

**An Instructed Eucharist**  
**St. Augustine's Church, Croton-on-Hudson**  
**June 26, 2005**

BJR Good morning, and welcome. Today, we're going to participate in a special teaching service, or "instructed Eucharist," during which we'll pause periodically to explain what we're doing and why we're doing it. We prepare for worship first by our private prayers and meditations as we take our places in the pews.

In its entirety, the Eucharist is the work of the people giving thanks to God for what God has done for us through Jesus Christ. The celebration of the Eucharist has been done in this way, more or less, since the middle of the second century. The word "Eucharist" in Greek means thanksgiving. The word "liturgy" means the work of the people.

There are two parts to the service of Holy Eucharist. The first part is called "The Word of God." This part includes readings from the Bible, the Sermon, the Creed, the Confession, and prayers for our own needs and the needs of others. This part of the service ends with the Peace. The second part of the service is called "Holy Communion," based on Jesus' Last Supper with His disciples.

In just a moment, the entrance rite will begin. As we sing a Processional Hymn, you'll see the other worship leaders and me enter the church. We follow the processional cross, because the work that we do together is a re-enactment of God's saving work in the death of Jesus on the cross and His rising again. Singing the Processional Hymn together brings the participants into the room, but more than that, it's a means of involving and unifying us so that we're able to respond as a body and not as isolated individuals to the opening acclamation. We stand to honor the symbols of our faith, and to sing hymn #404.

**Processional Hymn**

N Now we come to the first words we will exchange. Please turn in your Prayer Book to page 355. Betsy, who is the celebrant, will greet you, and then you'll greet her. These opening words are called the "Trinitarian Acclamation" and come from the Eastern Orthodox Church. They attest to our understanding that we worship three persons in One God.

BJR Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

ALL And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever. Amen.

N The next prayer is called the Collect for Purity, which has been used at the opening of the Eucharist since 1549. It proclaims two great truths: Our need to stand before the all-knowing God with clean hearts, and our need to love and worship God. After saying this collect, or prayer, we will sing a song of

praise, “Glory to God in the highest.” The text is found on page 356 and the music on the inside of the back cover of your hymnal.

### **Betsy prays the Collect for Purity**

#### **We sing the Gloria**

N Now we turn our attention to the Word of the Lord. The Collect of the Day is a Prayer that collects or gathers the main thoughts of today’s readings from the Bible. The celebrant will begin with a greeting, to which the people respond.

BJR The Lord be with you.

ALL And also with you.

BJR Let us pray

### **Betsy prays the Collect of the Day**

N In the Episcopal Church, we generally stand for praise and sit for instruction. Please be seated while a lector of the parish reads from the Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament. (Pause while people are seated.) This reading connects us to the earliest part of the story of God’s people, before Jesus was born. Our response to the stories of our Jewish and Christian ancestors is a resounding, “Thanks be to God!”

### **The Old Testament Lesson is read by a lector**

N Next, we say together the appointed Psalm of the Day, which is essentially a hymn extracted from a 3,000 year old hymnal. The themes of the Psalm support the message of the Gospel reading for the day. The Psalms are pieces of poetry intended to be sung.

### **The lay reader leads the psalm**

N The second reading from the Bible is often called the Epistle, because it’s taken from one of the epistles, or letters, written for and exchanged among the new communities of followers of Jesus after his death and resurrection. These letters form part of the New Testament, or the Christian Scriptures, and they tell us the writers’ thoughts about relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

### **The Epistle is read by a lector**

N From ancient times, the Jewish people have revered the Torah by enshrining it in a special place and carrying it in procession. At some early date, the Christian church similarly began to honor the four Gospel books – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These four books tell the story of Jesus and his teachings. “Gospel” means good news.

The Gospel Book, a book containing just the Gospels, is carried from the altar into the midst of the people to act out the coming of the Good News to all of us in Jesus Christ. We stand and face the reader to call further attention to the Gospel reading and to honor it as the Word of God.

The candles or torches that accompany the Gospeller not only signify the bringing of Christ's light and words to the people; they also date back to the time before electricity when they provided light to read by!

The hymn that we sing as this procession happens is called the "sequence" or "gradual" hymn." Music was originally introduced into the liturgy to cover movement as the priest, deacon, and servers moved about the altar. Our gradual hymn also helps us understand the Gospel we're about to hear. Please stand to sing hymn #630.

### **Gradual hymn**

### **Gospel reading**

N Please be seated. (Pause while people are seated.)

