

**MINISTRIES
IN THE
CATHEDRAL EUCHARIST**

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**The Cathedrals' Liturgy Group
Occasional Paper 1**

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Foreword

The Cathedrals' Liturgy Group was formed early in 1994, at the initiative of the Church of England Liturgical Commission, to promote good liturgy in cathedrals and the contribution that cathedrals might make to the worship of the wider church.

Its members, who include deans and provosts, precentors, organists and architects, have met to address a number of issues. Some of these issues are now treated in the first three of a series of occasional papers planned by the group. These first three are

- 1 Ordination Liturgy
- 2 Ministries in the Cathedral Eucharist
- 3 Towards the Ideal Psalm Cycle

The approach has been the same for each paper. An individual member of the group has written the paper, and the name of that writer has been retained, but successive drafts have been amended in the light of discussions in the Group. In each case what we offer is the work of one person, modified by the Group as a whole, and issued with the general approval (and, indeed, enthusiasm) of the Group.

We hope the series, and in particular the three initial papers, may prove helpful to those who order cathedral worship at a time of liturgical change and renewal.

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MINISTRIES IN THE CATHEDRAL EUCCHARIST

One of the ways in which a cathedral is an exemplar in its diocese is in the celebration of the liturgy. But this cannot be at the level of detailed provision. When parish churches try to copy cathedrals, in their music, for instance, or even in some of their ceremonial provision, things go dreadfully wrong. The cathedral is an exemplar in terms of the theological and liturgical principles that its liturgy expresses. A particular responsibility is therefore laid upon cathedrals to ensure that what they do expresses good theology. The eucharist is not just a matter of convenient organisation or aesthetic delight, but says something about the nature of Christian ministry and, more profoundly, about the nature of the Church.

Over the last generation there has been much fresh thinking in the Church at large about the nature of Christian ministry, about the presidency of worship and about the role of laity in the life of the Body of Christ. Inevitably, and rightly, this fresh thinking has come to be expressed liturgically, and there are implications for the way that bishops, priests, deacons and lay people play their part in liturgical celebrations. Some cathedrals have rethought their practice in the light of this thinking; others have not.

But, of course, cathedrals are complex communities. Indeed most of them are a series of inter-related communities. In a number of cathedrals the community at worship at Evensong each day is the "foundation", often the successor of an earlier and sometimes monastic community in which lay people had no part. It would be artificial to insist that the scriptures ought to be read by the laity. But in many cathedrals the community for the Sunday eucharist is not the foundation, but a much broader "congregation" of those who regard their cathedral as something not very different from a parish church and of large numbers of occasional visitors. Should they encounter a liturgy in which only clergy read and lead prayer? Cathedrals do well to ask, in relation to any service, "who constitutes the community worshipping here?"

The Laity

The place accorded to the laity in the eucharist needs to reflect the Church's understanding, however expressed, that Christ is present in the eucharist, not only in the reading of the scriptures and in the sharing of the bread and wine over which thanks has been given, but also in the assembly, the community, itself. It needs to express the truth that it is the community that is the celebrant, and all individual ministers, lay and ordained (including the president), are set apart or called out only in order to help the community to be the celebrant of the memorial of Christ's death and resurrection.

The ministry of the laity in the eucharist is not expressed primarily in being "called out" to perform particular public ministries, such as reading and leading prayer. Its principal expression is in the prayerfulness that each person brings through their sharing, actively and passively, in the whole liturgy, as they stand, and kneel and sit in their places. Nevertheless the participation of the laity is expressed at a second level through these special ministries:

- 1 They may read the first two of the three scripture readings. In some circumstances this may mean also the leading of a spoken psalm, canticle or acclamation that follows the reading. Lay people sometimes read the scriptures very badly, as do clergy, but with training available every cathedral can have a band of competent readers. (There is of course no requirement for the gospel to be read by an ordained minister, but cathedrals, with their larger staff of priests and deacons, will very frequently want to reserve this reading to an ordained minister.)

- 2 They may lead the Prayers of Intercession, the prayers "of the faithful". In less literate communities in the past, the role of the deacon has been crucial here in collecting up their prayer requests and articulating them in the liturgy. In our own day and in the kind of communities found in

most cathedrals, this precise role for the deacon is usually superfluous. There are able lay people well equipped to lead "the people's prayers". They would need (on-going) training, but providing such training ought to be part of a precentor's role.

- 3 They may share in the distribution of the bread and wine. In some cathedrals they do this, but only when there are insufficient ordained ministers, and sometimes they are robed, rather than drawn out of the congregation. But distributing the elements is not solely a priestly function, and there is a case for always having lay people involved in the distribution even when there are many ordained ministers present. We should note the development of the "eucharistic minister" role in the Roman Church.

