

Sessions 4 & 5 – The Liturgy of the Eucharist

Questions:

- Name the two essential elements of the Eucharistic Prayer.
- What is another name for the Eucharistic Prayer?
- Why does the priest drop a piece of the consecrated bread into the chalice at the time of the fraction rite?
- What is the fraction rite?
- At what point during the mass does the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ?
- Is there a “greatest part” or “high point” of the Mass?

Presentation of the Gifts

"Even though the faithful no longer bring from their own possessions the bread and wine intended for the liturgy as in the past, nevertheless the rite of carrying up the offerings still retains its force and is spiritual significance" (**General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 73**).

Washing of Hands – Ritual washing.

Preface – Lift up your hearts!

- Who is the Eucharistic Prayer addressed to?

"In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the Holy City of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, Minister of the holies and of the true tabernacle" (Vatican II, Sacrosanctum Concilium, No.8).

Holy, Holy, Holy – Trisagion Hymn – Thrice Holy – Agios O Theos

Isaiah 6:1-7 The Sending of Isaiah.

In the year King Uzziah died (742 B.C.), I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne, with the train of his garment filling the temple. Seraphim were stationed above; each of them had six wings: with two they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they hovered. One cried out to the other:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts!
All the earth is filled with his glory!”

At the sound of that cry, the frame of the door shook and the house was filled with smoke.

Angels humbly cover their faces, acknowledging their unworthiness to stand in the presence of Almighty God. Their only response is to worship God. They call out to each other, almost stammering in their reverence as they say "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts "

Revelation 4:1-8 Vision of Heavenly Worship:

After this I had a vision of an open door to heaven, and I heard the trumpetlike voice that had spoken to me before, saying, "Come up here and I will show you what must happen afterwards." At once I was caught up in spirit. A throne was there in heaven, and on the throne sat one whose appearance sparkled like jasper and carnelian. Around the throne was a halo as brilliant as an emerald. Surrounding the throne I saw twenty-four other thrones on which twenty-four elders sat, dressed in white garments and with gold crowns on their heads. From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder. Seven flaming torches burned in front of the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. In front of the throne was something that resembled a sea of glass like crystal.

In the center and around the throne, there were four living creatures covered with eyes in front and in back. The first creature resembled a lion, the second was like a calf, the third had a face like that of a human being, and the fourth looked like an eagle in flight. The four living creatures, each of them with six wings, were covered with eyes inside and out. Day and night they do not stop exclaiming:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty,
who was, and who is, and who is to come."

The early Christians adopted a pattern of listening to the word and then celebrating the Eucharist. We can see this from a passage like the Emmaus story in Luke 24. First comes Jesus' explanation of the Word, then the sacrament where the scriptures get their full meaning. Similarly, in Acts 8:26-39, where Philip meets the court official, follows a similar pattern. In this story, baptism follows the explanation of the word.

There are four important **verbs** at play that became the backbone of the Christian celebration of the Eucharist: **Take, Bless, Break, and Give**

- We prepare the altar (take)
- We pray the Eucharistic prayer (bless)
- We celebrate the Fraction Rite and pour the cups (break)
- We distribute and receive Holy Communion (give).

There is a good deal of controversy over whether Jesus' Last Supper was a Passover meal.

- The synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, explicitly state that Jesus ate a Passover meal with his disciples on the eve of his Passion and death.

- John's Gospel says that the Passover lambs were sacrificed at the hour of Jesus' death, meaning that his last supper couldn't have been a Passover meal.
- Why do you think this is?

We can be certain that Jesus would have celebrated meals with his disciples according to Jewish religious custom. Every formal Jewish meal would have begun and ended with blessings. These blessings became an important part of the makeup of the Eucharistic prayer.

There are two important 2nd century works that tell much about early liturgies:

- The **Didache**, or The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, an early explanation of how to be a Christian and organize a church.
- The Apology of Justin Martyr, who discusses the Mass in Rome.

The first part of the Didache presents a long catechetical instruction called "The Two Ways," the way of life and the way of death.

