

## **Week 16 – Great Thanksgiving Alternative Rites and Summary**

*This week, we want to pull back some and look at the way the whole service fits together. Next week we're starting our focus on the Lenten period.*

### Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, send your Holy Spirit into this room that we might grow to understand how our life together binds us with your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and that same Spirit, one God, now and forever.

### Texts for Discussion

- Great Thanksgiving, “Prayers for an Inclusive Church” [optional]
- Catechism (BCP pp. 859-860)

### Primary Take Aways

- Again, even with a modern liturgy we find a similar pattern to the traditional forms: lifting up our hearts, the Sanctus, the words of institution, the Lord's Prayer, the communion itself.
- The catechism tells us what is going on in the Eucharist.

### Important Links to Previous Weeks (“Where We Are”)

- Remember our images of the baptism and where we are in the service.
- In the last two weeks, we talked about how the entire Great Thanksgiving places us literally in heaven, at a place where heaven and earth coincide. That also applies this week.
- Basic structure: Opening salutation: “The Lord be with you,” “Lift up your hearts,” Sanctus/Benedictus, Words of Institution, “Through Jesus,” Lord's Prayer.

### Important Background

- See previous weeks.

### Structure

In this lesson, our goal is to think a bit about what we're actually doing in the celebration of the Eucharist. To do so, we started by looking at the liturgy we use at our 9am service. (Other liturgies will yield similar insights, but by all means feel free to summarize the previous weeks and move straight to the discussion on the catechism.) In essence, we want to highlight how the service follows a similar structure even as we change the words. That lets us highlight what we're doing in the service.

*Discussion questions:*

- Breaking into groups, assign a prayer we've discussed and have the students compare it to the one in the service sheet. What's different? What's the same?

For instance, we still start with the salutation and the *sursum corda*. Then, the prayer begins with "God of many names" as opposed to "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," or just "Father." Jesus isn't mentioned by name until after the Sanctus. Instead, we hear about the Spirit first, then the Word, then the Beloved, then the Son. So we might say the opening prayer is less specifically tied to Jesus and to Israel and is more general, more of an idea about how God relates to creation by making us the best versions of ourselves.

We next have the words of institution, which are fairly close to what we have in the other prayers. We have the Mystery of Faith (as in Rite II, Prayer A).

When we eat and drink here, we are filled with Christ's life-giving presence. This is different from "remission of sins and benefits of his passion" or "serve you" or "at the last day bring us into the joy of your eternal kingdom" or "Unite us to your Son in his sacrifice, that we might be acceptable through him" or "Make us one body, one spirit in Christ, that we may worthily serve the world in his name" or "Grant that all who share this bread and cup may become one body and one spirit, a living sacrifice in Christ, to the praise of your name."

We then pray the Lord's Prayer and take communion.

*Discussion question:*

- We've looked at all these prayers. So what do we think we're doing here. What's happening in communion?
- It's a sacrament. What did we say a sacrament was?

Let's remind them of the catechism. "An outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace." "Grace is God's favor towards us." It involves the forgiveness of sins, the enlightening of our minds, the stirring of our hearts and the strengthening of our wills" (BCP 857-858).

How is the Holy Eucharist a sacrament? Let's get the students to look at the catechism and walk through it.

What are the elements we want to draw out?

Memorial: First, we need to emphasize how it is a remembering of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, until he comes again. That means we are moving our attention both backwards (to the human Jesus' life, which we are remembering) and forwards (to the time when all things are made new in Christ).

Sacrifice: We are offering praise and thanksgiving. Jesus offered himself. We are taken back to that moment when we do this (we talked about us going up into heaven, so space is collapsing, but we are also going to a point in a time (time collapses)).

Outward and visible sign: bread and wine given the way Jesus told us to do it (hence the use of the Gospels and 1 Corinthians).

Inward and spiritual grace: receiving the Body and Blood Christ in faith, which leads to the forgiveness of sins, the strengthening of our union with Christ and with one another (the union which occurs in baptism) and a foretaste of the eternal life we will receive in heaven.

Requirements!: We are required to examine ourselves and repent of our sins, to love and be kind to all people.

So, in the Eucharist, we enter the throne room of God, which takes us back to Jesus' offering of himself. This can happen because we are united to Christ in the Spirit, the very Spirit that the priest invokes over the bread and wine and over us. In the same way we are united by the Spirit to Christ in baptism, so here are we united with Christ by the pouring out of God's Spirit upon us and upon the gifts of bread and wine. When we eat the bread and drink the cup, we receive sustenance to live our lives as Christians. And we do this with our eyes to the future, when we are brought together with Christ into God's kingdom.

In Holy Communion, we enter the throne room of God, praying to the Father, telling and remembering the Son, transformed by the Spirit.

#### Closing Prayer

Today's prayer can again be the Collect "Of the Holy Eucharist" (BCP 252).

*The Lord bless us and keep us; the Lord make his face to shine upon us and be gracious unto us; the Lord lift up his countenance upon us and give us peace.*

## Cheat Sheet

### 10 minutes: Welcome, Prayer, Candle Lighting, Where we are

Heavenly Father, send your Holy Spirit into this room that we might grow to understand how our life together binds us with your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and that same Spirit, one God, now and forever.

*Discussion question:*

- What are our images that we keep on the board? (Baptism/Service)
- We've been saying we go somewhere at the start of the Eucharist. Where?

### 20 minutes: Comparing a new prayer to a previous one [optional]

*Main point:* The same basic structure organizes even new prayers.

*Discussion questions:*

- Breaking into groups, assign a prayer we've discussed and have the students compare it to the newer one. What's different? What's the same?

### 20 minutes: Looking at the catechism

*Main point:* The Eucharist has us looking backwards and forwards, back to Jesus' life and forward to his coming again in glory. It is the spiritual food that strengthens us to be Christ's body in the present.

*Discussion question:*

- We've looked at all these prayers. What's happening in communion?
- It's a sacrament. What did we say a sacrament was?

### 10 minutes: Closing Prayer

The Collect "Of the Holy Eucharist" (BCP 252).

*The Lord bless us and keep us; the Lord make his face to shine upon us and be gracious unto us; the Lord lift up his countenance upon us and give us peace.*