

A Visitor's Guide
to the
Holy Eucharist
as celebrated at the
Church of St. Michael & All Angels
St. John's, Newfoundland



We welcome you and invite you to join in the worship of God Almighty: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

This booklet will help you become familiar with the liturgy of the Anglican Church of Canada, and the traditions of our parish.

All baptised persons, regardless of church affiliation, are welcome to receive the Blessed Sacrament at our altar.

Books and Papers

At our Liturgy you will need:

- 1) *The Angelus*, our weekly bulletin which includes the Order of Service, Hymns and Proper of the Day
- 2) The green *Book of Alternative Services (BAS)* or the maroon *Book of Common Prayer* which contains the rite.
- 3) The blue *Book of Common Praise* (The Hymn Book, 1938), which contains the hymns we sing.

At St. Michael's we avoid making announcements during the Liturgy. This helps create a focussed and reverent atmosphere, and allows the worship to flow uninterrupted by worldly distractions. For this reason, you will need to follow closely the Order of Service, which contains all the hymn numbers and page references. The hymn numbers from the Book of Common Praise are also displayed on the hymn boards.

The Holy Eucharist

From the earliest days of the Church, Christians have gathered on the Lord's Day (Sunday, the day of our Lord's Resurrection) to celebrate the mysteries of His Body and Blood. The Holy Eucharist is known by a number of names:

'Eucharist' from the Greek, means "thanksgiving", and refers to the thanks we give God for all the blessings of this life, and especially for the life-giving resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The 'Lord's Supper' is the holy meal of bread and wine, the Body and Blood of Christ, shared between Jesus and His disciples in the Upper Room on the night of his betrayal.

'Liturgy' is a term which also comes from a Greek word meaning, loosely, "Work of the People". The work of the People of God is to offer "a sacrifice of Praise and Thanksgiving", in the mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ, the Holy Eucharist.

'Holy Communion' refers to the relationship between the faithful community and Jesus Christ Himself, as we discover in receiving the Blessed Sacrament.

'Most Blessed Sacrament' is a formal title for the consecrated elements of Bread and Wine. A sacrament is defined as "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace".

'Mass' is a term used by Roman Catholics and also by many Anglicans. The name is thought to be derived from the dismissal given by the Deacon in the Latin Rite: "Ite Missa Est". The Faithful are sent forth into the world to fulfill God's will in their daily lives.

The 'Rite' refers to the liturgical text used in the celebration. On Sundays at St. Michael's we usually use two rites. At 8:00 a.m., we use the rite found in the *Book of Common Prayer (BCP)*. This is the "classical" Anglican Eucharistic rite. At 10:30 a.m. we use the rite found in the *Book of Alternative Services (BAS)*. This is a traditional-language rite which employs elements of the liturgical renewal movement of recent years.

Our principal 10:30 liturgy is a 'Sung Eucharist', which means that many parts of the rite are sung or intoned by the priest, choir and congregation.

'Ceremonial' refers to the physical actions and movements of the priest and servers. At St. Michael's we use a formal ceremonial in the Anglo-Catholic tradition.

The Gathering of the Community (BAS page 230)

Introit Hymn: During this hymn the Celebrant (the priest who presides at the celebration) enters the sanctuary, attended by servers and, at Solemn celebrations, the Deacon and Sub-deacon.

The Greeting: As the celebrant greets the assembled community, we are reminded of why we are gathered to worship. The *Collect for Purity* helps us to centre our thoughts and prepare us for worship.

Gloria in Excelsis (Glory be to God on High): This ancient hymn of praise helps to set the tone of our worship. During the seasons of Advent and Lent, the *Gloria* is replaced by the *Kyrie* or the *Trisagion* (BAS page 231/2) penitential hymns appropriate to those seasons.

The Collect of the Day: On behalf of the congregation, the priest intones (sings) a prayer which summarises the spiritual themes for the day. Each day of the Christian Calendar has a set of *Propers*, which includes the Collect of the day, along with other prayers and readings.

