



## Celebrating the Sacred Liturgy of the Mass: A Review of New Diocesan Norms—Part V

Just as the Sacred Liturgy is the source and summit of all the activity of the Church, the General Instruction to the Roman Missal points to the Eucharistic Prayer as the “center and summit” of the Mass. The Mass is a re-presentation, not a repetition, of the one sacrifice of Christ. Jesus’ self offering at the Last Supper and His death on the cross was all-sufficient for human salvation for all time.

### **Sacrifice as Self-Giving**

Our contemporary understanding of sacrifice as suffering is too narrow to explain the sacrifice of the Mass. Here, we encounter the sacrifice of Christ as a self-giving, free expression of His love. In the Eucharistic Prayer we join ourselves to Christ, acknowledging the great things God has done for us through the Paschal Mystery. In addition, we join our lives to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit in offering our own gift of self. By means of the Eucharistic Prayer we recall the mystery of salvation as recounted in the Old and New Testaments.

Since the reform of the liturgy following the Second Vatican Council, there are four Eucharistic Prayers for ordinary use. In addition, there are three Eucharistic Prayers for use in Masses with Children; two Eucharistic Prayers for Masses of Reconciliation, often used during the Season of Lent and at other times when reconciliation is a special emphasis for Mass; and an additional Eucharistic Prayer for Masses for Various Needs and Occasions.

The Eucharistic Prayer consists of several necessary parts. While we pray the Eucharistic Prayer as a whole when we participate in the Sacred Liturgy, looking at the various parts individually can help us understand this prayer better and lead to more fruitful participation.

The Eucharistic Prayer begins with the Preface dialogue:

The Lord be with you. R/ And also with you.

Lift up your hearts. R/ We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. R/ It is right to give him thanks and praise.

This ancient dialogue between the priest and the assembly at the beginning of the third century and is an important starting point to the Eucharistic Prayer.

### **Our Spiritual Attitude**

As the priest proclaims the Eucharistic Prayer, the active and conscious participation of the lay faithful should lead to the self-giving of each participant in union with Christ, a deepening of thanksgiving for His mercies and favors, and a firm resolve to follow Him faithfully. In this way, the Eucharistic Prayer is truly offered by the priest and the people.

Following the dialogue, the priest prays the Preface. This prayer emphasizes reasons for which we give thanks to God. The Preface expresses thanks for the gift of salvation and to other graces according to the feast or the liturgical season being observed.

### **Sing Praise with the Angels**

We then join the eternal hymn of the angels (see Isaiah 6:3) as we sing the *Sanctus* (or *Holy*). Ideally, the *Sanctus*, together with the memorial acclamation and the *Amen* should always be sung.

In the United States, we usually kneel following our singing of the *Sanctus* unless we are unable to for some good reason (e.g. reasons of health, lack of kneelers). This change in posture highlights this part of the Sacred Liturgy.

---

Each Eucharistic Prayer has some form of an *epiclesis*, in which the priest imposes hands over the gifts and asks God the Father to send the Holy Spirit upon the gifts of bread and wine so that they may become the Body and Blood of Christ.

### **Do This in Memory of Me**

In this part of the Eucharistic Prayer, the priest recalls the moment of the Last Supper in which Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist. Although there are several Eucharistic Prayers which may be prayed, the words of consecration are always the same in all of the Eucharistic Prayers in the Sacramentary (Roman Missal). We reflect on Christ's Body broken for us and Christ's Blood poured out for our salvation in the Sacred Liturgy which makes present to us again the one Divine sacrifice of Christ on Calvary.

The words "Do this in memory of me" invite us not only to recall the one sacrifice of Christ, but also invite us to enter into that sacrifice: To pour out our own lives in both large and small sacrifices we may daily make for others.

Our Diocesan Norms remind us that the General Instruction to the Roman Missal permits the use of a bell to signal the faithful a little before the consecration and again during the elevation of the Body of Christ and the elevation of the Precious Blood.

The history of the use of a bell during the Sacred Liturgy of the Mass indicates that it began use as a sign of reverence, directing our participation and posture as an expression of reverence and adoration for Christ's true presence in the Eucharist. From those in the assembly seated around them, children can readily learn that the Eucharistic Prayer is a very special time of quiet and attentive prayer.

### **That We May Be Transformed**

The next part of the Eucharistic Prayer is called the *anamnesis*, a Greek word which here means "active remembrance". This remembrance is introduced when the priest sings or says "Let us proclaim the mystery of faith." The assembly

then sings or says one of the following four short acclamations.

Christ has died, Christ is risen,  
Christ will come again.

Dying you destroyed our death,  
rising you restored our life. Lord  
Jesus, come in glory

When we eat this bread and drink  
this cup, we proclaim your death,  
Lord Jesus, until you come in glory.

Lord, by your cross and resurrection,  
you have set us free. You are the Savior  
of the world.

Each of these acclamations guide our prayer regarding Christ's Paschal Mystery, His death and resurrection, not only in the past, but also made present to us now in the Holy Eucharist, and unto its fulfillment in the future that God wills for all of His People.

Following this acclamation, the priest continues in the Eucharistic Prayer, offering to God the Body and Blood of Christ, praying that the Holy Spirit will transform each of us who will receive His true presence in the Holy Eucharist.

As an expression of our communion though, and as a gesture of extending the graces of the sacrifice of the Mass to others, we pray not only for ourselves, but also for our Pope, our Bishop, for the clergy, for all the Church on earth. We also pray for those who have died, that through the graces of the Mass, the dead may be joined more completely to God's mercy and the fullness of His presence in heaven.

The Eucharistic Prayer is concluded with the doxology, where the priest invokes praise of the Blessed Trinity. Elevating the chalice and paten once again, the priest sings or says: "Through Him, with Him, in Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, forever and ever."

The assembly responds by singing or saying the Great Amen. "Amen" is translated as "so be it," meaning our assent not only to this final prayer but to the whole of what has been prayed to God in the Eucharistic Prayer.