

Year of the Eucharist

October 2004 to October 2005

Part 32 in a series on
The Year of the Eucharist
from
The Office of Rites and Sacraments
Department of Worship & Spiritual Life
Catholic Diocese of Memphis
in Tennessee

The Structure of the Mass The Liturgy of the Eucharist

Offering

Many people have told me that they are not in the habit of really listening to the Eucharistic Prayer. In some ways, I suppose it's not surprising. It's sad, but true that there are few places in our society where we are invited to listen attentively, reflectively and openly. We get distracted (or sleepy) while reading. We watch a TV program with the remote control in hand so we can channel surf if we become instantly disinterested. When we do listen, often it is with a critical ear because we're challenged to look for improvement or a new insight. Rarely when someone speaks do those who listen have the expectation of being "on board" with all that is being said. But remember, the priest prays on behalf of the gathered assembly.

As assembly, many have come to recognize important cues in the dialogue, that is, the places where there is a response expected by the people. But too often the Eucharistic Prayer is perceived as "Father's part" of the Mass. Yet when we pay close attention to the words being prayed, it is surprising how often in "Father's part" he uses the word, *WE!!* Is it possible that it's not just Father's part?

"Father, WE celebrate the memory of Christ, your Son.

WE, your people and your ministers, recall his passion...

...WE offer to you, God of glory and majesty, this holy sacrifice...

...WE pray that your angel may take this sacrifice to your altar in heaven."

The *WE* is the priest, ministers and the entire gathered body of Christ. The priest, in the person of Christ, "*associates the people with himself in the offering of sacrifice through Christ in the Holy Spirit to God the Father...*" (*General Instruction on the Roman Missal*, #93).

Intercessions

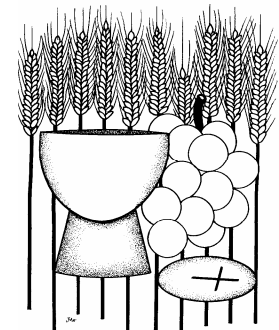
In the Prayer of the Faithful, we offered petitions for the needs of the Church and the world. The intercessions within the Eucharistic Prayer are different. The Eucharist is celebrated in communion with the entire Church, the Church both in heaven and on earth. It makes sense then that we pray in union with all members of the Church, including Mary, the Virgin Mother, the apostles and martyrs and all saints who have gone before us. We are invited to silently remember those who have died, and we pray for their salvation... *May these and all who sleep in Christ, find in your presence, light, happiness, and peace* (*Eucharistic Prayer I*).

Final Doxology

The Eucharistic Prayer is a Prayer of Thanksgiving and a Prayer of Offering. Through the action of the priest, Christ is offered and Christ invites us to join ourselves to him in this offering. In this great Prayer, we remember, we give thanks and praise, we invoke the Holy Spirit, we offer sacrifice, we sing our acclamations, we pray for the living and for the dead, and we do all this as proclaimed in the Final Doxology:

**"Through Him, With Him, in Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, for ever and ever."**

And all the people make the entire Eucharistic Prayer their own by responding with full hearts and minds and voices... **AMEN!**



**From
The General Instruction
on the Roman Missal...**

II. The Duties of the People of God

In the celebration of Mass the faithful form a holy people, a people whom God has made his own, a royal priesthood, so that they may give thanks to God and offer the spotless Victim not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him, and so that they may learn to offer themselves.

They should, moreover, endeavor to make this clear by their deep religious sense and their charity toward brothers and sisters who participate with them in the same celebration." (#95)

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