

Formation Chapter 10

O God, the strength of all who put their trust in you: Mercifully accept our prayers; and because in our weakness we can do nothing good without you, give us the help of your grace, that in keeping your commandments we may please you both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**This Collect dates back to around
the 7th Century.**

Responding to the Word of God

Steve writes:

“When the Word of God is heard by the action of the Holy Spirit, an event of revelation takes place. The event of revelation calls for a response of faith. In the Liturgy of the Word, the response is in the form of the Prayers of the People, and on Sundays and other major feasts, the Nicene Creed.”

The Nicene Creed

**We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the
Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge
the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the
giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped
and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and
apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the
forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Steve makes the important point that we don't have to understand or agree with every point of the Creed. He writes,

“The Creed has more to do with belief and trust than it has to do with understanding... By standing with the congregation to recite the Nicene Creed, we affirm that despite the weakness of our faith, and our lack of understanding of the mystery of the Trinity, we join ourselves to the united faith of the Church throughout the centuries and around the world.”

The Prayers of the People

The 1979 Book of Common Prayer intends for the congregation to participate actively in the Prayers of the People, either silently or aloud. In Rite II, there are 6 forms of the Prayers of the People.

In the Prayers of the People in our Eucharist, we are offering both our individual prayers and the Prayers of the Church. We'll talk more about this distinction when we talk about Morning and Evening Prayer.

C.S. Lewis said that written prayers reminded him of “what things [he] ought to ask”. Thus our Prayer Book requires that we include prayers for:

- **the Universal Church, its members, and its mission;**
- **the Nation and all in authority;**
- **the welfare of the world;**
- **the concerns of our local community;**
- **those who suffer and those in any trouble;**
- **the departed.**

These, we can say, are part of the “Prayers of the Church”, since the Church should be responsible for praying for these things.

The Peace

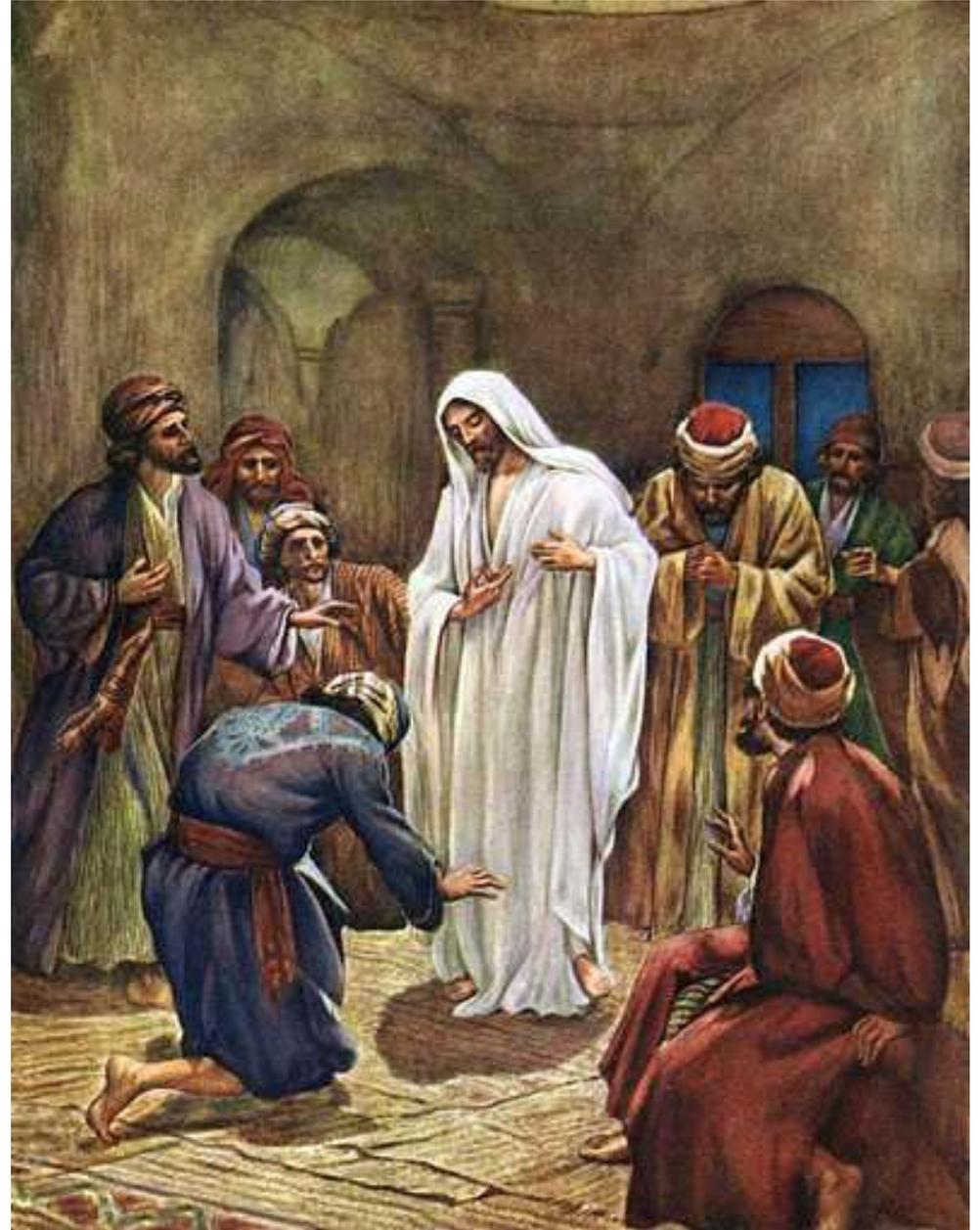
Perhaps one of the most misunderstood parts of the Eucharist is the exchanging of the Peace. Steve writes:

