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Parish Eucharist



Associated Parishes

This booklet is one in a series dealing with the work of the Parishes of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada.

Prepared by the laity and clergy of the Associated Parishes for Liturgy and Mission.

Throughout the commentary, there are references to 4 basic texts:

- BCP *The Book of Common Prayer* of the Episcopal Church (USA) (1979);
- BAS *The Book of Alternative Services of the Anglican Church of Canada* (1985);
- BOS *The Book of Occasional Services - [year]* of the Episcopal Church. Page citations are from the 1994 edition.
- OS *Occasional Celebrations* of the Anglican Church of Canada

The Associated Parishes is a group of persons belonging to the Episcopal Church, the Anglican Church of Canada, and other Christian Churches, who are committed to the renewal of Christian life and worship. During the half-century of its existence, this group has especially concerned itself with providing an articulate expression of the principles of the Liturgical Movement in North America, as they have been experienced and tested within the life of our congregation.

Further information will be gladly supplied, and applications for membership will be received by the Coordinator of the Associated Parishes, P. O. Box 27141, Baltimore, MD 21230-0141. Regular membership dues are \$30 per year (\$15 for students and retired persons) or \$80 for three years. Members receive the quarterly journal *OPEN* and a set of current brochures.

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PARISH EUCHARIST

FOREWORD

The words in our title help define one another. A parish (or mission, or any regular congregation of Christians) is a community of the baptized — a local, specific manifestation of the Body of Christ. As a community, it is not meant to be simply an aggregate of individuals but a living, identifiable unity of people who understand themselves as belonging to Christ and, in Christ, belonging to one another.

The most characteristic activity of the parish is the worship of God; and the supreme expression of that worship is the Holy Eucharist. The word Eucharist derives from a Greek word meaning Thanksgiving, and in this case it signifies more than an attitude; it is a manner of living. Thus, the Eucharist is more than an expression of gratitude (although it certainly is an act of thanksgiving), it is our fullest response to the mighty, saving work of God — a response that includes proclamation and communion, mission and prayer, claiming and offering, sharing with and caring for one another. It is our Liturgy — another word derived from the Greek and meaning public work, work for the common good. The Eucharist is the paradigm of our life as the Body of Christ.

Eucharist, then, is what the parish does—in response to what God has done for all humankind. Liturgy involves all our physical, intellectual, and emotional senses; it includes words and movements and feelings; it is experienced by the whole person. The purpose of this booklet is to set forth briefly WHAT we do, what we intend by what we do, and HOW we do the Liturgy of the Holy Eucharist.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST

The Liturgy for The Proclamation of The Word of God and Celebration of The Holy Communion

The Episcopal Church provides a variety of prayers and other materials for use in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, and a great deal of flexibility in the use of those materials, in order to make the Liturgy appropriate for a variety of situations. Even so, the Liturgy of the Eucharist is not simply a matter of each community of Christians "doing their own thing." It is God's thing we do. It is the Church's thing — belonging to the Body of Christ. It is our thing in that we are made members of Christ's Body and claim Christ's life as our own. In the Liturgy we do what the Church has always done to worship God. With all our variety, options, and flexibility, we follow a common Order for the eucharistic celebration — an outline which makes it quite clear that whatever the particular rite used or options exercised, we are doing the same Liturgy, and that Liturgy is the same one which the Church has done since apostolic times.

The several eucharistic rites provided in the Book of Common Prayer are gathered under the general heading given at the top of this page. The sub-title (BCP 315) is meant to describe what goes on throughout the Liturgy and not to designate two discrete services. Although the action of the Liturgy conveniently divides itself into two portions*, these are to be seen as two acts of a single, unified drama. BAS divides the Liturgy into three major sections: The Gathering of the Community, The Proclamation of the Word, and The Celebration of the Eucharist. The Celebration begins when the community gathers. Communion takes place from the first greeting between friends and in the prayers and readings of the Christian story. The Word of God continues to be proclaimed in the sharing of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

*See: The Holy Eucharist, Rite Two: A Commentary, Associated Parishes.

