of the liturgy was said in a low...
voice, they sought spiritual nourishment in peripheral elements. They began to attach imaginative and moralizing meanings, that is, allegorical interpretations, to the rites, even if their original purpose was simply a practical one. Many fanciful or allegorical "explanations" have been imposed on the eucharistic celebration throughout the centuries. For example, Amalarius of Metz, in the first half of the ninth century, tried to see each part of the celebration as a reminder of some portion of Christ's life and his passion. His ideas were condemned by a local synod in 838, but they were influential during much of the Church's history.

- Eucharistic bread and communion: The use of unleavened bread became general in the Western Church during the eleventh century. At the same time the practice spread of receiving the eucharistic bread on the tongue, and since this was considered to be more reverent, people also began to kneel when they received. The Greek practice of dipping the eucharistic bread into the chalice did not take hold; it was frequently censured by Western councils and synods, particularly by the Synod of Clermont in 1095. Communion of the people is no longer mentioned in the missals, since only the priest received most of the time. Also, communion was no longer considered to be an integral element of the eucharistic celebration, and bread consecrated previously and reserved began to be used for communion.

4. The Cult of the Blessed Sacrament (twelfth to the sixteenth centuries)

This period is characterized by the dissolution of the liturgical community;¹ the people's participation was minimal, and they were no longer involved in the liturgical action. The celebration of the eucharist had become a theatre piece, a drama, which they could only watch.

During the first millennium Christians saw the eucharist as an action; now the emphasis shifted to the reserved sacrament, and a growing devotion to the eucharist outside the Mass led to a strong emphasis on this one aspect of Christ's presence. An anomaly of this time is that the primary form of devotion by communion was being neglected; the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) had to legislate annual communion. People were content to stare at the host instead of receiving it (the "gaze that saves").

- Elevation: In response to a controversy about Christ's real presence in the eucharistic bread, begun by Berengarius in the eleventh century, special attention was now being given to the words of institution, isolating these words from the rest of the eucharistic prayer. At the same time, people who only rarely received communion wanted to at least see the host; therefore, priests began to elevate it high enough for them to see it. Visually, the round, white, flat host worked the best. During the last quarter of the thirteenth century the chalice was elevated as well. In some places a bell was rung to emphasize the importance of the elevation.

Development of the Eucharistic Liturgy

- Communion from the cup: The practice of both eating and drinking the eucharist had been the normal mode from the beginning; the practice was retained in the Eastern churches, but in the Roman rite it was discontinued in the thirteenth century and restored only by the reform of Vatican II.

- Posture: In the early Church the normal prayer position for presider and people was standing, facing east, with hands outstretched in prayer. Kneeling was forbidden on the Lord's Day and throughout the Easter season by the Council of Nicaea in 325. A deep bow was made during the eucharistic prayer and when receiving a blessing. By the thirteenth century, however, kneeling had replaced the bowing during the elevation, and in time people knelt for most of the eucharistic prayer, from the Sanctus to communion. For the presider, a genuflection replaced the bow during the fifteenth century.

- Rood-screens: In many churches, a wall separated the liturgical action and all the ministers involved in this action including the choir from the faithful assembled. Even in churches where there was no rood-screen, all those involved (all clerics) were near the altar; the assembly was reduced to spectators. (This rood-screen is not the same as the iconostasis in front of the main altar in the Byzantine churches; in their liturgy the proclamation of the Scriptures and the ministry of the choir is carried out in front of the iconostasis, and the deacons constantly move from one side of it to the other.)

- Popular piety: Many people believed that looking at the eucharistic host was the same as receiving it in communion. It therefore made sense to leave the church right after the elevation. In some places people believed that their life could be extended by looking at the consecrated host; this prompted them to hurry from one church to another and to ask that the elevation be prolonged. This went so far as the host being put in a reliquary and placed in a niche above the altar for the whole of the Mass. Thus a cult of the blessed sacrament developed. The understanding of who Jesus was changed as well; people lost sight of his role in the liturgy as mediator and focused more and more on his presence on the consecrated host, a static presence, where he could be seen but not touched. The people sought new intermediaries, and greater importance was given to the intercession of Mary, the mother of God, and the saints. Feasts of saints in the liturgical calendar multiplied, so much so that Sundays were often superseded.

Other developments in the liturgy of the time included moving the tabernacle to the main altar; the reserved sacrament had been kept at first in the sacristy and then in a niche in the sanctuary wall or on a pedestal. Preaching was no longer done from

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the chair or the ambo but from a high pulpit located in the nave; preaching also was no longer based on the readings and became instead a dogmatic or moral exposition that could have been given at any time. The offertory procession dropped off, since the people's bread and wine were no longer used for the eucharistic sacrifice.

A certain unity in the liturgy throughout the Western church came about through the new itinerant preachers, especially the Order of St. Francis, who for practical reasons used liturgical books from the papal court that were relatively simple. Thus the Roman books became fairly well known and copied through the Western world. This prepared the way for another factor that would assist a more uniform practice in the liturgy, the invention of printing; the first missal was printed in 1474.

5. The Tridentine Reform (sixteenth to the twentieth century)

Many bishops at the beginning of the sixteenth century desired reform in the liturgy, a reform that would put some order into the multitude of prayer formulas being used, the gestures that often obscured the real meaning of the eucharistic celebration, and to deal with popular customs that were sometimes based on superstitions.

The Council of Trent (1545–63) entrusted the publication of a reformed missal to the pope because it had chosen to concentrate mainly on doctrinal and disciplinary issues in response to the challenges presented by the Reformation. This missal was produced by Pope Pius V in 1570; it was intended to be a return to the sources, with many of the feast days that obscured the Sunday removed, most of the sequences suppressed, the priest's gestures flowing from excessive devotion simplified, and musical compositions with non-liturgical texts removed. Above all, Pius V discouraged any practice on the part of the people that bordered on the superstitious. In the end, the missal was not much different from the Roman missal of 1474.

This missal was imposed on the whole Western church and suppressed any other missals being used unless a community had a tradition of a liturgical ritual that was at least 200 years old. The pope also decreed that changes could be made only by papal authority. As a result, the rubrics (the instructions now printed in red) gained a new significance, to the point of becoming a science known as "rubricism." Assisted by the invention of printing, the Congregation of Sacred Rites was able to bring about a uniformity that had never been previously achieved. For the next 400 years, very little changed in the way the eucharistic liturgy was celebrated, a period which is considered by many scholars as time of rigidity and stagnation.

It was decided to retain the Latin because changing to the vernacular would have given credibility to the Reformers. As well, the medieval concept of liturgy was also retained, that the liturgy was an activity performed by the clergy only, excluding any participation by the laity. The rubrics made no mention of the assembly.

There were two forms of the eucharistic liturgy, the sung or high Mass, and read or low Mass. The texts and rubrics the priest used were the same for both. For the music the text was prescribed,
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but the music was not. Composers therefore experimented freely with new musical forms that were being developed, producing great works of polyphony and using orchestral instruments. The music had taken over the liturgy, in fact, dominated it, rather than serve the liturgy as true liturgical music does.

- Introductory rites: The singing of the introit (entrance antiphon) was not begun until the priest and his ministers reached the foot of the altar. As the singing continued, priest and assistants quietly alternated the prayers at the foot of the altar (Ps 43.1-5), followed by several versicles and responses. The priest said two silent prayers as he approached the altar and kissed it; he then moved to the right side to read the introit and the triple Kyrie, then went back to the centre to intone the Gloria. He said the whole of it and then sat down while the choir sang it.

- Liturgy of the word: This was not considered a distinct part of the ceremony but a continuation of the previous rites. The epistle, gradual or tract, and “alleluia” (sometimes followed by a sequence) were read by the celebrating priest from the right side (the “epistle side”) of the altar. The book was then transferred to the left side (the “gospel side”) for the reading of the gospel. The priest read all of them even when someone else sang or read them. Incense was used for the gospel in sung or solemn Masses. Neither the order of the Mass nor the rubrics mention a sermon, but when a sermon was included, the preaching was done after the gospel. In North America most churches added prayers for the sick and the dead and for other needs after the sermon and the announcements. The Nicene Creed followed, with everyone genuflecting during the et incarnatus est. When the choir sang it, the priest recited it and sat down until the singing was finished.

- Liturgy of the eucharist: The offertory consisted of a series of silent prayers, with incensing in sung Masses, and concluded with the priest saying silently the “secret” (prayer over the gifts). The “Amen” at the end of this prayer was placed with the preface dialogue, so that no distinction was evident between the preparation of the gifts and the eucharistic prayer.

The preface was sung, or said aloud, and concluded with the Sanctus; in sung Masses the second half of it (the Benedictus) was sung after the consecration. The canon—considered to begin after the preface and its acclamation—was said in complete silence, with bells, incense, elevations, and genuflections to mark the institution narrative. Only the per omnia saecula saeculorum at the end was said aloud, and it was run together with the introduction to the Lord’s Prayer. (In the missal of Pius V the canon was considered to go on to the end of Mass.)

The communion rite began with the Lord’s Prayer, sung or said by the priest alone, with a silent “Amen” at the end. The fraction or breaking of the bread took place during the silent “Deliver us ...” and was followed by the commingling. The Agnus Dei was sung or said, and a silent prayer for peace followed; in solemn Masses the clergy passed on a stylized kiss of peace while the celebrating priest said two more silent
prayers before communion; he then received the consecrated elements in silence. The people's communion is mentioned only briefly. Two silent prayers were said during the ablutions. He read the post-communion prayer at the right side. The end of this part was usually marked by closing the missal after the prayer.

- Concluding rites: At the centre of the altar the priest greeted the people, said the dismissal (there were three forms for various circumstances), and gave the blessing. He then went to the gospel side and read the "last gospel" (Jn 1.1-14) from the altar card. The rubrics also added that while leaving the altar, he was to say the canticle of the three young men (Dan 3.57-88) with Ps 150 and other prayers.

6. The Reform of Vatican II

Before the Second Vatican Council brought about through its first document, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the reform that is at the heart of the Church's life today, the ground was prepared by some limited reforms and new insights gained through the study of ecclesiology, Scripture, patristics, and liturgical history. Many had come to realize that the Mass was not intended to be a one-man sacrifice that people could only watch, but a celebration of the Church in which all, priest and people, should have a part.

- The liturgical movement: In the nineteenth century a Benedictine monk, Presper Gueranger, founder of the abbey at Solesmes, through his writing created a renewed interest in the liturgy as the source of spiritual life. Early in the twentieth century Pope Pius X encouraged a renewed interest in the liturgy with his legislation on the use of chant and urged frequent communion. Lambert Beauduin, a Benedictine from Belgium, in 1909 initiated study weeks on the liturgy, and writers such as Romano Guardini and Pius Parsch offered insights on the renewal of Christian life based on the prayer of the Church.

- Dialogue Mass: Also initiated by Beauduin was a series of booklets containing translations of the Latin texts (at one time vernacular translations were on the "index of forbidden books") so that people could follow the actual liturgical texts rather than simply have in their hands collections of pious prayers they could use. These booklets were eventually replaced by the very popular one-volume missals (e.g., the St. Andrew Bible Missal). Once people were actually following the liturgical texts, they were eventually allowed to participate by saying some of the prayers in Latin.

- Reform of Holy Week: The restoration in 1951 of the Easter Vigil and Holy Week in 1955 began to show a new understanding of the relationship between the priest and the people.

- The addition of St. Joseph to the canon: In 1962 Pope John XXIII added the name of St. Joseph to the Roman cannon; this was a small change, but it was the first change made in the eucharistic prayer for centuries.

- The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy: Promulgated on December 4, 1963, this document called for a stripping away of extraneous material, simplification of the rites, a return to a more ancient understanding of symbols, and above all the "full, conscious, active participation
of all the faithful,” thus making the eucharist once more the centre of Christian life. Also key to the reform of the liturgy the document called for was the use of the vernacular, thus restoring accessibility to the people (no. 36). Other aspects of the reform included the following:

- “Differentiation of place”: The liturgical action was no longer to be only at the altar but also at the ambo and from the chair.4

- “Difference of function”: Each person, ordained and lay, who has an office to perform will do that and only that which pertains to that office (no. 28).

- Renewal of the table of the word: There is to be more scripture reading; the “treasures of the Bible are to be opened up” (no. 51).

There was also a stress on the unity of the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the eucharist, both parts of one act of worship (no. 56).

• Reform of 1964-65: The first changes to come into effect as a result of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council were felt in 1964, when the epistle and gospel could be read by the priest in the vernacular, without having to read them in Latin first. The first major steps reshaping the Mass were taken:

  - Introductory rites: The psalm was dropped from the prayers at the foot of the altar.
  - The liturgy of the word: The priest presided from the chair for this part and read the readings from the lectern; the homily and the general intercessions were now considered part of the structure.

- The liturgy of the eucharist: The prayer over the gifts was said aloud; the Sanctus, the Lord’s Prayer, the responses at communion, and eventually the preface with its opening dialogue were permitted in the vernacular. The formula, “Body of Christ,” with the response, “Amen,” was introduced.

- Concluding rite: This was done in the vernacular; the blessing was placed first so that the dismissal ended the Mass. The last gospel was dropped.

• The missal of Pope Paul VI: Published in Latin in 1970 (and again in 1975 with some minor revisions), it offered the reform called for by Vatican II. It introduced the new structure of the eucharistic celebration but it did not contain the scripture readings. (These were published separately, in a lectionary, also in two editions.) Translations in English of the sacramentary became available in 1972 and of the lectionary in 1971. With the missal there was an instruction, in contrast to the General Rubrics of the 1570 missal, that is, a document that was meant to teach. Basic to this new missal is the fact the assembly is considered the “celebrant,” and the norm is now the Mass with people present, though “private” Masses are still permitted. 82

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The Rites of the Eucharist

The Church ... earnestly desires that Christ's faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators; on the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers they should take part in the sacred service conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full involvement. They should be instructed by God's word and be nourished at the table of the Lord's body; they should give thanks to God; by offering the immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him, they should learn to offer themselves as well; through Christ the Mediator, they should be formed day by day into an ever more perfect unity with God and with each other, so that finally God may be all in all (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, no. 48).

Presence of Christ

For a major part of the Church's history, the presence of Christ in the consecrated eucharistic species was the main focus. Vatican II's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy stated that Christ was present in the Church, especially in the liturgical celebrations (no. 7). The focus of Christ's presence was broadened to include the whole eucharistic action, with four distinct modes: in the word, in the presiding priest, in the assembly, and in the bread and wine. The presence of Christ in the bread and wine, his body and blood, was not to be diminished by the other modes of his presence; rather, the other modes gave a context for this particular mode.

