

Eucharist Study Notes

4/20/22

INTRO –

On any given Sunday morning all around the world

There are more Christians celebrating Eucharist than not

Some call it Eucharist, or Holy Communion, or the Lord's Supper, or Mass

But more than half the body of Christ celebrates communion every Sunday

And many of them celebrate more often than once a week

But many churches celebrate communion three or four times a year if that

Like any other Christian belief

You can find all kinds of ideas about what Eucharist is and is not

Some are sure that Eucharist replaced the Jewish Passover

While others believe that Passover is still a valid Jewish celebration

Some think that the Last Supper was NOT even eaten at a Passover meal, a seder

But was just a meal they all shared before the crucifixion

Many Christians are sure that the real presence of Jesus is in the Eucharist

That we are indeed eating the body of Jesus and drinking His blood

Others are certain that the bread and the wine

Are merely symbolic representations of the body and blood of Jesus

Some think that the Eucharist should be celebrated at every Christian gathering

While others think that occasionally is enough

Some think that Jesus is present and communing with us in the bread and wine

While others think that our communion with Christ

Has nothing to do with the symbols of bread and the wine

To some, it is an official sacrament of the church

To others it is just something we do to remember Jesus

This teaching is going to be evidence based

It's going to use the Bible as the primary source of evidence

The next source of evidence is what the early church fathers said

And, finally, it's going to try to thread the needle

Of what the church "has always believed at all times in all places"

I.e., the view of the historical church on the subject

You will find that as a communion, the CEC is very mindful of this concept

That we want to believe what the church has always believed at all times in all places

For example

Throughout history you'll find evidence of people who speak in tongues

The CEC embraces speaking in tongues

It has only been the last 50 years or so that some churches accept homosexual clergy

So, for the CEC, that would fall outside the ancient church beliefs

For the first 1,000 years of the church

Rule was by a council of bishops, not a pope

The rule of a pope cropped up 1,000 years ago

So, we stuck with the ancient concept and not the newer one

Many denominations today

Continue to be ruled by councils of bishops/overseers/elders

FOUNDATION

Terms, definitions, basic understandings

The early church fathers and most of the church throughout history

Have used the term Eucharist to describe this memorial meal that we celebrate

Ignatius wrote: "And this food is called among us the Eucharist"

Ignatius of Antioch was born about 5 years after the crucifixion of Jesus

And died at the age of 72

He was a contemporary of the Apostles

And was the second or third Bishop of Antioch

To me, his writings reflect some of the earliest thinking of the Church

We'll hear more from him later

Eucharist is a transliterated Greek word that means thanksgiving

Many down through the centuries referred to it as the Great Eucharist

The Great Thanksgiving

So, for me, I'm going to use the terminology of all of church history

But, I'm also open to calling this ritual

The Last Supper, the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion, OK?

The Eucharist is a religious ritual to all Christians who practice it

A ritual that involves bread in some form and wine or grape juice

And represents a memorial meal

Memorial is the term used to describe something related to a dead person

You can only have the George Washington Memorial Bridge

After George Washington has died

Thus the term memorial

Which means something by which the dead person is remembered

To many, the ritual is not just to casually remember Jesus

But, should re-live or reenact that Last Supper with His disciples

This kind of remembrance is to put yourself into the middle of the history

And make it a part of you while you make yourself a part of it

SCRIPTURAL BASIS FOR THE EUCHARIST

Luke 22:13-20 – Jesus and the disciples the night of His capture

V13 clearly implies that they are preparing to eat a Passover meal

I Cor 11:25 – when Paul describes the cup of Jesus as after supper

That would be typical of the last cup in a Passover meal

You will find some scholars who think that this was the meal on Passover Eve

They get this from John 19:14

John writes that the day after the last supper was the preparation day for Passover

So, to them, the last supper could not have been a Passover Seder

A Messianic Jew explained that

In the time of Jesus there were 3 different religious sects

Each had their own calendar

And sometimes they celebrated feasts on different days

There may be theological implications either way

But, if it was not a Passover meal

It doesn't take away from the fact that what we celebrate

Is a memorial meal to Jesus and His life, death, and resurrection

If it was a Passover meal, it just adds some theological icing to that cake

Paul seems to have thought that the last supper was a Passover meal

Because He saw Jesus as the ultimate Passover lamb sacrifice

I Cor 5:7-8 – Christ our Passover is sacrificed, let us keep the feast

Conclusion, Jesus and his disciples were re-enacting the original Passover

Eucharist for us is about re-enacting or reliving the Last Supper for 2 reasons

Luk 22:15 - it seems like Jesus was expecting a Passover meal

Luk 22:20 – His blessing over the cup was after they had eaten

Luk 22:19-20 – These are what is called the words of institution

Almost all denominations

Recognize these words of institution as establishing (instituting) this memorial meal

