

Remembering

The Eucharist (Greek for 'thanksgiving') is also known as Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper and the Mass. In this service we have the great privilege of receiving the 'body and blood' of our Lord Jesus Christ. At the Last Supper, Christ's final meal, he took bread, broke it and shared it saying, '*This is my body*'. Jesus then passed a cup of wine among the disciples and said, '*This is my blood*'. The next day his body would be broken and his blood spilt. At the Last Supper he commanded us to '*Do this in remembrance of me*'. So as we share bread and wine, we remember Jesus' death on the cross. For 2000 years Christians have believed that the bread and wine are a special focus for the presence of Christ ('real presence'). As we receive the gifts we meet our risen Lord, who feeds us and fills us with his new life.

Though we have found new ways of expressing our faith liturgically, we stand in a tradition of worship nearly 2000 years old. In the **Preparation** we make ourselves ready to hear God's Word and to receive our communion. In **Ministry of the Word** we listen to readings from the Bible and hear the sermon. In the **Ministry of the Sacrament** we receive the bread and wine, which are signs of the body and blood of Christ. The balance between word and Sacrament emphasizes that Jesus comes to us as we listen to the Bible and as we receive his body and blood. The Eucharist or Mass was originally in Latin or Greek. Latin or Greek titles for elements of our Eucharist have survived to this day.

The Preparation

The **Kyries** (*Kyrie eleison* - 'Lord have mercy') This is a Greek hymn from the 4th century calling on Christ to have mercy on us.

The Confession

As we come to God, we ask his forgiveness for our failings. So before the service we should take a moment to consider our lives in the light of Jesus' commandments which the priest may read:

'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all

your strength and your neighbour as yourself.'

God's forgiveness is limitless and only he can give us a true sense of peace and ease about who we are and what we have done.

The Absolution

The priest makes the sign of the cross & we hear the assurance of God's love and forgiveness.

The Gloria

The Gloria is based on the hymn sung by the heavenly choirs at the Saviour's birth; *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* - 'Glory to God in the highest'. Lk 2.14

The Collect

This 'collects up' the prayers of the people and emphasizes the theme of the lectionary readings for the day.

The Ministry of the Word

The Readings

Our first reading is usually from the Old Testament (Hebrew scriptures) & the second from one of the letters (*Epistles*) in the New Testament, with a psalm (sung or read) interspersed between them.

The Gospel

As we graduate from the Epistle to a reading from one of the Gospels, the Gospel book is carried in procession to the centre of our church & read among God's people. On feast days the Gospel book may be venerated with incense, reminding us that we must worship God with all our heart, mind, body and soul – including all our senses. The rising smoke also reminds us that our prayers rise to heaven. We stand and face the Gospel partly as an act of reverence to welcome Christ who comes to speak to his people through the words of his Gospel.

The Sermon

The preacher seeks to explain the Gospel message in our contemporary circumstances.

The Creed (*Credo* - I believe)

A creed is a statement of the Christian faith. We use two forms - the shorter 'Apostles Creed' derives from the affirmation of faith made by someone seeking to be baptised into the Church & is usually reserved for baptism services. It stresses the humanity of Jesus as it was written in the 2nd century

at a time when this was a matter of great debate within the Church. The **Nicene Creed** was formulated by Councils of Bishops in 325 & 381 AD in response to a widespread dispute about whether Jesus was God. It stresses the divinity of Jesus: '*God from God, Light from Light...*' & is divided into three sections stating our beliefs about God the Holy Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Trinity, simply put, is the belief that God has revealed himself to us in three ways; as Creator (Father), as a human being (Jesus Christ) and as the Holy Spirit alive in us today.

The Intercessions

These are prayers for the world and the Church led by a member of the congregation. We believe that prayer is a force for good that God has placed in our hands. Prayer is therefore an important Christian responsibility.

The Prayer of Humble Access or Approach

A prayer in anticipation of our approach to the sacrament of the Eucharist.

The Greeting of Peace

We greet each other with a handshake as members of the body of Christ and we recognize Christ present in each other, and that we are now reconciled to one by our forgiveness of sins.