BCP and BAS provide two basic Rites for the eucharistic celebration, each with a variety of options. The primary difference between them is that one is more traditional in its language and style, while the other is more contemporary. Both follow the general outline which BCP calls "An Order for Celebrating the Holy Eucharist." This Order is reproduced below and will form the outline for our observations of WHAT we do and HOW we do the Eucharist.

THE PEOPLE AND PRIEST
GATHER IN THE LORD'S NAME
PROCLAIM AND RESPOND TO THE WORD OF GOD
PRAY FOR THE WORLD AND THE CHURCH
EXCHANGE THE PEACE
PREPARE THE TABLE
MAKE EUCHARIST
BREAK THE BREAD
SHARE THE GIFTS OF GOD

Before we begin our more detailed examination of the several elements of this outline, it is important to take note that, after the subject is given (The People and Priest), what remains is a series of verb-phrases which form a single statement. In other words, each element of the Liturgy contributes to a single, integral whole. Furthermore, the Liturgy is quite clearly seen as ACTION — as something we DO. Words and gestures are used to illustrate, illuminate, inform, and express. They are the means, the HOW, of what we do; and as such, they are of importance and are to be taken seriously. But the words and gestures derive from the action; they do not determine it. Still, medium and message are integral to one another, and we shall look at both.

THE PEOPLE AND PRIEST
GATHER IN THE LORD'S NAME

This is WHAT We Do....

The biblical word we translate as Church (ecclesia) means, literally, Assembly. The connotation is not that of a crowd, nor of a random

collection of spectators, nor even of a small group. It is rather an assembly of particular people — in this case, an assembly of the baptized. The Body of Christ called together — this is what we mean by Church.

Thus, our Liturgy begins with a self-conscious coming together of the people of God to *be* the Church. We who are the Body of Christ in a particular place (a parish or mission or whatever) gather to celebrate the Holy Eucharist. Any assembly for the purpose of engaging in a common action requires a leader or president, and the parish has its liturgical president in the person of a priest. On a diocesan level, and whenever present in the parish, the bishop is our liturgical president. In the absence of the bishop, the priest represents the bishop and presides over the Parish Eucharist. Just as the conductor of an orchestra is not that orchestra, so the priest is not the parish. In fact, a number of roles of leadership within the overall liturgical action may be designated to various people: deacons, readers, musicians, ushers, acolytes, and others. And so, although the priest is there to preside, the Liturgy is the "work of the people."

We gather in the Lord's Name--not accidentally as we might at a bus stop or casually as at a cocktail party, but deliberately and self-consciously as the People of God, the Body of Christ in this particular place. We are called together for a specific purpose: to celebrate the Holy Eucharist.

In spite of the impression sometimes given by the rubrical directions, the priest is not the only celebrant of the Parish Eucharist. All who participate in the celebration are celebrants, not only by definition, but by intention. The people and priest gather in the Lord's Name, and the celebration begins.

Our opening ceremonies are designed to do several things:

- 1) to gather us as a community, as a parish, as the assembly of God's people;
- 2) to help us say what we are about, that is, the worship of Almighty

God;

- 3) to begin that worship by praising God; and frequently
- 4) to establish immediately the particular focus of our worship on this given day.

. . . And This is HOW We Do It

The actual gathering ceremonies of the Liturgy are important, not only because they help us say who we are and why we are gathered, but because they also set the tone for the remainder of our celebration. Although no mention is made of it in any of our rites, the gathering ceremonies actually begin as members of the parish greet one another and begin to take their places in the assembly. Many parishes have the custom of appointing ushers whose role it is to welcome the worshipers as they arrive, to see to it that they have the necessary printed materials to be used in the service, and perhaps to escort them to seats. Frequently the ushers try to spot newcomers and introduce them to members of the parish and generally make them feel welcome. Our coming together and meeting with old and new friends is an occasion of joy. Most worshipers try to arrive early enough to have a few moments of quiet, personal prayer before the Liturgy begins.