The sermon normally follows the reading of the Gospel. Its purpose is to help us understand the scripture readings and to connect them with our own lives. Most often, preachers choose the Gospel as the particular reading upon which to base the sermon, although any or all of the biblical texts, the collect of the day, or a hymn may shape the sermon. Occasionally, general topics appropriate to the life and ministry of the church or something that's going on in the world form the basis for a sermon. Today, these words of explanation about the service will take the place of a traditional sermon.

There must always be a response to God's word, read and preached. So, following the sermon, we affirm our faith. And since the fourth century, Christians have summarized their faith in the words of a creed that was first formulated by a council of bishops in the Greek city of Nicea.

Notice that it is "we" who are confessing our faith – the pronouns are plural. The creed is not intended to be a test of personal standards or beliefs. Rather, it summarizes what the church has come to understand and affirm about who we are and what we're to do as followers of Jesus. It reminds us that we're part of the Body of Christ, the community of believers and followers of Jesus' way. Please stand for the creed, found on page 358.

### **The Nicene Creed is recited by all**

N Please be seated.

Our belief has been nourished by Scripture, affirmed in the Creed, and is now exercised as we offer the Prayers of the People. The Prayers of the People intend

to express the prayers of everyone gathered in the worshipping community. A lay person leads us, and we're all encouraged to ask God specifically for what we need, to pray for particular people we know and love, and to thank God for our lives and for God's love and presence in our lives. We may offer personal prayers silently or aloud.

The Prayer Book gives us six forms with which to offer prayers, and we try to alternate between the different forms from season to season. Each form gives us the opportunity to pray for the church, the nation, the world, and the local community along with our personal prayers. Today, we'll use Form VI, found on page 392.

The confession of sin is an important part of our prayers and of our preparation for Holy Communion. Each Christian is expected to come to the Eucharist having looked at his or her own life to see where we have missed the mark. This is a common confession – we're all in the same condition – so we pray together.

The priest then pronounced the Absolution, which is a promise of God's absolute and unconditional forgiveness, in which our sins are placed as far from us as "the east is from the west."

Please stand.

**Betsy invites prayers from the congregation; the lay reader leads the prayers; Betsy pronounces the Absolution following the confession ("Almighty God, have mercy on you ... keep you in eternal life. Amen.")**

N The first part of our worship is coming to a close. It will end when the Peace is offered. This is the peace which unites us to God and to one another. When we share the Peace with one another, we forgive each other for any wrongs, grudges, or offenses. The Peace is the solemn fulfillment of the Lord's command to be reconciled to one another.

However, just before the Peace, we sometimes have something specific to acknowledge or celebrate within our community of faith. Will the dePinho/Ardito family and the Joslyn/Mitchell family please come forward?

**Betsy offers prayers for Gabriel's first birthday and for Connie's and Gerald's fifth wedding anniversary; for the first anniversary of Molli's becoming part of the Joslyn/Mitchell family and for Betsy and Mark's sixth wedding anniversary! Then we offer the peace to one another. Betsy welcomes the congregation and makes announcements.**

N Please be seated.  
Everything we've done so far has been to prepare us for Holy Communion or Holy Eucharist, when we eat bread and drink wine together. The word

“communion” reminds us of other words: community, common, communicate. These are all from the Greek word “koinonia,” which was one name for Christians in the New Testament. We gather together for Holy Communion at the Lord’s table because we are the Lord’s community. “Eucharist,” another word sometimes used in place of “communion,” means thanksgiving. The meal we share is one of giving thanks to God for all that God has done for us and through us.

The Holy Communion, as a Sacrament, is the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace expressed in a simple meal. At his last supper, Jesus shared bread and wine – the things that give us life – with his disciples. He told them to remember him each time they shared the bread and wine, and that when they did, his life would be in them.

Holy Communion has four basic actions to it: The offering of bread and wine; the blessing of them; breaking the bread; and giving the people the bread and wine. These are called the Offertory, the Consecration, the Fraction, and the Communion.

In the Offertory, the first action, the congregation offers itself and its world. During the Offertory, representatives of the congregation gather the people’s offerings of bread and wine, and money or other gifts, as we sing an Offertory Hymn. Then, as these offerings are presented and acknowledged, we sing the Doxology.

Betsy will say an Offertory Sentence. Then, we will stand and sing hymn #524.

**Betsy says the Offertory Sentence (“Walk in love ....). During the singing of the Offertory Hymn, the bread and wine are brought forward and the offering is collected. The table is set. When the ushers bring the offering plates forward, the Doxology is sung.**

N Please be seated.

