

Eucharistic Prayer 5 Rationale

When Doug and I first compiled the music and choreography for Eucharistic Prayer 5, we stumbled into accidental success. Our chief goal was to include children leading the congregation in the Lord's Prayer using sign language. But the most efficient time to move kids forward in the liturgy was during the offertory hymn. That meant fidgety kids sitting around the altar for the Eucharistic Prayer before their turn to lead the Lord's Prayer. And this was distracting for everyone. Rather than hush and shush, Doug and I thought "let's give them something meaningful to do during the prayer." And the setting for this prayer was born.

Eucharistic Prayer 5 is structured with a refrain. This lends itself to a musical refrain. It also means that there is time for choreographed movement and a time to focus and be still as the prayer is spoken. For the choreography, we borrowed the movements from the manual acts of the priest. The choreography begins with the orans position. Then the hands are cupped together. The cupped hands are raised, as in elevating the bread and chalice. The final movement is an alleluia, praise God action with hands raised.

Once we started using it, we discovered that many adults felt inclined to participate. Doug and I rejoiced – this made the children leaders of liturgy, rather than performers for the sake of being cute. Adults were inspired to join in and their participation happened organically but also sporadically. Some felt inclined to join in, others needed explicit permission to join in. Anglicans can be conservative that way – we are not used to using bold gestures in our prayers. So we added leaders throughout the worship space so that all congregants could see and emulate the choreography and encourage participation.

The feedback was astonishing. Adults reported that in sharing in the movement during the sung refrain, they felt like they were really praying alongside the priest. Folks who had worshipped regularly in Anglican churches for forty or fifty years indicated that this was the first time they really felt like they prayed the Eucharistic Prayer. That instead of standing or kneeling while the priest prayed on their behalf, moving their bodies helped them to feel engaged in the act of prayer. And this is actually a better theological fit. The priest was never intended to be the sole person offering this prayer. They are the *presiding* celebrant, not the sole celebrant. All participating in the mass are called to be celebrants thereof.

This setting has been used with intention at Church of the Messiah, Toronto, St. Thomas' Brooklin, All Saints' Kingsway, Church of the Redeemer, Toronto, and the Church of St. Augustine of Canterbury. On one occasion when it was used at All Saints' Kingsway, retired Archbishop Terry Findlay was presiding. He found the setting so compelling, that when he left instructions for his funeral at St. James' Cathedral in Toronto, he chose this Eucharistic setting, choreography included! When worshippers at the cathedral joined in with the gestures at the funeral in March 2017, I wished Doug had been alive to see it.