The President

The people of God, when they celebrate the eucharist, are drawn and held together by the president, whether bishop or priest, and, however many clergy are present, one needs to be clearly designated as the president. The Alternative Service Book (page 115) is clear what parts of the service are retained by the president and which parts may be delegated:

He says the opening Greeting, the Collect, the Absolution, the Peace and the Blessing.; he himself must take the bread and the cup before replacing them on the holy table, say the Eucharistic Prayer, break the consecrated bread, and receive the sacrament on every occasion. The remaining parts of the service he may delegate to others.

The Deacon

Anglican liturgical thinking has come to value again the role of the deacon in the eucharist. Almost inevitably it was the period when women were ordained to the diaconate, but not the priesthood, that saw this new flourishing of diaconal liturgical ministry, but its rediscovery is a benefit to the whole Church.

This deacon role has recently been explained in this way:

It is a ministry that makes explicit the element of service that lies hidden in all ministries. The deacon serves God in serving both the congregation and the president. The members of the congregation are served by the way the deacon encourages them and helps them through the service. All through the deacon is inviting them to do things, and making it easier for them to do so. But the president is also served by being relieved of some tasks and assisted with other tasks to lighten his burden, and that is important it he is to be free to be at prayer. Throughout the liturgy the deacon is holding up to the priest and to the people a model of service, a service that, though it is the deacon's particular ministry, is one shared by the whole Church and by every member of it, priest, deacon or lay person, individually.

.. The ministry of the deacon, though it is of service, is not of subservience. That is why it is properly described as complementary. To the deacon is assigned the reading of the Gospel, the high point of the Liturgy of the Word. To the deacon is assigned the rite to dismiss the assembly at the end. It is a two person leadership of worship, a kind of team ministry, but one in roles are clear.¹

The ministry of the deacon in the eucharist cannot be too precisely defined. It needs to be developed to suit local needs and it need not be as full on one occasion as another. But traditionally the deacon's ministry has included some of these elements:

The deacon -

- is the president's right hand person;
- proclaims the gospel reading;
- preaches occasionally;
- invites the congregation - to confess, exchange the
Peace, make an Acclamation, etc;
- organizes the Prayers of Intercession;

prepares the table for the celebration;
shares in the breaking of the bread and the
distribution of the bread and wine;
gives practical instructions - about posture, page
numbers, etc;
dismisses the people at the end.

Although the deacon's liturgical role lay dormant through most of the Church of England for a long while, it has of course been kept alive in a way through the "three sacred ministers" style of celebration. Cathedral clergy have often been used to "being the deacon" and wearing diaconal vestments. The time may now be ripe to develop this deacon's ministry along the lines indicated.

This is an area in which recent Anglican and Roman liturgical thinking have diverged, Roman ceremonial insisting that there be no deacon of the eucharist unless someone only in deacon's orders (ie not a priest) is available, while Anglican thinking has laid emphasis on the "once a deacon, always a deacon" view, and seen merit in a second priest at a celebration exercising his diaconal ministry. (The Roman view is shaped by its view of concelebration - every priest exercises a priestly ministry by concelebrating, and therefore to be the deacon as well would indeed be confused.)

Three Sacred Ministers

Cathedrals that still employ a "three sacred ministers" ceremonial might wish to re-examine this style. It is convenient, and aesthetically pleasing, but it is not without problems:

- 1 It was always theologically odd in the Church of England, where there has been no ministry of subdeacon since the Reformation, but it could be justified by appeal to "western practice". Now that it is never found in the Roman Church, it has become more odd, left as a local eccentricity in a decreasing number of Anglican cathedrals and semi-Tridentine Anglo-Catholic shrines.

- 2 It puts three of the clergy together in some kind of liturgical relationship with one another and with the worshipping community, but appears to exclude all the other priests present. This is particularly a problem when it divides members of a cathedral chapter, when the eucharist ought, if it is to say anything about ministerial priesthood, ought to express something about collegiality.

There are three ways of trying to make sense of a continuing "three sacred ministers" style.

- 1 The third minister should always be a lay person. In the Church of England the old minor orders have given way to a laity equipped for a variety of ministries. A lay "subdeacon" is a symbol of that. This might be the liturgical role for a Reader on the cathedral's staff.
- 2 Instead of a subdeacon, there can be two deacons, usually in priest's orders. Some would see a difficulty in a deacon's role that is diluted unhelpfully, in much the same way as handing over parts of the president's role to other clergy undermines the sense of presidency.
- 3 The aesthetic argument may be justified liturgically: the liturgy is a drama and a dance, and the movement of three ministers in the kind of patterns associated with a "high mass" style is pleasing to the eye and therefore helps to evoke a sense of worship.

