

It's All About Jesus!

Genesis 3:8-15; Psalm 130; 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1; Mark 3:20-end

I believed and so I spoke. [2 Corinthians 4:13]

At the heart of Anglican practice is the Latin phrase - *lex orandi, lex credendi* - what we pray, that we believe.

This Sunday and next I want to talk through what we do in our Eucharist so that we understand what is happening and why. If we don't know why things are happening we can lose the point that it is all about Jesus!

Why do clergy dress the way they do - it isn't just 'men in dresses'?

Cassock - black as a sign that we dead to self

Alb - a sign that we are forgiven people

Cincture - a reminder that we need to be self controlled

Stole - the symbol of priestly office

Chasuble - an outward reminder of the season, but something that makes the priest anonymous. The priest hides in it so Jesus is seen.

When getting ready there is a series of prayers that we use:

While washing hands:

Give strength to my hands, Lord, to wipe away all stain, so that I may be able to serve you in purity of mind and body.

While putting on the Alb:

Purify me, Lord, and cleanse my heart so that, washed in the Blood of the Lamb, I may enjoy eternal bliss.

While tying the cincture:

Lord, gird me about with the cincture of purity and extinguish my fleshly desires, that the virtue of continence and chastity may abide within me.

While putting on the stole:

Lord, restore the stole of immortality, which I lost through the collusion of our first parents, and, unworthy as I am to approach your sacred mysteries, may I yet gain eternal joy.

While assuming the chasuble:

Lord, you said "my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Grant that I may be able to wear this vestment so as to obtain your grace. Amen.

Have a look at the hands - 3 fingers for the Trinity and 2 crosses for Jesus as God and man.

The Entrance

The first thing you see as the Procession enters is the cross and then the lights, and after anyone else, the Gospel Book (usually held high) is the focus before the Presiding Minister. This is an Icon of Jesus - the cross and the Gospel together focus our minds on Jesus - because if it isn't about him it's a bit pointless.

After that we prepare ourselves by confessing our sins and receiving absolution (some people make the sign of the cross as a reminder that this is where forgiveness comes from), and then - apart from Lent - we sing or say the Gloria as a celebration of that.

The Collect is a prayer that highlights the theme of the service - forgiven people looking to see what God has for them next!

The Readings

The Old Testament points forward to Jesus - and gives us that assurance that God has been working throughout history. (Today - the fall and how wrong choices affect us)

The Psalm - with the roller-coaster of emotions - helps us to know that people of faith have the same struggles and joys. (Today a song of disorientation)

The Epistle helps us to see that Christians have to work out the implications of their faith. (Today - pointing us forward to heaven and when this life won't dominate)

The Gospel

The cross and the lights draw the eye and the Alleluia's tell us that this is something special

The triple crossing is a prayer - *may the Gospel be in my mind, on my lips and in my heart.*

Then we hear Jesus life and his teaching.

The Sermon ties all this together, we state what we believe in the Creed and we pray - gathering up to God our hopes and fears, always reminding ourselves that the community of faith is bigger than just us.

It is all about Jesus - and if it isn't (and we are clear that it is so) it is pointless. But if we see Jesus and we are brave enough to follow him then it all becomes worthwhile.