The Ministry of the Sacrament

The Offertory

During the offertory hymn the gifts of bread and wine are prepared on the altar. These are signs of Christ's perfect offering, and we join in this offering of ourselves to that of Christ. The monetary gifts, in thanks for God's generosity to us, are received & we thank God for all these gifts using the Jewish blessing that Jesus himself would have used at the Last Supper: '*Blessed are you Lord God of all creation...*'.

The Eucharistic Prayer – the Great Thanksgiving

There are several thanksgiving prayers which vary throughout the liturgical seasons. Modern eucharistic prayers find the origins of their content and structure in a prayer written by St Hippolytus in the 3rd century. The prayers all begin with the

opening greeting between priest and people – *sursum corda* ('hearts lifted'). In the opening phrases of the prayer we celebrate the grace and power of God in creating, restoring and bringing to completion all that is God's.

Then follows a Christological prayer thanking God for our salvation history - all that was accomplished in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Our response to this good news is two short songs of praise. The **Sanctus** ('holy') is an anthem to God's glory sung by the angels declaring the holiness and glory of God (Isaiah 6.3). The **Benedictus** ('blessed') is the song that hailed Jesus on his arrival in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday:

*"Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest!"* (Mark 11.10)

It is the greeting to him who came in the flesh, who comes in the sacrament and who is still to come. We then hear the narrative of the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper - Jesus declares that these 'elements' of bread and wine represent his body and blood. By breaking the bread and sharing the wine he shows what is to happen to him on the cross the next day – his body broken & blood shed.

As the prayer draws to its climax we remember (**anamnesis** – recollection or literally re-remembering) why we may stand with confidence before God to offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving (**oblation**) - the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We ask (invoke) the Holy Spirit, as the divine response to our obedience, to come (**epiclesis**) upon the bread and wine so that they may be for us Christ's body and blood. The bread and wine are a special focus for the presence of Jesus. They are the **Blessed Sacrament** of the Eucharist – an outward & visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. We may also ask the Holy Spirit to come and renew us (double epiclesis). Our prayer concludes with the **Doxology** ('glory') - a final act of praise to God.

The Lord's Prayer

Jesus gave this prayer to his disciples when they asked him to teach them to pray and we conclude

our thanksgiving with this prayer. 'The kingdom' has a dual meaning in Jesus' teaching. It not only refers to the time when the heavenly realm and the created order will be one, but it also most importantly refers to God's influence or 'reign' spreading now in our world— a task in which God calls us to share. We ask God to meet our needs and to forgive our sins. The prayer speaks of 'us' and 'our' not 'me' and 'my', indicating that Jesus intends us to use prayer for the benefit of others as well as ourselves.

The Fraction

The priest breaks the consecrated bread to remind us Jesus' body was broken on the cross. In our response we affirm our belief that as we share Christ's body we become members of one body - the Church, and as such are part of, and are related to, each other.

The Agnus Dei ('Lamb of God')

This is another ancient hymn to Jesus, where he is described as the 'Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world' recalling the lamb's blood which saved the Jews in the Old Testament book, Exodus. At Passover in Jesus' time at the Temple in Jerusalem the blood of a lamb was a thank offering for the atonement of the sins of the people. It was sprinkled on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies in the Temple. Since Jesus was crucified at Passover and as we believe his blood was shed for the forgiveness of the world, he came to be known as the Lamb of God.

The Communion

Communicant members of all Christian churches are invited to receive communion with us or come to the altar rail for a blessing.

After Communion

The service finishes with thanksgiving prayers and the blessing. In the thanksgiving prayer we are reminded of a theme that runs through Jesus' teaching; that of likening the kingdom of heaven to a banquet. The final words of the service remind us that we have been fed by Christ in Word and Sacrament for a purpose:

'Go in peace to love and serve the Lord'.

Holy Eucharist at Holy Trinity



An explanation of the service of

Holy Eucharist

HOLY TRINITY

Surrey Hills . Mont Albert

Cnr Union Road & Montrose Street
SURREY HILLS VIC 3127

www.holytrinity.sh