But do any of these ways quite convince? Is there not quite a strong argument for abandoning the three ministers style?

The Reader

What is the role of a Reader in the cathedral eucharist? The Reader may share with clergy the rota of preaching, and may share with lay people the

rota of leading the prayers of intercession. But, if robed, what is the Reader's role from week to week? Some would opt for the "subdeacon" model above. Others, having abandoned such a role, would be happy to see the Reader exercise the diaconal role, at least on occasions. This is the pattern in an increasing number of parish churches, but in that setting there are less frequently priests available to exercise their diaconate when not presiding.

Assisting Clergy

The "three ministers" approach, or the president + deacon approach, both leave unanswered the question of what happens to other clergy. How do they express their ministry and assist at the eucharist? The answer might be that they all exercise a diaconal ministry, wear their stoles and deacons, so that there is one president but there are many deacons assisting, and that is what happens at Coventry.

But other cathedrals have opted for some form of what the Church of Rome would call "concelebration": one president but many priests. In the Roman Church, 'concelebration' by all priests present would be the norm at the principal liturgy. The collegiality of these ministers would be expressed by where they stood and sat in relation to one another, by their shared gestures, by their saying together the words of institution, and by their dividing of other parts of the eucharistic prayer between them.

Although there are Anglican churches (including cathedrals) that have adopted the Roman concept of concelebration, most have not, and the 1982 Liturgical Commission report on the subject² (which merits reading again) held out against it. To many Anglicans it looks as if the Roman style undermines both the role of the president and the sense of the whole community as celebrant. There is, nevertheless, a clear distinction between the Roman understanding, which amounts to "co-consecration", and the sort of "ceremonial concelebration" (as the 1982 report calls it), which goes back to Hippolytus, and is increasingly found in Anglican churches and cathedrals and theologically quite acceptable.

Here there is one clear president, but the other priests, in albs and matching stoles, gather around the president at the holy table, and by gesture (not by spoken word) associate their ministry with the president's. In other ways too, that have to depend on the "geography" of the sanctuary (through the way they process, through the way they are seated, etc) signals are given that they are a body of priests with a shared ministry. It is a subtle matter, like so much in liturgy, because it needs to affirm something about priestly collegiality, but not at the expense of the primary affirmation that the one community of laity and their ministers is the celebrant of the liturgy.

This model, in which the clergy should be described as "assisting priests", rather than as "concelebrants", will be acceptable in most cathedrals.

Collegiality

The question arises: who are to be these "assisting priests"? On different occasions different pictures of ministry need to be affirmed. On some occasions it is that of the bishop and the administrative chapter, on others the collegiality of the greater chapter. But both these will be on only a few occasions in the year. From week to week there are two models to consider: (1) the *capitular* celebration, expressing the collegiality of the administrative chapter, with one of their number as the president and (2) a celebration expressing the wider collegiality of all the priests who share in the Sunday celebration as an expression of the way they share the ministry, liturgical and otherwise, during the week, and this group may include other ordained members of the foundation, retired clergy who help and perhaps a visiting preacher.

Both these groupings may merit expression on different occasions, and a cathedral policy needs to be clear on which occasions a celebration is *capitular*, and on which occasions the assisting priests are all the priests on the foundation or beyond that.

Bishops

The place of the bishop in the eucharist has been rethought in a number of cathedrals. There are three sorts of episcopal presence to consider: (1) the diocesan bishop, (2) his area or suffragan bishops and (3) visiting bishops.

The Diocesan Bishop

Until the last twenty years, the norm in the Church of England (as sometimes in Rome) was that the bishop presided at the eucharist in churches in his diocese "from the throne" (not that everybody would have used such a term), preaching, absolving and blessing, as the Prayer Book indicates. Since the Second Vatican Council, with its influence beyond the Church of Rome, and the recovery of the understanding of the bishop as the normative president of the liturgy, this practice has all but disappeared in the Anglican Church as well as in the Roman, and the bishop, wherever he goes in his diocese, "presides" at the eucharist in the modern sense. There is now therefore a strange modern oddity that the only church in which the bishop does not always, when officially present, preside in the full sense is in the bishop's church, his cathedral.

There are a number of historical factors that have given rise to this. In some cathedrals the presidency of the eucharist is defined by statute, or custom almost as strong as statute, and gives rights to preside variously to the bishop, the dean, the precentor, the canon in residence, or the minor canons. Often difficult relationships between bishop and chapter, or bishop and dean, in past times have contributed to the rigid fixing of these rights. But they appear anachronistic in the light of liturgical reforms that have reaffirmed the bishop as the normative president of the liturgy.