“The exchange of the Peace is a liturgical act which points to a deeper reality than can be expressed in a handshake or a hug. It is an effect of the Word of God, made alive by the Holy Spirit.”

I like to imagine that in exchanging the Peace, something holy and tangible is actually passing between us. When Jesus sent out the 70 into the towns, he instructed them: "Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' And if a son of peace is there, your peace shall rest upon him; but if not, it shall return to you." (Luke 10:5-6) Something is actually being passed here that can rest upon someone and return to someone.

This is one of the images I like to think about when I exchange the Peace.

There is also a relevant passage regarding the passing of Peace from one person to another in John's Gospel, when Jesus appears to the frightened disciples behind locked doors after his resurrection:



*“When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace to you.” After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. **Jesus said to them again,** “Peace to you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” John 20:19-23*

Thus, peace is linked with the gift of the Holy Spirit, reconciliation, and forgiveness. It is because of this that the exchange of Peace is located where it is in our liturgy: right before we bring our offerings to the altar. It takes our Lord's instruction in today's Gospel lesson seriously: *"So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift."*

Exchanging the Peace is a means of reconciling with our brother or sister before we offer our gifts at the altar.

Steve writes:

“He is our Peace. For God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. He has given us the ministry of reconciliation, and made us ambassadors of Christ.” (2 Corinthians 5:19-20) The passing of the Peace is therefore the liturgical expression of our ministry... We, who were once far off, have been brought near to God. We are reconciled to God. We are one in Christ.”

Of course, the word “peace” in Hebrew is “Shalom”, which is rich and deep in meaning. It can mean “well-being”, “health”, “wholeness”, “national prosperity”. It is a gift of God. It implies stability and friendly relationships. It is linked with covenant: a covenant initiates or seals Shalom: “I will make with them a covenant of peace...”

--Ezekiel 34:25

*“For the mountains may depart
and the hills be removed,
but my steadfast love shall not depart from you,
and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,
says the LORD, who has compassion on you.*

--Isaiah 54:10

As a gift of God, it can dissipate fear. In Judges 6:23, when Gideon is frightened by seeing the angel of the Lord, the Lord says to him, "Peace to you; do not be afraid; you shall not die." Gideon responds by building an altar there, entitled, "The Lord is Peace." This use of Shalom as a gift which can dispel fear is certainly one of the connotations when Jesus tells the frightened disciples, "Peace to you" -- as is the understanding that in imparting this peace, God's covenant is being fulfilled.

*All of this is carried in the “Peace” which Jesus **twice** declares to his disciples in their fear behind the closed doors.*

Scholar Raymond Brown notes that Jesus’ words should not be translated “Peace be with you”, as if it were a wish; but rather “Peace to you”, since it is a statement of fact, of certainty – as if Jesus is giving them a tangible, holy gift. Jesus isn’t “wishing” them peace; he is imparting it!