

Four-Minute Reflections on the Mass

Reflection 11: The Eucharistic Prayer, Part III

We have explored some of the key elements of the Eucharistic Prayer, closing our last reflection with affirmation of our belief that the whole Risen Christ is present and active in the celebration. Today's presentation will complete our discussion of the Eucharistic Prayer, looking at some additional aspects of it.

Earlier in the liturgy, we proclaimed the "*Mystery of Faith*" in the Memorial Acclamation. We are now reminded in the Anamnesis, which is a prayer of remembrance whereby the Church calls to mind the Lord's passion, resurrection and ascension into heaven that the Church is acting in memory of the Lord and obeying his specific command to: "*Do this in memory of me.*" In this prayer, the assembly affirms its devotion to that command in its gathering to celebrate, remember and proclaim Christ's Paschal Mystery.

Earlier, when the gifts were presented, the priest asked the Lord to accept these gifts of bread and wine. Now that the consecration of the gifts has taken place, the Body and Blood of Christ are what we offer to God. The Church and the assembly offer the Spotless Victim to the Father. However, the Church also intends that the faithful actively offer not only Christ, but also offer ourselves, our lives, our efforts to become more like Christ, and our efforts as a community of believers to serve each other as Christ once served. In doing so, we surrender ourselves, through Christ, to more complete union with the Father and with each another.

We recall presenting intercessions to God earlier in the Mass during the Prayer of the Faithful. Similarly, petitions are also embedded within the Eucharistic Prayer.

These petitions make it clear that we celebrate the Mass in communion with the entire Church in heaven and on earth, and that the offering is for the Church and all its members, living and deceased. The Intercessions are usually divided into three parts: for living Christians, for the dead, and in relation to the saints in heaven.

For the living, our prayers include those whom the Holy Spirit has set as shepherds over the Church - the pope and our bishop. We pray for the entire Church spread across the globe and for ourselves as a local community of believers. We also pray for those who have died in the peace of Christ, so that on the basis of the communion among all of us as believers, our petitions for spiritual help may bring comforting hope for the faithful departed. Finally, we invoke the assistance of all those who are now in heaven. We also ask God for some share in their fellowship and express our desire to share with them the heavenly inheritance.

All the Eucharistic Prayers end with a doxology, which is a song of praise to God. It is concise, familiar and Trinitarian; *“Through him (that is, Christ), and with him, and in him, O God, almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, forever and ever.”*

The final response is simple, yet deep - the Great Amen - which is both an assent and a conclusion. Our offering, which is Christ’s offering on the cross, calls for a resounding, unanimous and enthusiastic, *“Amen.”* St. Augustine said, *“Amen is the people’s signature.”* Indeed, the *“Amen”* is the people’s ascent as they respond affirmatively to the Eucharistic Prayer prayed by the priest on their behalf. The Great Amen is typically sung, and possibly repeated a number of times, in a joyous manner to emphasize our agreement to all that the Eucharistic Prayer says and does. Recognizing

the beauty and power of this celebration, let us put our spiritual signature on these holy proceedings with our hearty, "Amen."