It is difficult to find a theological or liturgical justification for the continuation today of the old "presiding at the throne" procedure. Justification has to be in terms of either statute, custom or history. Thus the argument would run: the bishop is not always the eucharistic president in order to affirm the chapter's rights in the cathedral and its proper independence of him.

But how often is that what the chapter wants to affirm? If it wants instead to affirm the sense of the chapter as the bishop's *familia*, the more natural expression of that would be the chapter concelebrating with the bishop, with the dean or provost as his deacon.

Area or Suffragan Bishops

Area or Suffragan Bishops have always been an anomaly for a cathedral, and *Heritage and Renewal* calls for a new attitude to them. On a diocesan occasion, it is simple enough: an area or suffragan bishop presiding at an ordination, confirmation, etc presides, in the full modern sense, at the eucharist that forms part of it.

But what happens if he comes to preach at an ordinary Sunday Eucharist? As a courtesy, or as a right, should he be invited to preside? In a parish church there would be no distinction between a visit from the diocesan or his suffragan. Is a cathedral different or, in today's Church, should it be the *bishops'* church. The theology of this is difficult, for the simple reason that collegial episcopacy is itself a theological oddity. But certainly a suffragan bishop ought to be received more like the diocesan than like a visiting bishop with no local jurisdiction.

Visiting Bishops

A visiting bishop, though he might, as a courtesy, be invited to preside in the modern sense, is more likely to be treated like any other visiting preacher, extended the welcome and hospitality of being invited to stand with the chapter at the holy table, taking his place among the other assisting ministers, in no sense the president.

Furnishings

Clearly there are implications here both for sanctuary furnishings and for the vesture of ministers, and these will raise important questions when re-ordering is proposed or when vestments are being renewed.

Re-ordering in the sanctuary area must be considered as a whole and not as an agglomeration of separate elements. There must be enough space for each part of the liturgy to be carried out with dignity so it can be clearly seen by all the participants. The sanctuary must be a focus, so the eye naturally stops where the liturgical action is taking place. This can be achieved in many different ways from the lighting of the area to the back drop or to change of level at which the action takes place.

The way the liturgical furniture is set out will vary from place to place according to the space available. All the furniture should match in material, style and form. To have a discordant element of liturgical furniture will affect the perception of the liturgy.

The president's chair should be in a position where it is visible and does preside effectively over the assembly. Assisting ministers, whether priests, deacons or sub-deacons, should have their seats which show their relationship to the president. This may be achieved by chairs that match the president's, but without arms or with smaller backs, or by different positions or levels.

The holy table must be deep enough to accept comfortably all that needs to go on it, but it need not be as long as some have been in the past. It is important that it is of such proportions that it has presence and dignity.

The lectern too (or the pulpit if that is used for the proclamation of the scriptures) needs to have a strong relationship with the holy table in terms of its position and design to re-enforce the relationship of the Word and the Eucharist. One feeds first at the table of the Word and then at the table of the Eucharist. Nevertheless the table may be seen as the "throne" for the scriptures, from which the gospel book is taken for the proclamation of the gospel reading.

It is important that any frontal, pall or fall must have a relationship one with another, with the season being celebrated and with the vestments.

Vestments

Vestments need to be well cut and dignified. They should show the distinct ministries of those taking part in the celebration. If the role of the deacon is to be enhanced, should there always be a dalmatic? What should other assisting ministers wear? In some places broad matching stoles, worn priest-wise, prevail; in others simple chasubles. Ot should they all be seen as deacons and wear stoles deacon-wise?

Vestments should also, as the year progresses, give a sense of development of the Christian life in the course of the liturgical year. They should be cut in such a way that they do not impede or hamper the ministers in their liturgical functions. There is a need to avoid copes that are too tight or chasubles that have too much material at the front creating a hazard at the holy table.

Consideration should be given to the design and decorations of all liturgical vestments. With westward facing celebrations, the front is seen more than the back and this needs to be recognised with appropriate and richer embellishments to this side rather than the back. Indeed thought needs to be given as to whether the cope is ever an appropriate vestment for westward facing celebrations.

Conclusion

Some of this may seem to run contrary to an argument often strong in cathedrals that justifies something because "it is our custom". But ought we not always to be able to justify our custom theologically. It is hardly surprising if, in the light of all the fresh thinking and recovery of older truths, in relation to both the eucharist and the Church's ministry, quite a number of customs no longer look as natural and helpful as they did.

- 1 Michael Perham, *Lively Sacrifice*, SPCK 1992, p 37.
- 2 The Liturgical Commission, *Concelebration in the Eucharist*, GS Misc 163, Church House. 1982