

Preface Dialogue and the Eucharistic Prayer

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As Roman Catholics, we tend to assume that the center and climax of the Eucharistic liturgy, the Mass, is the Communion procession. However, according to the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, the Eucharistic Prayer is “center and high point” of the Mass (GIRM, 78). It is from this very prayer that we have one of the terms for which we call Mass: Eucharist. *Eucharist* means “thanksgiving.” Notice thanksgiving is a verb—something we do. Eucharist is an activity, it is a way of life, a way of doing what Christian disciples do: give thanks. Why thanksgiving? As human persons, we can do nothing, but thank the Triune God for all of his works in and through our lives.

Thanksgiving is a response to what God does for us, to us, and through us. God invites us to become more like him: God-like. This is an invitation to become holy as God is holy. Indeed, this is something to which all we can do is thank God for his marvelous works in our lives.

Since the time of the Second Vatican Council, we went from one Eucharistic Prayer: The Roman Canon (now called Eucharistic Prayer I) to a total of ten. There are Eucharistic Prayers I, II, III, and IV. In the Jubilee Year of 1975, two more were added: Eucharistic Prayers for Reconciliation I and II, Eucharistic Prayers I, II and II for Masses with Children and finally, the Eucharistic Prayer for Masses for Various Needs and Occasions. Priests tend to choose the Eucharistic Prayer based on the occasion. For instance, it is common for either/both Eucharistic Prayers for Reconciliation to be used during Lent, while Eucharistic Prayer I might be reserved to Christmas.

In the revised translation of *The Roman Missal*, there are some changes to the text of the Eucharistic Prayer, but not to what is done. The beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer is the Preface Dialogue:

Priest: The Lord be with you.
All: And with your spirit.
Priest: Lift up your hearts.
All: We lift them up to the Lord.
Priest: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
All: It is right and just.



The first and third lines of the people have changed. Like other areas in the liturgy, “And also with you” has been changed to the literal translation of the official Latin edition of *The Roman Missal*: “And with your spirit.” The same principle applies to “It is right and just.”

Some other changes in the text of Eucharistic Prayer include the following:

Sanctus: The first line now reads: “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts” rather than “of power and might.” God is Lord of hosts, not just the powerful and mighty, but also the last and least.

Institution Narrative: The Institution Narrative is the words of Jesus used at the last Supper over the bread and wine. The word cup is now translated to chalice. “TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND DRINK FROM IT, / FOR THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD . . .” This change by Pope Benedict brings a sacred word used for the vessel that holds Christ’s Blood. There is another change in this text: “WHICH WILL BE Poured OUT FOR YOU AND FOR MANY . . .” Before it read, “for all” rather than “for many.” Pope Benedict wanted this change to correspond to the many scriptural passages that say “for many.” The reason for this change is to reflect the biblical passages from which it was taken.

Memorial Acclamation: The priest celebrant will now say, “The mystery of faith” rather than “Let us proclaim the mystery of faith.” Throughout the liturgy, we hear and respond to direct statements inviting us to faith: “The word of the Lord,” “The Body of Christ,” “The Blood of Christ,” “The Gospel of the Lord,” and so forth. This translation now mirrors more closely the other statements of faith as well as the Latin edition of *The Roman Missal*.

There are other changes that are minor, and those parts are primarily the texts of the priest.

This is the center and summit of the Eucharist. During liturgy, we can particularly pay deep attention to the words and actions, and enter into this great prayer by being, indeed, people of thanksgiving to our ever-giving and gracious God.