The ninth and tenth chapters give us blessings for meals. Prayers before and after the meal take on a three-part structure:

- Thanksgiving for Revelation
- Thanksgiving for Creation/Food
- Supplication for the Church

Each begins with a repetition of the beginning, "*Glory to You forever more. Blessed be God forever.*"

This exact pattern is followed in Jewish prayer in the first and second centuries:

- Blessings for food
- Thanksgiving for Land
- Supplication for Jerusalem

Christians rewrote the traditional Jewish blessing after meals in light of Christ. They tended to use the term "thanksgiving" rather than "blessing."

Since the prayers make reference to the elements of the meal, food and drink, they are a kind of Eucharistic prayer.

The Institution Narrative: "*On the night he was betrayed, Jesus **took** bread, said the **blessing**, **broke** the bread, **gave** it to his disciples and said, "Take this, all of you, and eat it, for this is my body, which will be given up for you."*

Together with the words over the cup, this is the institution narrative.

Earliest prayers had no Institution narrative, but they seemed to have a scriptural basis, i.e., references to scripture that give a reason for the celebration.

The Didache (Chapter 14) refers to the Eucharist:

“On the Lord’s day, come together, break bread, and give thanks, having first confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. But let none who has a quarrel with his companion join with you until they have been reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be defiled. For this is that which was spoken by the Lord. ‘In every place and at every time, offer me a pure sacrifice, for I am a great King,’ says the Lord, ‘and my name is wonderful among the nations.’” (quoting Malachi 1:11).

This formulation will appear in a number of classic Eucharistic prayers.

- Receiving Holy Communion means being in communion, or reconciled with one’s neighbor.
- Even at the end of the first century, Christians were adopting the vocabulary of sacrifice.

Justin Martyr’s description of the Eucharist – An example of the Mass as it was celebrated in Rome in Justin’s time.:

(Chapters 66-67) of his Apology, Justin writes:

“No one may share the Eucharist with us unless he believes that what we teach is true, unless he is washed in the regenerating waters of baptism for the remission of sins, and unless he lives in accordance with the principles given us by Christ. We do not consume the Eucharistic bread and wine as if it were ordinary food and drink. For we have been taught that as Jesus Christ our Savior became a man of flesh and blood by the power of the word of God, so also our food that our flesh and blood assimilates for its nourishment becomes the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus, by the power of his own words contained in the prayer of Thanksgiving. The apostles, in their recollections, which are called gospels, handed down to us what Jesus commanded them to do. They tell us that Jesus took bread, gave thanks, and said, ‘Do this in memory of me, this is my body.’ In the same way, he took the cup. He gave thanks and said, ‘This is my blood.’ The Lord gave this command to them alone... Ever since we have constantly reminded one another of these things. The rich among us help the poor and are always united. For all that we receive, we praise the Creator of the universe through his Son Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit. One Sunday, we have a common assembly of all of our members, whether they live in the city or the outlying districts. The recollections of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as there is time. When the reader has finished, the president of the assembly speaks to us. He urges everyone to imitate the examples of virtue we have heard in the readings. Then we all stand up together and pray. On the conclusion of our prayer, bread and wine and water are brought forward. . . . The Eucharist is distributed. Everyone present communicates and the

deacons take it to those who are absent. . . . The collection is placed in the custody of the president, who uses it to help the orphans and widows and all, who for any reason, are in distress. . . .”

Important takeaways:

1. Apostles handed down tradition.
2. The rich must help the poor.
3. Sunday: common assembly of all members
4. There are readings from Apostles and writings of Prophets so long as time permitted.
5. The president gives interpretation of readings. The president prays and people assent.
6. Everyone present communicates.
7. The collection is taken for the poor. Celebrating the Eucharist and caring for those in need go hand in hand.
8. Second century Christians recognized the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.
9. Early liturgical prayers were not set in stone. The presider was free to pray as he wished. There was probably a set structure or sequence that was filled in according to the appropriate circumstance.
10. The group had a number of officers and a great deal of popular participation.
11. Christians were composing their own hymns and psalms.

