

## ***Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time***

***August 1, 2010***

***Worship 9:30***

### **EARLY CHURCH WORSHIP**

***(113 C.E. to 380 C.E)***

Worship in the church of the second and third centuries is best understood against the background of a hostile culture. The Roman Empire had its own gods and religion. Christianity was suspect. Christians worshipped quietly, if not secretly, in homes, shops, and caves. They gathered to hear the scriptures read, the Good News proclaimed, and to participate in thanksgiving at the Table. Worship was relatively simple, brief, and intimate.

The fourth century saw all that begin to change. After a struggle for power, Constantine became Emperor of the Roman Empire. He claimed that it was the Christian God who had shown him the path to victory. Consequently, it was no longer illegal to practice Christianity, and eventually, it became the official religion of the Empire. From a religion largely confined to the eastern fringe of the Mediterranean, Christianity began to spread around the geography of the Empire. From a simple gospel message it began to develop into a highly sophisticated theology. From an intimate family, gathered in "shared community", it began to incorporate the culture and hierarchy of the Roman court.

Unlike the period of the New Testament Church (40-113 C.E.), the sources that offer insight into worship and life during the period of the Early Church are much more abundant. Still, even with much more documentation, there are many unanswered questions, resulting in major gaps in our information. We must also remember that the church in this time was far from being uniform. Each cultural, geographical, and political setting contributed to the church looking very different from one end of the Roman Empire to the other. The fifth century church historian Socrates wrote of the fourth century, "It is impossible to find anywhere, among all the sects, two churches that agree exactly in their ritual . . ."

The worship service below is meant to express the continuing evolution of worship, incorporating three important developments that occurred in the fourth century. First, the power and hierarchy of the church came under more control by the Bishop of Rome, who in later centuries would be called The Pope. Consequently, local church leaders were no longer as free to give their own interpretation of scripture and offer their own prayers. Regional church officials sent messages and prayers to

be read to the congregation. The messages were often in response to questions raised by church members or to address heresies feared by the leaders.

Secondly, because of disputes about which writings from earlier centuries contained the "correct" teachings and stories of Jesus, the process of closing the New Testament Canon (a ruler by which to keep things straight) was completed. This debate was reopened in earnest at the Reformation.

Thirdly, confusion over the nature of Jesus and his relationship to God was brought to an end with the development of a creed that had its beginning at the Council of Nicaea (325 C.E.).

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

*"All People That on Earth Do Dwell"*

#7

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 49)

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Special Music

Kent Conrad

## Readings for Edifying the Saints

The Jewish Scripture — Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12-14; 2:18-23

Memoirs of the Apostles — St. Luke 12:13-21

## Message to the Children

Message to the Adults

"My Bishop . . . , My Bishop . . ."

## The Canticle of Mystery Revealed in Flesh

One: Let us sing, with the Generations of the Faithful, our praise to God our Savior.

**All: (From I Timothy 3:16; 6:15-16)**

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## 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 Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna, to the Church of Philipp—100-117 C.E.)

\*Closing Hymn

*"Ask Me What Great Thing I Know"*

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\*The Blessing

\*Mite box

\*Postlude