

# VII. “Lift up your hearts!”

## Part Two

Here continues an exposition of the meaning and purpose of the Eucharistic Prayer and its various parts. Perhaps both presider and faithful can grow in making this prayer the *one prayer* of the Church, the summit and source. Recall last week’s presentation about the *Preface*, the prayer of thanksgiving for the *magnalia dei*.

### II. The Holy, Holy, Holy – Our Response

The *Qedushah*, a prayer used in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century Jewish synagogue service, was based on the song of the angels, “Holy, Holy, Holy” found in Isaiah’s vision of God’s holy throne (Is. 6). Christian Eucharistic Prayers from the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century in Egypt took it up. It 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.” (79b) [FYI: The bishops of the United States asked for and were granted an indulgent that the faithful kneel from the end of the *Holy* 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 used by the Roman Church was what we now call Eucharistic Prayer I, the Roman Canon. It is an ancient and revered prayer that predates Trent by some 1300 years. St. Ambrose cites a version of it he used in Milan in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century.

The commission charged with the task of reviewing and revising our EP after Vatican II studied the very ancient prayers from Antioch, Alexandria, and Syria. They noted all, other than the Roman Canon, included an Invocation of the Holy Spirit, known by the Greek term, *Epiclesis*. But, what does the *Epiclesis* do?

There were two *Epicleses* in these ancient Prayers, the first before the consecration made obvious today by the presider’s hands extended over the gifts of bread and wine. This first invocation over the gifts recognizes how the Church relies on the power of the Holy Spirit 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:

“Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, *by sending down your Spirit upon them* like the dewfall so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Eucharistic Prayer II)

The second *Epiclesis* occurs after the Institution Narrative, the Memorial, and the Offering. It not only acknowledges how unity among the Body of Christ comes from sharing in the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ by the working of the Holy Spirit.

“Humbly we pray that, partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, *we may be gathered into one 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 presider narrates the ritualized story of the Last Supper. Thus, the telling of the story *and* the work of the Spirit not only consecrates the elements, but *also* functions as thanksgiving to God who redeemed us in Christ.

### V. The *Anamnesis* – Memorial

*Anamnesis* is better translated *remembrance* or *memorial*. The Church acknowledges here that it faithfully responds 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.

“Therefore, as we celebrate the memorial of his Death and Resurrection, we offer...” (Eucharistic Prayer II)

St. Thomas Aquinas described how the Eucharist joins 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

And, now *we*, the Church make *our* offering united with the presider. This is the true Offertory. We give thanks.

“We offer you the Bread of life and the Chalice of salvation, *giving thanks* that you have held us worthy to be in your presence and minister to you.” (Eucharistic Prayer II)

Besides offering “Bread of life and the Chalice of salvation,” we, the Church, gathered to remember and give thanks, enter into the self-offering of Jesus Christ to the Father through the Spirit. We “learn to offer ourselves” by joining our lives to Christ’s self-emptying, his *kenosis*, to pour ourselves out with Christ, toward God in praise, and toward our world in compassionate service.

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 ask for final union with Christ in the communion of the saints.

We also implicitly give praise to 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 cannot make these happen by our own will or action!"

All baptized as children were blessed with chrism into Christ, "priest, prophet, and king." Therefore, at the Universal Prayers, we make manifest the priestly nature of the entire Church. We engage our priestly ministry 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) Through *proclamation and response* the Church reveals itself in this offering of praise to our Triune God to confirm and conclude the whole prayer.

### Something New – The Memorial Acclamation

This acclamation was a new addition to our form of Eucharistic praying after Vatican II.

The liturgical commissions after Vatican II added the Memorial Acclamation to the Roman Catholic form of Eucharistic praying. It immediately follows the Institution Narrative and opens a space for the congregation to actively participate in the Eucharistic Prayer. One way or another, these acclamations unite the past and future with the present.

#### *Memorial Acclamations (2011)*

I – We proclaim your death, O Lord,  
and profess your Resurrection until you come again.  
II – When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup,  
we proclaim your Death, O Lord until you come again.  
III – Save us, Savior of the world, for by your Cross  
and Resurrection you have set us free.

### FYI For Liturgy Nerds

Today, in the U.S., there are 10 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 our other Eucharistic Prayers, its structure is based upon prayers originating in Antioch (modern day Turkey). [The double *epicleses*, however, actually demonstrate 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*)  
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 worshiping 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 begins the faithful's preparation for Communion. After hallowing the name of God, the assembled Church asks for daily bread and for forgiveness – not only for our sins and omissions, but also for the grace to forgive one another as we are forgiven.

"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 situated the Greeting of Peace where it stands in the liturgy today. Yet, before Augustine's time, it was positioned just before the Eucharistic Prayer to manifest the unity of the Body of Christ and prepare to receive Eucharist. (FYI: At the Easter Vigil in the early Church, the bishop greeted the newly baptized with peace, thus welcoming them to the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Today, set immediately after the Lord's Prayer, it gives the Church a foretaste of "ecclesial communion and mutual charity" which we will realize only at the Final Banquet. In other words, the Body of Christ reveals itself ritually as "healed of all division," which it shares in with 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 the past two articles?
- What is your experience of the Eucharistic Prayer?
- What would help you to enter into it more attentively?
- What is your experience of the Rite of Peace?

This is the seventh in a series of articles about the liturgy. Article #8 will present *Preparing to Receive Communion*.