That means that this is where Jesus tells us to celebrate the Eucharist

Many churches contend that you have to say these words (or something close to it)

For the sacrament of Holy Communion to be a valid celebration

Some Christians believe that the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus

At the words of institution

Others believe

It happens at the epiclesis (the prayer of sanctification)

The bread and wine remain bread and wine – no mystery for them

Matt 26:26-28 – Jesus said this is my Body and Blood, eat and drink it

He didn't say this represents my body and blood

He said it is actually His Body and Blood

I Cor 11:23-26 - the Lord's Supper was instituted by the Apostles as a special ceremony

V23 - Notice that this ritual was something Paul got directly from the Lord

V26 – This ritual was celebrated as more than a memorial

It was a celebration of the work of Jesus

Notice Paul refers to "this" bread and cup

He is not talking about any time they eat bread and drink wine

He is talking about when they celebrate the Eucharist this special, memorial meal

Before that Last Supper Jesus made some other interesting comments about His Body and Blood

John 6:35, 51 – Jesus referred to himself as the bread of life that came down from Heaven

John 6:53-58 – Jesus tells His disciples that they must eat His flesh and drink His blood

John 6:60, 66 – as a result of Jesus' words, many fell away

What are some of the details we can get from this passage?

V51 - Jesus equates Himself to the Manna of old

If you can receive it, Jesus says that He was the Manna of the wilderness

He, Jesus, literally came down from Heaven in the form of Manna

And sustained the Hebrew children in the wilderness for 40 years

V51 – the body of Jesus was sacrificed (given) in order to save the world

Jesus' body was a living sacrifice, THE ultimate sacrifice

That literally paid the price for all of mankind's sins

And notice He reiterates that He's talking about His body, His flesh

V35 – anyone who comes to Jesus and believes in Him will never again hunger or thirst

You're spirit man will no longer fruitlessly hunger for God

Because your spirit man will be united with God

Receiving and believing on Jesus gives you life in eternity

Where you'll never suffer from physical want

V52 – everyone understood that Jesus could not be talking about cannibalism

Obviously He's talking about some ritualistic eating and drinking

But, what could it be?

The disciples listening at the time didn't know

V53 – somehow, eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus literally gives us real life

Based on the next verse, Jesus is referring to life on this earth

And that real life comes from having the HS of God, the Spirit of Jesus

Living in and animating us

But, notice how Jesus connects that real life now

To a physical act now on this earth of eating and drinking Jesus

He's referring to all those who'll celebrate Eucharist on a regular basis?

The early church fathers saw it that way

V54 – eating His flesh and drinking His blood gives us eternal life

And insures us a place in the resurrection

V55-57 – If you don't receive Eucharist regularly, do you spiritually atrophy?

I Cor 10:15-18 - Paul took it as the body and blood of Jesus

V17 – one loaf is why we use a single loaf of bread for Communion

1. It represents the body of Jesus as a single whole

2. It is broken to remind us that Jesus was broken on our behalf

When the celebrant breaks that loaf (called the fracture)

Remember that Jesus was broken because of you

Some use individual wafers, ignoring this symbolism

V18 - Jewish sacrificial system is the framework

For taking literally the body and blood of Jesus

The sacrifices were eaten by the priests

And Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice

I Cor 11:20-34 – Paul teaches the Corinthian church what he received directly from the Lord

Apparently, they had turned the Eucharist into a potluck dinner of some kind

V21 says that some folks got drunk

At these community meals that masqueraded as the Eucharist

The way Paul describes it says 2 things:

They served wine, not grape juice at their Eucharist celebrations

Drinking enough wine to get drunk missed the whole point of the meal

V23 – this Eucharist method came to Paul as a direct revelation from the Lord

Acts 2:42 – breaking bread here means the Lord's Supper to the early church fathers

WRITINGS OF THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS ABOUT THE EUCHARIST

The early church fathers were the closest in time to the Apostles

And are probably going to tell us what the Apostles believed and taught with accuracy

But, what the early church fathers believed is secondary to what the Bible says

Here are just a few passages to give you the flavor of what they believed about the Eucharist

These are presented, generally, in chronological order

As you will see, their views did not change over the first 350 years

The Didache (author unknown, around 90ad)

On the Lord's Day of the Lord gather together, break bread and give thanks, after confessing your transgressions so that your sacrifice may be pure. Let no one who has a quarrel with his neighbor join you until he is reconciled by the Lord: "In every place and time let there be Offered to me a clean sacrifice.