The Beginnings of the Eucharistic Prayer

We consider three of the earliest Eucharistic prayers from the first to third centuries (before the acceptance of Christianity as a legal religion in the fourth century under the rule of Constantine).

I. The Papyrus Strasbourg: From 3rd c. Egypt

- This prayer was found on a single page of Papyrus leaf, first published in 1928.
- As with many early documents, the first few lines of the text are missing. The first words we have are “To bless you night and day,” similar to the preface of what we might call a Eucharistic prayer. The prayer continues with an acknowledgement of God as Creator of the universe, “who created through the true light our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.”
- There are a number of parallels between this reference to Christ as the light of the world and the blessing for light in traditional Jewish morning prayer.
- The prayer continues that we give thanks through Christ and “Offer this reasonable sacrifice and this bloodless service which all the nations offer you.” The prayer is considered to be a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving along the lines of Romans 12:1, “Offer your bodies as a sacrifice. This is your spiritual sacrifice.”

As in the Didache, each prayer requires a scriptural basis or warrant, a guarantee of its authenticity, (the “pure sacrifice.” Of Malachi 1:11)

The final section of the prayer is a series of intercessions, for the Church, the land, and the dead.

This embryonic Eucharistic prayer contains three paragraphs: two of thanksgiving, and the intercessions and ends with a doxology.

It is certain that pieces are missing.

From the earliest days there are three fundamental features of the Eucharistic Prayer:

1. The entire context of the prayer is one of thanksgiving, praise, and blessing of God in Christ. The thanksgiving is what gives the Mass its traditional and most universal name, the Eucharist. We use the technical term anamnesis, or “memorial,” to describe this aspect of Christian prayer. We “remember” what God has done for us.
2. The idea of offering is found in each prayer.
3. Like the Jewish grace before and after meals, each prayer contains an element of petition or intercession. We acknowledge who God is, what God has done for us in Christ, and call on God to continue to be generous and kind to us.

II. The Anaphora of Addai and Mari: East Syria, 3rd century

The Anaphora of Addai and Mari, also called the Anaphora of the Apostles, seems to have very ancient roots, reaching back to third century Syria, one of the earliest centers of Christianity. The prayer originated in Edessa, a city on the northeastern frontier of the Roman Empire.

Literally, in Greek, Anaphora means “lifting up.” It has come to mean the prayer of lifting up or offering.

This term is still used by the Church of the East, which broke off from the Catholic Church after the Council of Ephesus in 430 C.E. The prayer we are now considering predates this division.

It has a number of notable elements:

1. The prayer begins with an invitation dialogue similar to contemporary Eucharistic prayers.
2. The first part of the prayer leads into the threefold “Holy,” which has now become universal.
3. Part of the prayer is addressed directly to Christ. This is unusual in official liturgical prayers, which are normally addressed to the Father through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.
4. The Anaphora of Addai and Mari contains an explicit request that the Holy Spirit “Come and rest upon this offering of Your servants and bless and sanctify it, that it may be to us, Lord, for remission of debts, forgiveness of sins, and the great hope of resurrection from the dead and new life in the Kingdom of Heaven, with all who have been pleasing in Your sight.”

5. Presumably, the Church's offering or sacrifice is the bread and wine upon which the Holy Spirit is invoked. However, the only verb of offering in the prayer comes at the end and refers to the praise, glory, and honor we give to God.
6. Finally and most significantly, like the Didache and the Papyrus Strasbourg, the prayer contains no institution narrative. Instead, it says,

"We have received, through tradition, the form which is from You, rejoicing, glorifying, exalting, commemorating, and celebrating this great mystery of the passion, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In 2002, the Vatican Council for the Unity of Christians, in conjunction with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, issued a statement stating that this ancient prayer is a valid Eucharistic prayer, even though it does not explicitly contain the words of institution.

It is through our historical understanding of prayers that our theological understanding of the Eucharist has developed. *Lex orandi, lex credendi!*

III. The Apostolic Tradition – from third or fourth century, probably the most well-known of the three.

It is the basis of Eucharistic Prayer II.

We do not have the original Greek version and the first manuscript comes from the late fourth century and is in Latin.

