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WHAT'S IN A NAME?

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After much debate the General Synod has opted to call the new Communion service *'The Order for the Celebration of the HOLY COMMUNION also called THE EUCHARIST and THE LORD'S SUPPER'*. Synod had previously rejected *THE EUCHARIST* as the main title and opted for *HOLY COMMUNION*, but the Revision Committee decided to insert the extra words 'Celebration of'.

After all this it is interesting to ask: **What's in a name?**

The name 'the Lord's Supper' is found in 1 Corinthians 11: 20 and whilst it is not entirely clear what was in view it was evidently a meal of some sort taken in obedience to Christ's command as a means of remembering and proclaiming His death.

Earlier in 1 Corinthians 10: 16 and 17 the author speaks of the cup being the 'communion of the blood of Christ' and the bread being the 'communion of the body of Christ'. In modern translations the word 'communion' becomes 'fellowship' or 'sharing', though this latter word is rather too weak. The title Holy Communion draws from this verse but is peculiar to the Protestant Reformation, it highlights the fact that in taking the bread and wine in faith we are united with Christ and he with us.

The title '*Eucharist*' is a Greek word meaning 'thanksgiving' which captures one of the prime elements of the service. This title is an ancient one, but in the Bible it is not used in relation to the Lord's Supper. Liturgists particularly like the name because they can use the adjective 'eucharistic' or even 'eucharistical'!

In Roman Catholic and high Anglican churches the title 'The Mass' predominates. It appears that the title comes from the dismissal sung by the Deacon at the end of the service which in Latin was '*Ite, missa est*', translating as 'Go, the (congregation) is dismissed.'

Acts 2: 42 and 20: 7 both speak of 'breaking of bread' but this seems more like a simple description rather than a title.

In the light of this the most appropriate title is 'The Lord's Supper', which is also the main title given in the Book of Common Prayer. It is the only unequivocal biblical title; it is plain English; it doesn't need qualification and it is not as narrow in its meaning as alternatives.