

A Mission Church

The Eucharistic Prayers, you know, the ones beginning with the **Preface** and ending with the **Doxology**, the ones usually referred to as “the prayers the priest says,” aren’t really his. They are the **Prayer of the People** spoken by the priest on behalf of the assembled community of faith. If we listen closely, we can understand how our lives are prayed during these prayers.

There are prayers for the living, and for the dead, opportunities to plug in our own concerns, as well as concerns for the whole world. We pray for Church leaders, for reconciliation and healing, and for lives to be transformed. These are wrapped neatly around the central aspect of the liturgy, the Eucharist.

As should all prayer, the Eucharistic Prayer begins and ends with giving praise and glory to God, acknowledging his mighty works at the beginning, and at the end by professing the Triune God, and our union with the Father and the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ. We’ll look at this later on, as it is the culmination of the prayer.

THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER — Our Prayer

The Eucharistic prayer is the prayer of the people. It is the work of the people. Eight elements are common to all nine current Eucharistic Prayers. These elements are:

- 1) The Preface (Thanksgiving)
- 2) The Holy, Holy (Acclamation)
- 3) The Invocation of the Holy Spirit
- 4) The Institution Narrative and Consecration
- 5) Memorial Acclamation
- 6) The Offering of the Sacrifice
- 7) Intercessions for the whole Church.
- 8) The Final Doxology

Currently there are four standard Eucharistic Prayers, two for reconciliation, and three for children’s liturgies. In each of these “formulas” these eight components are arranged somewhat differently. We

need to remain alert to the words heard so that we may verbalize our own responses at the appropriate times, fulfilling our “work” (responsibility) and at the same time, praying our life experiences and needs.

THE MASS **The Eucharistic Prayers** *Praying Our Lives*



THE PREFACE

The prayer of the Preface is, simply put, our acknowledging that it is God’s work that has brought us to this point in time — a reminder of salvation that is truly gift through Jesus Christ’s own offering. It is a prayer of thanksgiving. As this is prayed, we are a thankful people that humbly admits our sinfulness and need for redemption. It is God’s grace that makes all of us worthy of eternal union.

Did I ever really consider how my faith calls me to a cosmic realization of God? How heaven and earth are united in the seen and unseen? How God is present in unimaginable ways? Am I thankful?

*“The Lord be with you.”
“And also with you.”
“Lift up your hearts.”
“We lift them up to the Lord.”
“Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.”
“It is right to give him thanks and praise.”
“Father, it is right that we should...”*

HOLY, HOLY

This acclamation, taken from scripture (Isaiah 6:3, and Matthew 21:9), is not just something from the past, but is our own raising of voices to the Lord, who was, who is, and who will come — the God of creation, the God present to us now, and the God who calls and blesses us with grace sufficient to “Come in the name of the Lord.”

Jesus carried the weight of the world in his life. Is it possible for us to carry the burdens of others to the table of the Lord? Are we capable of sorting out the true burdens we carry from the desires of the world? Joy in the presence of God is awesome. Do I find joy in oneness with my God?

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COME HOLY SPIRIT

The invocation of the Spirit is that same asking of God's life, to be found in the bread and wine, as it is when hands are held over a person in prayer at confirmation or when a special blessing is imparted, such as at a wedding. Not only do we ask the Holy Spirit to change the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus, but we also are asking that we are made one in Christ. Remember, we have offered ourselves in union with Christ at the altar.

Lord, am I worthy of being one with you in the eternal offering of self for the sake of others? Make me worthy through the peace of your Spirit of renewing love.

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## AN EARLY BELIEF

The three basic beliefs of early Christians were that:

- Christ died
- Christ rose from the dead
- Christ will come again.

Christ's saving actions of his death, resurrection, and ascension are brought to mind with him present now in the Eucharist, and in the community. His promise is that he will come again — in glory — and share that glory with those who hold out in faith till the end. It is Christ always transforming believers.

*What glory do I seek in life? A vanishing glory found in temporal acknowledgment? Or an everlasting glory given as gift through the gift of Jesus Christ?*

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THE OFFERING CONTINUED

The Eucharistic Prayer continues with us, now offering to the Father, what just has been given to us — a sacrifice made perfect by the very one who was sacrificed. It also looks to our being raised in glory when all things are at last subjected to the one who made all things. Our own offering of life (made during the Presentation of Gifts (Offertory) unifies the believer with Christ and the whole Church, bound by the Eucharist. It is a prayer where hope can be found.

Can I take this offering and really live it? Am I

capable of freeing myself from my own desires so to be truly free from sin? Can I be loved into perfection with Christ?

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## WE'RE NOT ALONE ON THE JOURNEY

The intercessions that we speak of here in some ways mimic the intercessions spoken early as we concluded the Liturgy of the Word. The Pope and local Bishop are to be prayed for — by name — along with the clergy. All the faithful living are included in these intercessions, as are all the faithful departed — without names. We remember the presence of the saints with us even as they are in glory in heaven, now praying for us. The Communion of Saints is very evident here, especially in Eucharistic Prayer I, where the earliest of martyrs are remembered by name. There is a spirit of unity that flows from these prayers, reminding us that the mass is not a private matter, but one that unites us with all the faithful, as does Jesus.

*Do I make myself truly present in prayer to those gathered here at mass? Do I lift them up in prayer as I do my own needs in life? This is where I can be in communion with those I carry in my heart. How open or limited is my heart toward others?*

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THE GREATEST OF AMENS

The Doxology, the prayer of praise, brings the Eucharistic Prayer to a conclusion, praising God's glory. As the priest elevates the Body and Blood of Jesus and sings the words of the doxology, we again acclaim that, through, with, and in Jesus is all glory to be given God for his gift of renewed life, salvation, won by Jesus. Our response is to be the greatest "AMEN" we've ever spoken or sung. It is a testament of faith — "I believe all of this is true! No questions!"

Remember when we offered ourselves along with the bread and wine? Well, this is not simply a statement of our belief that our lives have been consecrated in union with our Lord and Savior. This, if our work in this liturgy was truly meant to join us with Christ in all things, soon will mean we must see ourselves in the days to come, as an offering to the world for the salvation of all. What we now do will be sacrificial in nature because of our love of and for God. This "Great Amen" is to be echoed in our faith.

Well, the living of this belief meant death to many Christians, then and even today. Am I ready to persevere in finding happiness in doing the work of the Lord? Is my happiness found in the union I now have with Christ? Does my trust in God take me beyond the self-inflicting doubts I hold onto in life?

THE CONSECRATION

There's enough here to warrant one week's discussion by itself. So we're politely asking your forbearance until next week.

