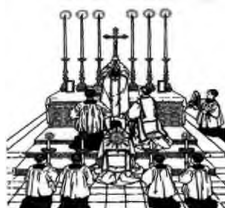


# MASS OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS

LITURGY BYTES *by Michele Hall*



All the way back around 150-155 AD, St. Justin Martyr wrote one of the earliest descriptions of the Mass. See how it parallels to the structure of Mass today but slightly out of the order we are familiar with in some parts.

*And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together in one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits (Liturgy of the Word – New and Old Testament readings), then when the reader has ceased, the president (priest) verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things (Homily). Then we all rise together and pray....for ourselves....and for all others in every place, that we may be counted worthy, now that we have learned the truth, by our works also to be found good citizens and keepers of the commandments, so that we may be saved with an everlasting salvation (Universal Prayer). Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss (Sign of Peace). There is then brought to the president of the brethren (priest) bread and a cup of wine mixed with water (Liturgy of the Eucharist – Presentation of the Gifts), and he taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at his hands (Eucharistic Prayer). And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying Amen. This word Amen answers in the Hebrew language to – so be it (Great Amen). And when the president (priest) has given thanks, and all the people have expressed their assent, those who are called deacons give to each of those present to partake of the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced (Holy Communion), and to those who are absent they carry away a portion (Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion bringing Communion to the homebound).*

*And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president (priest), who succors the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need (collection).*

*Have a blessed, prayerful, and joyful week ahead!*