



EUCHARIST - A BRIEF HISTORY

I. Mass in the home: From Jewish Roots to 4th Century.

- a. The Last Supper: Jesus uses the Jewish Passover meal in a new way.
- b. Apostolic Times: Eucharist celebrated in homes primarily as a meal of unity.
 - Spontaneity gradually replaced by ritual.
 - Simple celebrations until 313.
 - Eucharist taken in hand and often taken home to sick or for communion during the week. Eucharist not celebrated daily.
 - Social dimension to Eucharistic meal (caring for the poor).

II. Mass in the Basilica: 4th - 7th Century.

- a. Christianity becomes public: Roman emperor becomes Christian; public assembly halls (basilicas) used for Eucharist; Clergy become defined group with status; liturgical garments develop; Church becomes more worldly.
- b. Language changes: Latin becomes the norm, rather than Greek.
- c. Ritualisation: Prayers and rituals become more formalised.
- d. Changing concept of Christ: Stress on Christ's divinity and shepherd Christ.

III. Mass in The Medieval Period: 8th - 11th Century.

- a. Style of prayer changes: Prayers are compiled and formal; improvisation ends; concern over minor details of rite.
- b. Superstition and realism influence worship.
- c. Church becomes European; Clergy acquire status of princes; loss of sense of Christian roots.
- d. Gulf between people and religious action: Congregation becomes more like spectators.

IV. Mass from the Middle Ages to Trent: 12th - 15th Century.

- a. The "Real Presence" doctrine emerges: Loss of the sense of Eucharistic community; attention focuses on the host (magic properties).
- b. Abuses in Eucharistic practices: Private masses, paid Masses.

V. Mass from Trent to Vatican II: 1570 - mid 1960.

- a. Council of Trent: Freezes the Mass Rite.
- b. Missal of Pius V (1570)
 - Baroque influence; devotion to Mary; unifies liturgical celebrations; Scripture de-emphasised.
- c. Beginnings of reform: Monasteries renewed their liturgies; movement towards biblical reform.

VI. Second Vatican Council: 1962 - 1965.

- a. Recommended the use of the local language for participation.
- b. Encouraged reception of communion as part of each Eucharist, sometimes under both species.
- c. Urged greater use of scripture and preaching.

- d. Communal aspect of the Eucharist underlined, eg. priest facing people, participatory prayer and response.
- e. Revision and renewal of all liturgical rites in order that true nature of sacramental and ritual event be seen and understood by all the people of God.

Fr Gary Jones - Daylesford and Creswick Parish Priest