



Fotos: NAKI

The liturgy of the New Apostolic Church as of the first Sunday of Advent 2010

Zurich. The liturgy is what orders and governs the sequence of music, prayers, Bible readings, the sermon, and the dispensation of the sacraments within the divine service. With the start of the new church year, a reform will come into effect (we reported) in the New Apostolic Church. The celebration of Holy Communion in particular is to be structured in even more dignified fashion through the enriched liturgical elements. Chief Apostle Wilhelm Leber, the international Church leader, explained that the new liturgy is intended to bring greater solemnity to the sequence of the divine service.

The start of the divine service

After the opening hymn sung by the congregation at the beginning of the divine service, the officiant solemnly invokes the triune God as follows: "In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Thereby God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are present within the congregation. After the opening prayer and the reading of the Bible text on which the divine service is based, either the choir or the congregation will sing a hymn.

At special holidays in the course of the church year, a Bible reading will in future be incorporated at this point. This will occur in front of the altar, not from behind the altar, and is intended to contribute to a better understanding of the particular church holiday in question.

The sermon portion of the divine service

Following this is the sermon. Between the main portion of the sermon and the ministers called to serve along, musical selections in the form of choral or instrumental pieces are to enrich the divine service event. These are to involve as many of the divine service participants as possible, and showcase the diversity of musical talents and abilities of the congregation within the framework of the musical literature provided. All portions of the sermon are concluded with “Amen”. Each time, the congregation responds with “Amen”.

The sacramental portion of the divine service

The sacramental portion of the divine service, which now follows, begins with an appropriate preparation for the forgiveness of sins or for the celebration of Holy Communion. This is to make the congregation aware of the importance of the moments that are to follow. This purpose is also served by the collective singing of a hymn of repentance, which is to emphasise the confession of the congregation’s sins before God and to one another. Following this, the congregation prays the Lord’s Prayer. The ensuing proclamation of the absolution occurs by commission of the Apostle and in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Eucharistic prayer which now follows recalls the suffering and death of the Son of God.

It is at this point in the divine service, i.e. before the celebration of Holy Communion, that any other sacraments are dispensed and sacramental acts performed. These include Holy Baptism with water, Holy Sealing, adoption, or confirmation. These acts constitute a profession that permanently entitles the beneficiary to partake in Holy Communion (meal of profession).

The celebration of Holy Communion begins with the visible uncovering of the Communion chalices. The wafers are then dedicated to the purpose of Holy Communion through the consecration. The new consecration formula is as follows: *“In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, I consecrate bread and wine for Holy Communion and lay thereupon the once brought, eternally valid sacrifice of Jesus Christ. For the Lord took bread and wine, gave thanks, and said: ‘This is My body which is broken for you. This is My blood of the new covenant given for many for the remission of sins. Eat and drink! Do this in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this wine, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes. Amen!”*

These words reflect the New Apostolic Church’s understanding of Holy Communion, which incorporates commemoration of the events that occurred in the past, the presence of Christ’s sacrifice, remembrance of both His bitter suffering as well as His promise, the profession of the Lord’s death, and a reference to His return. Following this, the wafers are dispensed to the ministers and the congregation. The dispensation of Holy Communion is complete once the last person in the congregation has received Holy Communion, has said “Amen”, and has eaten the consecrated wafer. Once all the chalices have again been returned to their places at the altar and the Communion hymns have come to a close, the Communion chalices are once again covered—this is an act that is visible to the entire congregation.

Other holy acts and the close of the divine service

It is here that any further acts of blessing or ordinations are incorporated into the divine service. A musical framework can also be provided for these acts. The divine service comes to a close with the closing prayer and the closing benediction using the words recorded in 2 Corinthians 13: 13: *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all! Amen.”* This blessing is spoken with outspread arms. The congregation acknowledges the closing benediction with the liturgical singing of the threefold “Amen”. At this point the officiant closes the Bible. A concluding musical selection marks the end of the divine service.

Summary

The new or expanded elements of the liturgy include: Bible readings on special Christian holidays, the hymn of repentance preceding the celebration of Holy Communion, the uncovering and covering of the Communion chalices as a separate, visible act, an enriched consecration formula, and moments of silence between each of these. This form of liturgy is to promote the solemnity of the divine service event, enrich the celebration of Holy Communion, and involve the congregation to a greater degree in the divine service event. It will enter into effect on the first Sunday of Advent 2010.

I. Start of the divine service

Opening hymn, invocation of the triune God, opening prayer, reading of the Bible text, hymn by either the choir or congregation, Bible reading (on church holidays)

II. Sermon portion of the divine service

Sermon, musical contribution, other ministers called to serve along

III. Sacramental portion of the divine service

Preparation for the forgiveness of sins or Holy Communion, hymn of repentance, the Lord’s Prayer, the absolution, the Eucharistic prayer, other sacraments and acts, uncovering of the Communion chalices, consecration of the wafers for Holy Communion, dispensation of Communion to the ministers, announcement of the Holy Communion hymn, dispensation of Holy Communion to the congregation, closing of the Communion chalices

IV. Other holy acts

Ordinations or other acts of blessing (e.g. weddings and wedding anniversaries)

V. Close of the divine service

Closing prayer, closing benediction, concluding hymn

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