

The Revs. Giovan King and Preston Lentz - Instructed Eucharist – March 31, 2019 – Lent 4C

Giovan: I wanted to make sure we had an instructed Eucharist while Preston was still a Deacon, because he's wearing a Deacon's stole and performing Deacon duties, and I wanted him to tell us about that.

Part I: Liturgy of the Word

Giovan: Preston, in some churches, the clergy wear black academic gowns; some clergy even wear street clothes. Why are we wearing what we are wearing?

Preston: These white **albs** are actually our baptismal garments. In the early days of the Church, all of us would be wearing white baptismal garments into worship. Giovan is wearing a priest's **stole**, which is like a rabbi's prayer shawl, or tallit, used in worship for thousands of years. She is also wearing a **CHASUBLE**, a poncho-like garment that high-ranking Romans wore in Jesus' day. My deacon's stole goes around my left shoulder and is gathered at my right hip. One Deacon task is setting the table for communion and cleaning up afterward. It has been said that the Deacon's stole originally was for the cleaning of the vessels used on the altar at Communion.

Giovan: Preston, why are we wearing pink? ... or rose?

Preston: There have been a variety of liturgical color schemes through the centuries, depending on location and era. Today, rose *may* be worn for the 4th Sunday in Lent and 3rd Sunday in Advent, to remind us that we are at least halfway through the season of expectation leading to Christmas and of penitence leading to Easter. This 4th Sunday in Lent is known as Laetere Sunday, or the Sunday of rejoicing.

Giovan: Why do we read so much Scripture during the Liturgy of the Word?

Preston: Episcopalians read more scripture than they do in any other churches. The first part of our service – the Liturgy of the Word - is essentially a synagogue service, very familiar to Jesus. To this day, we gather in community and hear the stories of the prophets and sing psalms, just as Jews still do as well. Eventually, Christians incorporated the letters that Paul and others wrote to particular churches. The Gospels were written from about 70AD to 95 AD and eventually became the main reading in a Christian service.

Giovan: Why is the Gospel Book brought out among the people when the Gospel is read?

Preston: The Gospel Book is the symbol of Christ's presence during the Liturgy of the Word. As the servant of the people, a deacon traditionally carries the Gospel Book into the midst of the people, who stand in honor of Christ's presence. A deacon typically makes a sign of the cross in the Gospel Book. Many of us then make the sign of the cross on our forehead, lips, and heart, symbolizing that the Word is to be in our thoughts, on our lips and in our hearts. Traditionally, also, a deacon carries the Gospel into the Church during the opening Processional and carries the Gospel Book at the end of the service, symbolizing our taking the Good News out into the world.

Preston: Does every Eucharist service have a sermon?

Giovan: In the ancient Church, every service had a sermon. By medieval times the sermon was forbidden because most clergy were not educated and not equipped to prepare or deliver a sermon (at one point, priests who could read were given "canned" sermons). After the Protestant Reformation, the sermon became the focus and Communion ceased even to be a part of the Sunday service. You might have a sermon that lasted an hour or two (familiar to those of you here last week. So, the pendulum

swung from always having a sermon, to the sermon not being allowed, back to a very long sermon, and then to where we are today, which is more in line with ancient tradition.

Preston: At the end of the Liturgy of the Word, we always have a passing of the Peace. Could you talk about its significance?

Giovan: I Corinthians 13.4 tells us that we are to be in right relationship with God and one another before we approach the altar. We pass the peace as a reminder of that. Incidentally, in the earliest days, those who were not baptized left the service just before this, prior to the Liturgy of the Holy Eucharist.

Part II: Liturgy of the Holy Eucharist

Preston: We begin the Liturgy of the Holy Eucharist with another Procession, in which the gifts of bread, wine and money are brought forward. What is the significance of that?

Giovan: In early centuries, people brought bread and wine from their homes, along with livestock, eggs, grains, and vegetables. Deacons were in charge of these gifts and kept all of them in the Deacon's sacristy. Gifts not used at Communion were given to the poor, and to the clergy. Tom and I saw this kind of procession on a mission trip to Haiti. The people danced to the altar, with their offerings of bread and wine, with a little money - because, indeed, they had little money, with grains, fruits and vegetables, and with live chickens. We shared one of those chickens for dinner one Sunday evening with the parish priest and his wife.

Preston: We have several Eucharistic prayers that the priest or bishop might say at the altar. Are there common elements to these prayers?

Giovan: Just as a Jewish Sabbath meal at home would begin with the person at the head of the table offering thanks and making supplications to God, so we begin each Eucharistic prayer with thanksgiving for God's mighty acts in creation. We also repeat the words of Jesus, commanding us to celebrate this Holy Communion in remembrance of him. We proclaim his death, resurrection and his coming again. Finally, we ask the Holy Spirit to descend upon these gifts of bread and wine and upon us, to make these gifts to be for us the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Those here last week might remember that we got that calling down of the Holy Spirit, the epiclesis, from the Scottish Episcopal Church, in which our first American Bishop was consecrated.

Preston: Why do we come forward to receive the bread and wine? Why not just remain seated and pass the elements in the pews, as some churches do?

Giovan: The practice of receiving communion in the pews began in the 16th and 17th Centuries. But, in our Anglican tradition, it is very important that we come forward, as we are able, again in a procession, to accept Christ's invitation to the table, to share a common cup, and to present the gift of ourselves to God.

Giovan: So, would you agree that the service is not complete without one final procession?

Preston: We Episcopalians really do love processions because we are participating in the flow of God. When we entered the Church, we were entering God's sacred space and time. At the end, after being fed by word and sacrament, we then take that flow and reverse it. We go out into the world, taking what we have done out into Kailua and beyond. Seen in this light the service really begins at the end of the liturgy. As Deacon, my final duty in the service is to dismiss us in order to go out and love and serve the Lord in the world.