And let none eat or drink of your Eucharist but such as have been baptized into the name of the Lord, for of a truth the Lord hath said concerning this, Give not that which is holy unto dogs.

Ignatius wrote (around 110ad)

And this food is called among us the Eucharist, of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Savior, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, "This do ye in remembrance of Me, this is My body;" and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, "This is My blood;" and gave it to them alone.

Justin Martyr wrote (around 150ad)

For not as common bread nor common drink do we receive these; but since Jesus Christ our Savior was made incarnate by the word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so too, as we have been taught, the food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by Him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh is nourished, is both the flesh and the blood of that incarnated Jesus.

Tertulian wrote (around 200ad)

The flesh feeds on the body and the blood of Christ, so that the soul too may fatten on God.

The Sacrament of the Eucharist, which the Lord commanded to be taken at meal times and by all, we take even before daybreak in congregations.

Origen wrote (around 250ad)

You are accustomed to take part in the divine mysteries, so you know how, when you have received the body of the Lord, you reverently exercise every care lest a particle of it fall, and lest anything of the consecrated gift perish....how is it that you think neglecting the word of God a lesser crime than neglecting His body?

Cyprian of Carthage wrote (around 250ad)

And we ask that this Bread be given us daily, so that we who are in Christ and daily receive The Eucharist as the food of salvation, may not, by falling into some more grievous sin and then in abstaining from communicating, be withheld from the heavenly Bread, and be separated from Christ's Body

Cyril of Jerusalem wrote (around 350ad)

For just as the bread and the wine of the Eucharist before the holy invocation of the adorable Trinity were simple bread and wine, but the invocation having been made, the bread becomes the Body of Christ and the wine the Blood of Christ

It seems from these writings that the early church fathers
Had a much higher reverence the Eucharist than the most churches today
Some felt deprived if they didn't receive the Body and Blood of Jesus every day
Some seemed to have a mystical impression that the Eucharist
Actually contributed to their eternal salvation

People can say what they want to about the bread and the wine of Holy Communion
But it is obvious that the early Church believed in what is called the Real Presence
I.e., they believed it is the Body and Blood of our Savior Jesus
Never in the history of the church was Holy Communion not celebrated at least weekly
Until years after the start of the reformation
At that point, there were so many people who were so skeptical of the Roman Church
Because it had become so godless and corrupt
That many felt like that the only things they should do in their worship
Where the things that the Roman church had NOT been doing
Unfortunately, they threw out the baby with the bath water
And walked away from rites and rituals
That the church had been observing and celebrating from the beginning

Martin Luther didn't do that
You will see Eucharist celebrated in every Lutheran church at least every Sunday
John Wesley didn't do that either
Though, sadly, some Methodist churches have lost the weekly Communion
Many churches recently have made preaching the Word
The central act of worship on Sunday
Some Charismatic churches think that singing is the central act of worship
But from the beginning it was the Eucharist that was the central act of worship

Many seminary texts seem to be consistent about the beliefs on the Eucharist
I.e, most who see the Real Presence in the Eucharist
Have a mystical view of the Eucharist service itself
They say that the form of the service centers around a memorial meal
And the heart of the service is remembrance – to remember Jesus and His work
But, and this is the mystical part
They feel that we aren't simply re-enacting the Last Supper
We are more re-living it, re-experiencing it, re-presenting it
Than a simple mental recalling
It is much like the Jewish Passover
That's why they celebrated Passover dressed for a journey, etc.
They were re-living the first Passover

And when we celebrate the Eucharist
It's not just us in our building sharing a memorial meal
But all the host of Heaven celebrate with us
We and our table are mystically carried up into the Heavens
And Heaven is mystically brought to earth at our table
For a celebration of true communion between God and man

HOW CAN IT BE THE BODY AND BLOOD OF JESUS?