Christ's presence in the word is active when he speaks in the liturgy of the word; the appropriate human response is to listen, since by listening Christ's presence can be recognized. His presence in the presiding minister means that it is Christ who presides, who welcomes and gathers, who invites all to enter into his own prayer; Christ's presence will be recognized by those gathered by entering into that prayer. Christ's presence in the assembly makes that assembly his body: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Mt 18.20). The presence of Christ in the eucharistic food is for nourishment: it is food and drink. It is a source of unity and a source of transformation. Just as these elements of creation are transformed, the assembly too is transformed, to be Christ incarnate in the world and to transform the whole world.

The presence of Christ in the eucharist in these four modes is real; it is the same Christ who is present in each. Reverence for Christ in the eucharistic bread and wine must be extended to reverence for Christ in the word, in the assembly, in the presiding minister, and indeed toward all of creation. The purpose of his presence is not adoration; it is an active presence, gathering those assembled into his own worship of the Father and at the same time offering salvation. The liturgy is an action by Christ the head and his body, the Church.

For a fuller development of this topic and the source of these brief comments, see Peter E. Fink, "Theology of the Eucharist," The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship, ed. Peter E. Fink (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1990), pp. 441–443.
The Rites of the Eucharist

The Present Order of the Eucharistic Celebration

The celebration of the eucharist facing the people, a free-standing altar, communion under both forms, singing in every celebration, and the full use of ministers are considered to be usual. The model is that of the bishop surrounded by his presbyters, ministers, and people (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 74).

The ritual of the eucharist enables the assembly to encounter God. A ritual format which is characterized by the simplicity called for by Vatican II and which has balance will assist this encounter. A balanced structure will make it clear that the assembly's worship consists of two essential parts, the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the eucharist, which together make one act of worship. Introductory rites prepare those gathered to enter into the celebration, and concluding rites dismiss the assembly to continue their witness to Christ in their daily lives.

- Introductory rites
  Entrance procession and song
  Sign of the cross
  Greeting
  Opening rite (penitential rite or sprinkling of holy water)*
  [Glory to God]*
  Opening prayer (collect)

- Liturgy of the word
  First reading, followed by silence
  Responsorial psalm
  Second reading, silence
  Gospel acclamation
  Gospel
  Homily, silence
  Creed or profession of faith
  General intercessions

- Liturgy of the eucharist
  A. Preparation of the gifts (taking)
     Preparation of the altar
     Presentation of the gifts
     [Incensing]
     Prayer over the gifts
  B. The eucharistic prayer (blessing)
     (The eucharistic prayer is one prayer, made up of several parts.)
     Dialogue and preface
     Acclamation: Holy, holy
     Invocation of the Holy Spirit (epiclesis)
     Institution narrative
     Memorial-offering (including the memorial acclamation)
     Intercessions
     Doxology and Great Amen.
  C. Communion rite
     Lord's prayer
     Greeting of peace
     Breaking of bread (breaking), Lamb of God
     Communion procession (giving)
     Silent prayer
     Prayer after communion

- Concluding rites
  [Announcements]
  Greeting
  Blessing
  Dismissal

* Soon after the present order of the eucharist was put into use, there developed a sense that there were too many diverse elements in the introductory rites. (See Bulletin 55, p. 253.) When the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) embarked on a revi-
sion of the 1972 sacramentary, an alternative scheme was suggested for the opening rites. Responding to a consultation in 1986, the commission made several independent rites from a number of the elements in the present rites; one of these then could be selected according to the season and the occasion. (See Bulletin 126, pp. 176-77 for a description of this proposal.) There would, according to this order, no longer be a penitential rite, a Kyrie, and the singing of the "Glory to God" in the same celebration. This order was incorporated into the revised sacramentary proposed to the English sector of the Canadian bishops in 1997 for their approval. The bishops have approved this revision, but confirmation from Rome has not yet been received.

It is important that each community of faith celebrates this liturgy well, with careful preparation and reflection, using all the options available. There are many modes of participation for the assembly, singing, responding, silent reflection, appropriate posture.

Introductory Rites

As with every human action, Christian worship too has through the ages had a beginning, a time for those present to prepare themselves, to set the scene and create a mood.

The introductory rites have had a varied history. In Justin's description at the middle of the second century, the presider entered the place where the community had assembled and began the liturgy immediately with the readings. At the beginning of the fifth century, various elements of introductory rites appeared, first the greeting, then the opening song, and the opening prayer. Over the centuries a variety of arrangements and numbers of rites have accumulated, but there was not an underlying structure to these opening rites. Rather, they were a series of independent rites by which the worshipping community prepared itself for the liturgy.

In the present Roman rite, the introductory rites are intended to provide a recognizable and simple beginning to the celebration. The reform of Vatican II has simplified these rites; yet care is needed to avoid over-emphasizing them by too much singing, wordy interventions, or mini-homilies. These rites are a time for all assembled to spend the opening few minutes in reflection, praise, and prayer, and then move on, ready and open, to the far more important liturgy of the word.

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) describes briefly the purposes of these rites (no. 24).

1 The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), a pastoral introduction and explanation of the rites of the eucharistic celebration, has been published in various forms. Currently it is available (the 1975 edition) in booklet form, together with the Introduction of the Lectionary for Mass (1981 edition), published by Publications Service, CCCB, Ottawa.
Introductory Rites

- Unity: They help the people move from being a diverse and scattered community to a unified assembly, to realize that they are with their brothers and sisters, all members of the body of Christ, and that Jesus is truly present among them.

- Preparation: The rites help the assembly to get ready to take part in the liturgy of the word by some calming moments of reflection. They make a definite beginning, a call to order, a recognized vestibule through which the community enters the day's liturgy. The rites introduce the worshippers to a mood for reverent listening and active response in word and act.

**Signs of reverence**

Several signs of respect used in the eucharistic liturgy come from papal court customs, which in turn were derived from the ceremonial of the Roman emperor's court, based on oriental customs. The rites are clearly evident in the papal Mass of the seventh century.

- Lights: Seven clerics carried lighted candles before the people just as fire and incense were carried as signs of honour before the emperor, magistrates, and other important personages. (Constantine had recognized the bishops' courts as equal to the civil courts and gave the bishops civil honours.) The candles were placed next to the altar when the procession arrived at the front. During the time of Charlemagne the custom began of placing them on the altar before the liturgy, and leaving them there. Thus candles gradually stopped being a sign of reverence for the bishop or priest and were used for other symbolic reasons.

    Today, candles are signs of reverence and festivity. They are placed on the altar or (preferably) around it, without blocking the people's view of the movement of liturgical ministers. At least two candles are lighted, or four or six may be used. When the diocesan bishop presides, seven candles are used (GIRM, no. 74). The cross and candles may also be carried in the entrance procession and then placed near the altar; the candles may also be put on a side table (GIRM, nos. 79, 84, 269).

- Incense: During the time of the Roman persecutions, incense was offered to the image of the emperor; Christians died rather than perform this act of idolatry. After the persecutions ended, incense began to be used in Christian worship. (See also Ps 141.2, Rev 5.8.) Constantine gave a gold censer to the Lateran baptistry, and incense was used in Jerusalem by the end of the fourth century. At the same time, Ambrose (d. 397) mentioned that Christians incensed the altar; for him the altar represented Christ. Incense is still used frequently in the Divine Liturgy of the Eastern churches.

    Incense was used in the papal Mass of the seventh century.² By the ninth century the priest incensed the altar after greeting the people. This was seen as a sign of honour, as well as purification of sin and protection from harm. The tendency in

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² The Roman practice was to burn incense in a stationary brazier and to carry this in procession at the beginning, at the gospel, and at the end of Mass.
Charlemagne's time to find Old Testament parallels for everything likely reinforced the use of incense at the beginning of the liturgy (see Lev 16.12).

Today, incense is placed on the burning coals before the procession begins, and the smoking censer is carried at the head of the procession. Once the presider reaches the altar area, he incenses the entire altar as a sign of respect. He also incenses the cross.

• Carrying the gospel book: When the seventh–century papal Mass was ready to begin, an acolyte carried the open gospel book on the folds of his chasuble to the altar. Then the entrance chant and the procession began. When the pope reached the sanctuary, he kissed the book as a sign of greeting, for it was considered to represent Christ (see GIRM, no. 9).

Today, a deacon, or if there is no deacon, a reader, goes ahead of the presider in the procession, carrying the gospel book. He lays it on the altar (GIRM, nos. 9, 82, 84, 128, 148–49).

• Veneration of the altar: In the Roman liturgy a kiss was a sign of greeting and respect. The altar was saluted with a kiss by the end of the fourth century; the practice was derived from the pagan custom of greeting the gods by kissing the threshold of the temple and from the civic custom of sometimes saluting the family table in this way. In the seventh–century rite the pope kissed others around him, then the gospel book and the altar as representing Christ. By the twelfth century the priest also kissed the crucifix.

Today, the presider and the deacon make a low bow to greet the altar as the table of the Lord and venerate it by kissing it (GIRM, nos. 27, 84, 129, 232, 259).

Entrance Procession and Song

By the sixth century, an entrance psalm was sung in papal ceremonies. In the seventh–century ritual the pope, when all was ready, would wave his maniple and the singing began. The pope, with the choir and his attendants, left the sacristy (located near the entrance) and moved through the people as the song continued. After he arrived at the altar, he signaled to the choir to begin the "Glory be" and repeat the antiphon.

The singing of the psalm during the procession added dignity to the action. No musical instruments were used in Roman ceremonies. The antiphon text was normally a verse from the psalm, a verse that seemed apt for that particular celebration. The Romans preferred words that were "dictated by the Spirit" rather than hymns, which were not allowed in the celebration of the eucharist until the end of the ninth century. Antiphons chosen from other parts of Scripture or even non-biblical texts were introduced in the Middle Ages.

On penitential occasions the processional chant led directly to the collect; the "Lord, have mercy" was sung at the beginning of the procession, and the "Glory to God" was omitted.

The Church at Antioch made the "Glory be" (called the little doxology in contrast with the great doxology, the "Glory to God") the normal ending of the psalm in the Christian liturgy. In the seventh or eighth century the entrance chant (introit) was introduced.
in the "private" Mass developing at that time; it usually consisted of the antiphon, the opening verse of the processional psalm, the doxology, and the antiphon. From the fourteenth century on, the singing of the introit did not start until the priest reached the foot of the altar. This practice, the shortened form, was retained in the 1570 missal, but tropes that had been added to the entrance chants were cleared away.

Today, the entrance song is intended to help the assembly to enter into the celebration and to lead them into the liturgical season or feast. The song, which should engage the participation of the assembly in at least a refrain, also accompanies the entrance procession. This procession reveals both the pilgrim nature of the people of God that are on a journey and the paschal nature of a community responding to the good news of Christ and journeying with him to the kingdom of God.

One anomaly remains in the present rite: when no entrance hymn is sung, the entrance antiphon provided is to be said—either by the congregation, by a few people, or by the reader—as the priest enters; otherwise the priest reads it after he greets the people (GIRM, no. 26). The antiphon usually provides a good meditation on the season or feast and its sentiments could be incorporated into the presider's comments following the greeting.

**Sign of the Cross**

The significance of the cross as a symbol of Christ's saving death and resurrection is mentioned frequently in the New Testament. At the beginning of the third century Tertullian and Hippolytus described the common Christian practice of marking one's forehead with a small cross (still done today at the beginning of the gospel) many times during the day, both in prayer and in ordinary activities. The Church Fathers of the fourth century spoke of the seal or sign of the cross made in the baptismal rite, usually during the anointing with chrism. This cross was considered an indelible sign of Christ's ownership over his flock, a mark of his protective care, a badge of membership in Christ's body.

In the thirteenth century the presiding priest made a sign of the cross as he began to read the introit. The words now used with the sign of the cross come from the baptismal command in Mt 28.19.

Today, the presider and people make the sign of the cross together after the entrance song (GIRM, nos. 28, 86).

**Greeting**

Before the present order of the eucharistic celebration, the Roman rite used only one form of greeting—immediately before the opening prayer. Now a number of forms are provided for presbyters and one for bishops. This brief dialogue indicates that the Lord is present and that the gathering, spiritual in nature, has come about not merely through human initiative but as a response to God who calls the people together.

- "Peace be with you," the greeting used by bishops, was the greeting that the risen Lord gave to his apostles (Lk 24.36, Jn 20.19, 21, 26; 15.27). It was used in the East from the fourth century, and in the West it was reserved for the bishop, as is the case on the present order.

- "The Lord be with you" is found in the Old Testament (Ruth 2.4) and in the New Testament (2 Thess
3.16; 2 Tim 4.22). It echoes Christ's promise to remain with his people (Mt 18.20; 28.20); Christ is "God with us." Hippolytus quoted this greeting in the preface dialogue at the beginning of the third century. The people's response, "And with you," echoes the greeting at the close of some of Paul's letters (Gal 6.18, Phil 4.23, Philemon 25). St. John Chrysostom described how the people answered their Bishop's greeting by shouting out the acclamation, "And with your spirit," a variant of the same response.

- Other greetings are currently provided for the presiding priest. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ ..." is taken from 2 Cor 13.13. "The grace and peace of God our Father..." is also used by Paul at the beginning of many of his letters: Rom 1.7; 1 Cor 1.3; 2 Cor 1.2; Gal 3; Eph 1.2; Phil 1.2; 1 Thess 1.1; 2 Thess 1.2; Titus 1.4.

The significance of the liturgical greeting as a reminder to the community that the Lord is present among them is diminished when non-liturgical greetings are used to supplement or replace the liturgical greeting.

The greeting may be extended by acknowledging briefly on behalf of the community any guests and particular groups (such as the catechumens, the elect, or large groups of children). Occasionally the invitation to the opening rite about to follow may be incorporated into these introductory comments.

**Opening Rites** 3

- Penitential rite: This was an entirely new element in the 1970 Missal. The "I confess" form is a simplified form (for the assembly) of the medieval prayers, which were in the Gallican rite of the early Middle Ages and were parts of private rites of prayer and repentance. Having at first been private prayers said before the eucharistic liturgy or during the procession, they became the prayer at the foot of the altar around the year 1000. In the missal of Pius V these prayers were already somewhat simplified, but they remained the private prayers of the priest. (This form concludes with the "Lord, have mercy.") This rite prepares the assembly for the eucharistic celebration by way of a confession of sin and a prayer of absolution.

A second form of the rite is a brief dialogue including a single "Lord, have mercy." A third form includes three invocations to Christ made by the presiding priest or another minister and incorporating the "Lord, have mercy" as a response. Both conclude as the first form does. It is to be noted that the model invocations provided for the second and third forms focus not on the community's sins but on the mercy of God and an acknowledgment of Christ's saving power.

