The History and Meaning of the Divine Liturgy
“Liturgy” in Ancient Greece

• *Leitourgia* – “performance of a public duty” (usually by a wealthy member of society)

• Two main categories: 1) annual religious and sporting events, and 2) military supply as needed

• 1) Religious festivals, theater dramas, and pan-hellenic games (e.g., Olympics);

• 2) Triremes (ships) and cavalry, etc.
“Liturgy” in the Bible

• *Leitourgia* (n.)/*leitourgein* (vb.) – services prescribed for the Tabernacle/Temple in Israel (involving the Priests, Levites, and all the people; book of *Numbers*, chap. 3-4);

• Christ Jesus is the High Priest: He is the *Liturgist*, and His service is the *Liturgy* (Heb. 8:1-6);

• The ministry of the Church is the liturgy (Acts 13:2).
Liturgical Services in Judaism

1) Continual Temple Offerings and Prayers
   a) Daily, morning & evening (3rd and 9th hours; see Acts 2:15; 3:1; 10:9)
   b) Weekly, according to need (Lk. 18:10)

2) Sabbath Synagogue Service (Lk. 4:16; Acts 13:14)

3) Feast Day Services
   a) Passover (Lk. 22:15)
   b) Pentecost (Acts 2:1)
   c) Tabernacles (Jn. 7:2)
   d) Hanukkah (Jn. 10:22)

Neither the Apostles nor the Church invented the Liturgy; importantly, the Liturgy was perpetuated from Judaism as fulfilled in Christ Jesus.
First Century Synagogue Service

• And as His custom was, [Jesus] went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. (Luke 4:16)
• [They] went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down. And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, “Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.” (Acts 13:14-15)

1. Recitation of the Shema (confession of faith [creed])
2. Praying of benedictions with petitions (response: Amen)
3. Scripture readings: Torah/Law [3-year cycle of 154 sections] and Prophets [chosen by reader] accompanied by translation
4. Sermon (the preacher/teacher sat on a raised platform)
5. Blessing (by priestly member, or prayed by congregation)
Physical Arrangement of the Temple and Synagogue

Temple

- Holy of Holies
  - Ark
  - incense
- Showbread
- Lampstand
- Holy Place
- Porch

Synagogue

- Torah
- Ark
- Lampstand
- Raised platform (bema)

Jerusalem

Altar

East
Jewish Ritual Meal Prayers

• **Kiddush** (lit., sanctification) for the Cup and Bread (See Lk. 22:17 & 1 Cor. 10:16)

The master of the house holds the cup of wine, recites Genesis 1:31-2:3 and says:
“You are blessed, Lord our God, King of the universe, You who created the fruit of the vine.”

Then a blessing is added for the Sabbath or the feast, e.g., Passover, after which all drink of the wine poured into their own cups:
“You are blessed, Lord our God, King of the universe. You have sanctified us by Your commandments, You have given us as an inheritance the Sabbath of Your holiness, out of love and good will, as a memorial of the works of Your creation. This day is the first of Your holy convocations. It is the memorial of the exodus from Egypt. You have chosen us among all peoples, You have sanctified us, You have given us as an inheritance the Sabbath of Your holiness, out of love and good will. You are blessed, O Lord, who sanctify the Sabbath.”

Before the bread is broken and distributed, the father of the family lays his hands on the bread and says:
“You are blessed, Lord our God, King of the universe, You who have brought bread forth from the earth.”

• **Birkat ha-mazon** (lit., blessing of the food)

Recited after the meal:

“You are blessed, Lord our God, King of the universe, You who nourish the entire world with goodness, tender love, and mercy. Your are blessed, O Lord, You who nourish the universe. We will give you thanks, Lord our God, for You have given us a desirable land for our inheritance, that we may eat of its fruits and be filled with its goodness. You are blessed, Lord our God, for the land and the food.

Lord our God, take pity on Israel Your people and Jerusalem Your city, on Zion, the place where Your glory dwells, on Your altar and Your sanctuary. You are blessed, O Lord, who build Jerusalem. You are blessed, Lord our God, King of the universe, You who are good and filled with kindness.