The two principal rites allow a variety of ways of formally opening the Liturgy, but we usually begin with a song. (BAS does not provide for a song before the opening acclamation of praise.) Singing together is one of the surest, and most enjoyable, ways of creating a sense of community, and a carefully selected opening hymn can help establish the mood of the entire celebration, perhaps by its seasonal or scriptural references, or simply by its rhythm. In many parishes the singing is led by a choir from designated seats or "choir stalls." In any event, the choir's function is to lead the entire congregation, not to perform for them.

Before or during the first song, the priest and other clergy, if any, along with some of the people who will assist, take their assigned places.

They may enter in formal procession or unobtrusively. After the opening hymn, the priest and people begin the Liturgy with an acclamation of praise. Then, in the name of the assembly, the priest may offer a brief prayer that our worship might be a worthy offering.

Next, we all join in another hymn of praise. This may be in the words of the ancient *Gloria in excelsis*, or the briefer *Lord, have mercy*. Some parishes sing a hymn new to Episcopalians but one that has been used in the Church since its early centuries: *Holy God, Holy and Mighty*. Some other song of praise might be used here instead of any of these. Finally, the priest calls the gathered community to prayer and offers the brief Collect, or prayer, especially appointed for the particular day.

PROCLAIM AND RESPOND TO THE WORD OF GOD

PRAY FOR THE WORLD AND THE CHURCH

This is WHAT We Do

Christians are a people of a story. Through the telling and hearing of the story, day after day, week after week, from one generation to the next throughout the ages, we come to know and to proclaim who we are as a people. It is the story of the mighty acts of God. It is the story of the creation, redemption, and salvation of the people of God. It is a love story. It is God's story, and it is our story. And it is Good News!

Actually, the Christian story begins with the origins of humankind, thousands of years before Christ. It continues with accounts of our persistent apostasy and God's unceasing love. It is climaxed by the sending of the Son, our savior Jesus Christ. And it is being resolved, even today, by the formation of the Church and our struggle to live out our new condition as the Body of Christ. So, we never tire of reading and hearing our story. Sometimes we study it to learn about the people and the times and the places of our heritage. Sometimes we read it alone or in small groups as an act of devotion. In the Liturgy we read it primarily in order to proclaim the wondrous power of God our Creator, the saving work of Jesus Christ, and the driving, binding force of the Holy Spirit.

The reading of the Gospel is the climax of the proclamation. Here is the Good News of Jesus Christ — the incredible story upon which we have bet our lives. Its reading is attended by all the solemnity and attention we can bring to bear. It is read by a deacon, or by a priest when there is no deacon present. Frequently the Gospel book is carried in procession accompanied by torches, and sometimes by a cross and incense, and the Good News is proclaimed to the people from the lectern or pulpit, or in the midst of the congregation with the worshipers crowded about to hear. The congregation stands for the reading — in reverence and in expectation — and responds to the announcement with a shout of praise.

The liturgical sermon addresses the parish where it is at that moment: in its pain and struggle, its joy and thankfulness, its faith and questioning. And to this immediate situation, the sermon brings the Good News.

In a way, our very lives, and the life of the parish, are a response to the Word. Liturgically, our immediate response is one of prayer: the work of the Church. As God's "nation of priests," we pray for the world, for the Church, and for ourselves — lifting up our concerns, offering our thanks, confessing our sins. The Word has given us confidence that our prayers are made worthy. And this IS Good News!

. . . . And This is HOW We Do It

The reading and hearing of the Word of God in Holy Scripture is at the very core of the Church's understanding of itself, and should be one of the high points of any service of worship. Our Liturgy provides for two or three separate readings at the Eucharist: one from the Old Testament, one from the Epistles or other writings of the New Testament, and one from one of the four Gospels. Sometimes one of the first two may be omitted (but not both); however, all three are used generally. The first two readings are appropriately done by lay members of the parish. These persons need not be licensed lay readers, but they should be carefully selected for their ability, and trained to read aloud. The readings should be audible, coherent, and enthusiastic. This is God's

story and our story, and it deserves careful rehearsal by trained readers. Between the two readings many parishes sing or say a psalm or canticle chosen for the occasion.