- Lord, have mercy: Based on petitions used frequently in gospels and psalms, the Kyrie eleison is addressed to Christ. Its use in Jerusalem at the end of evening prayer toward the end of the fourth century is described by Egeria. In Antioch a similar litany with the same response was used at the prayer of the faithful after the scripture readings at the same time. In Milan the same type of prayer was used but

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3 See the outline of the Order of Mass (p. 84) regarding the elements in a proposed revision of the introductory rites.
placed between the *introit* and the *collect*.

In Rome, Pope Gelasius (492–496) replaced this solemn prayer of the faithful (similar to the form currently used on Good Friday) with a series of eighteen petitions, to which the people responded with the *Kyrie*. Gregory the Great (590–604) dropped the petition in this form, retaining only the *Kyrie*, for the Mass celebrated on ordinary days.

The practice developed in Gaul of saying the invocations in sets of three, inappropriately giving a trinitarian meaning to the prayer. By the eighth century the formula became obligatory in private Masses; tropes were added in the next several centuries, but these were removed in the 1570 missal.

Today, the petitions, used as acclamations giving witness to Christ’s loving mercy, are said or sung in litany form, and the original Greek, *Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison*, may be used.

**Other Opening Rites**

Several other rites that may replace the penitential rite are found in the current sacramentary. A rite of blessing and sprinkling of water may be used particularly during the Easter season to remind the assembly of baptism, the gateway to the eucharistic assembly. When an occasion presents itself to celebrate the liturgy of the hours together with the eucharist, a part of the former replaces the penitential rite.

On Ash Wednesday the penitential rite is omitted because of the blessing of and signing with the ashes is a part of the ritual. On Passion Sunday, the rite of blessing palms and the procession replace the usual opening rites. At funerals the welcoming of the body at the beginning of the liturgy replaces the penitential rites. When baptism is to be celebrated during a celebration of the eucharist, the welcoming of the candidates at the beginning of the celebration replaces any other opening rites.

**Glory to God**

Sometimes called the greater doxology, the “Glory to God” was originally a morning hymn, written in imitation of the psalms and New Testament hymns. A version of it is contained in the *Apostolic Constitutions* (around the year 375).

Around 530 it was used in Rome during the celebration of the eucharist on special occasions; only bishops could intone it. By the seventh century presbyters could use it once a year, on Easter; by 1100 it was used in all festive eucharistic celebrations. At first its music was simple and sung by the people, but eventually it became complicated and was sung by the choir alone. Tropes became common, but these were dropped by Pius V in the 1570 missal.

The text begins with the words sung by the angels (Lk 2.14) and continues with praise of the Father, then of Christ, and closes with praise of the Trinity.

Today, it is used in the current order of the Mass on Sundays outside Lent and Advent, solemnities, feasts, and in solemn celebrations of the local
Church. It is by nature a hymn and should always be sung, even though present rubrics suggest that it is said by the people when it is not sung. The assembly may sing the entire hymn or may repeat a refrain, in this way alternating with the choir.

The Collect or Opening Prayer

A presidential prayer with a variable text to end the introductory rites became part of the Roman liturgy at the time of Leo the Great (440–461). There was only one collect or prayer—in which, as it were, the presider gathers the petition of the community—until the year 1000. Then, to compensate for the prayer of the faithful which had by now disappeared, collects were multiplied, even up to ten.

The prayer itself has several distinct actions:

- Invitation to prayer: The presider invites the assembly to join him in a moment of silent prayer by a simple “Let us pray” or a brief invitatory. An ancient Roman form of this invitatory is still used in the solemn prayers of intercession on Good Friday.

- Prayer: The Roman collect is typically brief and concise. It is addressed to God the Father, giving him a title (“you”), usually followed by a clause expressing praise for his works (“who”), with a petition for the needs of the Church (“do”). The ancient orans position on the part of the presider is the typical posture for this prayer.

- Conclusion: The trinitarian conclusion of the prayer stresses the “through” dimension of the prayer: that it is offered to the Father, through the Son, the mediator, and in the Holy Spirit. The community’s response, “Amen,” is its assent to the prayer. This Hebrew word, meaning “certainly, truly,” was used in synagogue worship and adopted by Christians (see 1 Pet 5.11, Jude 25, Rev 1.6–7).

Today, the original simplicity of the collect and the use of one only has been restored by the Church. (See GIRM, nos. 10, 12–13, 18, 23, 32, 88.) The pause for silent prayer “for some moments” is intended to give the presider and assembly time to remember God’s presence and to offer their own personal petition; the time should be sufficient for genuine prayer to take place. Next to the eucharistic prayer, the collect and its counterparts (the prayer over the gifts and the prayer after communion) are the most important presidential prayers. In some cases this prayer is the only prayer that expresses the proper character of a particular eucharistic celebration.
Liturgical of the Word

In the early centuries of the Church, the proclamation of the word and the liturgy of the eucharist were celebrated independently. In a short time these two rites were joined into one ritual; by the end of the Middle Ages the reading of the scriptures was seen as simply an extension of the preparation for the liturgy of the eucharist and was called the “fore-Mass.” Now the liturgy of the word is an integral part of the eucharistic celebration; together with the liturgy of the eucharist, it forms one act of worship. The liturgy of the word brings about the Lord’s presence in the assembly, since it is Christ himself “who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church” (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, no. 7) and the faithful are nourished at the “table of the word” (no. 51).

Listening to the Word
Readers are mentioned by Justin in the second century and by Cyprian in the middle of the third. The ministry of the reader, long in disuse, has been restored by the Vatican II reform.

The liturgy of the word consists in the main of the readings from Scripture and the sung texts, expanded by the homily, the profession of faith, and the general intercessions (GIRM, no. 33). In the liturgy of the word the dialogue between God and the world continues; the assembly is invited by Jesus himself to share the good news of his passage to life in the kingdom. The readers, cantor, deacon and presider are agents of the risen Lord, announcing the word on his behalf. As the assembly listens, the good news is revealed in its midst, particularly in the gospel. The assembly celebrates God’s message of salvation, proclaiming it with joy; the liturgy of the word has the characteristics of genuine celebration.

The assembly’s celebration expresses itself in many ways: through proclamation, acclamations, postures, gestures of reverence, processions with the gospel book, incense and candles. Ministers with a variety of gifts contribute to this celebration.

The assembly listens to its own story of salvation as the word is proclaimed. The reader’s ministry is to bring the great story of God’s salvation to life and announce it as the assembly’s own story; it becomes a living word that engages the assembly now. Receiving the word proclaimed is an essential element of full, conscious, and active participation by the assembly.

On occasion, a brief introduction to the liturgy of the word may be given; the purpose of this introduction is to situate the context of the reading or highlight the significance of the proclamation of God’s salvation. It is not the place for a homily, catechesis or exegesis.

Each of the readings closes with a dialogue, which takes the form of a double acclamation. The acclamation by the reader refers not to the written text but to the living proclamation of the word. The formula now used after the first and second reading, “The word of the Lord,” and after the gospel, “The gospel of the Lord,” correspond to the
formulas used during the communion rite. They echo the Scriptures (see Acts 15.35; 1 Thess 1.8) and act as a signal for the people's acclamation, "Thanks be to God," which affirms that they have heard and understood the word of God. It seems to have entered the eucharistic liturgy from a similar practice in the liturgy of the hours.

First Reading
A number of references in the New Testament showed that the early Christian community accepted the Jewish scriptures as their own; it was read in public (1 Tim 4.13) and seemed to be the basis of teaching and preaching. It appeared that the Septuagint version, a Greek translation which contained more books and passages than the Hebrew books, was the accepted version.

Old Testament readings dropped out before long from the Sunday eucharist, but they were retained on lenten weekdays, ember days, and in a few other cases.

Vatican II called for a revision of the liturgy of the word that consisted of a larger proportion and better arrangement of scripture texts. Three readings— from prophet, apostle and gospel—became the norm for Sundays and solemnities (Introduction to the Lectionary, no. 3a). The first reading therefore is again chosen from the Old Testament, except during the Easter season when, according to an ancient custom, this reading is taken from the Acts of the Apostles. The pericopes selected correspond to the gospel reading, either because of the words or events recalled by Christ or to show the progress made by the people of Israel toward the mystery revealed by Christ.

The present arrangement shows the unity of the two testaments of the Scriptures and the continuity of story of salvation: Christ is the centre.

Silent Reflection
The period of silence that is to follow each reading and the homily is obligatory, not an option; it is an integral part of the celebration. It allows the assembly to assimilate the word they have just heard and to reflect on it, a time when the people of God can be attentive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and to gain the full effect of the proclamation of the readings (GIRM, no. 23). It is one of the ways listed of active participation on the part of the assembly (CSL, no. 30).

Responsorial Psalm
After the last supper, Jesus and his disciples sang the hallel psalms (Mt 26.30, Mk 14.26). The singing of the psalms was a practice in the synagogue worship that the first Christians continued. Paul encouraged people to sing psalms (Eph 5.18–19, Col 3.16, James 5.13). In the years after the Council of Nicaea in 325 the people knew and used the psalms; children learned them by memory, and preachers spoke about them. A century later, Augustine preached on the responsorial psalm as one of the scripture readings. In the Middle Ages the psalm was truncated to a single verse; it was restored in the Vatican II reform.

Today, the psalm is seen as an integral part of the liturgy of the word and is a meditative response to the first reading. The refrain sometimes picks out an important aspect of the season or the day. Sung in responsorial form, that is, with the cantor singing the verses and the assembly the refrain, it establishes a dialogue between God
and the people. To assist communities in participating in the response, seasonal psalms are provided, and fidelity to the scriptural texts requires that the psalm be used not in a modified version but as it has been handed down. Only when this is impossible should another song be used.

Second Reading
The word “epistle” was used in the past for the reading before the gospel, even when the reading was taken from the Old Testament or the Book of Revelation. In the Vatican II lectionary the word is used only once: for the eighth reading during the Easter Vigil.

When Justin, in about 150, described the reading in the liturgy, he spoke of the reader as reading as long as time permitted. This practice of semi-continuous reading was adapted in subsequent lists of readings used in the Roman Church; later, feasts and seasons made frequent interruptions in this pattern. The practice is restored in part in the current lectionary. The readings are selected from the Book of Revelation, the letters of Paul and John during the Easter season, and the letters of James and Paul during the year.

In pastoral practice, it is better to have another reader proclaim the second reading in order to give a variety of voices to aid people in listening to the word.

Gospel Acclamation
Many of the psalms use the word “alleluia” as a cry of joyful shout of praise to the God of salvation, meaning simply, “Praise God.” The word is taken from hallel and Yah (or YHWH.) It forms part of the victory song in heaven: Rev 19.1–7. In Africa, during Augustine’s time, it was sung every Sunday; in Rome in the middle of the fifth century it was sung only on Easter, but by the sixth century it was sung throughout the Easter season. Gregory the Great (590–604) allowed it at other times. The final vowel was often prolonged with melismatic music as a sign of Christian joy. By the Middle Ages the “alleluia” was omitted from Septuagesima—three Sundays before Ash Wednesday—to the beginning of the Easter Vigil. (It has been said that the reason for this omission was the beautiful musical settings that were created for the text; Christians wanted to fast from this wonderful music during Lent.) A tract (a series of psalm verses) replaced it on these occasions.

– Sequences: The music of the extended final syllable was “embroidered” in the eleventh and twelfth centuries with lyrics added to the music. These became independent pieces, called sequences, and they were numerous until the reform of Pius V in the 1570 missal. He retained only four, for Easter, Pentecost, the solemnity of the body and blood of Christ, and for some Masses for the dead. Another one was added in the eighteenth century, for September 15. The one for Masses for the dead was dropped in the Vatican II reform, and it was made optional for the solemnity of the body and blood of Christ and for September 15.

Today, the acclamation is the assembly’s expression of joy at the presence of Christ experienced in the proclamation of the good news as well as its faith in the gospel by which it lives. It is by nature a sung text and accompanies the procession with the gospel book. During Lent another text of praise is substituted.
The current three-year cycle of readings permits most of the four gospels to be proclaimed in the assembly: Matthew in year A, Mark in year B, and Luke in year C. The gospel of John, in particular chapter 6, which relates the multiplication of the loaves and the discourse on the bread of life, is read during year C, since the gospel of Mark is shorter than the others. John's gospel is also proclaimed during Lent and the Easter season, serving as a type of catechesis explaining the mysteries of Easter and Pentecost. The semi-continuous reading of these gospels allows people to discover the richness of the good news of Christ, especially through the diversities and various emphases of several authors and the communities for which they wrote.

The gospel is the good news of salvation given through the death and rising of Christ. It has a place of honour among the three readings, and many signs of respect surround it as it is proclaimed among God's people in the liturgy.

- Special reader: It is the role of the deacon to proclaim the gospel in the assembly. The role was mentioned by St. Jerome in the fourth century. During the Middle Ages a special pulpit for the reading of the gospel was often described.

- Special book: A gospel book (evangelium), containing only the gospel readings, was richly ornamented, and its hand-written pages were elaborately decorated. It was carried in procession at the beginning of the liturgy and at the end, and it was locked away because of its value.

- Prayer of purification: Using words based on Is 6.5-8, the deacon prayed to be worthy to proclaim the gospel and was blessed by the presiding priest. The practice was already in evidence in Rome in the seventh century.

- Lights and incense: These were marks of respect for the emperor and high civic official; they were also given to bishops (see the introductory rites). Soon they were considered as signs of honour for Christ present in his word. St. Jerome, in 387, described the Eastern custom of lighting candles as a sign of joy when the gospel is read. In the seventh century, incense was carried before the book, and by the eleventh century the book was incensed.

- Standing: All in the church have stood to hear the gospel proclaimed since ancient times; the custom is mentioned in the East in the fourth century and in the West by the sixth century.

- Acclamations: Directed to Christ himself, the acclamations at the beginning and end of the gospel have been in use since the eighth century in Charlemagne's empire.

- Sign of the cross: Between the ninth and eleventh centuries the practice developed of making small signs of the cross on the book, the forehead, lips and heart. (A cross on the forehead in personal prayer was recommended in the third century by Tertullian and Hippolytus.)

- Kissing the book: In eighth-century Rome the book was kissed by all the clergy after the gospel was proclaimed. Members of the congregation kissed it up to the thirteenth century, but this practice gradually disappeared; then only the celebrating bishop or priest reverenced the book with a kiss.
Today, the Church states that it is Christ himself who is proclaiming his gospel; all the marks of reverence are used to proclaim that presence. If no deacon is present, a presbyter proclaims the gospel. In that case there are two private prayers he uses. Before the proclamation he says: “ Almighty God, cleanse my heart and my lips that I may worthily proclaim your gospel,” and after the proclamation he says: “May the words of the gospel wipe away our sins.”