You are blessed, Lord our God, King of the universe, You who are good and filled with kindness.”
The Jewish Passover Meal

1. The first cup is mixed (wine & warm water) and the blessing over the wine and over the day is said. The first cup is passed around and shared.
2. The head of the household rises and washes his hands.
3. Dishes of food are brought to the table: bitter herbs are dipped into salt-water or vinegar and shared, followed by the breaking of the unleavened bread.
4. The second cup is mixed and the youngest person present inquires as to the meaning of the evening’s observance – the explanation follows.
5. The first two psalms of ‘the Hallel’ (Ps. 112-117 LXX) are said with a benediction; the third cup is mixed followed by a blessing for the meal. Another handwashing precedes the meal.
6. With the fourth cup, the Hallel is completed.
“Composition” of the Divine Liturgy

Synagogue Service

Meal Prayers

Passover Meal

Jesus Christ: Priest & Liturgist
“Transmission” of the Divine Liturgy

Jesus Christ: Priest & Liturgist

The Apostles: Participants with Christ

The Church: Recipient of the same Liturgy
Liturgy *is* Apostolic Tradition from Christ Himself

- “Do this in remembrance of Me…And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom.” (Lk. 22:19, 29-30)
- “For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you…If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.” (Jn. 13:15, 17)
- For first of all, when you come together as a church…For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you…For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you, proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes. (1 Cor. 11:18, 23, 26)
Christ’s Liturgy the Center of the Church

• And [the baptized] continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine, and the communion, the breaking of bread, and the prayers. (Acts 2:42)

• As they ministered (lit., served the liturgy) to the Lord and fasted... (Acts 13:2)

• Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread... (Acts 20:7)

• We have such a High Priest...a Minister (lit., Liturgist) of the sanctuary...But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry (lit., liturgy), inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant (i.e., the new covenant). [Heb. 8:1-2, 6, 13]

• Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus...not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. [Heb. 10:19-25]

• See Heb. 12:22-25.

N.B. From the beginning of the Church, only the baptized received Holy Communion; there is “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Eph. 4:5), thus one Church and one Communion.
Names of the Divine Liturgy

• **Pascha** (i.e., *Passover*) – Lk. 22:15; 1 Cor. 5:7
• **Lord’s Supper/Table** – 1 Cor. 11:20; Lk. 22:30
• **Holy Communion** – 1 Cor. 10:16
• **Divine Liturgy** – Heb. 8:6
• **Eucharist** (lit., *Thanksgiving*) – 1 Cor. 11:24
• **Synaxis** (lit., *gathering*) – Acts 20:7
The Divine Liturgy ca. 150 A.D.
(as recorded by St. Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 66-67)

- **Readings from Scripture** (Gospels & Epistles; see Col. 4:16; 1 Thes. 5:27)
- **Sermon by the celebrant** (i.e., bishop, or priest; see St. Ignatios, *To the Philadelphians* 4; *To the Smyrnaeans* 8)
- **Prayers of the community**
- **Holy kiss of love** (2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Pet. 5:14)
- **Offering of bread and wine with prayers by the celebrant** (“according to his ability”; see *Didache* 10.7)
- **Reception of the *Eucharistic Gifts*, the Body and Blood of Christ with “Amen”** (1 Cor. 14:16)
- **Taking of Communion to those absent by the Deacons**
The Divine Liturgy ca. 215 A.D.
(as recorded by St. Hippolytus, *The Apostolic Tradition*, 4)

- The Deacons bring the offerings of bread and wine to the Bishop and priests, followed by:
  
  Celebrant: The Lord be with you all. (cf. Gal. 6:18; 2 Tim. 4:22 et al.)
  People: And with your spirit.
  Celebrant: Your hearts on high. (cf. Col. 3:2)
  People: We have them with the Lord.
  Celebrant: Let us give thanks to the Lord.
  People: It is right and fitting.