Matt 26:26-28 – Jesus said this is my Body and Blood, eat and drink it

He didn't say this represents my body and blood

He said it is actually His Body and Blood

How can it really be the Body and Blood of our Savior Jesus?

For nearly 2,000 years

The church was content to say "It's a mystery"

And leave it at that

Recently, the Roman Catholic Church decided

That it happens through transubstantiation

Where the bread physically becomes flesh and the wine physically becomes blood

But that is very recent

I Cor 10:15-18 - Paul took it as the body and blood of Jesus

V18 - Jewish sacrificial system is the framework

For taking literally the body and blood of Jesus

The sacrifices were physically eaten by the priests

And Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice

John 6:53-56 – Jesus said that we have no part in Him

Unless we eat His flesh and drink His blood

How can it be the real body and blood of Jesus? – It's a mystery

THE EUCHARIST AND HEALING

Paul actually implies that healing comes through the Eucharist

I Cor 11:23-26, 33-34 - God's plan for the communion ceremony

This is not just a potluck dinner

The Lord's supper, holy communion, Eucharist, is a ritual celebration

The earliest records of the church, as we've seen

Indicate that all Christians celebrating communion did so as a ritual memorial meal

What happens when Eucharist is not celebrated properly?

I Cor 11:27-32 - Paul's warns that sickness and death can result

This is a very serious and stern warning

This is similar to the warning that goes with sexual immorality

You can look at this from two directions:

1 If you don't do communion right you may get sick or even die

2 If you celebrate communion properly and regularly

Then you'll walk in a greater measure of health

The word here in v27 that's translated unworthy manner

Comes from the Greek word that means irreverently

If I'm acting irreverently, then I'm not honoring or acknowledging

The holy or God-touched nature of something

I think Paul means three things by "unworthy manner" or "irreverently":

1 Not being serious about the ritual or ceremony of communion

2 Receiving communion with unrepentant sin or grudges in your life

3 Not recognizing the Real Presence of the body and blood of Jesus

This last point means not understanding

That the bread and wine somehow become the body and blood of Jesus

After all, Jesus said that we must eat his flesh and drink his blood

Otherwise we have no part with him – John 6:51-60

V29 – those who don't properly judge the body are taking into themselves judgment

The Greek word used for judging the body would have been better translated "discern"

Acts 15:9 – the HS made no distinction between Jews and Gentiles

The Greek word translated no distinction is this same Greek word

From I Cor 11:29

How do we properly discern the body?

We distinguish between a common loaf of bread and the body of Jesus

And receive not a symbol of bread but receive the Body of Jesus

Otherwise, we bring judgment upon ourselves in the form of sickness and death

So, it appears that properly receiving Holy Communion prevents illness and death

I and many others are certain that this also says that Eucharist can bring healing

God requiring that a ritual meal be eaten in a certain way is nothing new

People getting sick because they don't follow the ritual properly is not new, either

II Chro 30:17-20 - consequences of Passover not being celebrated properly

In captivity, the people had lost the tradition of celebrating Passover

When they realize that they were supposed to be celebrating Passover each year

They jumped right into it but did not prepare themselves properly for the meal

As a consequence, many became ill

But Hezekiah repented on their behalf, prayed for them

And the Lord healed them

So there are two concepts that are confirmed in both the old and new Testaments:

1 God institutes special ritual meals that we are to celebrate regularly

And that we are to celebrate in a certain way

Celebrating the ritual properly can bring health and healing

2 If we do not celebrate these ritual meals as God intended

Then we may become weak or sick, or we may die prematurely

MECHANICS OF THE EUCHARIST

We celebrate Eucharist using liturgy

Liturgy is a transliterated word that comes from the Greek word leitourgeo

That means work of the people, or a public servant

And includes prayers, responses, and the order of a service

Because Roman Catholics use detailed liturgies for all of their services

Many reformers wanted to be as much NOT Roman Catholic as possible

And, so, they prided themselves on not having any liturgy

Many pastors of reformation denominations

Proudly explain to me that they don't have any liturgy

They then tell how they conduct a service

They start with an opening prayer followed by a fast hymn

Then they have 2 more hymns or songs with the last one being the slowest

After that they have a responsive reading from a Psalm

Some will include a scripture reading or 2

Then they take up the offering, sing the doxology and have the sermon

An altar call always follows the sermon

Then, just like Jesus and His disciples at the Last Supper they sing a hymn

At the end of that hymn, someone gives a benediction

That usually includes a blessing

Many churches even have the service order written out in a bulletin

But to them it's NOT a liturgy – you can't call it that because that's Catholic

Liturgy of some kind has been part of the worship of Yahweh from the beginning

Num 10:35-36 – Moses had a liturgy for the Ark of the Covenant

Ruth 4:11-12 – a liturgy for taking a widow as your wife

Acts 2:42 – new Christians devoted themselves to "the prayers"