Homily

Preaching within the liturgy is part of the heritage the Christian Church received from Judaism. During the time of Christ the synagogue service on the Sabbath included scripture reading and an explanation. Stories in the gospels show Jesus preaching on such occasions (Lk 4.16-30). The New Testament also mentions Paul preaching after readings from the law and prophets in a synagogue (Acts 13.14--44). In Acts 20.7-12 Paul is described as giving a long sermon during the Christian community’s breaking of bread. Sermons and discourses outside of worship are common throughout the gospels and Acts of the Apostles.

In the early centuries of the Church preaching was the task of the bishop. In Rome about 150, Justin described the homily as being given by the president of the assembly after he and the people had listened to the readings. By the third century the homily was also given by priests. Though preaching was omitted in the eucharist and sadly neglected at times in the Church, the abundance of homilies by the Fathers of the Church provide a strong testimony of the place of preaching in the Christian liturgy. In the Middle Ages preaching became strong and also began to take place outside the liturgy, especially in the ministry of the mendicant orders.

Today, the homily is an integral part of the liturgy of the word, never to be omitted on Sundays and holy days, and recommended for all celebrations of the eucharist. It points to the presence of God in people’s lives and provides the motive for celebrating the eucharist; it proclaims that the saving deeds of God just announced in the gospel are still happening today in the community. The assembly, hearing the living gospel proclaimed, discovers new reasons for thanksgiving and awe at the works of God. At the same time, it forms the community for mission.

The homily is by definition a presentation of the message contained in the biblical texts. Through an explanation of some aspect of the scripture readings or of a text from the ordinary or proper parts of the eucharistic celebration the preacher will be able to help the assembly benefit from the richness of God’s word. The mystery being celebrated on the particular day and any special needs of the community will also be taken into account. Using the homily for other purposes or to publicize events or projects deprives the community of an aspect of the liturgy of the word.

Dismissal of the catechumens: Because catechumens or the elect do not yet fully participate in the eucharist, they

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1 Vatican II stated that teaching the word of God is the primary duty of the bishop and therefore of his co-workers, the priests. See Decree on the Bishops’ Pastoral Office in the Church, no 12, and Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, no. 4.
are, if they are present in the eucharistic assembly, normally dismissed after the homily so that they may reflect together on the word that has been proclaimed.

**Profession of Faith**

The primary profession of faith during the eucharistic celebration is the eucharistic prayer. A proclamation of the creed is a witness to the faith by which the assembly lives and a sign of its unity with the Church through the ages and throughout the world. It is a statement in summary of the story of salvation that lies at the foundation of Christian life; in this profession of faith the assembly celebrates its participation in the story and its sharing in the salvation revealed through the Church. It is a response to the homily and at the same time a reminder of each one's profession of faith at baptism.

— *Nicene Creed*: The origin of this creed may be found in the creed taught by Cyril of Jerusalem around 350 to candidates for baptism. In 451 the Council of Chalcedon made a credal summary of the faith expressed in the first two ecumenical councils, Nicaea in 325 and Constantinople in 381. It became part of the eucharistic liturgy in Constantinople early in the sixth century and was soon used after the dismissal of the catechumens throughout the East.

In the West the creed first appeared in the eucharistic liturgy in Spain in the late sixth century, through Byzantine influence. During the time of Charlemagne it was introduced in France and was widespread in northern Europe by the tenth century. In 1014 the emperor, on a visit to Rome, was surprised to find that the Romans did not have the creed in the eucharistic liturgy. The pope therefore included it on Sundays and on feasts mentioned in the creed. The genuflection at the mention of the incarnation was first observed in the eleventh century.

Today, the creed, recited by the assembly, is an expression of assent and adherence to God's word as just proclaimed; it is also a link between the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the eucharist. It is a statement in the first person plural, “we believe,” because it represents the statement of an ecumenical council and, furthermore, it is a statement of what the whole Church of all time and places believes, not just a statement of a local congregation. The plural form also witnesses to the nature of corporate worship, that it is a community and not just a group of individuals that prays together.

— *Apostles' Creed*: Canada and a number of other countries have permission to use the Apostles' Creed in the eucharist. This creed was developed from the profession of faith used during baptism in Rome. The earlier question form was in use in 215 during the time of Hippolytus. This form has again returned to the liturgy.

Either the Nicene Creed or the Apostles' Creed (recited entirely by the assembly or in the interrogatory form) may be used. Certain feasts, however, such as Christmas and the Easter season, seem to call for the Nicene Creed. There is also ecumenical value in using the Nicene Creed at least from time to time, since it is used by many Christian churches.

**The General Intercessions**

St. Paul urged the Church to devote itself to prayer for all people, particularly for civic rulers, because God
wants all to be saved; Jesus died for all (see 1 Tim 2.1–8). Justin, describing the Sunday eucharist in Rome about the year 150, wrote that after the Scriptures had been read, the president preached a homily, and then all stood and prayed together for themselves, for the newly baptized, and for other people all around the world. Only those baptized could take part in these prayers. Hippolytus, describing the practice in Rome about sixty-five years later, noted that after baptism the new Christians were led into the assembly for anointing by the bishop, and then they took part in prayers with all the members of the community.

In both East and West the common prayer was offered after the homily. The community turned to the east, the direction of the rising sun, and prayed with outstretched hands. After the bishop invited the people to prayer he presented the petition and the people answered. By the year 400 the deacon gave the invitation to prayer, presented the petitions in the form of a litany, and the people responded; the presider prayed at the end of the litany.

In Rome a solemn form evolved in the third century and has remained to this day in the Good Friday liturgy, with some minor modifications in the last reform. By the time of Gregory the Great (590–604) this prayer fell into disuse (except in Holy Week) and seems to have been replaced by the “Lord, have mercy” and the intercessions in the eucharistic prayer.

During the Middle Ages various forms of prayer for general needs were said after the sermon, often with people saying an “Our Father” after each intention.

The tradition of prayer after the homily carried on into modern times; when the sermon was finished, the priest led the people in prayers for the sick and the dead and for various other intentions, concluding each intention with the “Our Father,” “Hail, Mary,” and the “Glory be to the Father.” During the time of Pope Leo XIII, prayers were added after Mass for “the Roman question.” Once Pius XI had arranged with Mussolini for the emergence of the Vatican State in 1929, the prayers were offered for the conversion of Russia. During World War II prayers for peace were included.

Today, the general intercessions (prayer of the faithful), after an absence of fourteen centuries, were restored by the Vatican II reform. They are the prayer of the people exercising their priestly function to intercede for all of humanity (GIRM, no. 45); they are truly the prayer of the whole Church. The assembly, aware of its identity as the body of Christ and renewed by recognizing that God continues to act in its midst, with confidence commends the world and the Church to God’s care.

The people gathered pray that the whole world may receive the good news, that God’s love, peace, unity and joy may reign supreme, that all will receive healing, freedom and dignity, and they pray for the Church on its journey and in its mission to the world. The assembly brings these needs before God as it finds them in the world and in the Church of today.

To ensure that the prayer would be truly general, a four-fold plan was offered in some guidelines; the order suggested was: a) for the needs of the Church; b) for public authorities and the salvation of the world; c) for those oppressed by any need, d) and for the local community.
The form consists of a brief invitation by the presider to the community, the intercessions presented in litany form by the deacon or another minister, followed by the assembly’s invocation of supplication or a period of silence, and concluded by the presider’s collect. The content of the intercessions will reflect the concerns of the community.

The general intercessions permit the assembly to respond to God’s word proclaimed in the readings; they bring the liturgy of the word to a close.

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**Liturgy of the Eucharist**

The liturgy of the eucharist has three parts: the preparation of the table of the Lord and the gifts, the eucharistic prayer, and the communion rite. Four principal actions make up the liturgy of the eucharist: taking, blessing, breaking, and giving. These are based on the basic actions carried out by Jesus at the last supper. Gregory Dix, in *Shape of the Liturgy*, described these actions as follows:

1. Jesus takes bread
2. He gives thanks
3. He breaks the bread
4. He gives it to his disciples
5. Jesus takes the cup of wine
6. He gives thanks
7. He gives the cup to his disciples.

All celebrations of the eucharist include these actions, taking the following basic shape:

- Preparation of bread and wine (“he takes”)
- Prayer of thanksgiving (“he gives thanks”)
- Breaking the bread (“he breaks”)
- Communion (“he gives”)

The liturgy of the eucharist is so closely connected to the liturgy of the word that both form one act of worship (CSL, no. 56). In this one act of worship it is Christ himself who is present as the celebrant in the midst of his body, the Church, and it is he who gathers the world into the divine liturgy.

The liturgy of the eucharist seals again the covenant that has been announced in the liturgy of the word. The liturgy of the eucharist achieves reconciliation through communion of life in God, a reconciliation of the world that was called for in the liturgy of the word. In the liturgy of the eucharist the assembly celebrates its response to the call to join Christ in his passage to the life of the kingdom.

**Preparation of the Gifts**

*This part of the rite embodies the action of Jesus: to “take.”*

The first part of the liturgy of the eucharist was formerly called the “offertory.” It is no longer called offertory but simply the “preparation of the gifts” to correct the thinking on the part of many Christians that this was

the time to offer themselves and all that they did, a kind of sacrifice before the sacrifice. The reality of the sacrifice is that Christ involves the faithful in the one sacrifice he himself offers in the eucharistic prayer. The rite consists of preparing altar, gifts and people for the offering which will take place only in the eucharistic prayer.

In the first centuries this part was done without ceremony, but in the Middle Ages the rite became quite elaborate. A simpler form of the rite has again been restored. The rite embodies “taking,” and focuses on the action of taking the gifts and placing them on the altar.

Preparation of the Altar
The early Christians were more aware of the presence of the risen Christ in their liturgical assemblies. The centre of their gatherings was the bishop at his chair. After the liturgy of the word the deacons brought in a wooden table for the liturgy of the eucharist. In the fourth century, however, as large basilicas were built, altars eventually came to be made of stone. The custom of celebrating the eucharist over the tomb of a martyr led gradually to the custom of placing relics or portions of a martyr’s body in every altar or altar stone.2

Today there is to be one freestanding altar, which is the table of the Lord, the symbol of Christ the reconciler, and which is the place for the thanksgiving offered in the eucharistic prayer. The altar is covered with at least one cloth; this may be done during the rite itself.

Procession with the Gifts
In the early years the gifts were simply brought to the president for the eucharistic prayer. By the end of the second century, however, the Church, reacting against the anti-material trends of the Gnostics, began to express more emphatically the value of created things.

Irenaeus pointed out that the offerings of bread and wine were from the first fruits of creation. In Hippolytus’ time the deacons brought in the gifts; new Christians brought their offerings for the first time when they came for the celebration of Christian initiation during the Easter vigil. Tertullian spoke of the people bringing their gifts; Cyprian, in the middle of the third century, mentioned the believers bringing their gifts and scolded a person who came to communion without bringing a gift.

Augustine (fifth century) mentioned the singing of psalms during the time before the eucharistic prayer, probably referring to a processional chant. A church council, late in the sixth century, placed a new emphasis on the traditional practice of offering bread and wine. At that time, however, the gifts were given before the liturgy, in a sacrarium or separate room.

In the papal Masses in seventh-century Rome the procession had become elaborate, with the pope and his assistants collecting the offerings of bread and wine from the nobles, court officials, and clergy, placing the bread in a cloth or sack held by acolytes and the wine being poured into a chalice by an archdeacon.

In eighth-century England and France

2 For more on the history of altars and other church furnishings, see Edward Foly, From Age to Age (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1991).
the rite became a procession of the people as they brought their bread and wine to the altar. These gifts were not used for consecration, since unleavened bread was coming into use and communions were few. In Chaucer’s writing (around 1387) there is a reference to the offertory procession in his description of the woman from Bath.\(^3\)

Other gifts came to be offered, either before or during the eucharist: oil, candles, wheat, grapes, precious vessels and even deeds for donating property. In the ninth and tenth centuries other gifts became more important than the bread and wine; in the next two centuries money became the first gift (in Spain as early as the seventh century), and other gifts gradually fell into disuse except on special occasions.

During the middle of the twentieth century the liturgical movement promoted a return to the procession with the gifts; unfortunately, too much stress was placed on “offering” instead of on the presentation of the gifts.

Today the Church has restored the procession in a simpler form: members of the assembly bring the gifts of bread and wine and present them to the presider or deacon. This practice is intended to carry on the spiritual value and meaning of the ancient custom when the people brought bread and wine for the liturgy from their homes (GIRM, no. 49).

**Processional song**

From the time of Augustine psalms accompanied the procession with the gifts. The psalm was sung antiphonally (with alternating choirs) at first, then responsorially. The chant covered the time of the procession. After the year 1000, when the procession became less frequent, the psalm verses began to drop out.

The 1570 missal retained only the antiphon without psalm verses. These texts were dropped in the 1970 missal, but the idea of singing during the procession was retained (GIRM, no. 50).

**Collection**

Support of the temple and worship was normal for the first Christians, both Jewish and Greek. Even Jesus paid the temple tax (Mt 17.24–27).

Concern for the poor is a basic Christian precept. Paul reminded the believers at Corinth (1 Cor 16.1–4) to set aside money every week on the Lord’s Day to help the saints (see Rom 15.25–29, Acts 11.27–30). Part of Paul’s teaching is to do good to all, especially to those who belong to the family of the faith (Gal 6.10).

Money is to be used for God’s glory and to help others, especially in time of need (see 1 Jn 3.17–18). Help given to others can be a sacrifice which pleases God (Phil 4.18, Heb 13.16) because it is a sign of love; this can show a real concern for one’s brothers and sisters. Words not backed by action are condemned (James 2.15–17; 1 Jn 3.17–18). At the same time, gifts to God, the Church and others must not be given for the wrong motives (see Mt 6.1–4, Mk 12.41–44) but for the right one (see Mt 5.16). Christians give because they have first received; God’s generosity far outweighs whatever anyone can do for God in return.

Justin, writing in Rome around 150, said that in the eucharist “... they who

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are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succors the orphans and widows, and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds, and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word, takes care of all those who are in need.⁴

Today, money or gifts for the poor and for the Church are brought forward during the preparation of the gifts (GIRM, no. 49). On Holy Thursday, at the Mass of the Lord’s Supper, the entire assembly may be involved in a procession bringing gifts of material goods for the needy. Such a procession is appropriate at other times.

