

The Book of Common Prayer
(2004)

Commentaries

Michael Kennedy



2011



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& Michael Kennedy

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FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure as editor of the 2004 edition of the *Book of Common Prayer* to write this foreword to an encyclopaedic commentary on that book.

The Reverend Michael Kennedy is probably unique among liturgical scholars. Not only has he earned a doctorate setting forth the theology behind the work of revision that became the *Alternative Prayer Book*. He has also been a member of the Church's Liturgical Advisory Committee since 1986 having a hand in the continuing revision that led to the publication of the revised *Book of Common Prayer* in 2004. As rector of country parishes in Armagh diocese, he has had hands-on experience of translating texts into worship Sunday by Sunday. As senior honorary clerical vicar of St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh, over the years he has led services such as Choral Evensong and weekday celebrations of Holy Communion as well as helping to order special services in that place. As a canon of St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, through several sermons, he has distilled his knowledge and understanding to a wider audience.

Above all the material in this commentary has been produced for the benefit of those training to become leaders of worship; for he has been for the past four decades been teaching those preparing for the lay ministry of readers and in post-ordination classes, urging the best practice of liturgy to clergy in their first years of ministry in Armagh diocese. His notes have been also used as resource material in the approved course for candidates for the non-stipendiary or auxiliary ministry course.

They say that the proof of the pudding is in the eating and I can testify that those whom I have been helping to become readers in Down and Dromore diocese have, in the responses I have read, clearly benefited from copies of Dr Kennedy's notes that he so willingly made available to me.

This commentary is an amazing piece of work and I can confidently say that nothing comparable has ever been produced for a Church of Ireland liturgy in the past. Nothing so detailed since some of the major commentaries on the 1662 edition of the *Book of Common Prayer* published in England in the nineteenth century. Certainly there is nowhere I know that covers the discoveries and insights of the twentieth century as fully as this.

No dry as dust commentary either – Canon Kennedy has strong views on many issues – not all of which I share! That is indeed one of the beauties of this work. Those who consult it will find authoritative answers to many questions, and some views on the way liturgy ought to be performed, which will make them think. Whether or not they accept the opinions is not what is at stake: all who read will find reasoned arguments.

I heartily commend this commentary and pray that users will be helped in taking part in the primary work of the Church which is the worship of Almighty God.

Brian Mayne
Downpatrick, St Patrick's Day 2011

COMMENTARIES
ON
THE 2004 EDITION
OF
THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER OF THE CHURCH OF
IRELAND

These Commentaries represent many years of teaching and working alongside ordinands, people involved in post-ordination studies, and diocesan lay readers in training. Their origin was the perceived absence of relevant up to date information on the authorized services of the Church of Ireland and of guidance as to how best to use them. They began as course notes used in the training of Readers in the Diocese of Armagh and for post-ordination study with the deacons and first-year priests. As modern liturgical revision has developed and changed so the notes have grown into the present set of commentaries and been adapted as required. The replacement of the *Alternative Prayer Book* (1984) and *Alternative Occasional Services* (1993) by the 2004 edition of the Prayer Book has necessitated a complete re-write and the opportunity has been taken to revise the parts dealing with the traditional rites as well as the modern versions. The aim has been to produce material on every authorized order of service in the Church of Ireland (not all of which are contained in the Prayer Book itself). As liturgy is something of a "moving target" (for example some parts of the marriage rites in the new Prayer Book have already been rendered obsolete by changes in secular law) it seems appropriate for these Commentaries to appear in a format which allows for further modifications as required and one also wishes them to be generally accessible, so it seems that publication on-line (though not necessarily exclusively) is the best option available. Indeed the particular advantage of electronic publishing is the convenience of the format for possible future updates and the incorporation of new perceptions and insights.

An earlier version of these Commentaries was used and recommended in the Church of Ireland Theological College by the then liturgy tutor, Dr Billy Marshall. Comments and criticisms from readers and users are welcome and will be taken into consideration when any future updates are being planned.

I would like to thank the General Synod's Literature Committee and its Hon. Secretary Dr Raymond Refauseé for their co-operation with this venture and am very grateful indeed for all the guidance given by Dr Susan Hood in preparing this material for publication. Any faults and flaws remaining are entirely my own.

The encouragement and support given by the members of the Liturgical Advisory Committee (to which I have belonged since 1986) are very much appreciated.

I am most grateful to Canon Brian Mayne, editor of the 2004 edition of the *Book of Common Prayer* and a long-term member of the Liturgical Advisory Committee, for very kindly writing the foreword to this publication.

Michael C. Kennedy
Armagh, St Patrick's Day, 2011