

# St Justin Martyr's Letter to the Pagan Emperor Antoninus Pius (c. AD 155)

In this letter St Justin explains the worship of the Christians.

On the day we call the day of the sun, all who dwell in the city or country gather in the same place. The memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read, as much as time permits. When the reader has finished, he who presides over those gathered admonishes and challenges them to imitate those beautiful things.

Then we all rise together and offer prayers for ourselves... and for all others, wherever they may be... Then someone brings bread and a cup of water and wine mixed together to him who presides over the brethren. He takes them and offers praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...

When he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all present give voice to an acclamation by saying: Amen. When he who presides has given thanks and the people have responded, those whom we call deacons give to those present the eucharisted bread, wine and water and take them to those who are absent.

- 1 Read St Justin's description carefully.  
Can you match the parts of this ancient Eucharist to the parts of the modern Eucharist?

Record your findings in a table like the one below.

| Part as described by St Justin               | Equivalent in the Mass today                                  |
|--|---|
| <i>On the day we call the day of the sun</i> | <i>Catholics gather on Sunday to celebrate the Eucharist.</i> |
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- 2 Arrange the following parts of the Sunday Mass in the correct order:

Communion, Gloria, homily, first reading,  
blessing & command *to love and serve the Lord*,  
Eucharistic Prayer, second reading, offertory,  
*responsorial psalm*, penitential rite, bidding prayers,  
Sign of the Cross, Creed, gospel reading, the Lord's Prayer

Pick from the parts above those that make up the **Liturgy of the Word**.  
Pick from the parts above those that make up the **Liturgy of the Eucharist**.  
Pick out **three** parts of the Mass that you think most important. Say why.

## Some scripture references ...

### Now

as they were eating,  
Jesus took some bread, and when  
he had said the blessing he broke it  
& gave it to the disciples. 'Take and eat,'  
he said 'this is my body.' Then he took a ~  
cup, & when he had returned thanks he gave it  
to them. 'Drink all of you from this,' he said  
'for this is my blood, the blood of the cov-  
enant which is to be poured out for many  
for the forgiveness of sins. From now on,  
I tell you, I shall not drink wine until ~  
the day I drink the new wine with you

**in the kingdom of my**

**Father.'** Matthew  
26:26-29

### **For this is what I received from the Lord,**

& in turn passed on to you: that on the ~  
same night that he was betrayed, the ~  
Lord Jesus took some bread, & than-  
ked God for it & broke it, and he ~  
said, 'This is my body, which is for  
you; do this as a memorial of me.'

In the same way he took the  
sup after supper, & ~  
said, 'This cup ~  
is the new  
covenant in my  
blood. Whenever  
you drink it, do  
this as  
a mem-  
orial  
of me.'  
Until~  
the Lord  
comes there-  
fore, every time  
you eat this bread &  
drink this cup, you are pro-  
claiming his death, & so anyone who  
eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unwor-  
thily will be behaving unworthily towards the body  
& blood of the Lord. **1Corinthians 11: 26 - 29**

When they drew near to the village to which they  
were going, he made as if to go on; but they  
pressed him to stay with them. 'It is nearly evening'  
they said 'and the day is almost over.' So he went  
in to stay with them. Now while he was with them  
at table, he took the bread and said the blessing;  
then he broke it and handed it to them. And their  
eyes were opened and they recognised him; but he  
had vanished from their sight. Then they said to  
each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us as he  
talked to us on the road and explained the  
scriptures to us?'

They set out that instant and returned to  
Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven  
assembled together with their companions, who  
said to them, 'Yes, it is true. The Lord has risen  
and has appeared to Simon.' Then they told their  
story of what had happened on the road and how  
they had recognised him at the breaking of bread.  
*Luke 24:28-35*

### **The early Christian community**

These remained faithful to the teaching of the  
apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of  
bread and to the prayers.

The many miracles and signs worked through the  
apostles made a deep impression on everyone.

The faithful all lived together and owned everything  
in common; they sold their goods and possessions  
and shared out the proceeds among themselves  
according to what each one needed.

They went as a body to the Temple every day but  
met in their houses for the breaking of bread; they  
shared their food gladly and generously; they  
praised God and were looked up to by everyone.  
Day by day the Lord added to their community  
those destined to be saved.

*Acts of the Apostles 2:42-47*