It is not clear why the translators left out the article the, but they did

This has to refer to written Jewish prayers – liturgies

Acts 13:2 - while they were doing the liturgy

Ministry = Greek leitourgeo

This is the Greek word from which we get liturgy

This is how the NT Christians did church – with liturgy

Modern Jews follow a complex liturgy for every aspect of their lives

They even have 2 separate prayers for going to the bathroom

We humans are designed to worship using a liturgy as a guide

We just function better that way or God wouldn't have introduced it

We're also designed to worship in Spirit and in Truth

Meaning that we often allow the HS to move in/around/even outside the liturgy

When liturgy becomes a rigid structure that must be adhered to religiously

We miss the point that liturgy is meant to be a guide, guardrails if you will

That help us not forget or miss some of the important parts of worship

Liturgy is meant to help us worship together in a rich beautiful way

But, when the liturgy Nazis get involved and insist on rigid rules

Then it becomes truly "work" and no longer our reasonable, spiritual service

So, we all use liturgy of some kind in our worship

Let's keep it balanced and not be afraid of it

Let's use it as a beautiful/helpful tool, and not run away from it

The term Eucharist, for some, describes the liturgy of a complete church service
That includes Holy Communion towards the end
But, for many, the Communion PART of that service is the Eucharist
Let's talk about church service order for a minute
If you've been privileged to attend a Jewish synagogue service
You'll almost immediately notice that their order of service, their liturgy
Is strikingly similar to most Christian services
They open with pray and then sing some songs, maybe even dance
They have another prayer followed by responsive readings of the Psalms
They always include a reading from the Torah
Which is followed by a homily or teaching of some kind
After the sermon, they receive the offering in 2 kinds
They receive money
Then, at the end of the service they receive an offering of bread and wine
The service ends maybe with a song and certainly with a blessing
The original church was made up of almost entirely of Jews
These early disciples just took a synagogue service
And, when the bread and wine was brought up toward the end
They used that as an opportunity to celebrate Eucharist and share Holy Communion
Some believe that you can't have an official Eucharist service without a reading of a Gospel
This is like the Jews who believe an official service must include reading of the Torah
So, what is the general form of the Eucharist?
This service order is ancient and celebrated pretty much the same way for 2000 years
It's not a show to watch
But a ceremony for ALL to participate in
Thus, responses from the congregation
We re-enact or re-present the entire creation and Gospel story
Starting with creation and going through the fall of man
Followed by the Gospel and what Jesus has really done for us
We literally relive together with God and this congregation
The history of mankind and God's Love for us
This is all done in the mystical space where Heaven and earth temporarily meet
Paul also seemed to indicate that the primary purpose for Lord's Day worship
Was to celebrate the Lord's Supper – I Cor 11:20
In a way, every Lord's Day Eucharist is a mini-Easter celebration