There is, of course, too much of the story to read it all at any one gathering. Many of its short passages are so rich in meaning that we can read them over and over without exhausting their insights. So the Church has provided a schedule of short, significant readings for each celebration of the Eucharist. These are arranged in a three-year cycle, so that over a triennium we hear all the main parts of the Bible proclaimed.

Our story doesn't end with the last chapter of the Bible; it continues as the Church lives. So, after hearing the Word proclaimed from the book, we hear it spoken to our time and circumstance. The sermon springs from the readings and proclaims the Good News for our lives today. We understand the Word of God not as ancient history, but as living and active in our midst

In response to the Word, we stand and rehearse the ancient articles of faith set forth in the Nicene Creed or, in BAS, the Apostles Creed. Although the Creed actually is a statement of dogmatic theology and would seem to belong more to the classroom than to the Liturgy, we use it liturgically as the statement of the faith to which the holy Catholic Church has subscribed since the fourth century.

Having heard the Word by which we were made, and therefore being sure of our identity, having been assured by the Good News of eternal life in Christ and having seen how Christ is with us in the present, and having reaffirmed our faith. . . we pray. BCP and BAS provide us with a wide choice of styles and forms of prayer, and there is material which is flexible enough to be suitable to any parish on any occasion. The Prayers may be preceded by announcements of coming events in the life of the parish, baptisms or weddings planned and anniversaries being celebrated, and the sharing of the names of those who are sick, distressed, or departed. All these concerns — occasions for joy, thanksgiving, sorrow — are opportunities for ministry. All go to make up "The Prayers of the People."

It is appropriate that the prayers be led by a deacon or other member of the congregation. In many parishes, opportunity is given in the midst of the prayers themselves for any member to add concerns, to pray for specific individuals, and to share personal thanksgivings with the whole Body. The prayers of the parish are gathered up in a final Collect by the president of the Eucharist. Often, these are followed by a general confession of sin and a pronouncement by the priest that we are forgiven. Sometimes the confession is included in the prayers. Although some parishes kneel for the confession, the usual posture for the Prayers of the People is standing. Our response to the Word of God is made in an attitude of eagerness to be about the Church's business of serving the world, offering ourselves, and glorifying God.

EXCHANGE THE PEACE

This is WHAT We Do . . . And HOW We Do It

After the gathering ceremonies there was something of a change in the mood of our worship as we listened to the Word proclaimed in Scripture and sermon. The mood shifted again as we responded with our affirmation of faith, prayers for the world and the Church, and the confession of our sins. With each phase of the Liturgy, the tension has been building — like a new rubber band being flexed to limber it up. Now, before stretching it taut, there is a brief moment of relief.

Acting out of the knowledge of who we are (hearing the Word), out of our work (the prayers), and out of the forgiveness and peace we have received, we move instinctively to share the Lord's Peace with others. The Peace is no mere greeting, it is an acting-out of the reconciliation that is ours in the Lord. Although it is nearly always accompanied by words, the Exchange of the Peace is a physical action, usually communicated by some form of touching: a clasping of hands, an embrace, a kiss. In many parishes, especially those not encumbered by rigid, crowded seating, most people move about exchanging the Peace of the Lord with a number of other worshippers.

All this may take several minutes and appear a little disorderly; but

at this point we are in no hurry, and the absence of formality is a very human response within a community of people bound by love. This is the way a family acts.

Even so, the Exchange of the Peace is not dragged out. The very act that momentarily relieves the tension points to the excitement to come. Reconciliation leads to sacrificial offering by the reconciled community. That, in turn, leads to communion itself. Soon, we are eager to proceed.

PREPARE THE TABLE MAKE EUCHARIST

This is WHAT We Do. . .

Once again the mood, as well as the focus of our attention, shifts as we are invited to prepare the Lord's Table with our offerings. Until now, all the liturgical action has taken place in the midst of the congregation or at the very edge of it; prayer desk, pulpit, and pews have been the scene of activity. Now, our attention is drawn toward the Table on which sacrifice is offered and received — the Altar around which the family of God gathers and eats and drinks.

