



# St Mary's • Coxhoe • Durham

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## What our Eucharist Service at St Mary's is all about!

We welcome you to the worship of God through the liturgy of the Anglican Church. Like the early Church (Acts 2:42), we meet each Sunday to celebrate the Holy Eucharist. Eucharist means "thanksgiving" and refers to the thanks we give to God for the gift of life, for the continuing presence of the Holy Spirit, and most of all, for the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. This service is also referred to as the Mass, the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion. Broadly, the service consists of just two parts: the liturgy of the Word, and the liturgy of the Eucharist. In more detail, the Holy Eucharist consists of the following parts:

- **The Gathering of the Community**
- **The Proclamation of the Word**
- **Prayers and Intercessions**
- **Holy Communion**
- **Commissioning**



## The Gathering of the Community

**PROCESSIONAL HYMN:** We normally begin our worship with an opening hymn. The hymn number is noted on the hymn boards around the church and on your Notice Sheet. The procession symbolizes the gathering of God's people to worship.

**OPENING GREETING:** This Greeting reminds us why we are gathered to worship.

**SUMMARY OF THE LAW:** The priest recalls the Great Commandments of Jesus to love God and neighbour.

**PRAYER OF PREPERATION:** In prayer we commend our worship to God.

**CONFESSION OF SIN:** We now "confess our sins, confident in God's forgiveness". Confession has two main parts: identifying the sin and the intention to address it. While we recite the words together in a general form, it is intended that in our hearts, we reveal the particular intentions to God.

**ABSOLUTION:** The priest then stands and offers absolution (forgiveness) for our sins through Jesus Christ. The priest reminds us of the words of scripture that assures us of God's love for all His creatures.

**HYMN OF PRAISE:** A hymn of praise is then offered. Usually this is the *Gloria* but during Lent and Advent the more solemn *Kyrie* (Lord Have Mercy) is used.

## The Proclamation of the Word

**SCRIPTURE LESSONS:** The Anglican Church uses a lectionary that assigns the readings for each Sunday. In the course of a three-year cycle, we read through most of the biblical text. Usually there are three readings: a text from the Old Testament, from the letters of Paul, and from the Gospels. Reading scripture during a service is based on ancient forms of Jewish worship.

- **Old Testament Reading:** What we call "Old Testament" is in fact the Hebrew Scriptures referring to God's first promise to Israel through Abraham. Jesus and his disciples would have heard and studied these writings. The New Testament refers to the New Covenant or promise made by God to humanity through Jesus. You will note that there is a response from the people after each reading - "**Thanks be to God**".
- **Gradual Hymn:** Gradual hymns/psalms are ancient Hebrew hymns Christians and Jews have sung for thousands of years. "Gradual" from the Latin word "step" is attached to the name of this Psalm since it was sung as the reader walked down the steps to where the lesson would be read.
- **Gospel** (from old English words "God Spell" meaning "good news") Because the Gospels provide our best picture of Jesus, we honour the Gospel reading from the lectern with a special book that contains the four Gospels and we stand as we attend to their truth. A special set of responses occurs before and after the Gospel. During the reading of the Gospel, it is customary for all members of the congregation to face the reader, even if this means turning sideways or backwards in the pew.
- **Sermon:** Following the readings the priest (or other preacher) seeks to proclaim God's love reflected in these texts, applying them as much as possible to current issues in the church and the World

## Prayers and Intercessions

**THE CREED:** After the sermon, we stand and recite the Creed (Nicene or Apostles'), a credal statement that summarizes the basic beliefs of the Christian faith, that was formulated early in the Church's history. "Credo" literally means to "place your heart". As followers of Jesus, we place our very hearts and lives in commitment to the Kingdom of God and the Gospel of Jesus.

**INTERCESSIONS:** Prayer is an essential part of the Christian's life. Our liturgy frames our prayer by reminding us of dimensions of our existence. In our prayers, we often name members of our parish who are ill, as well as parishioners who have recently died and **In Memoriam** for the coming week (the names are in the Notice Sheet).

**THE PEACE:** Following the Intercessions, we offer a sign of peace to our neighbour. This is in line with the scriptural admonition that if you have a grievance with your brother or sister go and settle it before you offer your gift at the Altar. This is much more than "saying hello to your neighbour", but rather is a symbol of regard for each person.

## Holy Communion

**THE OFFERTORY:** A hymn is sung as we bring forth the bread and the wine for our Holy Communion. Alms plates are passed among the people gathered for worship. This offering supports the mission and ministry of our parish and beyond. Our stewardship of God's many gifts to us is expressed in our gifts to the ministry of the Church. The tithe is the standard of giving for the Christian.

**SURSUM CORDA:** Holy Communion begins with the salutation between the Celebrant and the People, with the priest exhorting the people to "lift up your hearts". This invitation asks people to place their hearts and minds on the Kingdom of Heaven where indeed God reigns.

**SANCTUS AND BENEDICTUS:** This text comes from Isaiah as the prophet finds himself in the presence of God and "cries holy unto the Lord". It is a deep expression of praise that speaks to the majesty of God. This text has traditionally been set to music by some of the great composers of the church and in most of our liturgies, we sing the Sanctus and Benedictus.

**EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER:** Using ancient texts that recount the mighty acts of God, our Eucharistic prayer expresses our profound thanksgiving to our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. We recall the "words of institution" that scripture tells us Jesus used

on his last night on Earth in the holy meal he shared with His disciples. We take comfort in the promise he made: He will be present at future celebrations of this meal. As Anglicans, we affirm the Real Presence of Christ in our Eucharistic celebration. During the Eucharistic prayer, the priest invokes the Holy Spirit to be present in our celebration. At the conclusion, all the people affirm the spiritual truth of the prayer by sounding a hearty AMEN.

**THE LORD'S PRAYER:** When Jesus taught his disciples this prayer it was a summary of all prayers. Placed in our liturgy at this place it again becomes the summation of our prayers to God in blessing the Bread and Wine.

**FRACTION:** The Eucharistic Prayer is followed by the breaking of bread (the Fraction), a Fraction Sentence, and the Prayer of Humble Access . Then the priest invites the people to come and share in Holy Communion.

**AGNUS DEI:** During or immediately following the fraction (above) we pray to Christ as the perfect sacrificial offering who atones for the sin of the world ["Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29)], asking for his mercy and his peace.

**RECEIVING THE SACRAMENT:** We practice "Open Communion" in the Anglican Church. If you are a baptized Christian, you are welcome to receive the Blessed Sacrament with us. To receive, simply place your overlapped hands in front of the minister. The host (wafer) will be placed in your hands, at which point you may consume it. Another minister will follow behind with the chalice of wine. Take the base of the chalice and guide it to your lips for a sip of the wine. If you do not wish to receive the wine, simply cross your arms over your chest and the minister will give you a blessing instead. After receiving the sacrament/blessing people return to their pews for a time of quiet contemplation. During this period the choir will sing softly. Our post-communion prayer follows and reminds us of the spiritual graces we have received.

## **Commissioning**

**THE BLESSING:** The traditional blessing by the priest is given, followed by the *Recessional Hymn* in which the choir and ministers proceed to the back of the church. This is symbolic of our leaving worship to go into the world for service.

**THE DISMISSAL:** The priest pronounces the dismissal, entreating us to go into the world to love and serve the Lord.