The meaning of the collection may need to be discussed occasionally in order that it be seen as part of what it means to be a servant of God, individually and as a Church, and for this reason also a liturgical act. Giving this collection a sense of something deeper than simply a utilitarian purpose means that it is given as a gift to God and destined for the earthly recipient over the altar. Confining the collection to the time when the gifts are offered and with dignified ritual will assist in supporting this deeper meaning. Gifts for the altar and concern for the marginalized have always had an intrinsic connection in the liturgical tradition.

No act of public worship can mean so much or so little as the giving and receiving of our gifts in God’s house. If we offer our collection unthinkingly and formally, the act is devoid of all spiritual significance and warmth. But, if we see the collection as an integral part of corporate worship and anchor it thus firmly in the total response we make to the gospel news, then it takes on a new, richer meaning; and the dedication of our money becomes the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace of a thankful heart. Like all true worship, the offering is sacramental.³

Preparation of the Gifts

- Bread: Jesus used unleavened bread at the Last Supper (it was during the time of Passover, the time of unleavened bread, Mk 14.1). Both unleavened and leavened bread continued in use in various places. Loaves were marked with a cross (to facilitate breaking, a pre-Christian custom) or with pious symbols or inscriptions. From the third century on, the bread was at times braided and formed into a circle called a corona.

The move in the West, beginning in the ninth century, to the use of unleavened bread only came about for various reasons: developments in the teaching on the reserved sacrament, the desire for making bread as white as possible, the practice at the Last Supper, the fact that leaven seemed to be undesirable (see 1 Cor 5.7–9). While the East retained the use of leavened bread, the West used only unleavened bread from the eleventh century.

Because of the growing devotion for the reserved sacrament and thus the desire to make the bread for the

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eucharist special, this bread was baked, in both the East and the West, with religious rites by special ministers. In the West the bread was no longer taken from the people's gifts but from special unleavened discs, which were broken for communion. On “communion days” the presider's bread was reduced, and small breads were prepared for the people. Thus the gesture of breaking the bread was lost.

Today, the use of unleavened bread made from wheat is continued, but the GIRM insists that it have the appearance of food. An attempt has been made to restore the gesture of breaking one bread.

- Wine: Wine made from grapes has been the traditional drink of the eucharist (Lk 22.18); the East preferred red wine (which has a richer symbolism) but there has never been a universal obligation. Substituting other elements for the wine has never been condoned.

Wine mixed with water was the custom of the time because people drank wine in a diluted form to make it less of an intoxicant. The practice continued, and by the middle of the third century the mixture of water and wine was explained by Cyprian as representing the union of Christians with Christ, and like the wine and the water, Christ and his Church could not be separated. Luther questioned the use of water, suggesting that the commingling of wine and water not be obligatory since it was human intervention. This led the Council of Trent to emphasize the rite.

Today, natural and pure grape wine is used, with a little water added to it in the cup (GIRM, nos. 102, 281, 284–86).

### Placing the Gifts on the Altar

This action has, in the history of the Roman rite, gone from a simple act to a highly elaborate anticipation of the eucharistic prayer to a somewhat simplified form in the present ritual, with a little room for improvement.

As the people's procession with the gifts ceased to be important, the vacuum was gradually filled with other rites and private prayers. In the eighth century in Gaul the bishop raised his own offering and looked up to God in silence. By 1000 prayers of intercession had been added, and by the late Middle Ages numerous prayer formulas had been developed. The use of the term “host,” derived from the Latin hostia (sacrificial victim), anticipated the consecration of the elements. In the ninth century the breads were laid on the altar in patterns, usually in the form of a cross.

The 1570 missal contained prayers of offering during this rite, private prayers anticipating the real offering, which took place only during the eucharistic prayer.

Today, there are two prayers fewer than before, they are shorter, and their main thrust has been changed. Their presence, however, still makes more of the rite than need be. The prayers said with the bread and the cup are in the form of a berakah or prayer of blessing God while remembering his great and wonderful works. The blessing genre of these two prayers also presents a problem: it is this genre which is at the root of the eucharistic prayer itself, and even if the theme of offering has been eliminated in this rite, the theme of blessing is still a duplication of the eucharistic prayer. Also, the English

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translation of one of the silent prayers unfortunately refers to "the sacrifice we offer you," although the Latin does not mention offering.

**Incensing the Altar and Gifts**

The practice of incensing at the end of the preparation of the gifts appeared to be a part of the rite in the north in the ninth century but not in Rome. By the eleventh century this rite was fully developed, with prayer and incensing of those near the altar. These prayers consider incense as dedication to God, a reminder of his burning love, a symbol of prayer rising to God like incense (see Ps 141.2, Rev 8.3-4).

Today the presider may incense the gifts and the altar to acknowledge and honour the presence of Christ in the sacred action. The assembly is incensed also, since it is the body of Christ.

**Washing the Hands**

This is a symbolic washing, with roots in the ceremonial washings practised by devout Jews (see Mk 7.2-5). In fourth-century Jerusalem, and also at Antioch, the bishop and the priests around him washed their hands as a symbolic gesture.

The well or fountain at the entrance of early Christian basilicas served the same purpose. During Charlemagne's time a rite of sprinkling holy water on the people at the main Sunday Mass was introduced, using Ps 51.6 or 7 as a formula.

The washing of hands took place at various times, sometimes before the people brought their gifts forward, sometimes after. A variety of prayers was added in the Middle Ages. In the 1570 missal the rite was placed after the laying of the gifts on the altar and the incensing; the formula used was Ps 26.6-12.

Today, the presider washes his hands before the eucharistic prayer, not for the sake of cleanliness but as a presidential act of ritual purification before proclaiming the Church's prayer offering. It is specific to the one who prays on behalf of the community, reflecting the need for interior holiness and openness to the power of the Spirit. The prayer formula is Ps 51.2.

**Prayer over the Gifts**

- Invitation: Many formulas were developed since the eighth century when an invitation addressed to the clergy first appeared in Gaul. Sometimes the formulas were addressed quietly to the surrounding clergy, sometimes aloud to the men and women in the congregation.

Today the presider invites the assembly to pray that the sacrifice to be offered during the eucharistic prayer will be acceptable and pleasing to God (GIRM, nos. 53, 107).

- Prayer: A prayer over the gifts was provided in the ancient Roman sacramentaries, and it was the only text for the rite. It normally contained words like offering, gifts, sacrifice, eucharist, mysteries. It was addressed to the Father; only after the year 1000 were a few formulas addressed to Christ. During the eighth century the practice began in Gaul of saying the prayer quietly, and it became known as the "secret." Several were said in succession in most Masses, as were the collects. This lasted until the 1960s, when once more it was prayed aloud.

Today it is once again known as the prayer over the gifts; it retains its ancient purpose of being the sole prayer said over the gifts which have been placed on the altar. The references to gifts, offerings, and sacrifices in the various forms of this prayer refer
to the sacrifice about to be offered during the eucharistic prayer. The assembly gives its assent to the prayer with an "Amen" (GIRM, nos. 21, 32, 53, 107).

Because this prayer ends the preparation rites, a discreet pause before the proclamation of the eucharistic prayer is in order.

The Eucharistic Prayer

The eucharistic prayer embodies the action of Jesus: to "bless." The eucharistic prayer is the "center and summit" of the eucharistic celebration (GIRM, no. 54). It is, by definition, essentially a prayer of praise and thanks, focusing on blessing God for the mighty works for the salvation of the world and above all for Jesus' passage to eternal life. It is the central prayer of the Church, in which the Church manifests herself as the body of Christ and that it is Christ to whom she belongs.

The whole eucharistic prayer is directed to the Father; the assembly addresses the Father through Christ in the Spirit. This is based on the instruction of Jesus himself. At the Last Supper he prayed by thanking the Father; his prayer remains the model for the Church’s prayer.

The opening dialogue of this prayer is one of the oldest elements in the eucharistic liturgy. It is more than just an invitation to pray; it affirms that all are gathered in unity as the body of Christ, that this is indeed the prayer of Jesus taken up to the Father, and that this is the assembly's response to the call to give thanks. By engaging in this dialogue the assembly makes a deliberate and conscious decision to give thanks, to "make eucharist," and endorses the ministry of the presider, without whom there would be no public work of thanksgiving.

Names for the Eucharistic Prayer

Throughout the centuries the Church has used a number of names for the central prayer of the eucharistic liturgy. Some of these are:

- Eucharist: Derived from the Greek for thanksgiving, eucharistia, this word sums up the main thrust of the prayer.
- Canon: This is the Greek word for a fixed rule or standard (as in the canon of Scripture). The Roman eucharistic prayer was fixed and stable from the sixth century on. Other than the preface, there are few variations in its text.
- The prayer: The Latin terms, prex, oratio, were used to describe it. Other names are: the prayer of offering, the great prayer, the sacrificial offering, the action.
- Anaphora: A common Greek term for this prayer, it comes from the Greek verb for offering as in sacrifice.
The Eucharistic Prayer

- Eucharistic prayer: This is the title used in the Roman rite today.

Unity of the Eucharistic Prayer
The eucharistic prayer is one prayer, one great prayer of thanksgiving with various parts fulfilling different functions. The analogy of body members used by Paul could apply here also. Only in the context of the total eucharistic prayer are the parts understood clearly. From the opening preface dialogue to the great "Amen," the prayer is one.

An example of this unity is the model eucharistic prayer given by Hippolytus in the Apostolic Tradition. This text, written in Rome about 215, is one long sentence. The narrative of institution is part of it, in a subordinate "who" clause.

Form of the Eucharistic Prayer
The eucharistic prayer is not a collection of individual prayers, as it may seem, but an elaborated form of a biblical and Jewish prayer structure, the berakah (blessing). Praise and thanksgiving are the primary elements, offered as God's wonderful works in the past are remembered and help is requested. The prayer usually concludes with a doxology. This form of blessing, used by the Jewish people in their daily lives, still continues as part of their personal and synagogue prayers.

The eucharistic prayer is a berakah in a developed form. These are some of the elements.

Praise and thanksgiving: The whole prayer is one of giving thanks—this is the meaning of the word, eucharist. We praise the Father for all his works, which we recall, and we offer him the sacrifice of Christ his Son, all for his honour and glory.

Remembering God's wonderful actions: We recall:
- God's work in creation;
- God's work in the realm of salvation:
  - by sending his Son as our Saviour;
  - by what Jesus did at the Last Supper;
  - by his suffering and death;
- God's work of saving us by the paschal mystery, summed up in the death and rising of Jesus.

Offering: We offer to the Father the sacrificial death of Christ his Son, as Christ told us to do, by presenting the bread of life and the cup of eternal salvation. We join our own living sacrifice to that of the Lord and offer this to the Father with Jesus.

Interceding: As members of people of prayer, we intercede for the Church and for the whole world. We continue the prayer of Christ, the high priest, that all will be saved. We pray that the fruits of his death and resurrection will be given to all.

Doxology: This prayer summarizes our act of praise and glory being offered by the Church to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. The assembly acclaims the prayer and makes it its own by a resounding "Amen."

Posture
The normal posture for the early Christians during the eucharistic prayer was to stand, with hands outstretched in the orans position and facing the rising sun (the rising sun was an image of the risen Christ). It was presumed that the assembly assumed the same bodily posture as the presiding minister unless instructed to do
otherwise. Differences in posture first occurred at the blessing, when people stood with bowed heads. This posture was then extended to the presidential prayers, then to the canon, from the Sanctus to the great “Amen.” The Council of Nicaea (325) expressly forbade kneeling on Sundays and during the Easter season.

During the Middle Ages, as the people’s attention shifted from the action of the body of Christ in the liturgy to worship of the reserved sacrament, kneeling (and genuflecting) gradually began to replace bowing as a gesture of reverence. In the 1570 missal the people were to kneel from the Sanctus to the sign of peace on ferials of Advent and Lent, Ember days, vigils of the saints, some Masses for the dead, and in private Masses through all of it except for the gospel. Eventually people made no distinction and knelt through the eucharistic prayer for all Masses.

The reform of Vatican II returned to the original practice of standing during the eucharistic prayer, with the exception of kneeling during the consecration unless prevented from doing so (GIRM, no. 21). Bishops’ conferences could adapt postures, as long as they corresponded to each part of the celebration. Bishops’ conferences in Spain and Italy chose to adopt no. 21 as given (kneeling during the consecration); bishops’ conferences of the Netherlands, Belgium, and France chose to remain standing throughout the eucharistic prayer, and the American bishops chose to direct the assembly to kneel from right after the singing or reciting of the “Holy, holy” to just before the introduction to the Lord’s Prayer. Their reason was to remove one element from the profound changes they would experience in the new order of the Mass.

When questions were raised with Roman authorities regarding the people kneeling from the “Holy, holy” to the end of the prayer, their response was this:

[The] purpose is to ensure uniformity in posture in the assembly celebrating the eucharist as a manifestation of the community’s unity in faith and worship. The people often give the impression immediately after the Sanctus and even more after the consecration by their diverse postures that they are unmindful of being participants in the church’s liturgy, which is the supreme action of the community and not a time for individuals to isolate themselves in acts of private devotion.

An examination of what posture is appropriate for the eucharistic prayer will be fruitful only after people have examined what it is they do in the prayer and how their posture might embody what they are praying and what they believe about themselves.

**Elements of the Eucharistic Prayer**

To these basic elements of the berakah the Church has added several other elements through the centuries. The
GIRM recognizes in every eucharistic prayer eight chief elements, which may vary in their order (no. 55). These are not eight distinct parts but rather elements or a particular focus within a unified whole.

**Thanksgiving:** “Eucharistic prayer” means a prayer of thanksgiving and praise. This element is found especially in the preface (which is not some kind of introduction as the word might indicate but a public proclamation of praise) and continues throughout the prayer. As the presider prays the anaphora in the name of the assembled community, he praises and gives thanks to God through Christ. The whole assembly therefore joins with Christ in recounting God's wonderful works of creation and redemption and in thanking God for what he has done in and through Christ. Through variable prefaces (there are more than eighty) the community is able to express its thanks for some particular aspect of what God has done in Christ for salvation, an aspect which is often connected to a feast or a season.

**Acclamation:** Following the preface the presider and assembly join together in song, a song that embraces heaven and earth. Through the “Holy, holy” all give glory to the Father with the angels and the saints.

**Epiclesis (invocation):** While holding outstretched hands over the bread and wine, the presider asks God the Father to send his Spirit to sanctify these offerings. This epiclesis or “calling down upon” moves the prayer into supplication; the assembly through the presider asks God to first of all transform the gifts of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ and to transform those who partake of the body and blood of Christ, to build up the body of Christ.