We offer our money, a powerful liturgical symbol. For us it means food and shelter, clothing and transportation, recreation and self-esteem. We have worked hard for it, and we use it with care. Offering a portion of it for the common life of the parish and the whole Church and the world is both a pledge and a means of mission.

We offer bread, perhaps baked by some members of the parish. With all our affluence, bread still denotes life. This particular bread signifies for us all food, as this meal signifies and hallows all our eating and drinking. We offer wine, the drink of good fellowship that sets any meal apart as a special occasion.

Money, bread, and wine: symbols of the very stuff of life. Through them we offer the life of the parish as well as the lives of its members. The Body of Christ offers itself to be made the Body and Blood and Work of the Lord.

With our offerings on the Table, we join in the great prayer of Thanksgiving. Words and phrases as old as the Church itself are fresh and immediate as we 'lift up our hearts' and acclaim God's glory in the ancient hymn of the seraphim. As the priest recounts the mighty works of God in the creation and salvation of the world, we become the object of God's love and work. For us the Word became incarnate; for us the bread and wine on the Table become the Body and Blood of the Son. We recall Christ's glorious resurrection and our own incorporation into the Body of Christ. Our own meager offerings are made worthy by being joined to the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ and are received and transformed into instruments of eternal life which we share with Christ and with one another and with Christians of all times and in all places.

At designated points we all join in the prayer itself until finally we conclude it with a resounding AMEN! Then, together, we pray our Lord's own prayer. Now, it is our prayer. And we are at once humiliated and exalted — witnesses to creation, as Christ makes all things new.

. . . . And This is HOW We Do It

Although BCP and BAS provide many helpful suggestions, there are virtually no fixed ceremonies or liturgical texts governing the preparation of the Table. Therefore, there is a wide variety in the details of this portion of the Liturgy; but the basic action is the same everywhere: alms are gathered and brought to the Altar, bread and wine are brought and arranged, and the Table is made ready.

The shift of focus is demonstrated quite clearly in those parishes where there is a deliberate and obvious movement of the liturgical leaders from the edge of the congregation to a position behind the Altar. Sometimes this movement is accompanied by torches or the placing and lighting of candles on the Altar. After an offertory sentence, the alms are collected in a manner governed entirely by parish custom. During this period the congregation may sing hymns or sit quietly while the choir offers an anthem as their particular contribution to the Liturgy.

The congregation stands as the money, bread, and wine are presented to the deacon or priest behind the Table. Most parishes now have all

these elements brought from the congregation by members of the parish as a visible sign that the elements are the people's offering and represent the life of the parish as a whole. The use of real bread, generally baked by a member of the parish, is a custom being recovered by more and more congregations as people discover they can identify more easily with a real loaf and can have a deeper investment in it as a symbol.

After the Table is set and the bread and wine are arranged on it, the president begins the Great Thanksgiving by greeting the congregation and inviting them to participate in the offering and the prayer. The service materials provide a choice of several eucharistic prayers, each with its own special flavor. They all contain the same basic elements, however, of praise and thanksgiving, of recalling the saving work of Christ and his words at the Last Supper, of the offerings of ourselves, and of invoking the blessing of the Holy Spirit upon bread, wine, and congregation. They all conclude with a recitation of the Lord's Prayer. Frequently, the opening and closing portions of this prayer are sung. It is rapidly becoming the custom for the congregation to remain standing throughout the great prayer. Not only is this the ancient posture for such prayer, but it signifies both participation and anticipation as well as emphasizing the corporate nature of our offering and of the blessing of God.

BREAK THE BREAD SHARE THE GIFTS OF GOD

This is WHAT We Do. . . .

As the Great Thanksgiving concludes, there is an inevitable attitude of awe. We stand in silence as the priest raises the loaf high for all to see and then deliberately begins to break it into pieces that we can share. The Body of Christ is broken . . . for us; broken on the Cross; broken that it might be shared with all people. The one loaf is broken that we might each have a portion and be a part of the one, new, resurrected life of Christ. And Christ's Blood is poured forth for the salvation of the world; and we, too, drink of His cup. It is a holy, awe-full moment. The rubber band is stretched taut.

