



Pastor's Column

St. Peter Catholic Church

January 6, 2019 ~ The Solemnity of The Epiphany of the Lord

The Mass Explained-The Eucharistic Prayer

We continue our Pastor Column series on the Mass explained, and we turn now to the Eucharistic Prayer.

First of all, of course we as Catholic Christians acknowledge and profess our belief in three Persons in the one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And therefore, we can speak with (and listen to) any one of the three Persons, and we can pray particularly to any one of the three Persons as well as to all three as the one God.

The Eucharistic Prayer *always* is directed to God *the Father*. This is the great prayer of the Mass that speaks to the Father *through* the Son *in* the Holy Spirit. And we recall the basic structure of nearly all of our Opening Collects at every Mass, how nearly all of them conclude; they are directed to the Father "*through* our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You *in* the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever."

(Sidebar: it is interesting to note the Opening Collect for the Solemnity of Corpus Christi; it is addressed specifically to God the Son, and it is the only Collect all year long that explicitly calls Jesus "God.")

The essential structure of the Eucharistic Prayer. There are three fundamental elements of the Eucharistic Prayer: the *anamnesis*, the *epiclesis* (in which we find the Institution Narrative), and the intercessions. The *anamnesis* remembers what the Lord has done for His people in the past. The *epiclesis* calls upon the Holy Spirit to make the Sacrament happen (the *epiclesis* is signified by a particular gesture: when the priest celebrant shifts his hands from the *orans* position – his hands raised in prayer – to a joined position when the hands are held over the gifts of bread and wine; the *epiclesis* is further signified by a single ring of the consecration bells). The intercessions are when we pray for the pope and for our bishop by name, and we pray also for the living and the deceased. We pray also for ourselves, that we may be counted among the angels and saints in Heaven.

The fundamental purpose of the Eucharistic Prayer: to praise God; to thank God; and most importantly, through the Institution Narrative, to confect the Eucharist (that is, to call upon God to make the gifts of bread and wine change substantively into the Sacred Body and Precious Blood of Jesus Christ).

The Institution Narrative tells of what took place at the Last Supper, and by the power of the Words of Institution spoken by Christ Himself, the priest (*in persona Christi*; "in the person of Christ") holds the bread and the chalice of wine in his hands and transforms them into God. The heart of the Eucharistic Prayer is the Institution Narrative.

The Eucharistic Prayer concludes with the Great Amen. The priest celebrant concludes his part in the Eucharistic Prayer by holding up the Body and Blood of Christ, and the congregation responds, "Amen." In a certain sense, the Great Amen is the high point of the entire Mass: the bread and the wine have just been transformed into the Sacred Body and Precious Blood of Jesus Christ; the Eucharistic Prayer (the centerpiece of the entire Mass) has just concluded with the doxology ("Through Him and with Him and in Him..."); and because the Mass is a *public* worship of the Church, even if the priest celebrates a private Mass, because all of the angels and saints in Heaven and every soul in Purgatory is present there, worshipping together, and giving praise and thanks to God, it all culminates with the Great Amen. The Great Amen, therefore, is the loud-and-proud response of the congregation, the holy people of God here on Earth, the Church Militant here on Earth. In this moment of the Great Amen, the congregation is representing those angels and saints and souls in Purgatory, whose silent "Amen" uttered beyond the earthly realm (such that we cannot hear them) is given a voice in the Great Amen of the congregation. As we pray both at Baptism and at Confirmation: "This is our faith; this is the faith of the Church, and we are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus our Lord." Amen.

~ Fr. Lewis