

A FORM OF HOLY COMMUNION FOR A HOME MEETING OR CONFERENCE

This is an Order devised by The Rev Paul Burgess, now Warden of Carberry Tower, during his time of service as a missionary in a college in Pakistan. It was used by interdenominational groups connected with the college, and is now used at Carberry.

After a time of study of Scripture and a sharing of thoughts arising,

a Hymn or Song may be sung, followed by

Prayer and Praise for - the world we live in,

- the church we belong to,

- the community we serve,

- those for whom we have some special concern.

PREPARATION

Minister : The Lord is here - his spirit is with us now.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God, through Jesus Christ His Son.

We thank you for all the wonders of creation, and for making us in your own image.

We thank you for sending your Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us, that we might be freed from the slavery and guilt of sin.

We thank you for exalting Jesus to your right hand on high, and for sending us your life-giving Spirit to dwell within us.

We join with all the company of heaven in proclaiming your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying:

All : Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest!

Minister : We have complete freedom to go into the Most Holy Place by means of the death of Jesus. For we have a great High Priest in charge of the house of God.

So let us come near to God with a sincere heart and a sure faith with hearts that have been purified from a guilty conscience.

Let us hold on firmly to the hope we profess, because we can trust God to keep his promise.

Let us be concerned for one another, to help one another to show love and to do good.

Let us encourage one another all the more, as we see the Day of the Lord is coming nearer.

Let us now together approach the throne of our gracious Heavenly Father and together confess all that is wrong in our lives and for which we ask his merciful forgiveness:

: Almighty God, our Father in heaven,
we have all sinned against you as much as we have wronged others,
in the evil we have done, and in the good we have not done, through
ignorance, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault.
We truly repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, who died for us,
forgive us all that is past,
And grant that we may serve you in newness of life,
to the glory of your name.

Amen.

Minister : Let us praise God for his mercy and give thanks for his goodness.

A Hymn or Responsive Reading may follow here.

On occasions when COMMUNION is not preceded by BIBLE STUDY and a period of PRAYER, the following may be included at this point:

A Prayer of Intercession;

A Reading from Scripture;

A led Meditation, followed by

A Hymn or Song.

THE PEACE

Minister : We are the body of Christ. In the one Spirit we were baptised in the one body. Those who gather at God's table must be at peace with one another. Let us then pursue all that makes for peace and builds up the common life.

The "Peace" (in the form of a hand shake) may be passed from person to person with these words:

"The peace of the Lord be always with you!" - "And also with you!"

THE COMMUNION

Minister : The Lord Jesus, on the night that he was betrayed, took a piece of bread, gave thanks to God, broke it, and said:

"This is my body, which is for you. Do this in memory of me".

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup and said:
"This cup is God's new covenant, sealed with my blood,
Whenever you drink it, do so in memory of me".

This means that every time you eat this bread and drink from this cup
you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

So, in obedience to Christ's example and appointment, we take these gifts
of bread and wine

And pray that we, who eat and drink in memory of the death he suffered,
may, through the power of the Holy Spirit, be partakers of his body
and blood.

Minister : The bread which we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?

All : The cup which we drink, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ?

Minister : We, though we are many, are one body;

All : For we all partake of the one bread.

Minister : Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which he gave for you,
and the blood which he shed for you;
Remember that Christ died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

The bread and wine are now passed round to all participating, with appropriate words.

The following may be used: "The body of Christ which he gave for you".

"The blood of Christ which he shed for you".

All : The Lord's Prayer, followed by this prayer said together:

All : Almighty God, we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual body and blood
of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Through him we offer you ourselves, our
souls and bodies to be a living sacrifice.

Send us out in the power of your Spirit, to live and work to your
praise and glory.

Amen.

Minister : Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the
great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip
you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that

which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever.

Amen.

FACING THE PEOPLE IN THE PATRISTIC PERIOD: THE MYTH AND THE REALITY

A Communication presented to the ninth International Conference on
Patristic Studies. Oxford, 5-10th September, 1983.

The myth that in the Patristic period, particularly in the early Patristic period, the celebrant at the eucharist generally faced the people across the altar is a myth that needs finally putting asleep. It is a myth that has been fanned by the desires of liturgical reformers rather than by the desire for historical accuracy. It is a myth which, at least in the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches, has caused the celebration of the eucharist to look silly, when a Westward facing altar has been erected in a Church building which was demonstrably constructed in such a way that Eastward facing celebration conforms with the architectural design of the building. So many celebrants have allowed the myth to convert them into what appears to be either a fish and chips sales-assistant, or a victim of a bank robbery. The myth is a myth in the primary sense that it is a set of beliefs or assumptions which have little or no basis in historical fact. Certainly, the claim that in the early Church the eucharist was generally celebrated facing the people, is hard to sustain.

The myth, nonetheless, has been widely advocated, despite its lack of any serious historical justification. To quote two examples:

Firstly, the venerable Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church states under the entry Westward position: "The practice of the celebrant of the eucharist standing on the east side of the altar facing the people appears to have been customary until about the 8th or the 9th Century when the Eastward position was generally adopted."¹

Secondly, Rev. Michael Rear in the Church Literature Association Pamphlet entitled "Facing the people" writes:- "The new position of the altar (i.e. so that the celebrant faces the people) is actually a return to a more ancient custom, when Christians had to maintain their solidarity in a non-Christian environment."²

The Patristic period, which I will for the purposes of this paper confine to its traditional and shorter span between the first and the eighth centuries, was not one in which the practice of facing the congregation at the eucharist was common or universal.