

# THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

This Prayer is the centre and summit of the entire celebration of Mass. It is proclaimed by the Priest in the name of Christ and on behalf of the entire assembly which professes its faith and gives its assent through dialogue and acclamations culminating in the Great Amen. The Eucharistic Prayer is said by the Priest alone and all the people should listen to it attentively with reverence and silence. The chief elements making up this Prayer are as follows:

**THANKSGIVING:** This is especially brought out in the Preface. The Priest, in the name of the people glorifies God the Father and gives thanks for the whole work of Creation or for some special aspect of it that corresponds to the Feast day or Liturgical Season in hand.

**ACCLAMATION (*Holy Holy*):** Uniting their voices with the Heavenly Hosts of Angels in a universal outburst of praise, the Priest and congregation sing the 'Sanctus' or 'Holy, Holy', the first line of which is based on a passage from the Book of Isaiah (6:3).. 'Hosts' in the Latin translation is 'Sabaoth'. Actually it is a Hebrew word fused with the Latin. It refers to God's command over the armies of Angels. It proclaims the power of God who has all the forces of Heaven and Earth under his control. 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord' is a direct quote from Psalm 118:26. The 'Holy Holy' is a musical priority and, if possible, should always be sung. The words of the text should correspond with those in the Roman Missal and not be altered.

**'EPICLESIS':** (meaning 'invocation upon') By stretching his hands, palms down, over the offerings the Priest in the name of the Church implores the Holy Spirit to come down on the Bread and Wine so they become Christ's Body and Blood at the consecration. This change is referred to as 'Transubstantiation'

## **INSTITUTION NARRATIVE AND CONSECRATION:**

In words and actions the Sacrifice of Christ commemorated in the Mass which Christ instituted at the Last Supper is now celebrated. Under the appearance of Bread and Wine He offered His Body and Blood for us on the Cross, gave them to the Apostles to eat and drink and commanded that they carry on this mystery in His memory. Memorial, in the scriptures is not merely recording a past event but in a certain sense making it present again sacramentally. At Mass Christ does not suffer or die again. Rather he represents, prolongs, and renews His great moment of sacrifice down through the centuries - it's like Calvary being

suspended in time for the benefit of men and women of every generation until He returns in Glory. After the Consecration there is as usual the 'Proclamation of Faith'. It should always be sung.

**'ANAMNESIS'**: (memory). Fulfilling the command of Christ given to the Apostles at the Last Supper and passed on to us, the Church treasures the memory of the saving work of Christ in His Passion, Death and Resurrection.

**OFFERING**: The Church here and now assembled offers Christ, the Victim to the Father in the Holy Spirit. The Faithful also offer themselves so as to be drawn into ever more perfect union, through Christ, with God the Father and with each other so that God may be all in all.

**INTERCESSIONS**: The Eucharist is a celebration of the whole church in Heaven, on Earth and in Purgatory, so the offering is made for all its members both Living and Dead.

**THE FINAL DOXOLOGY**: Just like the Eucharistic Prayer opens with a dialogue so also it closes with one. The praise of God is expressed in the Doxology which is sung by the priest, then affirmed and concluded by the people's sung response in the Great Amen. Since it consists of only two syllables it may be best to repeat it a number of times when sung.

## **Questions**

2. *The 'holy' is a musical priority – it cries out to be sung. Why are Catholics, compared to our separated brethren, so reluctant to sing at Mass. Discuss?*

3. *Catholics believe in 'transubstantiation' while most other Christians do not. What is your basis for believing in it? Discuss.*

6. *To describe the mass as a service doesn't seem very catholic. Does it not suggest that the congregation is in a 'passive mode' with the priest or minister dominating everything? Is not the Mass a two way interaction between priest and people to the praise and glory of God. Discuss.*

7. *I notice on a lot of 'orders of service' for funerals, no mention is made of praying for the person's soul – but during the tribute at the end a lot is said about the past life of the person. Surely this is not the catholic way of doing things. Discuss*