The order of the Eucharist, or the Communion part of the service looks like this

- Remember, this part of the service is after the sermon and general prayers
 - Refer to page 360 of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer
- Passing of the peace – providing a chance to get local relationships in order
- The Offertory - taking of the bread and wine along with tithes and offerings
 - The Eucharist starts with us bringing something to the Lord
 - Our money represents the fact that we and all we are is owned by God
 - The bread and wine represents our desire
 - To contribute what we can to this miracle meal
 - Giving something natural that He transforms into something supernatural
- Preparing the elements – setting the table
 - Water is added to the wine to signify the piercing of Jesus' side
 - And water and blood poured out
- Prayers of thanksgiving and exclaiming God's love in the Gospel
 - This includes 2 significant parts
 - The Sursum Corda
 - Sursum Corda = Latin for "we lift our hearts"
 - We all lift our hearts toward God and enter into worship
 - Notice we don't lift UP our hearts
 - Santus and Benedictus
 - Singing the hymn re-presents Palm Sunday every Sunday
 - Hosanna = Hebrew = blessed is he how comes in the Name of the Lord
 - We join with those in Jerusalem who hailed Jesus as King and worshipped Him
- The Words of Institution – re-enacting the Last Supper
 - The Latin version of this part of the service gave us the term hocus pocus
 - "Hoc est enim corpus meum" = "This is the body"
- The Mystery of Faith
 - Christ has died, Christ is risen, and Christ will come again
- The Consecration (epiclesis) – involving God's touch on the elements
 - The celebrant asks God to sanctify or make holy the elements
 - Many are convinced that this is when the bread/wine become the Body/Blood
- The Eucharist prayer ends with a doctrinal confirmation of the Holy Trinity
 - It goes something like this
 - "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 for ever"
 - This was added to help tamp down the many heresies about the nature of God and Jesus
- The Great Amen – said heartily my all, as the early church fathers put it
- The Lord's Prayer
- The Fraction – the breaking of the host
 - When Jesus broke the bread at the Passover meal with His disciples
 - This would be the breaking of the middle piece of matsa
 - Although Jews celebrating Passover didn't understand the symbolism
 - The act of breaking in half the middle matsa
 - Was indeed a foreshadowing of Jesus giving His body on the Cross
- Lifting up of the Body and the Blood
 - John 3:14-15 – as Moses lifted up the serpent
 - So, Jesus must be lifted up
 - John 12:32-33 - Jesus said, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all me to me"
 - This is part of the dramatic re-enactment of the Eucharist
 - When the celebrant lifts up the bread and wine after blessing them
 - He is re-enacting Jesus' crucifixion
 - I Cor 5:7-8 – Christ our Passover is sacrificed, let us keep the feast

Holy Communion – distributing the Body and the Blood (the cup and the host)

After receiving Holy Communion

Most follow the ancient tradition of making the sign of the cross

Many today mistakenly think this is a Roman Catholic form of idolatry

But it is really one of the most ancient signs of Christianity

Practiced by the first century church to indicate who was a Christian

Sort of like a secret handshake

Following Holy Communion there may be a song

But there's always a benediction at the end that includes a blessing

Here's an example of service order at the beginning from the writings of Ignatius:

And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and offer hearty prayers in common for ourselves and for all others in every place, that we may be counted worthy, now that we have learned the truth, by our works also to be found good citizens and keepers of the commandments, so that we may be saved with an everlasting salvation. Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands. And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying Amen. And when the president has given thanks, and all the people have expressed their assent, those who are called by us deacons give to each of those present to partake of the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced.

Sounds familiar, doesn't it?

We model our Eucharist after the earliest church liturgies

Some might ask that's just a tradition of men, why follow it?

The early church fathers didn't see this as tradition but commandment from God

Much like the Passover was rigidly proscribed

So was the Eucharist in the early days

EUCHARIST DETAILS

Receiving communion is a time to worship and pray
Not a time to visit, talk, get coffee, play with children
Take advantage of this time to do 2 things:

Relax and worship God

Contemplate all the aspects of this celebration

Renew your baptismal vows

Renew your commitment to serve God completely

Recall what God has done for you in your life

Pray

Pray for the one standing in front of you

As you are in line to receive

Get together as a family afterwards and pray together

What about some of the hardware and elements of the Eucharist?

I Cor 10:16-17 – the cup and the bread are sharing the body and blood of Jesus

V16 – Paul talks about THE cup that is blessed

Not all the little individual cups

Most Christians who believe in the Real Presence

Offer to share from a common cup

Some modern Roman Catholic churches do not serve the cup at all

During the Black Plague of the middle ages in Europe

Almost everyone was Roman Catholic

And the Roman Catholic church, at the time, still served from a common cup

Supposedly, there is not a single instance of transmission of the Black Death

Through the shared cup of Holy Communion

V17 – one loaf is why we use a single loaf of bread for Communion

1. It represents the body of Jesus as a single whole

2. It is broken to remind us that Jesus was broken on our behalf

When that loaf is broken (called the Fraction)

Remember that Jesus was broken because of you

Some use individual wafers, but we prefer a single loaf

What should be in the cup: wine, grape juice, or something else?

Why use wine, an alcoholic beverage for a church function?

Why not use grape juice?