Churches of the East and the West have placed different emphasis on the epiclesis; for the Roman rite consecration takes place at the words of institution, and for the Eastern churches the gifts do not become the body and blood of Christ until the presider asks God to send the Spirit to make these offerings holy. Ultimately, the entire eucharistic prayer is consecratory.

**Institution narrative:** The scriptural texts describing the Last Supper come from the liturgical uses of believing communities. The story of the Last Supper is a prayer addressed to God; it is a proclamation, not a dramatization. It is ritual remembering by the Church; the words are the words of the ordained minister of the Church speaking to God in prayer. The words are prayed in the context of the community's having asked God to sanctify the gift by the Spirit, and by doing that, the community is asking God to act according to the new covenant established through Jesus' sacrifice.

**Anamnesis (memorial):** The assembly singing the memorial acclamation, an integral part of the prayer, is a manifestation of its participation in the memorial and a proclamation of joy in the risen Christ. In the memorial prayer that follows, the Church is obedient to the command of Christ, recalling his passion, descent among the dead, resurrection, ascension, and coming in glory. The Church recalls the fullness of the paschal mystery and in doing so makes present the divine blessings here and now.

**Offering:** In the memorial prayer the Church makes what is the offering in the eucharist. In Eucharistic Prayer II
it is phrased this way: "In memory of his death and resurrection, we offer you, Father, this life-giving bread, this saving cup." This offering is made by the entire Church, but especially by the community assembled in faith (GIRM, nos. 74-75). The following are characteristics of this offering:

- Offering Christ: The assembly offers Jesus Christ with the ordained minister who offers him in their name and in the name of the Church. Christ his Son is the only gift that can be truly pleasing to God.

- Offering themselves: Christians also offer themselves in union with Christ. Christians pray that Christ will make them "an everlasting gift" to the Father (Eucharistic Prayer III). Christians give glory to God by offering themselves as living sacrifices, that is, by living in a way pleasing and acceptable to God.

- Union with the Father: Union with God demands obedience in faith and love. It is the Spirit, living in the Christian as his temple, who teaches how to be spiritual people.

- Union through Christ: Jesus is the way, the truth, the life; he is the way to the Father. Growing in union with the Father is done through Christ; that means following him by carrying the cross, serving him by deed and not by lip service only. Through the eucharist God will give the Christian his strength to be true followers of Jesus.

- Union with one another: Growing in union with God, and praying that he will accept the offering of Christians, they have to be seeking an ever-growing love and union with each other. This love will be the sign that they are Christ's (Jn 13.35).

**Intercessions:** The Church is called to be a praying people. Transformed in and bolstered by the Spirit, Christians ask God to remember the Church, praying for all its living members, for the dead, and for peace and salvation for the whole human race. The intercessions follow different arrangements in the eucharistic prayers and repeat in a general way some of the intentions presented in the general intercessions.

**Doxology:** The final words of the eucharistic prayer, the doxology, proclaim once more the whole movement of prayer to the Father, through, with, and in Jesus, a movement possible because of the Holy Spirit. The assembly's "Amen" is the most important acclamation the community sings. In this way the community confirms and approves the action of the eucharistic prayer proclaimed in their name. The acclamation is described by Justin. Augustine said that saying "Amen," a Hebrew word for "So be it," is like putting one's signature to the prayer.

**Eucharistic Prayer I**

A brief history: Known as the Roman canon, this prayer was the only eucharistic prayer used in the Roman Rite for sixteen centuries, from about 375 until 1968. Its text remained fixed during most of that time.

Its origins date back to the time of Ambrose (d. 397) and Pope Damasus I (366-384). It was during this pope's time that the Roman church moved from Greek to Latin in its liturgy. The

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3 At the conclusion of the eucharistic prayer, the doxology is proclaimed, like the rest of the prayer, by the presider alone. Inviting the congregation to join in is contrary to the tradition of the Latin rite. The assembly's participation is the "Amen" which they sing as an affirmation.
Roman canon appeared to have been written in Latin. Ambrose echoed its wording in his mystagogical lectures. (It was Damasus who commissioned St. Jerome to make a new Latin translation of the Scriptures.)

Gregory the Great (590-604) touched up the language of this canon. After his time only a few changes were made but these reflected the decline in understanding of the eucharistic action:

- Silence: For the first five centuries the Church considered the eucharistic prayer a presidential prayer to be proclaimed aloud by the bishop or priest, in the name of the gathered, participating community. In the East in the sixth century and in Spain in the seventh century, a tendency surfaced of saying the eucharistic prayer quietly: it was "too holy" to be heard by the people; this trend grew, and the silent canon remained until 1967. This mentality carried over into other areas; until the end of the last century, it was forbidden to print a vernacular translation of the canon.

- "Through Christ our Lord. Amen": This ending, repeated four times within the silent canon, was added between the ninth and twelfth centuries. Disrupting the unity and flow of the prayer, it shows little understanding of the meaning of communal prayer. The eucharistic prayer is one and should have only one great "Amen." The present rite makes these endings optional; they should be omitted.

- "Or who offer for themselves": Thought to be added by Alcuin, this line showed a significant change in the theology of the canon. This addition makes it sound as if the priest alone is offering the sacrifice whenever he says "we" and that the congregation is offering it for themselves. The "we" in the eucharistic prayer means the whole Church—which is present and offering.

The last changes made to this eucharistic prayer have been in modern times. In 1962 Pope John XXIII added St. Joseph's name to the list of saints—the first addition to a fixed canon. After the reform of Vatican II it is no longer the only eucharistic prayer to be used in the celebration of the eucharist.

The first eucharistic prayer is considered particularly suitable when seasonal inserts are provided. It is also appropriate on Sunday and on the feasts of the forty-one saints mentioned in its commemorations.

**Eucharistic Prayer II**

Introduced in 1968, the second eucharistic prayer is based on the model prayer given by Hippolytus in the *Apostolic Tradition*, which included a description of a typical liturgy of Rome around 215 and the earliest one known. Simplicity and brevity are its characteristics. Some changes were made in the early text to adapt it for use in the Roman rite today; the elements that were added are the *Sanctus*, the intercessions, and a passage linking the *Sanctus* and the institution narrative, a passage which is an epiclesis in character. It is considered a suitable eucharistic prayer for weekdays.

**Eucharistic Prayer III**

This prayer, introduced to the Latin church in 1968, does not have its own preface and can be used with all the prefaces in the missal; this makes it suitable for any time of the liturgical year, particularly on all Sundays and feasts. The text was composed with inspiration drawn from Gallican texts; the author is considered to be Paul VI.
Eucharistic Prayer IV
This anaphora, the third new prayer provided in 1968, follows the example of some Oriental prayers by presenting a long summary of the history of salvation in the section after the preface. It is considered the most theological of all the eucharistic prayers. It retains its own preface, even on days that normally demand a seasonal preface. This anaphora is filled with an atmosphere of joy, which is proper to the eucharistic celebration. It celebrates redemption, which consists in the restoration of unity in Christ.

Other Eucharistic Prayers
Besides the four eucharist prayers, there are now six other eucharistic prayers available for particular circumstances. While they contain the basic elements of Roman eucharistic prayers, they adapt them in ways that could point out a path for future developments.

• The Eucharistic Prayers for Masses with Children: Following the publication of the Directory for Masses with Children in 1973, three new anaphoras for children were promulgated in 1974 for episcopal conferences that had requested them. These anaphoras represent a new direction, that the Latin texts provided are not liturgical texts but are to be seen as models, and the new texts in a given language are not so much translations but adaptations in the vernacular based on the structure provided by the model.

• The Eucharistic Prayers for Masses of Reconciliation: These two anaphoras were promulgated with the Eucharistic Prayers for Masses with Children and were intended for a specific purpose: to be used during the Holy Year 1975, which had reconciliation as its theme. The introduction to these anaphoras states that the prayers were prepared to shed light on aspects of reconciliation so that they may be the object of thanksgiving. Each of the prayers forms a single unit, with a preface that cannot be replaced by another, thus making it inappropriate for celebrations that call for a proper preface. No doubt these anaphoras will be suitable for celebrations focusing on reconciliation in preparation for the Great Jubilee Year 2000.

• Eucharistic Prayer for Masses for Various Needs and Occasions: Approved for use in Canada in December 1995, the anaphora was first approved in 1974 for the Swiss Synod. The text has a preface and intercessions that are variable, and the rest is invariable. (It is the first time that an anaphora has variable intercessions; in this the prayer is unique.) The variable parts have four alternative texts, each one formulating a central theme ("God leads his Church to unity in Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life") in a different way and thus connecting them to the invariable part. Because of this thematic unity, the prefaces cannot be replaced by other prefaces. The titles given to the four variable formulas are a) the Church on the way to unity, b) God guides the Church on the way of salvation, c) Jesus, way to the Father, and d) Jesus, the compassion of God.
The Communion Rite

The communion rite embodies two actions of Jesus: to "break" (at the breaking of bread) and to "give" (in the communion procession).

In the eucharist the Church, an Easter people, shares in the life of the glorious Christ. In the communion rite the assembly shares the table of the kingdom and the victory feast of the Lamb. Hence, this liturgical action is the occasion of the Church's special joy.

The elements that make up the rite are the Lord's Prayer with the sign of peace, the breaking of the bread, and the communion procession.

The Lord's Prayer

Jesus gave Christians more than a prayer formula when he taught his disciples to pray (Mt 6.13, Lk 11.2-4); he gave them the right to address God as their beloved Father. The prayer is found in the Didache, which is probably about as old as the gospel texts.

In the Mass: In the early centuries, after the eucharistic prayer was concluded by the people's acclamation, the great "Amen," the holy bread was broken and presider and people received communion under both forms.

The Lord's Prayer seems to have been introduced into the celebration of the eucharist in the late fourth century. St. John Chrysostom, Cyril, and Ambrose mentioned it, and Augustine spoke of it on several occasions. At first it was said after the breaking of bread, just before communion. For Augustine, and later for Aquinas, the praying of the Lord's Prayer sincerely was an occasion of forgiveness. It thus served

in the eucharist as a moment of purification (see 1 Cor 11.28).

Gregory the Great (590-604) moved the Lord's Prayer to its present place, just after the eucharistic prayer, at the beginning of the rites preparing for communion. In Rome it was said by the priest alone, while in other places it was said by the people.

Today, the Lord's Prayer is the people's prayer in preparation for communion. The community is invited to join the presider in singing or saying the prayer. As in the early centuries, the Church continues to see a reference to the eucharist in the petition for daily bread (GIRM, nos. 16, 21, 56a, 110).

The Church prays the Lord's Prayer publicly three times a day: at morning prayer, in the eucharist, and at evening prayer.

Embolism: The final petition of the Lord's Prayer has been expanded into another prayer in both East (except in Byzantine rites) and West. It seems to have been present, in a simpler form, during the fifth century. During the Middle Ages, saints' names were added, but these were removed in 1969 and an eschatological phrase from Titus 2.13 was added.

Until 1964, the fraction or breaking of the bread took place during the silent recitation of this prayer. This action has now been made a separate rite once more so that it stand out more clearly.
Doxology: The concluding acclamation, “For the kingdom ....,” is also included in the Didache and in some Greek manuscripts of Matthew’s gospel—a sign of the influence of the liturgy on the formation of some scripture passages. Restored to the Roman rite in 1969, it has long been used in the Byzantine Divine Liturgy as the conclusion of the Lord’s Prayer.

Greeting of Peace
The letters in the New Testament contain references to a holy kiss as a sign of Christian love (Rom 16.16; 1 Cor 16.20; 2 Cor 13.12; 1 Thess 5.26; 1 Pet 5.14). This gesture was incorporated into the liturgy. Both Justin (150) and Hippolytus (215) described it; in Rome it took place after the prayer of the faithful and could be exchanged only among believers.

When celebrated at the end of the liturgy of the word, before the gifts are brought to the altar, the kiss of peace is seen as a sign of the reconciliation required before offering sacrifice, as commanded by Jesus (Mt 5.23-24, 14.1-2). It is found in this position in most liturgies today.

During the fourth century, Rome changed the position of the kiss of peace to make it a rite of reconciliation before communion. Augustine made a reference to the Christians giving the sign of peace by a holy kiss after the Lord’s Prayer.

The kiss of peace was frequently reserved for those who would be going to communion. By the tenth century it was the practice for the kiss of peace to be given by the bishop to those around the altar, and they in turn passed it down to the people. In thirteenth-century England a “pax-board” was kissed and passed from one person to another.

The laity were eventually excluded from the kiss, and it remained a clerical preserve until 1969. The meaning of the rite was rarely discussed.

Today the rite of peace is a genuine exchange of the peace of Christ; it is not a gesture of welcome. It has been strengthened by beginning it with a prayer based on Jn 14.25, a greeting, and an invitation for all to exchange a greeting of peace as a sign of mutual love (GIRM, nos. 56b, 112, 136, 194). This exchange is an act of profound ritual significance. Though its form and position have varied through the centuries, the intention and emphasis of the sign of peace have remained constant: it is a seal and pledge of the fellowship and unity of the Spirit, found in the bond of peace.

Breaking of the Bread
The breaking of the bread is so significant that this was the earliest name given to the eucharist. The unity of the world in Christ, the sacramental effect of communion, is symbolized by the one table, the one bread broken and shared by all, and the one cup, likewise shared by all.

At the Last Supper Christ broke bread before giving it to his disciples. The first Christians recognized him in the breaking of bread (Lk 23.30,35). Paul spoke of the unity of the body of Christ, the Church, and the sharing in one loaf (1 Cor 10.16--17). The breaking of bread was necessary, for one loaf was blessed (consecrated) and had to be broken so that all could eat of it. The symbolic nature of this gesture combined happily with the practical need of breaking.

Before the time of Gregory the Great, the breaking of the bread came immediately after the eucharistic prayer.
The Communion Rite

When he inserted the Lord’s Prayer, the breaking of the bread followed. During the eighth-century papal Mass, the rite was elaborate, with the pope presiding from his seat as bishops, priests, and deacons broke the bread for communion.

The changeover to unleavened bread, beginning in the West in the ninth century, resulted in a smaller bread for the presider. In the tenth century smaller breads for the people were introduced, effectively ending the symbolism of the rite of breaking bread for the next thousand years. Signs of the cross and kisses for various allegorical reasons were added in the Middle Ages and removed in 1570.

Today the rite is restored to its original meaning, but it appears to be trying to do three things at once: emphasize the symbolism of the breaking of the bread, retaining the use of unleavened bread, and to be practical about the use of small breads for communion (GIRM, nos. 56c, 113, 283).