The Proclamation of the Word (BAS page 232)

The Readings: The Anglican Church uses a Lectionary which assigns the scripture lessons for each day of the Church Calendar. On Sundays, over a three-year cycle, we read through most of the Bible. At our Sunday liturgies, we generally have three readings: the first from the Old Testament, the second from the epistles (letters) of St Paul the Apostle, or from another part of the New Testament, and the third from one of the four Gospels. The text is printed in the Order of Service as found in the weekly *Angelus*.

The Psalm is sung between the Old Testament lesson and the New Testament reading. The words are printed in the *Angelus*.

The Holy Gospel is proclaimed with great dignity and reverence. The person reading the Holy Gospel (the *Gospeller*, always a deacon or a priest) is led by cross and torches to a place in the midst of the congregation. He holds the gospel book aloft, so that all may be reminded that the gospels give us the best written picture of Jesus, and they contain His words. All stand, and turn in their places to face the Gospeller. A **Gospel Acclamation** is sung during the Gospel Procession. The gospel book is returned to the altar after the Holy Gospel is proclaimed, a reminder that Word and Sacrament are closely bound together as two ways of knowing God in His Son Jesus Christ.

The Sermon (Homily) is preached, often on themes suggested by the readings, and especially by the Holy Gospel.

The Nicene Creed (BAS page 234): After the sermon, we stand and sing the Church's ancient statement of belief as formulated by the Fathers of the universal church at the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325). During the words 'And

was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary', you may notice worshippers kneeling or bowing, a devotion which reminds us of God's profound entry into human history through the Incarnation of His Son.

The Prayers of the Faithful: Prayer is an essential part of the life of the People of God. Each day the Church remembers in prayer the cares and concerns of the world. In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer we remember our fellow Anglicans throughout the world. In the Tri-Diocesan Cycle, we pray for parishes in the three Anglican dioceses of Newfoundland & Labrador. In our own Parish Cycle, we remember members of our own parish family, throughout the year. In the Prayers of the Faithful, we often name those who are ill, or who have asked for our prayers. We also pray for the repose of the souls of the Faithful Departed, often commemorating 'in the year's mind', departed members of our parish on or around the anniversary of their death.

Confession and Absolution of Sin: Four quotations from Holy Scripture are read which remind us of the salvation and life given to us freely by Jesus Christ. These scripture texts are often referred to as the *Comfortable Words*. The Faithful are then invited to make a General Confession of Sin, a reminder that we all fall short of the glory of God. The priest (or Bishop, if he be present) then pronounces absolution, a declaration that we are forgiven our sins through our Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Pax (Peace): After kneeling for the Confession & Absolution we stand forgiven and offer a sign of peace to our neighbours, saying "The peace of Christ". This is in keeping with a basic Christian precept. If we have a grievance with a neighbour, we are admonished by Jesus Himself to go and settle it with them before offering our gifts at the altar.

The Celebration of the Eucharist (BAS page 240)

The Offertory (Preparation of the Gifts): During the offertory, a hymn is sung. Representatives of the people present the gifts of bread and wine for the Eucharist at the altar. At the same time, collection plates are passed through the congregation to receive gifts of money for the support of our parish and the wider church.

When the gifts of bread and wine have been prepared by the priests and servers, a prayer over the gifts is said by the Celebrant. This prayer is printed with the Proper of the Day in *The Angelus*.

The Eucharistic Prayer (BAS 241): The traditional language rite from the BAS used at St. Michael's includes the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving from the Canadian BCP. This is the central prayer and action of the rite. The prayer begins with the *mutual salutation*, which is the greeting "The Lord be with you" and answer "And with thy spirit". This is followed by the exhortation "Lift up your hearts", an invitation for the people to place their hearts and minds on the Kingdom of Heaven where God indeed reigns.

The text of the *Sanctus* (Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts...) and *Benedictus* (Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord...) comes from the Prophet Isaiah and is a deep expression of praise that speaks to the majesty of God.

