

LET'S TALK LITURGY! – Liturgy of the Eucharist: Overview

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Our liturgy chats thus far have taken us through the Gathering Rite and the Liturgy of the Word. We have been formed as a community, heard the Word and had it broken open for us. Now it is time to move into the Liturgy of the Eucharist and its many parts!

In broad strokes, the Liturgy of the Eucharist can be likened to sharing a meal and consists of these main elements:

- Preparation of the Gifts and the Altar (setting the table);
- The Eucharistic Prayer (saying grace);
- Communion Rite (eating and drinking with our family and friends).

As we learned earlier, not all elements are of equal importance in the celebration of our liturgies. Some are more important (primary elements) and some are of lesser importance (secondary elements). This is helpful to know because it is sometimes easy to “overload” or over emphasize an element of secondary importance when planning and celebrating. This can draw attention away from the primary elements to the detriment of the whole celebration.

Unfortunately, some secondary elements have a lot of little parts which need to be addressed in these articles tending to make the secondary elements LOOK more important. That is true of the Preparation of the Gifts and Altar during the Liturgy of the Eucharist! The Eucharistic Prayer and Communion Rite are primary elements and the Preparation of the Gifts is a secondary element – with LOTS of little parts.

So, let's begin with the secondary element (Preparation of the Gifts and Altar) and its many little parts. Following the Universal Prayers (in most parishes) or the Sign of Peace (at QAC), you will see some or all of these actions in the Preparation:

- Presentation of the gifts of bread and wine by representatives of the community;
- Presentation of gifts for the poor and the Church (collection offerings);
- Preparation of the table (altar);
- Song or musical accompaniment to the presentation procession;
- Placing the bread and wine on the table;
- BRK or Berakah;
- Mixing of wine and water;
- Incensing of the gifts and those offering the gifts;
- Washing of hands;
- Invitation to the Prayer over the Gifts;
- Prayer over the Gifts.

The Eucharistic Prayer, a PRIMARY element, consists generally of 8 main parts as identified in Chapter II of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal. Those parts are:

- The thanksgiving (the Preface and its introductory dialogue);
- The acclamation (Holy Holy Holy)
- The epiclesis or calling down of the Holy Spirit;
- The Institution Narrative and Memorial Acclamation;
- The anamnesis;

- The oblation;
- The intercessions;
- The concluding doxology and Great Amen.

Finally, the Communion Rite (another PRIMARY element) can be broken into these parts:

- The Lord's Prayer;
- The Rite of Peace (in most parishes);
- The Breaking of the Bread and Lamb of God litany;
- Invitation to eat and drink;
- Communion (eating and drinking) including procession and music;
- Meditation (silence or song);
- The Prayer after Communion.

Each of these elements deserves our attention – and there are a few new words that need to be defined, but that will wait until our next time together. I am looking forward to the discussion!