

## Confirmation Notes

The Lord be with you!

First time I heard this greeting was as a sophomore or Junior at Wheaton College. Dr. Webber. He began the first class with "The Lord be With You" – and I had no idea how to respond.

You see, I grew up in a tradition that was skeptical about churches that did the same thing every week... I assumed it became an exercise in just "going through the motions" and that it would all become very rote and meaningless. It's hard for me to believe now that I ever had that view, because this form of worship has become so important to me. And the more I learn about it, the more I love it.

Dr. Webber went on to explain that that worship is really a celebration. I assumed he meant "yay God". But I was wrong. Let's talk about what "celebration" really is:

What are some common things we celebrate in our culture? Let's take birthdays for example. How do we celebrate someone? We have certain rituals, we gather together, we tell stories, we reminisce. I bet there are some of you here who know the story of your birth or how you came to be part of your family. Perhaps a parent has told you about the day you were born... Perhaps that it a story that is told and re-told each year on your birthday.

Think about other celebrations: graduations – you get together with friends and talk about a really hard class you had, or a teacher you didn't like, or memories from a team or music group you were part of.

Well, worship is the same principle. It is celebration through story telling. And the way we do that in our Anglican tradition is through liturgy (or "work of the people") that has been given to us in the Book of Common Prayer.

So: Worship > Celebration of Christ > Telling stories > Liturgy.

So why is understanding liturgy in this way – as "story" important?

Because narrative structure conveys meaning.

Like a story, liturgy has a plot in which key characters experience a conflict or crisis.

Something happens which the characters learn something they didn't know before and thus they are changed. And that change empowers them to resolve the crisis or conflict.

So in Rom Com, for example, a typical plot is boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl back. But before he gets the girl back, something happens that gives him new insight, and he becomes a better person.

So what is the story that our liturgy tells? It is the story of salvation.

God made us

We blew it by sinning

God provides a way to for us to get back to him (Jesus)

In-between phase – the Old Testament - God tries ~~by~~ many things to get us back. The stories of Abraham, Isaac, the escape from Egypt, the Flood, etc... are all stories within the story that describe God's attempts to bring us back to him.

The incarnation is the last of these stories within the larger story. God gives humanity the insight needed to become faithful to God. The crucifixion/resurrection event is the climax of the story in which we are fully restored to intimacy with God.

Liturgy is a way of telling and retelling the story of Salvation. It's the same story every time, though sometimes we emphasize certain parts of the story more than others.

Two ways our liturgy tells the Story of Salvation are through the Church/Liturgical Calendar and the Saturday evening service which includes the Eucharist. Today we're going to look at both of these, in light of this idea of story, pausing when we get to the Nicene Creed for a bit more in depth explanation.

The Liturgical Calendar: HAND OUTS

What is the Liturgical Calendar?

The Liturgical calendar provides an overarching plot line, or metanarrative. It's the larger story.

GO TO THE LITURGICAL CALENDAR NOTES and HANDOUTS

The second way liturgy tells the story of salvation is in the weekly celebration of Saturday Eucharistic service. It comes directly from the Book of Common Prayer.

HAND OUT ORDER OF SERVICE

The Eucharistic service has a narrative structure of plot: God gathers us, we tell stories within the larger Story, and then we give thanks, and finally we depart to share the Good News with the world we live in. So we journey from the world, into the presence of God through Word and sacrament, and then back into the world again.

4 fold Pattern-

Gathering

Word

Table

Sending

Let's look at the Order of Service:

First, we GATHER in the Lord's name: Prelude and welcome.

Processional – is an enactment of the journey – the journey of following Christ. At each part of the service, there is a symbol that represents Christ. At this time it is the processional cross – which is why we bow to it when it passes us.

Opening Acclamation – “Blessed be God:...

Collect for Purity –

What is a Collect?

A collect is simply a prayer meant to gather the intentions of the people into a succinct prayer.

The collect is a prayer composed according to a particular structure. It is framed according to a basic plan, though in some collects the plan is imperfectly worked out:

1. **Invocation.** This is associated with an understanding of some quality of God upon which the prayer is built. Because God is a certain kind of God, we are bold to pray for this or that thing.
2. **Petition.** This constitutes the body of the prayer and its central point.
3. **Aspiration.** This is what we hope to receive from the petition.
4. **Ascription.** Ordinarily this is "through Jesus Christ our Lord," though this may be modified for the sake of rhythm and variation. The full form is Trinitarian.

The BCP calls for the Priest (or celebrant) to say this Collect, but here at Savior, we all say it together, as a way for us to all prepare our hearts for worship. The prayer is asking the Holy Spirit's cleansing to enable proper worship.

The Gloria – sung as a song of praise. Sometimes we sing the Trisaigon here, but during Ordinary Time it is the Gloria.

The Collect of the Day – Begins with the Salutation of The Lord be with you... The origins of this is Boaz's greeting in Ruth 2. Notice the format that I mentioned earlier....

At this point, we've gathered, we sang praises, we've stated our intentions, and now it's time to we proclaim and respond to the Word of God.

