

EXPLORING OUR FAITH

A Walk Through the Sunday Service

Session 26 – Christ Will Come Again: The Future Dimension of the Eucharist

We've been winding up our slow walk through the Eucharist with a look at some general themes that underlie this sacrament: the doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the theme of sacrifice that runs through the eucharistic prayers. This week we talk about the way in which the Eucharist anticipates the heavenly banquet that awaits us and the universe. If you've missed some steps along the way, you can find all these bulletin covers on the St. Andrew's website.

Playing with time: past and present. Our secular world is very much tied to thinking of time in strictly linear terms. Past is past, gone for good. Present is now, the clock ticking relentlessly even as you read these words. But the Eucharist plays a more complex game with time. "Christ has died," we say in the Memorial Acclamation, but the Eucharist shows us that he is not dead and gone. We remember his death, but the Greek word translated remembrance, *anamnesis*, means memory brought forward, brought into living reality in the present. Christ is really present, as we said last week, in the bread and wine, in the gathered community, in the word of Holy Scripture. So we go on to add, in the Memorial Acclamation: "Christ is risen." His resurrection is happening now, as we celebrate the Eucharist and as we go forth in his Name to live and love as his Body in the world.

"Christ will come again." But of course, that is not the end of this sacramental game with time. The Memorial Acclamation has that third line: "Christ will come again." Come again, yes, in the future – the Greek word here is *eschaton*, meaning at the end or culmination of time, whether of our lives or of the universe – but a future that has no end. In the prayer after communion at the Burial of the Dead, we thank God for having "given us a foretaste of your heavenly banquet . . . a pledge of our inheritance in that kingdom where there is no death." In the second post-communion prayer in Rite II we thank him "for assuring us in these holy mysteries that we are . . . heirs of your eternal kingdom."

A future without end. In instituting the Holy Communion on the night before he died, Jesus intended to assure us that death is not the end. Both Old and New Testaments have frequent images of heaven as a banquet feast. All share in the abundance of the kingdom of God. Resurrection appearances like the road to Emmaus story emphasize the eating of food. Christian faith deals not just with ideas, but with embodied realities. Hey, that goes for the doughnuts at coffee hour too! Enjoy!

In this series of bulletin cover notes we are moving through the steps of the Sunday Eucharist. You can find past notes archived on the parish website. Each week in the 9:00 class we dig deeper into the week's subject, exploring further what we are learning.