- The Celebrant begins the Anaphora (model prayer of thanksgiving – including the *remembrance of Christ* [Gk., *anamnesis*] and *invocation of the Holy Spirit* [Gk., *epiklesis*]).
The “Core” of Liturgical Tradition

- Synagogue Service
- Meal Prayers & Passover Meal
- Scripture Readings & Sermon
- Community Prayers & Holy Kiss
- Reception of Holy Communion
- Eucharistic Offering of Gifts
- Meal Prayers & Passover Meal

Historical Shaping of the Liturgy

• Each local Church had its own form of the Divine Liturgy based on the “core” of apostolic Liturgical Tradition.
• There were the Liturgies of St. Mark (Alexandria, Egypt), St. James the Brother of the Lord (Jerusalem), St. Clement (Antioch), etc., led by the Bishop “according to his ability.”
• Three Orthodox Liturgies were written down in the fourth century and are still served throughout the Church:
  the Liturgy of St. James (usually now served only on Oct. 23 & the Sunday after Christmas);
  the Liturgy of St. Basil (ca. 365; taken from Caesarea in Cappadocia to Constantinople and Alexandria); and
  the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom (ca. 400; written while St. John was Patriarch of Constantinople).
### Comparison of “Eastern” & “Western” Liturgical Forms (or, “Rites”)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eastern Rite</th>
<th>Western Rite</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Often called <em>Byzantine</em> (from Byzantium = Constantinople)</td>
<td>Often called <em>Roman</em>, or <em>Latin</em> (the predominant language of Rome)</td>
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<tr>
<td>More standardized, or unified, from early on (a marriage of orders in</td>
<td>More diversified from early on (attempted standardization later,</td>
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<td>Constantinople and Jerusalem; after 400)</td>
<td>especially under Franco-German leadership; after 800)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Changes/additions governed by further development of pre-existing themes</td>
<td>Changes/additions governed by perceived necessity of rediscovery or reformation of content</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservatism born of Orthodox piety (hesychasm, monasticism)</td>
<td>Conservatism born of scholastic piety (legal/academic imposition)</td>
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Important Historical Factors for Liturgical Development

**Eastern Rite**
- Doctrinal controversies ("Only begotten Son"; the Creed; processions)
- Imperial architecture (entrances; Cherubic Hymn)
- Monastic influence following iconoclasm (hymnody & cycle of *Eight Tones*; iconostasis)

**Western Rite**
- Political and linguistic separation from the East (variation; 500-800)
- Franco-papal centralization (unleavened bread; private masses; Creed w/ *filioque*)
- Counter-reformation (veneration of sacrament; unification of rites)
Timeline of Factors Affecting the Divine Liturgy

Key issues:
1. Primacy of power
2. Creed with filioque
3. Unleavened bread
4. Celibate clergy
5. Purgatory
6. Rationalism

Ecumenical Councils → Rise of Papacy → Roman Catholicism → Vatican II

1 AD
- Constantinople founded
- Fall of Rome
- Emergence of Islam

1,000
- Crusades

2,000
- Fall of Constantinople
- Ottoman Empire

Lutherans
Anglicans
Presbyterians
Pentecostals
Pentecostals
Protestant
Reformation
Baptists
Methodists
Et al.
### Outlines of “Eastern” & “Western” Liturgies (w/Liturgical **CORE**)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EASTERN LITURGY (Ss. Basil &amp; John Chrysostom)</th>
<th>WESTERN LITURGY (Roman, Latin Mass)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Great Litany, Antiphons, Entrance <strong>READINGS, SERMON</strong></td>
<td>Entrance, Confession, Kyrie, Gloria <strong>READINGS, SERMON</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EKTENIAS (VARIOUS FERVENT PRAYERS)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Creed</strong></td>
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<td>Great Entrance (w/bread and wine)</td>
<td><strong>PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL</strong></td>
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<td>Litany of Preparation</td>
<td>Offering of bread and wine</td>
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<td><strong>KISS OF LOVE &amp; Creed</strong></td>
<td>Preface &amp; <strong>EUCARISTIC PRAYER</strong></td>
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<td><strong>ANAPHORA (EUCARISTIC PRAYER)</strong></td>
<td>Lord’s Prayer</td>
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<td>Litany of Gifts &amp; Lord’s Prayer</td>
<td><strong>SIGN OF PEACE</strong></td>
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<td><strong>HOLY COMMUNION</strong></td>
<td><strong>COMMUNION</strong> (in one kind)</td>
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<td>Litany of Thanksgiving</td>
<td>Prayer after Communion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dismissal</td>
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