The silence is broken as we join in an anthem, which may be climaxed by a shout of Alleluia! And then we are invited to approach the Table and share in the heavenly food and drink. Everyone who has been baptized into the Body of Christ is called to share the effective sign of that new life. Each of us receives a portion of the Bread of Heaven. The bread looks and feels good, it smells good and tastes good. It recalls the words of the psalmist: Taste and see that the Lord is good. Truly, the new creation is good. As we partake of the Cup of Salvation, it is as a seal of the new covenant between God and the people of God.

This part of the Liturgy is called communion, and indeed it is. It is communion between the individual and God. It is communion between the parish and God. It is communion between the whole Church and God. And it is communion between the members of the Church — those present and those absent, whether in time or space. The liturgical act is both medium and message; it is the means of communion and the content of the communication.

By participation in this act, and through the grace of God, we are in touch with the promise: the Kingdom of God that is coming to be and is now. Our citizenship in the Kingdom is affirmed, and we partake of the eternal life that transcends the time of clocks and calendars.

We return from the Holy Table as the New People, strengthened for service. Our Eucharist is complete.

. . . . And This Is HOW We Do It

The Breaking of the Bread, or Fraction as it is called, is a most solemn moment. Normally, it is done in silence as the president elevates the loaf or a large wafer for all to see and deliberately breaks it in half. Then, as we watch in hushed anticipation, the bread is quickly divided into convenient portions. If more than one cup is to be used in the distribution, this is the time when the wine is apportioned as well. Following this action, there is usually a brief period of silence while we contemplate the holy mystery being enacted before us and with us.

The silence is broken by an anthem, sometimes spoken by the priest and responded to by the congregation, sometimes sung responsively or in unison. Following an invitation to communicants to come forward and share in the Body and Blood of Christ, the clergy and other assistants at the Altar receive some of the consecrated bread and wine and then proceed to administer them to members of the congregation. It is the custom in many parishes for the participants to kneel at a rail and receive a portion of the bread in their hands, responding to the words of administration with "Amen." However, in many parishes the people stand to receive, and this practice is growing in popularity. The actual ceremonies of sharing the bread and the cup are not prescribed in BCP and BAS, and many congregations are finding new ways to participate joyfully in this portion of the Liturgy. It is appropriate for the President of the Eucharist to administer the bread and a deacon or a lay person specially licensed for the purpose to administer the cup. However, this practice, too, is varied in many parishes.

During the time of communion there may be silence, or the people may join in singing familiar hymns or psalms, or the choir may offer suitable music.

GO IN PEACE

TO LOVE AND SERVE THE LORD
THANKS BE TO GOD.

WE ARE SENT FORTH

It has been said that the most sacred moment in the Liturgy comes when the Body of Christ, having been fed by the Body of Christ, goes forth to be the Body of Christ in the world. We have been nourished by the Lord's Body and Blood, and now it is time to take up the Lord's life and work. We pause briefly to give thanks for the loving act of feeding us and to ask for guidance as we set out in mission. Sometimes there is a final hymn so that we might go forth singing and making "a joyful noise unto the Lord." The Liturgy itself concludes quickly: the deacon dismisses the congregation, and we respond with a short acclamation, followed, in Easter season, by "Alleluia".

The Liturgy is over, but the Eucharist is not. At the beginning of this booklet we observed that the Eucharist is what the parish does. It is that . . . and more. It is the way the parish lives: thankfully, joyfully, as a participant in the resurrected life of Christ and servant to the world. That which we have just symbolized in the Liturgy gets worked out in the day-to-day life of the parish and its members. That daily life, in turn, becomes the offering of our next liturgical celebration. Eucharist is a way and a style of life.

As various members of the congregation engage in brief conversations and gradually take leave of one another, we go as a community — the Body of Christ — strengthened and sent. . . God's eucharistic people.