Commingling: The rite of dropping a particle of the consecrated bread into the chalice was considered to be a sign of the Lord’s resurrection in fourth-century Syria. It was introduced into the papal Mass early in the eighth century, possibly by Pope Sergius I (of Syrian origin). The formula was changed by the Council of Trent due to Reformers’ arguments about communion under both forms.

Today the gesture has no significance attached to it, with only a silent prayer formula.

Lamb of God: Found in the Syrian rite, it was introduced by Pope Sergius I (687–701) in the Roman rite; it was sung during the lengthy breaking of the bread for communion. The song echoes the New Testament phrases of Christ as the Lamb of God (Jn 1.29), the passover or paschal Lamb (1 Cor 5.7; Jn 19.36) who was victorious over death (Rev 5.6–14).

Today the chant in litany form is sung while the breaking of the bread is going on, a sign that the Church desires a real breaking of real bread once more (GIRM, nos. 56e, 113).

Private prayers for the priest before communion were included from the ninth century on, with varied texts during the Middle Ages and fixed at three in 1570. Today there are two private prayers, of which one is to be selected. The rite emphasizes that they are private, and hence are to be said silently.

Communion Procession
Sharing in the holy food and drink of the paschal feast is the goal of the entire celebration. It seals the covenantal dialogue of the liturgy of the word and the eucharistic prayer. It involves both God’s initiative and the communicant’s response.

Invitation to communion: After genuflecting, the presider holds the broken bread and invites the people to communion, using words based on Jn 1.29 and Rev 19.9. Presider and assembly say a prayer developed from Mt 8.8.

– Gradual development: There is no sign of these rites in the early centuries. The genuflection is first mentioned in the fourteenth century. The “Lord, I am not worthy” has been in use since the tenth century. The 1570 missal provided a Confiteor, “Behold the Lamb …” and the “Lord, I am not worthy …” (recited three times).
Communion by the presider: The priest says a quiet prayer before he eats and drinks of the sacred banquet. In the first centuries the priest simply consumed some of the consecrated elements. Various prayer texts for his communion began to appear around 1050. In 1570 these were simplified to a petition, a psalm prayer, and another brief prayer before the chalice. The present rite omits the psalm text.

Giving communion: The minister of communion gives the eucharistic bread using the brief formula, “The body of Christ,” and when offering the cup, “The blood of Christ.” The communicant answers “Amen” each time. This response is an act of faith, while the participants are invited to reflect on the rich meaning of the words, “The body of Christ.” The reference is not only to the “holy bread for holy people” that is being shared but also the members of the body of Christ who have come to share this bread.

– In history: At the Last Supper, Jesus told his apostles to take and eat and drink and gave them the sacred food. Justin (about 150) spoke of the deacons distributing portions of the gifts over which thanks had been offered and that the people received this food as the body and blood of Jesus. The first formulas for communion were included by Hippolytus (215); at the Easter vigil the bishop broke the bread and gave a fragment to the neophyte, saying: “The heavenly bread in Christ Jesus.” The neophyte answered, “Amen.” A trinitarian formula accompanied the tasting of the three cups (water, milk mixed with honey, and the consecrated wine), with the neophyte’s response, also a trinitarian formula. A great variety of formulas were used in the following thirteen centuries; in the 1570 missal the formula retained was: “May the body of our Lord Jesus Christ keep your soul unto life everlasting. Amen.”

In 1964 the fourth-century practice was restored, including the formulas.

The procession: This procession, restored in the present rite, is one of the key actions in the eucharistic liturgy. It is accompanied by singing and thus expresses the unity and the joy of the assembly.

In the past, various practices have been followed: going right up to the altar (from the fourth to the eighth centuries), receiving in their places, at a side altar in front of the railing, or going to the railing. After the eighth century the laity was generally excluded from the sanctuary.

Today the railing is no longer mentioned in liturgy documents. Already in the time of Augustine the railing marked the sanctuary, and the people approached the railing for communion. In Europe, as long as people stood for communion, the railing was chest height; when kneeling was introduced, the railings were made lower. The communion cloth was used in some places in the thirteenth century.

Posture: The early Church received communion standing. The practice of kneeling developed and spread in the Western Church from the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries. (Even then, standing was the normal position for receiving from the chalice.) Today, the posture suggested by the GIRM is standing (no. 21).

Sharing in the sacrifice: The Church very much desires that people receive communion from bread consecrated during the celebration in which they
participate. This was true in the 1570 missal and in Pius XII’s encyclical, *Mediator Dei* (1947). Vatican II called this “the more perfect form of participation” (*CSL*, no. 55); this instruction was repeated several times (*GIRM*, no. 56h). This has not yet become the normal practice in many parishes.

**Communion in the hand:** This was the Church’s practice from the beginning until the ninth century, when unleavened bread came into use and when a change was taking place in the direction of eucharistic devotion. Cyril of Jerusalem (fourth century) gave a detailed description of the left hand making a throne for the right to receive the body of Christ. The traditional practice was restored in Canada in 1970. Now it is the communicant who has the right to decide whether to receive the eucharistic bread in the hand or on the tongue.

**Communion under both forms:** Jesus commanded his apostles to eat and to drink in his memory. Communion under both forms is the tradition of the Church, but it was interrupted in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, restored in some countries in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but withdrawn again in 1621.

Communion from the cup is now again restored; communion under both forms expresses more completely the sign of the eucharistic banquet (*GIRM*, no. 240). Some, however, have resisted this full symbolic action. Drinking from a common cup (the action which truly responds to Christ’s command: Take and drink) gives some concern for hygienic reasons. Studies indicate that the possibility of infections spread through the use of a common cup are minimal, especially when ministers of the cup take care to cleanse the vessel each time. Some see a solution to this “danger” by taking the wine by intinction (dipping the eucharistic bread into the wine). This practice has never been accepted in the Western Church, particularly dipping by the communicant. The gesture in receiving communion is exactly that: receiving. The communicant receives the cup in order to share in the blood of Christ. The practice of intinction bypasses this gesture.

**Ablutions:** It is not until the ninth century that directives are laid down for cleansing the chalice: the deacon or subdeacon washed it with water. Wine came into use in the ablution in the eleventh century, washing the fingers in the eighth century, and drinking the ablutions in 1256. Gradually this became the norm.

Today, the recommendation is that the washing of the vessels be done at the credence table by the presider or deacon, either after communion or after the celebration. (The latter would seem preferable, allowing the presider a further moment of silent prayer.) See *GIRM*, nos. 120, 237–39.

**Communion Song**

The tradition of singing a psalm with the refrain sung by the people was first mentioned in the fourth and fifth centuries, when it was common to sing Psalm 34 (especially because of verse 8: “O taste and see”). Augustine made reference to the singing of psalms during the communion procession that was introduced in North Africa in his time.

The communion song is one of the more important pieces of liturgical music; it is a processional song to
accompany the procession, and according to the GIRM, is to start as soon as the presider is about to receive communion (nos. 56i, 119). A psalm with a refrain that the people sing as they go to communion is recommended; in any case, a communion song which has a refrain that the assembly can sing easily will likely elicit the best participation.

Silent Prayer

Periods of silent prayer throughout the celebration of the eucharist are integral elements in the restored liturgy of Vatican II. One of these periods is after communion; it is a time for presider and assembly to reflect together.

The GIRM provides an alternative: singing a psalm or a hymn of praise (nos. 56j, 121).

Prayer after Communion

This prayer came into the Roman liturgy during the second half of the fifth century, between the time of Leo I (440–61) and Gelasius I (492–96). One of the three presidential prayers, it is in the form of a collect. Its early names included prayer after communion and prayer at the conclusion. Alcuin (c. 735–804) called it the post-communion prayer; this name remained in use until modern times. During the Middle Ages the number multiplied, corresponding to the number of collects used.

Today the ancient title has been restored, and only one prayer is used in each celebration. A time of silence follows the invitation, “Let us pray.” (If there has been no time of silence before the invitation to pray, the period of silence is more substantial.) It is not a prayer of thanksgiving but one in which the church asks God to grant the effects of the eucharist to God’s people. The assembly expresses assent by acclaiming an “Amen.” (The appropriate time for a personal thanksgiving is during the time of silence.)

The celebration of the eucharist ends with a brief rite that closes the eucharist and sends the assembly forth with God’s blessing and the mission to carry the good news of Christ to the world. It consists of a greeting, a blessing and a dismissal. Sometimes brief announcements regarding the affairs of the community take place before these rites begin.

Concluding Rites

Final Blessing

One New Testament account of Christ’s ascension describes him raising his hands and blessing his disciples as he was taken up into heaven (Lk 24.50-51). In Hippolytus’ time (215) a teacher, whether lay or cleric, completed a period of instruction for catechumens by placing a hand on them, praying for them, and then dismissing...
them. The Gallican liturgy before Charlemagne had a solemn blessing after the Lord's prayer as a dismissal of those who were not going to communion. In the papal Mass of the early eighth century, the pope blessed people silently as he was going out in procession after the solemn dismissal. A text for the final blessing by a priest appeared in the thirteenth century, for the bishop in the fourteenth. In the 1570 missal the text of the blessing was included, but placed after the dismissal.

Today, three forms for the blessing are provided; the dismissal follows.

- Simple blessing: The presider blesses the assembly in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit. The assembly responds with an “Amen.”

- Solemn blessing: The deacon invites the people to bow, and the presider proclaims a blessing which varies according to the season or feast. The assembly answers “Amen” after each invocation. The presider concludes with a simple blessing.

- Prayer over the people: A prayer or collect is prayed, to which the assembly answers “Amen.” The presider concludes this form with a simple blessing.

The Dismissal

The importance of the dismissal is reflected in the history of the Roman liturgy. At certain times in its history there have been three dismissals: the dismissal of the catechumens, the dismissal of the penitents, and the dismissal of the faithful. These dismissals were so significant that by the fourth century the eucharist itself came to be called “the dismissal,” the missa, the Mass, from the Latin dismissal, ite, missa est. The name is still in use.

By 800 the Franks were using another formula, “Let us bless the Lord.” The community's response to both was “Thanks be to God.” These two forms were assigned for various seasons and types of celebrations by the eleventh century. A special form was used in Masses for the dead from the twelfth century until the present reform.

Today, the English sacramentary has three forms in order to bring out its fullness a little more clearly. The deacon sings or says the dismissal.

The dismissal links the assembly's celebration and its mission in the world. It is the dramatic sending forth of the assembly on its work of witness, evangelization and catechesis, and of extending God's love to the whole world.

Before leaving the altar, the presider salutes it by a kiss, a sign of reverence and respect similar to the kiss at the beginning of the eucharistic celebration. (GIRM, no. 125).

No closing procession has ever been mentioned in the rite. It appears to have been the practice for the assembly simply to leave in an informal manner. This informal kind of departure may be seen as the natural thing for a household to do at the end of a celebration. Instrumental music or a final song is often used, however; a hymn that speaks of the Church's mission or a general or seasonal hymn is suitable.
Helpful Reading

The following are some of the many books available on the historical, theological, and pastoral aspects of the eucharist and its celebration.


Theme Masses

The use of themes in liturgical celebrations as a way of enriching them surfaced, according to Archbishop Annibale Bugnini, already before the Second Vatican Council. Archbishop Bugnini, who was the secretary for the Concilium that implemented the reform of the liturgy requested by the council and of the Congregation for Divine Worship until 1975, commented on the use of themes in an article in Notitiae (November-December 1975, nos. 111-12).

The use of themes (one liturgical commission had prepared a series of theme Masses for each of the Sundays) was never sanctioned by the council, he said. He called the theme Mass a "distortion." The reasons for his opposition are:

- they do not respect the liturgical year;
- the texts and readings have such great richness on their own;
- a theme is a form of imposition on the entire community;
- for particular circumstances or need there may already be an appropriate text which can be chosen when rubrics permit;
- creating new texts is an injustice to the people of God who have a right to participate in the authentic prayer of the Church;
- there are places in the liturgy where personal interventions are appropriate: the general intercessions, the homily, the music, and perhaps the collects as well.

He warns against the superficiality of our time and wanting everything ready immediately. The urge to be creative may be only a need for novelty, he said.
Places for Ad Libitum Remarks in the Eucharistic Celebration

Mark G. Boyer

The Roman Missal of Pope Paul VI contains the rubrics which indicate where the presider may speak ad libitum. Sometimes the rubrics concerning brief ad libitum remarks become occasions for mini-homilies. From time to time, it is helpful for presiders to review the rubrics governing the places for ad libitum remarks in the Mass.

But the way any of these introductions is presented must respect the character proper to each and not turn into a sermon or homily. There must be a concern for brevity and the avoidance of a wordiness that would bore the participants.

The letter also states:

Among the possibilities for further accommodating any individual celebration, it is important to consider the admonitions.... These enable the people to be drawn into a fuller understanding of the sacred action, or any of its parts, and lead them into a true spirit of participation. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal entrusts the more important admonitions to the priest for preparation and use.

As can be seen from the quotation above, the purpose of the presider using brief remarks is to draw the people into a deeper participation in worship. Longer remarks have the potential to either bore the participants or to "become tedious."

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Places for Ad Libitum Remarks in the Eucharistic Celebration • Mark G. Boyer

The Greeting

According to the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (hereafter GIRM), the first place for the use of an ad libitum remark is after the opening greeting of the Mass. The presider should keep in mind that the entrance song, greeting, penitential rite, Kyrie, Gloria, and the opening prayer or collect “have the character of a beginning, introduction, and preparation” (GIRM, par. 24).

There is no option presented for changing the greeting found in the Roman Missal. One of the three forms given in the “Order of Mass with a Congregation” in the Sacramentary (Hereafter OMC-S) is to be used (cf. OMC-S, p. 416). This is a formal liturgical greeting. To say, “Good morning,” or “Good evening,” before or after the liturgical greeting, or to substitute some other type of welcome, declares that the presider is uncomfortable with his role and the words assigned to him. He is saying to the assembly that the ritual doesn’t work and that his words are better than those of the rite.

The proper place for “Good morning” is at the church door as the people are arriving to join in worship and become a community. Instead of greeting people after the celebration is finished, the presider might try standing at the doors of the church fifteen minutes before the service is scheduled to begin. By wishing people “Good morning” or “Good evening,” he not only welcomes the members of the gathering assembly, but he also clears the way for the proper use of the liturgical greeting.

The GIRM makes clear the purpose of the liturgical greeting: “… Through his greeting the priest declares to the assembled community that the Lord is present. This greeting and the congregation’s response express the mystery of the gathered Church (par. 28).

Introduction to the Mass of the Day

After the greeting, the priest may make comments introducing the faithful to the day’s Mass. Those comments are to be “very brief” (GIRM, par. 11). According to the circular letter mentioned above, those comments are “to be prepared and spoken by the priest.”

