



TEACHING MASS - BULLETIN INSERT
LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST, PART B: THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2023



THE HIGH POINT OF THE MASS

The Eucharistic Prayer is prayed by the priest in the name of the entire sacred assembly, it is this prayer that transforms the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. This prayer is most commonly known as the means of the changing of bread and wine into body and blood, but there is much more to it than that. We should be mindful that the word “Eucharist” comes from the Greek word for “thanksgiving,” and the Eucharistic prayer, indeed the Mass as a whole, can be called a prayer of thanksgiving to the Father. The Eucharistic Prayer includes almost every kind of prayer we can give.

In the current use of our Mass, called the Roman Rite, there are ten approved Eucharistic Prayers that a priest may use. Some are used frequently on Sundays and weekdays, while some are used more sparingly because they are for special needs or occasions. Some are longer than others and some have their various prayers in different orders. Regardless, even if these each have different wordings, they all have the same key elements that make up the different prayers within the Eucharistic Prayer. By knowing these different elements and being able to recognize them when we hear the priest pray them, we are able to have a deeper and fuller participation in this most holy prayer. The elements are:

DIALOGUE OF PRIEST AND PEOPLE

This serves as the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer. The priest calls the people to be attentive to the divine prayer and to participate in it in heart and voice. Worship is a task of the mind, heart, soul, and body, and so the priest invites the people to this sacred moment. The dialogue is always the same:

“The Lord be with you.”

“And with your spirit.”

“Lift up your hearts.”

“We lift them up to the Lord.”

“Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.”

“It is right and just.”

Notice how the priest does not say his usual, “Let us pray,” but rather, “Let us give thanks...” The priest is inviting us to participate in the thanksgiving that is the Eucharist.

PREFACE

After the Dialogue, the priest turns his focus to God the Father and addresses Him directly. The Preface usually begins with, “It is truly right and just,” showing a continuation of what the people have just said, showing us how the priest’s prayer is tied to our prayer. The preface can differ in its wording and is often related to the unique celebration of that day, but it is always a prayer of thanksgiving which recalls the deeds of God the Father through Jesus Christ. The preface ends with our response, in which we acclaim, “Holy, Holy, Holy.”

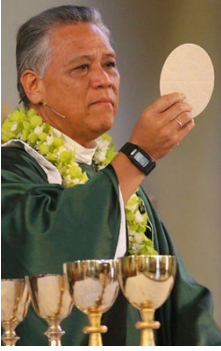
PRAYER OF PRAISE TO THE FATHER (ANAMNESIS – “NOT FORGETTING”)

An ancient form of prayer found time and time again in scripture, the Prayer of Praise, or *Anamnesis*, is when the priest mentions God’s greatness and the wonders He has done. It seems strange to spend time telling God how great He is; however, this form of prayer has been done by Moses, King David, and even Jesus Himself. It is thus in keeping with our greater tradition to join our prayer of praise to these.

THE CALLING DOWN OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (EPICLESIS)

It is not the priest who transforms the bread and wine into body and blood of Christ; only God can do that. The act of consecrating the gifts requires the Holy Spirit’s direct involvement. The priest performs the *Epiclesis* by extending his hands over the gifts with his palms down above them as he asks God the Father to send down the Holy Spirit that those gifts become the Body and Blood of Christ. It makes the gifts holy and acceptable so that they become worthy to be the Eucharist.





WORDS OF INSTITUTION (CONSECRATION)

These are the words by which the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ himself. It is at time within the prayer in which the priest recalls and relives the last supper. During this, the priest repeats the words first uttered by Christ: “This is my body,” and, “This is the chalice of my blood.” When the priest says these words, it is no longer the priest who is speaking, but Christ speaking through the priest. As Christ is the fullness of Truth, what He says is always true, and thus when He says that the bread is His body, it thus becomes so. Our Lord then does the same to the wine, transforming it into His blood. This concludes with, “Do this in memory of me.”

MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION (MYSTERY OF FAITH)

The consecration is followed by the priest proclaiming, “The Mystery of Faith,” a reference to the consecration he has just facilitated. The people respond by professing their faith in the new covenant, the consecration, and thus the Real Presence.

REMEMBERING THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION AS WELL AS HIS ASCENSION

This part of the Eucharistic Prayer is when the priest mentions how we are called to remember Christ’s passion and crucifixion, as well as His resurrection from the dead, His glorious ascension into heaven, and His future return to us in glory.

OFFERING OF THE BODY AND BLOOD

Before the consecration, we offered up bread and wine, made from human hands, to the Father as a gift. Now, those have been replaced with the Body and Blood of Christ, which are of far greater value in terms of sacrifice. Thus, the priest offers the Body and Blood of Christ to God the Father as the true acceptable sacrifice in atonement for our sins. The sacrifice on the cross, made present to us in the Eucharist, is the sacrifice that erases our sins and makes us worthy of God’s grace. We participate in this offering. Both priest and people offer up the sacrifice of Jesus as the price for our salvation.

EPICLESIS OVER THE PEOPLE

Similar but distinct from the *epiclesis* of the bread and wine, the priest asks God to remember and consecrate the people who are gathered at this Mass. We should remember that the priest acts as something of a mediator, and thus is the one who asks God to bless all the people of God gathered within the church for Mass. The Eucharist consecrates us as members of the Body of Christ.

INTERCESSIONS

Much like the Prayers of the Faithful, the Eucharistic Prayers include petitions of behalf of the Pope, the Bishop, the whole Church, and the dead.

DOXOLOGY (RIGHT PRAISE)

Always the same, the doxology is the final prayer of the priest which summarizes the Trinity and how each plays a role in the Mass: “Through him and with him and in him (Jesus), O God almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, forever and ever.”

GREAT AMEN

This is our response to the Doxology, which is often sung, and meant to relate how we acclaim, affirm, and believe in the sacrifice that has just been offered through the Eucharistic Prayer. The Great Amen concludes the Eucharistic Prayer.