THE EASTER PEOPLE

In the language of music, an octave embraces eight whole notes. The eighth is, of course, the same note as the first and is the first note of the next octave. This eighth note is required to complete or fulfill the octave sound. Christians feel the same way about the week. Sunday is the First Day, the Lord's Day. Sunday is also the Eighth Day, the day of promise and hope and fulfillment. Like the first and eighth notes in an octave, Sundays round out and give meaning to all that comes between; and the Parish Eucharist is the full chord that brings it all to life and celebrates it.

What we celebrate is the Incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of our Lord. We celebrate, as well, our own incorporation into Christ's resurrected life through Baptism. The fullness of the Easter event is marked liturgically by the observances of those days we know as Holy Week — Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday — climaxed by the glorious Easter Eucharist and then continuing for a full fifty days until Pentecost. BCP and BAS provide special liturgies for each of those days, all pointing toward and hinging upon the Great Vigil of Easter** and the first celebration of the resurrection.

**See: *The Great Vigil of Easter: A Commentary*, Associated Parishes.

Easter is the normative event for Christians, and the Easter celebration is the paradigm for all our Sunday celebrations. Every Sunday celebrates the resurrection of our Lord and our own participation in eternal life. Naturally, we could not endure, emotionally or materially, a full-scale Holy Week-Easter observance fifty-two times a year. However, by repeating week after week the central act of the Easter celebration, the offering, blessing, dividing, and sharing of bread and wine in obedience to our Lord's command and in the knowledge that it is made the Body and Blood of Christ, we in fact recall the whole Easter Event.

Every Sunday is, in effect, a little Easter. And in the Parish Eucharist, God's Easter people celebrate with thanksgiving and proclaim the Easter hope for the world.

**ALLELUIA.
CHRIST OUR PASSOVER
IS SACRIFICED FOR US.**

**THEREFORE LET US KEEP
THE FEAST.
ALLELUIA.**

WAS EVER ANOTHER COMMAND SO OBEYED?

In the words of Dom Gregory Dix, one of the great liturgical scholars: "At the heart of Christianity is the Eucharist, a thing of absolute simplicity — the taking, blessing, breaking and giving of bread and the taking, blessing and giving of a cup of wine and water as these were first done with their new meaning by a young Jew with His friends on the night before He died. He told His friends to do this henceforth with the new meaning for the recalling of Him. They have done it always since.

"Was ever another command so obeyed? For century after century, spreading slowly to every continent and country and among every race on earth, this action has been done, in every conceivable human

circumstance, for every conceivable human need, from infancy and before it to extreme old age and after it, from the pinnacles of human greatness to the refuge of fugitives in the caves and dens of the earth. Men have found no better thing than this to do for kings at their crowning and for criminals going to the scaffold; for armies in triumph or for a bride and bridegroom in a little country church; for the proclamation of a dogma or for a good crop of wheat; for the wisdom of the Parliament of a mighty nation or for a sick old woman afraid to die; for a schoolboy sitting an examination or for Columbus setting out to discover America; for the famine of whole provinces or for the soul of a dead lover; in thankfulness because my father did not die of pneumonia; for a village headman much tempted to return to fetish because the yams had failed; because the Turk was at the gates of Vienna; for the repentance of Margaret; for the settlement of a strike; for a son for a barren woman; for Captain so-and-so, wounded and prisoner of war; while the lions roared in the nearby amphitheatre; on the beach at Dunkirk; while the hiss of scythes in the thick June grass came faintly through the windows of the church; tremulously, by an old monk on the fiftieth anniversary of his vows; furtively, by an exiled bishop who had hewn timber all day in a prison camp near Murmansk; gorgeously, for the canonization of S. Joan of Arc — one could fill many pages with the reasons why men have done this, and not tell a hundredth part of them. And best of all, week by week and month by month, on a hundred thousand successive Sundays, faithfully, unfailingly, across all the parishes of christendom, the pastors have done this just to *make the plebs sancta Dei*--the holy common people of God."