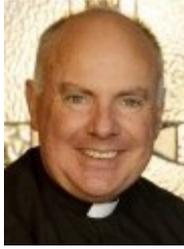


Tue 12 February 2013



Our present prayer book in the Anglican Church of Australia, A Prayer Book for Australia (APBA) of 1995 stands in a long line of Anglican prayer books dating back to the first Anglican Book of Common Prayer (BCP) of 1549. This long line of prayer books has used several different names for the service which is used weekly in our churches. These include the Holy Communion, the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper and even in the 1549 BCP the mass.

So what's in a name?

The Eucharist is an ancient name for this service we all use and dates from the beginning of the second century. The word Eucharist comes from the Greek word eucharistia and simply means 'thanksgiving'. It refers to the characteristic prayer or 'grace' used by the Jews before eating and drinking in which they blessed or thanked God, remembering what God had done for God's people. Jesus would have used such a prayer at the Last Supper with his disciples and so this use of a thanksgiving is quite ancient. In our modern Eucharist we are therefore giving thanks to God for what we have received in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord. We give thanks for Jesus' work for us on the cross and his rising again and that it is through him that we receive forgiveness of our sins.

The Holy Communion is the term often used by Anglicans. It refers to the holy partaking of the consecrated elements, whereby there is a communion or participation (Greek koinonia) in Christ and Christ in us. All Christian people share together in the service of Holy Communion as our Lord directed us to do in remembrance of him. Paul in 1 Corinthians 10: 16 speaks in this way as he tells us that 'the cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ?'

The name 'The Lord's Supper' is quite early in the Christian tradition and seems to have been used by the early church Fathers as well as St Paul when he speaks in 1 Corinthians 11: 20 of the Lord's Supper as the central act of Christian worship which he goes on to say in in verses 23-26 is about blessing or giving thanks over bread and wine, breaking bread and distributing a cup of wine.

The word 'mass' is of doubtful origin but some think it derives from the Latin word 'mittere' meaning to dismiss or send out. It seems to derive from as early as the 4th century. Despite its ancient origin it seems to have been associated in some Anglican minds with certain Medieval doctrine, but its primary meaning seems to be that we are sent out from worship to be God's people in the world. This is what we pray at the end of the Second Order in APBA, that is, 'send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory' (p. 144).

By **Brian Douglas**

Comments

Clear, succinct and helpful, Brian.

Made by Canon Scott Cowdell on Fri 1 March 2013