



Introduction

In March, Bishop Steven wrote that it is now time 'to reset the Eucharist as the gift of Christ to his people at the centre of our common life again, [and, in the Eucharist,] to meet with Christ and one another... to find healing and love and to be formed again, slowly, into one body able to share Christ's love with the world... To share the Eucharist is to set our lives each week around appreciation and wonder at the gift of life and love and salvation.'

These resources invite churches to renew their thanksgiving to God for the 'wonderful sacrament' of Holy Communion. They comprise:

1. passages of Scripture accompanied by questions for reflection and by a prayer, which could be used by individuals and households prior to attending a service of Holy Communion, or by the gathered community;
2. some personal prayers of preparation for receiving Holy Communion;
3. the famous poem *Love bade me welcome* by George Herbert;
4. links to further resources provided by the Church of England.

Churches are also encouraged to think about observing the Day of Thanksgiving for the Institution of Holy Communion (Corpus Christi) either on the First Sunday after Trinity (6 June) or the preceding Thursday.

Preparing for Communion

The Church of England has always encouraged Christians to make careful preparation before receiving communion. For those who have been unable to receive communion for some time, setting aside time to prepare to receive the sacrament again is particularly appropriate. Here are some prayers and passages of scripture that might be helpful.

1. They recognized him in the breaking of the bread

On that same day two of the disciples were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?' He asked them, 'What things?' They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.' Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

(Luke 24.13-35)

Reflection

- Reflect on what you have read for a couple of minutes, and then read through the passage again.
- Imagine that you are one of the disciples walking to Emmaus.
- How do you react when you meet the stranger?
- How significant is the breaking of the bread in enabling you to recognize Jesus?
- How do you feel after you have recognized him?
- How does this passage help you to prepare to receive Holy Communion?

Prayer

O living God,
whose Son made himself known to his disciples
in the breaking of the bread:
open the eyes of our faith,
that we may see him in all his redeeming work,
who is alive and reigns, now and for ever.
Amen.

*(Third Sunday of Easter
Prayer after Communion)*

2. The bread of life

(This passage follows John's account of the feeding of the five thousand.)

Jesus said to crowd, 'Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' They said to him, 'Sir, give us this bread always.' Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'

(John 6.32-35)

Reflection

- Reflect on what you have read for a couple of minutes, and then read through the passage again.
- Imagine that you are one of the crowd who has just been fed by Jesus.
- How do you feel after you have been fed by Jesus?
- How do you react when Jesus tells you that this bread is not just for you but for the world?
- How does this passage help you to prepare to receive Holy Communion?

Prayer

Strengthen for service, Lord,
the hands that take holy things:
may the ears which hear your word
be deaf to clamour and dispute;
may the tongues which sing your praise be free from deceit;
may the eyes which see the tokens of your love
shine with the light of hope;
and may the bodies which are fed with your body
be refreshed with the fullness of your life;
glory to you for ever.
Amen.

*(Eighth Sunday after Trinity
Prayer after Communion, adapted)*

Prayers of Preparation for Communion

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
Body of Christ, save me.
Blood of Christ, refresh me.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O good Jesus, hear me.
Within your wounds hide me.
Let me never be separated from you.
From the power of darkness defend me.
In the hour of my death, call me
and bid me come to you,
that with your saints I may praise you
for ever and ever.
Amen.

Soul of my Saviour, sanctify my breast,
Body of Christ, be thou my saving guest,
Blood of my Saviour, bathe me in thy tide,
Wash me with water flowing from thy side.
Strength and protection may thy passion be,
O blessed Jesu, hear and answer me;
Deep in thy wounds, Lord, hide and shelter me,
So shall I never, never part from thee.
Guard and defend me from the foe malign,
In death's dread moments, make me only thine;
Call me and bid me come to thee on high,
Where I may praise thee with thy saints for ay.

*(Anima Christi,
Common Worship: Pastoral Services)*

Lord Christ, who said, 'Do this in remembrance of me':
help us at every communion service to look back,
and remember your death for us on the cross;
to look up, and know that you are the risen Saviour among us;
to look around, and rejoice in your fellowship with one another;
and to look forward in hope to the coming of your kingdom and the heavenly banquet.
For your name's sake.
Amen.

(Llewellyn Cummings)

Father,
make our consciences clean
by the work of your Holy Spirit.
When your Son Jesus Christ comes to us
in this holy sacrament
may he find in us
a home ready and prepared for him,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

*(Conscientias nostras,
translated by Andrew Burnham)*

Most merciful Lord,
your love compels us to come in.
Our hands were unclean,
our hearts were unprepared;
we were not fit
even to eat the crumbs from under your table.
But you, Lord, are the God of our salvation,
and share your bread with sinners.
So cleanse and feed us
with the precious body and blood of your Son,
that he may live in us and we in him;
and that we, with the whole company of Christ,
may sit and eat in your kingdom.
Amen.

We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us.
Amen.

*(Common Worship,
Prayer of Humble Access)*

God of truth,
when we see with our eyes
and touch with our hands the bread of life,
strengthen our faith,
that we may grow in love for you and for each other;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

*(Common Worship:
Prayer after Communion, Fifth Sunday before Lent,
adapted)*

Merciful Father,
who gave Jesus Christ to be for us the bread of life,
that those who come to him should never hunger:
draw us to the Lord in faith and love,
that we may eat and drink with him
at his table in the kingdom
where he is alive and reigns, now and for ever.
Amen.

*(Common Worship:
Prayer after Communion, Third Sunday before Lent)*

Lord Jesus Christ,
we thank you that in a wonderful sacrament
you have given us the memorial of your passion:
grant us so to reverence the sacred mysteries
of your body and blood
that we may know within ourselves
and show forth in our lives
the fruits of your redemption;
for you are alive and reign with the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

*(Common Worship:
Collect, Day of Thanksgiving for the Institution of the Holy Communion,
adapted)*

Further Resources

The following poem by the 17th century priest and poet George Herbert may also be used as a focus for prayer and reflection

Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,
 Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
 From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
 If I lack'd anything.

'A guest,' I answer'd, 'worthy to be here:'
 Love said, 'You shall be he.'
'I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
 I cannot look on Thee.'
Love took my hand and smiling did reply,
 'Who made the eyes but I?'

'Truth, Lord; but I have marr'd them: let my shame
 Go where it doth deserve.'
'And know you not,' says Love, 'Who bore the blame?'
 'My dear, then I will serve.'
'You must sit down,' says Love, 'and taste my meat.'
 So I did sit and eat.

(George Herbert, 1593-1633)

Opening the Doors: Resources to celebrate re-entering our church buildings and gathering for worship

The Church of England has provided some resources that can be used when communities re-enter their church buildings in order to gather for worship. You can find them [here](#). They include:

- Prayers and Scripture for public or private use
- Acclamation at the re-opening of a building for worship
- Affirmation of the Christian Way
this may be used at the first occasion of public worship in a church building as a reminder of discipleship
- An 'Easter people'
this form of thanksgiving that uses the Paschal Candle as a focus may be used in churches that were closed for Holy Week
- At the first celebration of Holy Communion

Thanksgiving for the Institution of the Holy Communion

Traditionally the Thursday after Trinity Sunday is observed as a day of thanksgiving for the Institution of the Eucharist. Some communities might like to use the First Sunday after Trinity (6 June) as an opportunity to give thanks for Christ's invitation to come and eat at his table. This may be particularly appropriate where people have not been able to celebrate the Eucharist together for some time. Readings and other resources can be found [here](#).