The Apostolic Tradition is a manual for church order and discipline, much like the Didache. It instructs leaders on topics such as appointing ministers, celebrating the liturgy, and preparing catechumens for initiation.

In the document, the Eucharistic prayer is suggested for use by a bishop after his ordination.

The compiler writes, "Let each pray according to his ability." Today, we have many rules and regulations regarding our liturgical prayers and gestures. It seems that the Church of the first three centuries allowed a good deal of improvisation as long as the prayers were sound and orthodox.

This Eucharistic prayer of the Apostolic Tradition is the first that looks familiar to us as modern Catholics. It begins with familiar dialogue and continues with a thanksgiving for Christ's incarnation and saving work. This leads directly into an institution narrative.

This is the first Eucharistic prayer in which we find an institution narrative before the 4th century. These words are not taken directly from any of the New Testament accounts. This followed by:

- The memorial (anamnesis) and offering of the sacrifice follow.

- The invocation of the Holy Spirit (epiclesis).
- A concluding doxology.

Greek to Latin

In the first three centuries of Christianity, Greek was the most commonly used language in the Mediterranean and Greek was the language of the early Church in Rome.

Around the end of the fourth century, there is evidence that the liturgy was being celebrated in Latin. Soon, the entire liturgy in the West was in Latin.

Since the Mass is about unity, with God and one another, the sign of peace and reconciliation is vital in showing that we are in communion with one another. Early Christians concluded their liturgy of the Word with the sign of peace and reconciliation.

Only in the Roman rite did the peace come after the Lord's Prayer and before Holy Communion as opposed to somewhere between the general intercessions and the beginning of the Eucharistic prayer.

These Eucharistic prayers represent a maturation of the elements we saw emerging in some of the earliest traditions. Although they are arranged in different ways, they contain all of the elements that we recognize as fundamental to a Eucharistic prayer today.

IV. The Anaphora of St. Basil:

Many scholars believe that this prayer originated in the fourth century with St. Basil himself. Basil was a bishop and theologian in late fourth-century Asia Minor. It serves as a model for our current Eucharistic prayer for the longest of our modern Eucharistic prayers in the Roman Catholic liturgy today.

There is a logical flow to this prayer:

1. Dialogue between the presider and people
2. Thanksgiving and praise
3. Holy, holy, holy
4. History of salvation recounted
5. Priest recounts the institution of the Eucharist
6. Summary of what we remember (anamnesis)
7. Offering
8. Epiclesis: invocation of the Holy Spirit

The epiclesis uses the verb "reveal," and is thought to represent an earlier theology of consecration in which the prayer and action illuminate the reality of the Lord's body and blood in the offered gifts of bread and wine. The prayer and action are "revealed" as the body and blood of Christ.

Unity **with** Christ is one in the same with unity **in** Christ. In other words, communion with Christ is both vertical and horizontal.

The Communion Rite (Developed in the 6th century)

The first new element we find in the Communion rite is the addition of the Lord's Prayer.

We know it from a series of lectures given to the newly baptized about the sacraments by St. Cyril of Jerusalem. The Lord's Prayer comes at the end of the Eucharistic prayer.

We find a great deal of language of fear and awe used at this time. While the Church grew over the course of the fourth century, participation in Holy Communion seems to have declined.

The Lord's Prayer was followed by the fraction.

The bread was leavened and remains so to this day in Christian East.

The bread needed to be broken into pieces for distribution.

All who received got both the consecrated bread in their hands and drank from a cup.

Communion included a procession, probably segregated the sexes.

The Communion rite was probably accompanied by singing of a psalm. Psalm 34 was popular.

The procession was concluded with a prayer.

Deacon would dismiss assembly: there was no blessing or song for at least several centuries.

This liturgy shares many elements with our contemporary celebration. This is no accident. The *Ordo Romanus Primus* was one of the most important sources used by liturgical historians during and after Vatican II, when determining how the Mass could be reformed. The post-Vatican II reformers hoped to recapture elements of the liturgy that had fallen into disuse, especially features such as active participation.