

Great Thanksgivings for Four Seasons

This resource provides brief communion liturgies for the four seasons of the Christian year—Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter. These prayers are intentionally simple and accessible, designed for worshipers of all ages. Their structure is based on ancient communion prayers, and their language and imagery is drawn from scripture.

It is hoped that the brevity and simplicity of these liturgies will encourage and enhance the celebration of weekly communion, especially during these important times in the liturgical calendar. As the “family meal” of the church, the Eucharist is an inherently intergenerational and inclusive event, accessible to worshipers of any age or ability. Indeed, children often comment that communion is a highlight of the worship service.

Notice the repeated phrase “we give you thanks” in these prayers. Thanksgiving is the central theme of the Lord’s Supper and the meaning of the word “Eucharist.” Notice also that each prayer has three main sections, punctuated by spoken or sung responses. The three sections focus on God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, reflecting our trinitarian faith.

Rubrics (in red) indicate optional sung or spoken responses, as well as a potential place for the words of institution and prayers of intercession. The responses provide a valuable opportunity for active congregational participation in the prayer. Using standard wording and repeated melodies allows non-readers to learn the responses by heart.

This resource also provides simple, accessible language for the words of institution. These words may be used in three places: as an invitation to the table, during the Great Thanksgiving (as indicated in a rubric), or at the breaking of the bread. If your congregation is celebrating weekly communion during a particular season, consider keeping the words of institution in a consistent place throughout that span of weeks.

You may notice that the prayer for the Holy Spirit (“Pour out your Holy Spirit …”) is repeated in each Great Thanksgiving. This is a theologically critical element of the liturgy. We believe that Jesus is truly present through the work of the Holy Spirit, uniting us as the body of Christ and leading us in witness and service to the world.

Some congregations may wish to include prayers of intercession during the communion liturgy. A rubric provides for this option after the prayer for the Holy Spirit. If included, these should be very brief: a list of names, places, or two- to three-word phrases. This is an opportunity to feature the voices of other leaders, including children.

The last paragraph of each Great Thanksgiving serves a double purpose. In the context of Sunday morning worship, it anticipates the sharing of communion and closes the prayer with a trinitarian doxology. But it may also be used as a table prayer for ordinary meals on any day of the week, connecting communal worship with common life. The wording may be abbreviated as follows:

For the meal we are about to share
and for every gift of your grace,
we give you thanks, O God. **Amen.**

Great Thanksgiving for Advent

The introductory dialogue may be included here:

The Lord be with you ...

We give you thanks, O God,
for the new day you have promised—
when people will do what is right,
all creatures will live in peace,
and a little child will lead us.

The Sanctus may be sung or spoken:

With angels, saints, and all creation,
we join the hymn that never ends:

Holy, holy, holy Lord ...

We give you thanks for Jesus,
who is coming soon to save us—
from the first to the last,
from the beginning to the end,
from A to Z, Jesus is Lord.

The words of institution may be spoken here.

A memorial acclamation may be sung or spoken:

Great is the mystery of faith ...

Pour out your Holy Spirit, O God,
as we share this bread and cup—
bring us together as one body,
sharing the good news of Jesus
and working for good in the world.

Prayers of intercession may be included here.

Hear our prayers for the world you love ...

Help us to wait with patience and hope,
watching and working for the day
when all of your promises come true.

For the meal we are about to share
and for every gift of your grace
we give you thanks, O God,
through Jesus, in the Spirit,
now and always. **Amen.**

The great Amen may be sung or spoken.

Great Thanksgiving for Christmas

The introductory dialogue may be included here:

The Lord be with you ...

We give you thanks, O God,
for light shining in the darkness—
from the first day of creation
to the flicker of a tiny candle,
you give light and life to the earth.

The Sanctus may be sung or spoken:

With angels, saints, and all creation,
we join the hymn that never ends:

Holy, holy, holy Lord ...

We give you thanks for Jesus,
who is the light of all the world—
Jesus is your word come to life,
your beloved child of blessing,
full of glory, grace, and truth.

The words of institution may be spoken here.

A memorial acclamation may be sung or spoken:

Great is the mystery of faith ...

Pour out your Holy Spirit, O God,
as we share this bread and cup—
bring us together as one body,
sharing the good news of Jesus
and working for good in the world.

Prayers of intercession may be included here.

Hear our prayers for the world you love ...

Help us to welcome the child in the manger,
singing with the shepherds and angels,
“Glory to God in the highest!”

For the meal we are about to share
and for every gift of your grace
we give you thanks, O God,
through Jesus, in the Spirit,
now and always. **Amen.**

The great Amen may be sung or spoken.

Great Thanksgiving for Lent

The introductory dialogue may be included here:

The Lord be with you ...

We give you thanks, O God,
for love that never lets us go—
you are patient and kind,
reaching out with open arms
to welcome your children home.

The Sanctus may be sung or spoken:

With angels, saints, and all creation,
we join the hymn that never ends:

Holy, holy, holy Lord ...

We give you thanks for Jesus,
who teaches us how to love one another—
taking care of those who are sick,
being friends to those who are lonely,
and helping those who are in need.

The words of institution may be spoken here.

A memorial acclamation may be sung or spoken:

Great is the mystery of faith ...

Pour out your Holy Spirit, O God,
as we share this bread and cup—
bring us together as one body,
sharing the good news of Jesus
and working for good in the world.

Prayers of intercession may be included here.

Hear our prayers for the world you love ...

Help us to follow the way of Jesus,
breaking down dividing walls
and building up your church.

For the meal we are about to share
and for every gift of your grace
we give you thanks, O God,
through Jesus, in the Spirit,
now and always. **Amen.**

The great Amen may be sung or spoken.

Great Thanksgiving for Easter

The introductory dialogue may be included here:

The Lord be with you ...

We give you thanks, O God,
for love that is stronger than death—
safe passage through deep waters,
a seed that sprouts from a stump,
dry bones that rise up and dance.

The Sanctus may be sung or spoken:

With angels, saints, and all creation,
we join the hymn that never ends:

Holy, holy, holy Lord ...

We give you thanks for Jesus,
who is alive and right here with us—
like bread when we are hungry,
like water when we are thirsty,
like a shepherd when we are lost.

The words of institution may be spoken here.

A memorial acclamation may be sung or spoken:

Great is the mystery of faith ...

Pour out your Holy Spirit, O God,
as we share this bread and cup—
bring us together as one body,
sharing the good news of Jesus
and working for good in the world.

Prayers of intercession may be included here:

Hear our prayers for the world you love ...

Help us to show and tell
the joy of new life in Jesus,
life forever, and for everyone.

For the meal we are about to share
and for every gift of your grace
we give you thanks, O God,
through Jesus, in the Spirit,
now and always. **Amen.**

The great Amen may be sung or spoken.

Words of Institution

*For use at the invitation to the table,
during the Great Thanksgiving,
or at the breaking of the bread*

At this table, we remember
how Jesus took bread, blessed it,
broke it, and shared it with everyone,
saying: This is my body, given for you.

At this table, we remember
how Jesus took the cup,
saying: This cup is the promise
that I will love you always.

At this table, we look forward
to the great meal we will share
with the whole family of faith
when Jesus comes again.