Some will say that when the Bible says wine, it means grape juice

But you can't drink enough grape juice to make you glad – Psa 104:15

And you sure don't have to admonish anyone to drink it in moderation

Because God despises drunken behavior – not if it's just grape juice

In the Bible, when they talk about wine

They are talking about fermented grape juice that has an alcohol content

Paul had to correct the Corinthian believers about how they celebrated the Lord's Supper

I Cor 11:20-22 – They had corrupted the rite of Holy Communion

Into a some kind of big meal

Obviously they used wine because people were getting drunk

Paul didn't tell them not to use fermented wine

He told them not to be drunk in a church service

It appears that the New Testament and the Early Church Fathers

Allowed alcohol in moderation at least for Holy Communion/the Lord's Supper

We're not talking about gulps of alcohol or getting tipsy

We are talking about the tiniest sip of wine

In accordance with the command of Jesus

But, for those who cannot tolerate any alcohol

We will serve them grape juice

Red Wine is preferred for 2 reasons:

1. Symbolism

There are 3 characteristics of wine that make it a perfect symbol for Communion

1. The grapes have been crushed just as Jesus was crushed

2. The grape juice has undergone a chemical change

Just as Jesus was changed at His resurrection

Just as we are changed when we accept Him as Savior

We rise from the waters of baptism to walk with Him in newness of life

3. The wine is red like the blood of Jesus

2. That's what Jesus used

And He told us to repeat what He did

Jesus was celebrating Passover

There is no record that even implies that any group of Jews ever used grape juice

Instead of wine at the Passover meal

What if red wine or purple grape juice aren't available

Then use water, papaya juice, coffee, something liquid

It's preferable to reverently use whatever you have

Than to miss out on Holy Communion

But, if you can do any planning in advance – have red wine available

That's the ideal/best

WHO CAN CELEBRATE EUCHARIST AND WHO CAN CONSECRATE THE ELEMENTS?

There are many views on this

Below is what the CEC believes/teaches

And, as it turns out, our views are generally shared amongst many communions

We believe that our views reflect the early church views

Surrounding the Holy Communion, different folks have different roles

There is usually an altar guild made up of ladies of the church

Who take the responsibility of cleaning and preparing clothes and utensils

They also make sure we are using the correct colors for the season

Usually a deacon is the one who prepares the table at the time of Communion

Anybody approved by the celebrant, the person in charge of the service

Can serve the consecrated elements

All deacons and others who have been specifically commissioned by the church

As Eucharistic Ministers

Can use pre-consecrated elements for a Communion service

This is called a Deacon's Mass of Holy Communion under special circumstances

And is designed to take communion to the sick, the shut-ins

Or to provide communion in a service where there is no priest

Those who can officially, as sanctioned by the church, consecrate the bread and wine

That means to pray the prayer of consecration over the elements

So that they actually become the Body and Blood of Jesus

Remember, until the elements have been prayed over with this prayer

They are just bread and wine

The conversation about who can consecrate starts with order and organization

All human organizations have some kind of order

Some kind of division of labor and responsibility structure

Notice this is about responsibility structure, not authority structure

Granted, to carry out a responsibility one must have authority to do that

We often refer to human organization as an authority structure

But, in a Christian world view

Authority is only a necessary means to carrying out a responsibility

In the early church, it's obvious from the Gospels and the book of Acts

That the Apostles were at the top of the org chart

With "disciples" under their responsibility/authority

Apostles didn't rule with autonomy

They involved the community in major decisions

We see that when they appointed deacons to serve

Acts 6:2-6 – the congregation selected the deacons and the Apostles ordained them

As the church expanded, the authority/responsibility of the Apostles

Was also given to those called overseers or bishops

Tit 1:7 – qualifications of overseers described

We also see where priests were appointed to govern local churches

Tit 1:5 – appoint elders in every church

Elder is the Greek word presbuteros from which we get our English word priest

All of these titles are really just special work assignments

In the human organization of the church

I Cor 12:28-29 – an example of God-ordained work assignments in the church

In I Cor 11, we read where Paul excoriates the Corinthians for desecrating the Eucharist
Apparently, the Corinthians weren't following the Eucharist ritual

As Paul had delivered it to them on an earlier visit

They weren't really honoring the sacred nature of this memorial meal

That this caused Paul and other Apostles to realize

That they needed to better formalize the organization of the church in general

And the celebrating of the main act of worship, the Eucharist

We see that the teachings of the early church

Specified that only priests and bishops could consecrate the elements

In other words, consecrating the elements became part of their job description

Priests and bishops were especially trained and anointed in ordination

To properly carry out this divine mystery of the Eucharist

In a sacred and proper way

Remember, Paul talked about sickness and death

Could result from not doing Eucharist in a proper manner?