## WORD

The Lessons: (Or Scripture passages) are read whenever we gather for worship – whether it be Saturday evenings, or any short prayer service. We follow a 3 year reading plan/cycle which begins on the first Saturday/Sunday of Advent which is the beginning of the church year, from the Revised Common Lectionary, which provides a OT, Psalm, NT, and Gospel reading for each Saturday/Sunday. This is shared by a number of denominations. You'll notice we don't always do all the readings....

The readings are not random – there is a format to them – the OT and the Gospel readings generally share themes. The NT reading isn't always connected and follows a linear progression, and the Psalm generally comments on the OT/Gospel readings. The Psalms are often sung in many churches.

The Gospel – the highlight of Liturgy of the Word. It's processed down into the congregation to show that it should be accessible to and read in the midst of all the people.

We bow to the Gospel book as it comes down into the congregation because it then has become the Christ symbol.

A note about the Christ symbol – it moves throughout the service – begins with the processional cross, moves to the large cross in the center of the sanctuary, to the Gospel book, back to the center cross, and then to the recessional cross once again. (Talk about why we moved the processional cross to the fireside room... and why we bow to the main cross when crossing in front of it – acolytes.

The Gospel is always read by the Deacon. Talk about the role of the deacon. The deacon's role is to bring the needs of the world to the church, and the church back to the people. So if you notice the things the deacon does during the service, it's always a bridge between the church and the world.

Many people make a sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart before hearing the Gospel – while they say: "May the Lord be on my mind, on my lips, and in my heart.

The Gospel is read from a separate book and the people stand as it is read as a way of participating in the drama and honoring its status.

Some traditions use incense at this time and some deacons kiss the first letter of that day's reading after the reading to show it's love and reverence.

The sermon – or homily. Always follows the Gospel. The idea is for the preacher to expand and comment on the Scriptures that were read, usually the Gospel.



Nicene Creed – SEE NOTES

Prayers of the People –

- Read by a lay person
- Page 383 in BCP – outlines 6 categories which must be prayed for in the prayers
- Goes from global > personal
- *Prayer is offered with intercession for:*
  - The Universal Church, its members, and its mission*
  - The Nation and all in authority*
  - The welfare of the world*
  - The concerns of the local community*
  - Those who suffer and those in any trouble*
  - The departed (with commemoration of a saint when appropriate)*

## The Confession/Absolution

- This is intentionally placed here – before the Eucharist – in response to 1 Corinthians 11:27-32

So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. <sup>29</sup> For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. <sup>30</sup>

Led by the deacon – immediately followed by the absolution – which is done by the priest – when I do it as a deacon, I switch to the word “us”. Note that it is God who does the forgiving and it’s the priest who pronounces it.

The Peace- We exchange the peace with one another – it’s an ancient tradition and practice in the Christian community

- Based on Christ’s teaching in Matthew 5:23-24:  
<sup>23</sup> “So if you are presenting a sacrifice<sup>(a)</sup> at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.

- More than a greeting or saying someone hello - it’s wishing your brothers and sisters the peace of Christ which passes all understanding.
- We also exchange the peace because at the Last Supper, Jesus said “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you (John 14:27). When he greeted his disciples after his resurrection, he greeted them by saying “peace be with you”. We bring these two things together – Jesus shared his peace with us, so we share his peace with one another.
- Paul begins every one of his letters with a greeting such as “Grace and peace to you”. Suggests that this was a common between Christians.

Notice where this is situated in the liturgy – we make peace with God (the confession/absolution) and then peace with one another – and then we head for the Table.

## TABLE

It’s at this time that we transition from the Liturgy of the Word to the Liturgy of The Holy Communion.

The Offertory –



is a time of action. The gifts of bread and wine are received and the altar prepared for making communion. We also present the fruits of our labor to God – in the form of money.

The Great Thanksgiving –

Begins with what's called the "Sursum Corda" -- literally "Up with your hearts. We lift them to the Lord". Some of the most ancient words in all of the liturgy.

It's a dialogue between the priest and the people. We are brought into Christ's presence, we are not bringing Christ's presence to us.

Proper Preface – changes seasonally

The Eucharist not just the actions of the people in the congregation but of the whole church, and all of creation and the heavenly realm. We join them in the Sanctus (Holy Holy Holy)

And we say/sing "Hosanna" which means "save us now". And the Benedictus qui venit – "Blessed is who comes in the name of the Lord".

Celebrant: "Holy and gracious Father..." – here we remember how God saved us – the Salvation Story – We are told how he answers our cry of Hosana (or Save us now)!

Prayer of Consecration – "On the night he was handed over to suffering and death..." This is where the Priest lays his hands on all the elements to consecrate it....

The Church then proclaims the great mystery which it is in the process of enacting:  
Christ has died  
Christ has risen  
Christ will come again

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption... see here the idea of remembering – telling the story – celebration as the telling of story.