The GIRM expands this by saying that another qualified minister may make the opening comments: “After greeting the congregation, the priest or other qualified minister may very briefly introduce the faithful to the Mass of the day” (par. 29; cf. par. 86). The emphasis is placed on preparing the introductory comments so that they remain brief.

Introduction to the Penitential Rite

After introducing the Mass of the day, “the priest invites [the faithful] to take part in the penitential rite, which the entire community carries out through a communal confession and which the priest’s absolution brings to an end” (GIRM, par. 29).

The rubric in the “Order of Mass with a Congregation” (hereafter OMC) states that “... the priest invites the people to recall their sins and to repent of them in silence. He may use these or similar words” (OMC-S), p. 417). Then, three possible introductory forms

1 Sacramentary (Ottawa, Canada: Canadian Catholic Conference, 1974, 1983).
are given. A footnote on the same page states: “At the discretion of the priest, other words which seem more suitable under the circumstances ... may be used.”

The three models given in the OMC illustrate both brevity and the purpose of the introduction to the penitential rite. First, each of the three models is short, consisting of no more than three lines. Second, each of the three models exhorts the faithful to acknowledge sinfulness, to ask God for forgiveness, and to prepare to celebrate the sacred mysteries. Any brief ad libitum introduction to the penitential rite should contain those same three elements.

Invitation to Pray Before the Opening Prayer

For the opening prayer, the priest first invites the people to pray, either with the simple “Let us pray” or with the expanded invitation given for the alternative opening prayer found in the sacramentary. In the current edition of the sacramentary, the longer invitatory has been given for the opening prayers on Sundays and certain feasts. It is placed immediately before the prayer to indicate that it accompanies the use of the alternative opening prayer.

This invitatory or invitation to pray serves as a type of monito which the priest or other minister may employ to introduce or conclude—in very few words—different parts of the Mass. It is a model of how brief ad libitum statements ought to be.

It is used so that in the period of silence which follows the people may form their own petitions. The brief expansion of the invitatory structures the silence and helps to focus on the petitionary character of the opening prayer.

During the Liturgy of the Word

The Introduction of the Lectionary for Mass (second edition, 1981; hereafter LM) states, “The one presiding is responsible for preparing the faithful for the liturgy of the word on occasion by means of introductions before the readings. These comments can help the gathered assembly toward a better hearing of the word of God, because they enliven the people’s faith and their desire for good” (par. 42).

The GIRM reaffirms this: The priest “may give the faithful a very brief introduction ... to the liturgy of the word (before the readings)” (par. 111).

The priest “may also carry out this responsibility through other persons, the deacon, for example, or a commentator” (LM, par. 42). The commentator is the minister who “provides explanations and commentaries with the purpose of introducing the faithful to the celebration and preparing them to understand it better. The commentator’s remarks must be meticulously prepared and marked by a simple brevity” (GIRM, par. 68a).

While a brief introduction to a reading or readings might be needed “on occasion,” regular use of this option would have the tendency to overpower the word of God itself. More words detract from what is being said. Fewer words call attention to what is being said. The possibility exists that the faithful’s attention might become focused on the introductions to the readings rather than on the readings themselves. The best way to keep this from happening is to insure that there are periods of silence, as stated in the rubrics in the lectionary, between readings so that people have an opportunity to digest one reading at a time.
General Intercessions

"It belongs to the priest celebrant to direct the general intercessions, by means of a brief introduction to invite the congregation to pray, and after the intercessions to say the concluding prayer" (GIRM, par. 47; cf. OMC–S, p. 423). "In the general intercessions or prayer of the faithful, the people exercising their priestly functions, intercede for all humanity" (GIRM, par. 45). Sample formulas for the general intercessions, including brief introductions and concluding prayers, are given in the sacramentary (pp. 1040-52). Models of general formulae and formulae for Advent, Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Ordinary Time, and Masses for the Dead are provided.

Each introduction consists of a general statement concerning the seasonal mystery being celebrated with an admonition to the faithful to join together in prayer. Such brief introductions should be models for ad libitum introductions. Also, the models in the sacramentary reflect the sequence which should be followed for the intentions: “a) for the needs of the Church; b) for public authorities and the salvation of the world; c) for those oppressed by any need; d) for the local community” (GIRM, par. 46).

The sample formulae give models for the prayer which concludes the general intercessions. Each one is brief and follows a fourfold pattern: a) address (usually to the “Father”); b) a stated attribute of God (such as “our refuge and our strength” or “you know the many different needs your people have in this life”); c) a petition (“hear our prayer”); and d) a short conclusion (“we ask this through Christ our Lord”). This brief and succinct pattern should be used for the concluding prayer of the general intercessions. The conclusion to the prayer is very important, since it is the cue for the people to “make the prayer their own and give their assent by the acclamation, Amen” (GIRM, par. 32). If a conclusion such as “we ask this through Jesus our brother” or “we pray in the spirit of peace” is used, the people do not get their ritual cue and cannot make their response. Other short conclusions, which will elicit the faithful’s response, for concluding prayers are given in the GIRM, par. 32.

Since the presider must compose this prayer himself, he should note the conclusions to the prayers: “in the name of Jesus the Lord,” “through Christ our Lord,” and “for ever and ever.” Any one of the three conclusions will readily elicit the faithful’s response to the concluding prayer of the general intercessions.

Invitation to Prayer over the Gifts

The prayer over the gifts has its own invitatory (“Pray, brethren …”). No optional expansion of the invitation to pray is provided. However, regarding the address in this invitatory, the following is given: “At the discretion of the priest, other words which seem more suitable under the circumstances, such as ‘friends, dearly beloved, my brothers and sisters,’ may be used” (OMC–S, p. 425).

Before Beginning the Eucharistic Prayer

The presider “may give the faithful a very brief introduction … to the eucharistic prayer (before the preface)” (GIRM, par. 11). No model comments are given for this type of “brief introduction.”
However, following the GIRM, an introduction at this point should emphasize that the eucharistic prayer, “a prayer of thanksgiving and sanctification,” is “the centre and summit of the entire celebration” (par. 54).

“The meaning of the prayer is that the entire congregation joins itself to Christ in acknowledging the great things God has done and in offering the sacrifice (GIRM, par. 54). In a comment, the presider might exhort the faithful “to listen in silent reverence” and “to take part through the acclamations” (GIRM, par. 55) of the eucharistic prayer.

Introduction to the Lord’s Prayer

The 1973 circular letter of the Congregation for Divine Worship states: “Prominence should also be given to those introductions that the Order of Mass provides for certain rites, for example, the introduction to ... the Lord’s Prayer. By [its] very nature such [an] introduction does not require that [it] be given verbatim in the form [it has] in the missal; consequently it may well be helpful, at least in certain cases, to adapt [it] to the actual situation of a community.”

The sacramentary gives four forms of introduction (OMC–S, p. 618) to the Lord’s Prayer, which is the first part of the communion rite and leads “directly to the communion of the people” (GIRM, par. 56). The presider’s ad libitum introduction should be modeled on these forms, which consist of an “invitation to pray ... both for daily food, which for Christians means also the eucharistic bread, and for the forgiveness of sin, so that what is holy may be given to those who are holy” (GIRM, par. 56a). Of course, the introduction should also be brief.

Prayer after Communion

The prayer after communion either concludes the silent prayer, which followed the communion of the people or the silence following the presider’s invitation, “Let us pray.” This prayer functions as the concluding prayer of the communion rite and the liturgy of the eucharist.

No expanded invitatory is presented for the prayer after communion; “Let us pray” suffices.

Announcements

The concluding rite begins immediately after the people’s response of “Amen” to the prayer after communion. The comments concluding the whole rite before the dismissal should consist of “brief announcements” (OMC–S, p. 623) which are considered to be of importance for the community. Certainly, this is not a time to read the bulletin to the people. However, items that may have been omitted from the bulletin may be announced as well as events taking place immediately after the conclusion of the celebration. Either the presider or another minister may make the brief announcements.

Blessing

After the announcements, the presider gives the formal liturgical greeting, “The Lord be with you,” and the people respond. “On certain days and occasions” the blessing “is expanded and expressed in the prayer over the people or another more solemn formulary” (GIRM, par. 57a). When the option of a prayer over the people or a special blessing is chosen, after the presider’s formal liturgical greeting, the deacon gives the invitation: “Bow your heads and pray for God’s blessing.” He may also use similar words. In the
absence of a deacon, the priest gives the invitation. He too may use similar words, that is, an admonition to the people to ask God to bless them in a special way.

The “priest ... extends his hands over the people while he sings or says the solemn blessing or prayer over the people” (OMC–S, pp. 625, 636).

The solemn blessing is usually divided into three parts or verses to each of which the people answer “Amen,” while the prayer over the people is in the style of a collect, to which the people also respond “Amen” (cf. OMC–S, pp. 636–640). Since the prayer over the people has a conclusion like other presidential prayers, the people will respond readily. In other words, they are given their ritual cue and respond accordingly.

However, special attention is needed in the case of the solemn blessings, since the people will be unfamiliar with the style and the text. The priest should try to invite and encourage response by the inflection of his voice. In the absence of a fixed formula for concluding each of the verses, the tone or stress of the priest’s voice must indicate the moment for the common response. This is best done by singing, as the tone can cue a sung “Amen” from the people.

**Conclusion**

More than ever a great sensitivity is needed toward understanding how important it is in a world bombarded by words that the celebration of the eucharist not become another similar occasion. “Since by nature the celebration of Mass has the character of being the act of a community, both the dialogues between celebrant and congregation and the acclamations take on special value; they are not simply outward signs of the community’s celebration, but the means of great communion between priest and people” (GIRM, par. 14).

“The acclamations and the response to the priest’s greeting and prayers create a degree of the active participation that the gathered faithful must contribute in every form of the Mass, in order to express clearly and to further the entire community’s involvement” (GIRM, par. 15).

If the introductions to various parts of the Mass and other ad libitum comments are not kept brief, then active participation by the faithful is curtailed.

There is no need for presiders to re-invent the wheel. Sample introductions are given throughout the sacramentary. There is ample room for creativity within predetermined boundaries.
Brief Book Reviews

**Child of God**, by Gertrud Mueller Nelson, illustrated by Annika Maria Nelson (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1997); spiral bound; 62 pp. $15 US.

The full title of this attractive little book is *A Book of Birthdays and Days in between for the Child of God*. It is intended to give parents a place to record not only the events of an arrival and the growth of a new child but also the dreams, hopes, and fears that surround the waiting, the birth, and the significant events in the life of a child. The extended family has significance, with several pages available to give at least some information on the family tree.

The pages of the book provide space and ideas for collecting things, from a birth announcement to the child's drawings. Writing to the child is encouraged as are rituals celebrated by the family. Most of the pages include a short sentence or two from Scripture or traditional prayers that can be taught to the child. And when the book seems full and there is nothing more to add, it can be put away and some fifteen years later presented to the young adult as a source of the stories and memories that surround the early years of his or her life.

This book is worth considering as a gift on the part of family members, sponsors, friends, or perhaps the parish community, for the parents of a new baby.

**Preparing the General Intercessions**, by Michael Kwatera, OSB (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996); 63 pp.; $5.95 U.S.

This booklet is not just another collection of general intercessions; it is intended to assist those who take seriously the task of making these prayers truly the prayer of the community that is assembled. It is a guide for preparing them "from scratch," and at the same offering samples and patterns that will be useful to the one composing them.

The booklet contains some history, theological reflections, a discussion on the form, and some practical suggestions, such as what should be included and what should be absent, and the benefits of singing them. There is as well a method suggested, and some commentary with the samples given.

This book is pastoral in tone and would be an excellent resource for parish liturgy committees to help them understand the nature and importance of the general intercessions and to give to those who are designated to compose the parish's prayer of the faithful.

**The Essential Guardini: An Anthology of the Writing of Romano Guardini**, selected by Heinz R. Kuehn (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1997); $16 U.S.

Those interested in symbolism in the liturgy might will have read Romano Guardini's book, *Sacred Signs*, and perhaps *The Spirit of the Liturgy*. Others may have read *The Lord*. However, these books represent only a fraction of the volume and the scope of Guardini's writing.

Heinz Kuehn, who selected the material and wrote an introduction with a summary of Guardini's life, knew him...
personally and moved in his circles during the Nazi regime in Germany. Kuehn considers Guardini influential as a Catholic thinker on a broad level and includes material that comments on the world, on life today and tomorrow, on the message of salvation, on faith and doubt, and on the Church. On the liturgy itself he includes selections that discuss the relationship of the congregation and the Church, the prayer of the liturgy, the playfulness and the seriousness of the liturgy, and the symbolism of liturgy, as well as individual "sacred signs."

These excerpts give a picture of Guardini's Weltanschauung (world view) which is at the same time a context for his reflections on the liturgy. Perhaps the greatest value in this book is the snapshot it gives of the kind of writing on what the Church is and what the liturgy is that went on several decades before the Second Vatican Council occurred. For its time the writing must have seemed prophetic; it is still relevant today.

Leading the Assembly in Prayer: A Practical Guide for Lay and Ordained Presiders, by Michael J. Begolly (San Jose, California: Resource Publications, Inc., 1997); 152 pp., $17.95 U.S.

This book is intended for those who are beginning the ministry of leading their community's prayer, but it will also provide an opportunity for those involved for some time to review the basic skills and to engage in some theological reflection on their ministry. Part One of the book includes a chapter on the liturgical assembly as the context for the ministry, another on the ministry itself, on preparing to preside, and on a spirituality for presiders. Part Two gives in some detail the practical aspects of presiding at the Sunday eucharist, at Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest, at liturgy of the word with children, and for several rites from the Order of Christian Funerals. An appendix gives a formation process for presiders, a process based on methodology appropriate for adult learning.

The author manages to cover much ground in this little volume, and the book will be a good resource for anyone responsible for helping presiders to prepare as well as for presiders themselves.


Those who found the first edition of this book helpful will want to know that the basic premise of the revised edition has not changed: that liturgy is to be prepared, not planned. The contents also are much the same: some basic principles about worship and ritual, the necessity of preparation, some pastoral issues, and several chapters on the spirituality of and reflections for liturgical ministers. One new chapter has been added, "Negotiating the Rite," in which he discusses the need to prepare the liturgy within the parameters of the liturgical books and not with the mindset that "anything goes."

This book is intended for those who are new-comers to the preparation of liturgy, but it will also be a helpful resource for those who have been involved for some time. The balance of theological and spiritual insights with practical ideas, even a suggestion for patron saints for those preparing for worship, makes it a good tool.
RESOURCES FOR THE JUBILEE YEAR 2000

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