One way to avoid that is to limit those who can preside over this ritual

And make them accountable for doing it right

The theology of why this was their job developed later

The theology says that they are the spiritual heads of the church – which is true

And, as such, when they celebrate Eucharist

They are in Persona Christi, representing the person of Christ

Some even teach that the celebrant actually becomes Jesus while celebrating

God's structure of government is the family

He deals with heads of households for governmental matters

The church is structured like an extended family

With the Bishop being like the Grandfather

And the local priest being like the father of the house

Another part of the theology is that since this part of their job description

The congregations that approve of their ordinations know this

And are giving consent to the concept that only priests and bishops

Have been especially anointed to carry out this most sacred task

For 2,000 years, the position of the church has been

That only priests and bishops are authorized to consecrate the elements

Some have taken that to mean that only priests and bishops

Actually can CAUSE the consecration to occur

Others take it to mean that we are just better off leaving some this important

In the hands of those who are experienced and authorized by the church

So, why is a priest different from anyone else in the universal priesthood of believers?

I Pet 2:9 – Christians are literally a whole nation of royal priests

I Pet 2:5 – we Christians have been build into a holy priesthood

So, we're all priests and we all then must be approved to perform this sacred ritual

Well, if we're all royal, holy priests

Then why did the Apostles appoint people to different offices?

One of the specific reasons a priest is ordained is so that they CAN consecrate the Eucharist

When Fr Dan was ordained as a priest, it was drilled into him

That one of his primary duties was to properly celebrate Eucharist

To many in the Church, this is the main function of priests

So, in our communion, the Charismatic Episcopal Church

Only priests and bishops are authorized to consecrate the elements of Eucharist

Anyone who is approved by the bishop or local priest can SERVE the elements

But, those elements must first be consecrated by a priest or bishop

In some churches, only very special people can be approved as Eucharistic ministers

That means they can serve Communion to others

Originally, that was the deacon's job

To go to take Communion to those who were sick or unable to attend a church service

When a deacon serves Communion to someone, that's called a Deacon's Mass

And, in the Book of Common Prayer, on page 396 you'll find a service for

Communion Under Special Circumstances

Notice that a Deacon's Mass includes:

At least 1 NT scripture reading

A prayer of repentance

Everyone saying together the Lord's Prayer

And then the receiving of the elements

Where do those elements come from in the Deacon's Mass?

They were consecrated previously by a priest or bishop

And they were stored as what is called Reserve Sacrament

Where do they get their Reserve Sacrament for this Communion ritual?

Bring wine and bread to a church service and let the priest put your bread and wine

On the Communion table during the Eucharistic prayers

Or, when we have Eucharist over Webex

When you set your table, include a container of wine and some bread

So that they are on the table when I pray the Eucharistic prayers

Really, whatever is on the table when I pray the Eucharistic prayers

Is consecrated to God and made Holy

That can include Holy Water, Anointing Oil, your wallet, etc.

So, that gives you Reserve Sacrament

Now what do you do with it and how do you store it?

Well, since it is indeed the Body and Blood of Jesus

You need to treat it with special reverence

The kids can't make a sandwich from the bread

You can't have a glass of this wine after a hard day at work

Reserve Sacrament needs to be stored away and treated as holy

The bread may need to be kept in the frig or the freezer

Depending on how long it may take you to use it all

When you have your Mass at home

Whatever glass you use for the chalice needs to be cleaned carefully

Don't put a little tap water into it and toss that down the kitchen drain

Add a little water to dilute the Blood and drink it

Then you can wipe out the chalice for the next time

If you drop some crumbs of the Body

Catch them on a cloth and toss them outside onto the ground

Don't put them in the trash

Now, back to the question that started all this

If you're not a priest or bishop, can you consecrate the elements of Eucharist

For a Communion meal at home?

Technically, maybe you can

God will probably not strike you dead with lightning if you do

But, the church has not authorized me to condone that practice

If you want to celebrate Eucharist at home

Let's arrange so you have some Reserve Sacrament

And do a Deacon's Mass at home

Do you have to follow the Prayer Book for the Deacon's Mass?

Well, why not?

Use it as a guide for the parts and pieces so you don't miss anything