

CHAPTER 14

Prayer After Communion

The people and presiding priest give thanks

Over the centuries the Gathering of the Community became cluttered and its purpose obscured. In a similar way the conclusion of the Eucharist lost its shape and purpose. As with the Gathering of the Community, *A New Zealand Prayer Book* provides a wealth of resources from which a careful choice needs to be made. In this way the primary focus is not lost - that of being sent out nourished and strengthened by communion "to love and serve the Lord."

For the consumption of any remaining consecrated bread or wine, the vessels are preferably returned to the altar at the end of the distribution. The presider might go to the chair and sit. The deacon and/or assistants consume what remains and immediately take the vessels to the credence. Hence, after Communion the holy table would be cleared. As it was for the beginning of the Eucharist, the altar would be bare except for the candles. If the amount remaining is too large to be conveniently consumed, the vessels may remain on the altar covered with a linen veil or corporal. This is then consumed immediately after the Dismissal of the Community (page 516).

The ablutions are not an integral element of the liturgy! Traditionally the ablutions occurred in the sacristy (or vestry room) after the Eucharist. This corresponds to our cultural custom of doing the dishes after the meal, and not in the dining room. If the ablutions are done during the liturgy they should be done simply and unobtrusively, and preferably away from the altar. If it is necessary to perform the ablutions at the altar, they can be done facing away from the congregation. A single rinsing with water is sufficient at this time. There is no reason why the presider needs to do this task; an assistant can quickly perform it. The cleansed vessels are placed on the credence rather than returned to the altar.

After Communion the presider returns to the chair. Corporate silence may

be kept (page 428). A communion hymn might be sung, or a meditative psalm, or refrain, or a chant from the community of Taizé.

With the people standing, there may be a Prayer after Communion. There are suggestions for this on pages 525-542. Alternatively, a prayer is provided in the liturgy (e.g. pages 428, 429). Many of the concluding collects in the Daily Services (pages 58-95) can also appropriately be used. The prayer chosen can reflect the season, readings, or theme of the celebration.

In producing an original Prayer after Communion care needs to be taken not to create an extended "thanksgiving for the thanksgiving" - a mini-eucharistic prayer. The prayer may give thanks for the gifts received and pray for a particular fruit to be realised as the community departs to act out what is being accomplished within them. While the Collect of the Day might always have the long, trinitarian ending, this and other prayers in the liturgy could use a shorter ending. An example of such an ending would be "We ask this in Jesus' name" or "This we ask through Christ our Redeemer."

Some Questions

Were there any proposals in this chapter that provided a contrast with your experience?

Review the reasons provided in the text and the reasons for the practice that you are familiar with in the light of the worship context that you know best. What practice do you think would help most in that situation?