The celebrant invites the Holy Spirit to make holy both the gifts of bread and wine, as well as all the people (Sanctify us also... )

\*\* All this we ask through you Son Jesus Christ.... The Prayer book calls for this to be said by the celebrant alone, but here at Savior we all say it together as a way of making the prayer our own... and finish with a loud AMEN – which is the only place in the BCP where AMEN is in all caps.

We say the Lord's Prayer Together...

Remember that the Eucharist tells the story of salvation through words and actions. Key events are the life, death, resurrection, ascension, and return of Christ. And we are participants in this drama.

When We read the Last Supper account in the Gospel, we see that Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and then gave it to his disciples. Then he took the cup of wine, blessed it and gave it to his disciples. Notice that we act out the same pattern in our Eucharistic liturgy. The celebrant takes the bread and wine, blesses the bread and wine, and in a few moments the bread he breaks the bread and then the bread and wine will be given to the people.

The Fraction – this is when the priest breaks the bread. It's a reminder not only of the Last Supper, but also the breaking of his body on the cross.

There's the reference to Passover - This is significant. In ancient Jewish tradition, the sacrifice of the Passover lamb was not completed by its death; it was completed by a meal... eating the meat of the lamb that was slain. In order to be saved from death, you had to eat the lamb. Jesus is the new Passover lamb – therefore we must keep the new Passover feast by partaking of his body and blood.

The gifts of God for the people of God... We are now invited to come to the Table.

#### SENDING

The post communion prayer – we thank God for his provision and ask his blessing as we are sent back out into the world. Followed by a blessing of the priest – a source of consolation and encouragement.

#### Recessional

The Dismissal – read by the deacon who stands at the doorway of the church – remember the role of the deacon – bridge between the church and the world.

Here's a quote from All Saint's Anglican Church website that I think summarizes well what we just experienced in the Saturday evening liturgy.

“By definition, the church is the people of God sent into the world. Our ongoing movement is always in two directions: we come together in the name of Christ, and then we go forth in the name of Christ. We encounter Jesus together, and then we go out and announce Jesus to the world in both word and deed. We gather to partake of the body and blood of Christ, and then we leave here to be the body of Christ for the world.

Our liturgy ends right back where we started – sending us back into the street, to our houses, to our work, and to our daily life with all its burdens, responsibilities, and pleasures. We have enacted through the ritual the drama of the Gospel, so now we can go out rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit to enact the same”.

## Notes on Deacon role:

Rooted in the church – living out love of Christ along side other worshipers

Representative person – the church is charged with going into all the world to preach the gospel and so diaconal ministry is not just ministry *in* the church but the ministry *of* the church to the world. The deacon's role in public worship is as a representative person, making visible in liturgy the diaconal nature of the church.

Incarnation ministry – at home at church and in the world

Deacons have a prophetic ministry in the world where injustice exists, and a pastoral ministry to people in need. Because they do this as the church's representative, there is a two-way movement – deacons lead the church into the world in mission, and the world into the church for prayer and action.

“In the Eucharist, the local world intersects with the reign of God and we stand on that threshold, worshiping with all the company of heaven and with the person standing next to us”. (Brown, pg. 53)

Stole wore across the chest and tied back to allow ease of service – “The fact that a vested minister is dressed to serve is a visible reminder to the church of its own diaconal ministry, following in the ministry of Christ. The deacon, with a blend of responsibilities in the world and the church, is a constant reminder that Eucharistic worship embraces both heaven and earth, a challenge to never let worship or spirituality become totally other-worldly” (Brown, pg. 53).

### Role of deacon in liturgy:

- Bringing in the Gospel
- Invitation to confession
- Reading of the Gospel
- Preparation of the table/altar
- Receives the offering
- Distribution of communion
- Dismissal

Some of these tasks have practical origins. For example, bringing the Gospel book – the care of the scrolls was something not lightly entrusted in the face of persecution, so the deacon, who needed to be able to read, and had been proven trustworthy – stored the gospels at home during the week, brought them on Sunday to the assembly and read from them. In doing this, the deacon acted for and on behalf of the whole baptized community.

Several of the deacon's roles fit together to make visible the servant ministry of the church in the world. The deacon who calls us to confession, is the deacon who last week sent us out into the world to love and serve the world (in the dismissal), knows that we have inevitably slipped up in doing that and so now invites us to confess together – for we are assembled as one body.

Receiving the offering and the communion vessels at the altar -- For us, this involves the deacon receiving a plate of money, but historically and still in some



countries, this involved the very practical business of finding the bread and wine for the Eucharist from among the food items offered, and then distributing the left overs to the needy. In setting the table, the deacon makes practical preparation of the altar for communion.

After the Eucharist, the deacon cleans up – a practical and necessary task after a meal. It also symbolizes that the meal is complete, all is consumed and it's time for the church to move on in mission. It's also a sign of stewardship and practical care we are asked to give all things entrusted to us. It is a visible reminder that the routine tasks of life belong in worship.

Dismissal – the deacon stands at the threshold of the church and the world, and sends the congregation out to love and serve the Lord.

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