

## Script – Episode 5 – The Eucharistic Prayer

We now come to the moment the Church calls "the center and summit of the entire celebration." We have arrived at the Eucharistic Prayer. In the midst of this longest prayer of the Mass, the priest will do what Jesus did: he takes bread, blesses it, breaks it and declares it to be the body of Christ.

There are four Eucharistic Prayers that the priest may choose from. Each has its own emphasis, but they all speak the same truth and accomplish the same end. The priest begins by asking God the Father to send the Holy Spirit in a prayer called the epiclesis, a Greek word that means "to call upon".

He places his hands, palms down, over the bread and wine to evoke the hovering of the Holy Spirit, as at the baptism of Jesus.

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

This is a very important prayer because the gifts can only be transformed by the power of God and not by any human means. It is God who acts through the priest.

The priest then recites the words of the institution of the Eucharist, recounting what Jesus did at the Last Supper.

*"At the time he was betrayed and entered willingly into his Passion, he took bread and, giving thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:*

*"TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU AND EAT OF IT, FOR THIS IS MY BODY, WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP FOR YOU."*

The bread has now become the Body of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The priest, after the elevation of the host as a perfect offering to the Father, places it back on the altar and

genuflects in adoration of our Lord now present in the sacred species.

*"In a similar way, taking the chalice of wine, He gave thanks and gave the chalice to His disciples saying:*

*"TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND DRINK FROM IT, FOR THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD, THE BLOOD OF THE NEW AND ETERNAL COVENANT, WHICH WILL BE Poured OUT FOR YOU AND FOR MANY FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS. DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME. "'*

The chalice now contains the blood of Christ. The priest elevates the chalice as a perfect offering to the Father. He then sets it down and again genuflects in adoration.

This part of the Mass is known as the "major elevation". At each elevation, we should adore the Lord in a special way with an act of reverence - bowing or gazing at the sacred species in adoration or praying silently like the prayer of the Apostle Thomas, "My Lord and my God".

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whose body and blood were offered for our sins on the Cross, is now really and substantially present on the altar under the appearances of bread and wine. The priest exclaims that this truly is "the mystery of faith"!

*"The mystery of faith"!*

What has taken place on the altar is a reality that we accept in faith because we cannot possibly comprehend it just by human reason. Our response is a summary of the Paschal Mystery - Jesus' passion, death and resurrection. We also proclaim our faith that Jesus is alive and that He will come again.

*"We proclaim your Death, O Lord,*

*and profess your Resurrection*

*until you come again. "*

The Church identifies the Paschal Mystery as the center of the whole Christian experience. That is the Mystery made present now and we enter it through the eucharist.

Saint Pope John Paul II reflected on this profound Mystery when he celebrated Mass in the Upper Room where the Last Supper took place:

"At every Holy Mass, we proclaim this "mystery of faith," which for two millennia has nourished and sustained the Church as she makes her pilgrim way amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God, proclaiming the cross and death of the Lord until he comes ..."

When Jesus commands the apostles, "Do this in memory of me" at the Last Supper, He is not telling them to perform a simple ritual meal to help people remember him. He is instructing them to celebrate the Last Supper as a liturgical memorial.

The Church has been faithful in fulfilling his command. In this liturgical memorial, God's saving actions, accomplished in Christ, are remembered, not as past events, but as events that continue to accomplish their effects here and now. Jesus' one and perfect sacrifice, as priest and victim, is not repeated but is re-presented at every Mass so that we are able to enter it and draw spiritual nourishment from it.

The Church joins in Christ's total self-offering to the Father in the Holy Spirit. The sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his Body. Our lives, work, sufferings and prayers are united with those of Christ. In doing so, day by day through Christ's mediation, we are drawn into ever more perfect unity with the Father and with each other, so that at last God may be all in all.

The Eucharistic Prayer also includes a second epiclesis, a prayer for the Holy Spirit to come upon the people as upon the gifts earlier:

*" Humbly we pray that, partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, we may be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit."*

The Spirit transforms each of us and all of us into Christ. We receive his body, and we become his one body, by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Mass is celebrated in union with the entire Church, all who have lived and died in Christ, both in heaven and on earth. All of God's creation is brought together - from the angels to the communion of saints to the assembly gathered at the altar. The Mass is a sign of Christian unity but it is also the source of Christian unity.

The Eucharistic prayer culminates with an expression of praise. The priest raises the Body and Blood of Christ, presenting them to the Father as he sings:

*Through him with him and in him*

*O God, almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,*

*all glory and honour is yours, forever and ever.*

God the Father is offered the Son through the power of the Holy Spirit and all of us are presented to God the Father through the Son, in the unity of his Spirit who abides in us.

We acclaim the Great Amen, as it is called, to affirm that all glory and honour is indeed God's and also as an affirmation of the words and actions of the entire Eucharistic prayer. The priest has been representing us throughout this prayer and we now give our YES to all that the priest has been praying. In Jesus' time, AMEN was pronounced as the affirmation of an oath, a pledge of full and unreserved faith. Similarly, we must let our YES be YES. We must fully and actively live out in our daily life all that we say YES to and all that we give our AMEN to.