

Justin Martyr's *First Apology*, 150 CE

Mass Plus

Series on History of the Mass 2

St. Mary Magdalene Parish Family

E. Besl

1. Earliest Description of Eucharist

- Justin (100-165), born in Samaria, Gentile, philosopher.
 - Converted c. 130 CE, moved to Rome. Beheaded for being Christian.
- “Apology” = defense. Written to Emperor Antoninus Pius, ruled from 138-161 C.E.
 - Refutes accusations against Christians of incest, child murder, cannibalism, atheism.
- Rediscovered in 16th c. Quoted in *Catechism of Catholic Church* n 1345.
- *Read text on other handout.*

2. The Order of the Ritual – What Did They Do?

- See Ch 67, on p2 of other handout.
 - gather in one place
 - readings from apostles and prophets
 - preaching by president
 - prayers [cf. Ch 65 on baptism on p1 of handout]
 - [kiss of peace Ch 65 2nd para on p1 of handout]
 - bread and wine brought forward
 - president gives thanks & people assent w “Amen”
 - distribution of bread and wine to each
 - deacons bring communion to absent
 - collection for needy (also mentioned before)
- Parts will disappear, or added – Basic **structure remains** fr 2nd c. to now. BUT **re-interpreted**.



3. When? Frequency, Time of Day

- Only on Sunday, one gathering for all in nearby area.
 - 1st day of **creation**, Old Testament – God now making a new creation with this assembly, church.
 - Day of **resurrection** in New Testament – risen Christ is present among them now, in assembly.
- Morning.
 - Change: 1 Cor (50s CE) – evening. Justin Martyr (150 CE) – morning. Not Lord’s “Supper.”
 - Before work? Sunday a work day. (Not a day of rest until 321 C.E.). Reason some are absent?

4. Who?

- “We” – action of all present, of the baptized.
 - Note importance of assembly’s “Amen” to the thanksgiving. Mentions this one word.
- Various roles for certain individuals.
 - Reader
 - Gift-bearers
 - President – “presides,” leads worship & community life. προεστως [proestos] – “stands before.”
 - Deacons
 - Wealthy
- Action of whole assembly, with specific roles for some.

5. How? Style, Characteristics

- Order is fixed, yet allows for flexibility.
 - Readings “as long as time permits,” Thanksgiving – offered according to president’s ability.
- Prayers are improvised (not from a book)
- No longer an actual meal as in 1 Corinthians (100 years prior), only bread and wine.
- Added synagogue service to ritual meal. Synagogue: Readings, preaching, intercessory prayers.

6. Where?

- Justin doesn’t say, but no church buildings until 4th c. Probably in homes, or converted houses.
- Note: Dura Europos, 3rd c Syria, house converted to meeting place for baptism and Eucharist.

7. Theology

- Unity of Church – retained from 1 Corinthians.
 - “Gather together in one place” – all united. Communion to absent – still part of body.
 - Ch 67: Care for needy mentioned *before* and *after* ritual.
 - In Eucharist, Church is made visible as a community of love.
 - Eucharist “challenges society with its inequities by becoming the place of a redistribution of goods.”¹
- Real Presence
 - Ch 66 [*p1 of other handout*]. “Not as common bread and drink.” Compares to Incarnation.
 - “This food ... is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.”
 - Only the baptized may eat & drink. Access to Eucharist through Baptism, faith, living like Christ.
 - Refers to Last Supper and words of institution, “This is my body,” “This is my blood.”
 - Changed by the Thanksgiving prayer.
 - “food which is blessed [‘eucharistified’] by the prayer” Ch 66.
 - Another translation: “the food over which the eucharist has been spoken becomes the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus, in order to nourish and transform our flesh and blood.”²
- Like 1 Cor: Emphasizes BOTH aspects of “Body of Christ” = bread & wine, AND church community.

8. Thanksgiving

- President offers “prayers and thanksgivings.”
 - Meaning of what will become “Eucharistic Prayer.”
- Action of **giving thanks** gives name to the transformed **bread and wine**.
 - Ch 67, middle paragraph: “that over which thanks have been given.”
 - Ch 66: “This food is called Eucharist...”
 - “Thanksgiving” [Eucharistia] refers BOTH to the prayer and to changed bread and wine.
- Thanksgiving = crucial to meaning of action of Eucharist

¹ R. Cabie, *The Church at Prayer*, Vol II: The Eucharist, 1986, p19.

² L. Deiss, *Springtime of the Liturgy*, p92, quoted in Cabie, p17.