We now move to the central prayer in which our gifts to God are consecrated, set aside as sacred. This is the Eucharistic Prayer. In this prayer, we will hear described the last meal that Jesus had with his friends, just hours before he died. We will hear repeated the words of “Institution” – the words that Jesus said at the meal, in which he refers to the bread as his body and the wine as his blood. Jesus is quoted as saying, “Do this in remembrance of me.”

In our language, to remember is to drift back in time to musings about the past. But in the New Testament, remembering has a far broader and deeper meaning. Here, to remember is to infuse a past action with present reality and personal significance.

So Jesus is saying, “As you eat this bread and drink this wine, you will find me in

you. I am the host of this meal, and you are receiving me in faith.”

There are several Eucharistic Prayers in *The Book of Common Prayer*. Each has its own emphasis, and when all of these prayers are looked at collectively, they present a balanced picture of what we believe about God through our Eucharistic liturgy. As with the various forms of the Prayers of the People, we alternate the use of the Eucharistic Prayers with different liturgical seasons.

The Sanctus is a hymn that links us with the Communion of the Saints and the ranks of angels in praise of God. It reminds us that the action of the Eucharist is one in which we join with all of creation in worshipping God.

Our prayers continue on page 361 with Eucharistic Prayer A. Please stand.

**Betsy prays the Great Thanksgiving; the Sanctus is sung.**

N At this point, some in our church remain standing, and some kneel – either is appropriate. The earliest Christians would have stood, but because the prayer is long, some of you may be more comfortable sitting, and that’s fine, too. I invite you to remain standing, or to kneel, or to sit.

**The people stand, kneel, or sit; Betsy continues. The Eucharistic Prayer ends with: “All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and forever. Amen.”**

N And now, we are about to join in those special words that Jesus taught his disciples, in which we ask for our daily bread. Those words have been seen from early times as a preparation for the reception of communion and were apparently the original reason for including the Lord’s Prayer at this point in the service.

After the Lord’s Prayer, a large wafer is held up and broken in two. This is the third action of the Eucharist – the Fraction - which is mostly a practical action: bread must be broken to be shared. Yet, it is also a visual representation of the crucifixion, so that we may be encouraged to offer our own brokenness for forgiveness and healing. We also pause for a moment of silence to remind ourselves of God in Christ Jesus breaking into human existence – breaking into our own lives, here and now – and making himself present to us.

**Betsy leads the Lord’s Prayer, then breaks the consecrated bread; we sing the Agnus Dei (“Lamb of God ...”); Betsy gives the invitation: “The gifts of God ... feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.”**

N When we come forward to receive the bread and wine, it’s a profound act of

community. We move out of our seats and come before an altar where generations of other Christians have come before us. The act of coming to the table, to the altar, is both public and private. Receiving bread and wine side by side is an incredible affirmation of faith. We are strengthened as individuals and as a community of believers and seekers.

Here at St. Augustine's, all who seek God and a deeper life in Christ are welcome to receive communion. If you want to receive communion, please place your hands like this, making the sign of the cross, and the bread will be placed in your hands. Either eat the bread and drink directly from the chalice, or wait until the lay reader takes the bread from your hands, dips it into the wine in the chalice, and places it upon your tongue.

Anyone not wishing to receive but still wanting to participate is welcome to come forward to receive a blessing. Making the sign of the cross over your heart like this lets the priest know.

**Communion is distributed. Betsy does the ablutions (cleans the paten and chalice). When that has been completed, and the organ music has stopped, the instruction continues.**

N Now that we have all received communion, we say a final prayer together. It's a prayer that expresses our gratitude to God for feeding our bodies and our spirits. It's also a prayer that prepares us to go forth into the world.

After that communal prayer, we will be offered God's blessing. Please stand or kneel for the post-communion prayer, found on page 365.

**Betsy: "Let us pray. Eternal God, heavenly Father ..."**  
**Betsy gives the blessing**

N Please stand.  
Last of all, the dismissal is pronounced, and we'll sing hymn #345 together. But this is not the end of the service. Rather, it's just the beginning. For now we process forth, so that the rest of the service may be lived out in the many hours, the many places, and the many people with whom we may serve as ambassadors of Christ.

We have been renewed and equipped in our worship. And so our final words become a ringing acclamation, as we are encouraged to go forth in the name of Christ.

**Betsy gives the dismissal; the hymn begins; we process.**

