

# VII. “Lift up your hearts!”

## Part Two

Here continues an exposition of the meaning and purpose of the various parts of the Eucharistic Prayer that began last week. Its purpose is to help both presider and faithful understand their roles in making this prayer the *one prayer* of the Church. We concluded our introduction to the Eucharistic Prayer last week by describing the *Preface*, the prayer of praise and thanksgiving of the *magnalia dei*.

### II. The Holy, Holy, Holy

This acclamation finds its roots in the *Qedushah*, a prayer used in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century Jewish synagogue service. It is based upon the song of the angels, “Holy, Holy, Holy” found in the prophet Isaiah’s vision of God’s throne (ch. 6). It appeared in Christian Eucharistic Prayers in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century in Egypt and was quickly adopted throughout the Church in the Roman Empire. The *General Instruction* tells us that the “Holy” to be sung “by all the people with the priest.” (GIRM 79b) The bishops of the United States asked for and were granted an indult that the faithful kneel from the end of this prayer until the end of the singing of the *Amen* at the Doxology.

### III. *Epiclesis* – the Invocation of the Holy Spirit

From the time of the Council of Trent (mid-16<sup>th</sup> century) until Vatican II, the only Eucharistic Prayer employed by the Roman Church was what we now call Eucharistic Prayer I, the Roman Canon. Yet, it is an ancient and revered prayer that predates Trent by some 1300 years: St. Ambrose cites the version of it he used in Milan in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

The Commission, charged with the task of reviewing and revising our Eucharistic Prayers after Vatican II, studied the very broad history of Eucharistic Prayers originating in Antioch, Alexandria, and Syria. One of the elements the Commission discovered in these prayers was the Invocation of the Holy Spirit, known by the Greek term, *Epiclesis*. This *Epiclesis* was introduced, for the first time, into our three new prayers ratified by Pope Paul VI – Eucharistic Prayers II, III, and IV. But, what does the *Epiclesis* do?

There are two *Epicleses* in our contemporary Eucharistic Prayers – one before the consecration and one after. The first invocation of the Spirit over the gifts shows, in essence, that the Church relies on the power of God to transform these gifts of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. It is not a human ‘work’; we rely on God’s graciousness to accomplish this for the Church:

“Let your Spirit come upon these gifts to make them holy so that they may become for us the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ...” (Eucharistic Prayer II)

The second part of the prayer implores God’s Spirit to make the Church “one body, healed of all division.” This prayer for the unity of the faithful occurs after the Institution Narrative.

“... May all of us who share in the body and blood of Christ be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit.”  
(Eucharistic Prayer II)

### IV. The Institution Narrative and Consecration

In fidelity to the Lord’s command, “Do this in memory of me,” the priest recites the story of the Last Supper. Observe that this story is told in narrative form, which means that the telling of the story *also* functions as praise of God who redeemed us in Christ.

### V. The *Anamnesis* – Memorial

*Anamnesis* is best translated as *memorial* or *remembrance*. That is, the Church, through its ritual remembering, acknowledges that it is responding to Christ’s command to “do this in memory of me.” We remember *now* the Risen Christ who is seated at the right hand of the Father – who died, rose, ascended, and who will come again. The Church relies on the power of the Spirit *and* the narration of God’s great deeds in Christ to transform the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. Note that we recall past *and* future in memorial:

“In memory of his death and resurrection...”  
(*Anamnesis*, Eucharistic Prayer II)  
“Father, *calling to mind the death* your Son endured for our salvation, *his glorious resurrection and ascension into heaven, and ready to greet him* when he comes...”  
(Eucharistic Prayer III)

Recall that St. Thomas Aquinas points to the joining of past and future to the present in Eucharist: “The Eucharist looks to the past, *commemorating* the passion of Christ... [It] looks to the present, *signifying* the unity of the Church... [It] looks to the future, *prefiguring* our enjoyment with God in heaven.” (*Summa Theologiae*, “On the Eucharist, IIIa, Question 73, Article 4)

### VI. The Offering

Finally, we arrive at the Offertory, the offering of “this holy and living sacrifice...” and more. This is where the Offertory actually happens. But, besides the offering of the “life giving bread [and] saving cup,” the Church summons the whole People of God to ‘learn to offer ourselves’, pouring ourselves outward with Christ, toward God in praise, and toward our world in compassionate service.