The Eucharistic Prayer continues with our profound thanksgiving to God: the Father who creates, the Son who redeems, and the Holy Spirit who sanctifies. The events of the Last Supper are recalled and Sanctus Bells are rung to highlight the solemnity of the action and to draw our attention to the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

The Lord's Prayer (BAS page 245): We sing the Lord's Prayer, the model of prayer given to us by Our Lord Himself.

The Fraction (Breaking of the Bread): After a period of silence, the celebrant breaks the consecrated bread, Christ's Body broken, as it was upon the Cross of Calvary. The congregation then says the *Prayer of Humble Access* (BAS page 246), a prayer of preparation to receive the Blessed Sacrament.

Agnus Dei (O Lamb of God...): This ancient anthem prays to Christ (the sacrificed "Lamb of God" present in the Blessed Sacrament) to have mercy upon His people and to grant them peace.

Receiving the Blessed Sacrament: Those who wish to receive reverently approach the altar. It is our custom at St. Michael's to kneel to receive Communion. To receive the Host (consecrated bread), place your right hand over your left, palms up. An assisting priest or eucharistic assistant follows with the *chalice* (cup which holds the consecrated wine). Take the foot (base) of the chalice with your right hand and guide it to your lips for a small sip of consecrated wine. Wait until the person next to you receives from the chalice and then you may return to your pew, where you may wish to kneel for your own silent prayer of thanksgiving.

During Communion and the *ablutions* (the ceremonially cleansing of the sacred vessels) various hymns and anthems may be sung.

Those who are unable to come the altar rail to receive the Blessed Sacrament, should speak to a *sidesperson* (those who greet the congregation at the door) so that the celebrant can be notified to bring the Blessed Sacrament to the pew. When this is done the Sanctus Bells are rung, signalling the congregation to kneel as the Blessed Sacrament is administered in their midst.

Prayer after Communion (BAS page 237): A prayer after communion (or another, shorter prayer printed with the proper) reminds us of the spiritual graces we have received.

Blessing & Dismissal: The celebrant (or Bishop, if he be present) pronounces a Blessing upon the people. The dismissal is given traditionally by a deacon, or by the Celebrant. We are sent into the world blessed by Word & Sacrament, and empowered to be builders of God's Kingdom.

Closing Hymn: The *Sanctuary Party* (celebrant, other clergy and attending servers in the sanctuary, or area around the altar) depart during this hymn. The choir retires during a recessional played upon the organ. Following the departure of the choir it is customary to kneel for private prayer. All are invited to greet the celebrant and/or preacher at the West Doors, and to join in a time of fellowship in the Fr. Nichols Auditorium in the Parish Hall, where light refreshments are served.

A Note on Solemn Celebrations

On principal feasts we often begin the Liturgy with a Solemn Procession around the Church, during which hymns are sung, and an extra prayer is offered. This is a formal means of adding dignity to the celebration. The banner of St. Michael is often carried, a reminder of our patron saint. Sacred Ministers, the Deacon of the Mass and the Sub-deacon, attend the Celebrant at Solemn celebrations.

A Note on Incense

At solemn celebrations we often use incense, an ancient, biblical sign which suggests holiness and prayerfulness. Incense has been used through the ages as a means of purifying and designating holy things. Incense is a blend of sweet smelling spices, principally the gum-resin frankincense, which, when burned produces a sweet smell. This emblem of devotion was one of the gifts offered to the Christ child by the Wise Men. It is a sign of His divinity.

A Note on Holy Images

St. Michael's Church is adorned with precious artwork: the *Christus Rex* (Christ the King) above our altar, the *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God) mounted upon the altar, the beautifully carved 14 Stations of the Cross around the Nave, the small statue of our patron St. Michael the Archangel, and the icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Our Lady of Walsingham) which was hand-painted at the National Shrine of Our Lady in Walsingham, England. These works of art are aids in our devotion, vivid reminders of God's work in the world, and of His Incarnation in the person of Jesus Christ. Christian iconography expresses in images the same Gospel message that Holy Scripture communicates by words. Image and Word illuminate one another. God is glorified in sacred art, another way we can honour Him and offer our creative energy back to Him who created us.

