

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 25, 2010

Worship 9:30

EARLY CHURCH WORSHIP

(133 C.E. to 380 C.E)

In the first century, the distinctive feature of "Christian Worship" was a fellowship meal held on the first day of the week, in the home of the followers of Jesus. As the second century approached, a number of factors combined to cause the growing church to realize that its corporate worship could not continue strictly as a community meal.

First, Gentiles, rather than Jews, became the largest population in the Christian movement. The Gentiles had converted from various pagan religions and had no tradition of "religious family meals" that were such a key part of Judaism and from which the Christian Eucharist had developed.

Secondly, the number of Christians increased in sufficient number so that the growth prevented all the Christians in one community from gathering for a shared meal in a single home.

Also, the number of new converts necessitated an increased emphasis on the teaching role of the church during the Lord's Day service. Additionally, church leaders encouraged faithful members to practice observing individual daily religious devotions. One early church document suggested that Christians should say the Lord's Prayer three times each day.

By the middle of the second century, about one year after Jesus' death, the followers gathered each Sunday for a worship service that began with scripture lessons, a sermon, followed by intercessory prayer. Next came the kiss of peace, the offertory (bread and juice), the Eucharistic Prayer, the people's Amen, and the Communion.

The third century saw a clearer separation of the service into two distinct parts. The first part, consisting of lessons, sermons, and prayers was attended by baptized Christians and adult converts called Catechumens. At the end of this preparatory part of the service, the Catechumens were dismissed. The Eucharist proper, beginning with the kiss of peace and offertory, was called the Service of the Faithful, for only baptized Christians.

Today's service, based on descriptions of worship found in the early church document called the Didache. It was widely disseminated around the year 100 C.E. and became a kind of pastoral church manual used throughout the second century

and into the third. This service is meant to be a representation of worship from the period in the evolution of the church (133-380 C.E.) called the Early Church.

Resources The Church of Our Fathers, Roland Bainton
 History of Christian Worship, Richard Spielmann
 Worship Old and New, Robert Webber
 A Brief History of Christian Worship, James White

HOUSE FELLOWSHIP WORSHIP

Greeting and Introduction

Musical Prelude

*Call to Adoration

One: Come people of God, stand before God in praise and thanksgiving.

All: We praise God for the gift of life.

One: Come disciples of Jesus Christ, stand before the one whom God raised from the dead.

All: Because Christ was raised, we who are in Christ are able to stand before God and offer praise and thanksgiving.

*Hymn

"God Reigns o'er All the Earth"

#21

Blessing of the Poor and Those in Need

One: Brothers and sisters, if there are those here who hunger and thirst, or those who sorrow, I invite you in the name of the son of God, come forward.

(Pause for movement)

All: We, who are in Christ, enclose you in the mystic circle of the Church.

One: Luke 6:20-23

One: Go in peace, and praise God, and the blessed Son.

Imprecations to the Rich

One: Brothers and sisters, if there are those here who are rich, or full of sin, or slow to practice love, I adjure you, in the name of the Son of God, come forward and repent.

(Pause for movement)

All: We, who are in Christ, enclose you in the mystic circle of the church.

One: Luke 6:24-26

One: But God is slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. Through the grace of our Savior, your sins are forgiven. Go in peace, and praise God, and the blessed Son.

Psalm of Praise (Psalm 148)

Page 721

Special Music

Lauren Horn

Readings for Edifying the Saints

Jewish Scripture — Jeremiah 6:16

Acts of the Apostles — Acts 20:17-36

Message to the Children

Message to the Adults

Jim Nolan

The Canticle of Zechariah

One: Let us sing, with the father of John the Baptist, our praise to God our Savior.

All: (From St. Luke 1:68-79)

Page 733

Prayers of the Community of Faith

*Kiss of Peace

One: The Peace of Christ be with you.

One: And also with you.

The Lord's Supper

(In the Early Church, the Lord's Supper was celebrated every Lord's Day, it began with the kiss of peace. This meal served as both a reminder of the "Spirit of Christ" present in the Community of Faith, a remembrance of Jesus' sacrificial life and death, and a celebration of the blessings to faithful Christians.)

Words of the Church Fathers

(A letter written by Clement, the Bishop of Rome, to the Church of Corinth -- 96 C.E.)

*Closing Hymn

"God, Speak to Me, That I may Speak"

#531

*Mite box

*Postlude