“In memory of his death and resurrection, we offer you this life-giving bread, this saving cup”  
(*Anamnesis* + Offering, Eucharistic Prayer II)

The Church’s intention, however, is that *the faithful not only offer this spotless Victim but also learn to offer themselves*, and so day by day to be consummated, through Christ the Mediator, into unity with God and with each other, so that at last God may be all in all.” (GIRM 79f)

## VII. The Intercessions

These intercessions demonstrate again the reliance of our Eucharistic Prayers on Jewish table prayers. Not only do we petition God for the Church, the Pope, and Bishop, for the members of the Church living and dead, but we also intercede for our final union with Christ in the communion of the saints. Moreover, we also praise God. Intercessory prayer is inherently praise since it says, "You alone are holy. You alone are the One we can turn to. You alone are God! We praise you as we bring before you our needs!"

The Intercessions manifest the priestly nature of the prayer as the whole Church expresses its baptismal office of praying for the renewal of the Church and restoration of the whole world in Christ. (GIRM 79g)

## VIII. The Doxology and Amen

The Eucharistic Prayer concludes with the doxology and Amen. Its purpose is to 'express and confirm the glorification of God in this prayer.' (GIRM 79h) It is accomplished by means of the same structure we have seen above so often – *proclamation and response*. The sung *Amen* by the faithful responds to the "Through Him..." as it confirms and concludes the entire prayer.

### Something New – The Memorial Acclamation

This acclamation was a new addition to our form of Eucharistic praying after Vatican II. It immediately follows the Institution Narrative and offers an opportunity for the congregation to actively participate in the Eucharistic Prayer through its acclamation. One way or another, these acclamations unite the past and future with the present.

*Acclamation I* - Christ has died, Christ is risen,  
Christ will come again.

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

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

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

## The Eucharistic Prayers in the Roman Church

Today, in the U.S., there are 13 different Eucharistic Prayers available to be used at Mass. They reflect very ancient patterns of praying.

For example, Eucharistic Prayer I (the Roman Canon) has deep roots in the prayer of Alexandria, Egypt, notably the anaphora (Greek word for Eucharistic Prayer) of St. Mark.

Eucharistic Prayer II is modeled on a prayer from *Apostolic Tradition*, attributed to Hippolytus, a 3<sup>rd</sup> century priest in Rome. Along with all the other Eucharistic Prayers we have, its structure is based upon prayers originating in Antioch (modern day Turkey). [The split *epiclesis*, however, actually demonstrate some further influence from the Alexandrian anaphoras.] Eucharistic Prayers III and IV are new compositions also structured on the Antiochene prayers.

### *Other Eucharistic Prayers include:*

- Eucharistic Prayer III
- Eucharistic Prayer IV (with its own *Preface*)
- 3 Eucharistic Prayers for Masses with Children
- 2 Eucharistic Prayers for Masses of Reconciliation
- 4 Eucharistic Prayers for Masses  
for Various Needs and Occasions

## Doing What Christ Did

When concluding the Eucharistic Prayer at Mass, the worshipping community has carried out the first two parts of what Jesus did at the Last Supper: He took the bread and said the blessing. The Church continues to respond to Christ's actions at the Supper by preparing to break the bread and share it as Communion. (See GIRM 80)

## The Communion Rite: The Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer is the first part of the faithful's preparation for Communion. After praising God in the Our Father, the assembled Church asks for our daily bread and for the grace of forgiveness – not only for our sins and omissions, but also for the grace to forgive one another.

"In the Lord's Prayer  
a petition is made for daily food,  
which for Christians means preeminently  
the eucharistic bread,  
and also for purification from sin,  
so that what is holy may,  
in fact, be given to those who are holy." (GIRM 81)

## The Communion Rite: The Rite of Peace

St. Augustine placed the Greeting of Peace at the place where it stands in the liturgy today. But, before Augustine, this 'rite' functioned mainly to manifest both unity and admission to the Eucharist – it was positioned just before the Eucharistic Prayer. It was also the first greeting given by the bishop to the newly baptized in the early Church, welcoming them to the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Now, set immediately after the Lord's Prayer, it takes on the additional purpose of manifesting communal reconciliation by demonstrating "ecclesial communion and mutual charity." In other words, the Body of Christ must be experienced as *one* here, "healed of all divisions," so that it may be truly revealed in sacramental communion.

"The Rite of Peace follows, by which the Church *asks* for peace and unity for herself and for the whole human family, and *the faithful express to each other their ecclesial communion and mutual charity* before communicating in the Sacrament." (GIRM 82)

## For discussion/reflection:

- What new things did you learn about the Eucharistic Prayer in this article?
- What is your experience of the Eucharistic Prayer?
- What would help you to enter into this prayer with more attention and prayerfulness?
- What is your experience of the communion of saints?
- What is your experience of the Rite of Peace?