

**RCIA**  
**The Eucharist: Part II Liturgy of the Eucharist**  
**Session #10**

***"The Eucharist or principal sacramental celebration of the Church, established by Jesus at the Last Supper, in which the mystery of our salvation through participation in the sacrificial death and glorious resurrection of Christ is renewed and accomplished. The Mass renews the paschal sacrifice of Christ as the sacrifice offered by the Church. It is called 'Mass' because of the 'mission' or 'sending' with which the liturgical celebration concludes.***

The Catechism of the Catholic Church  
#’s 1332, 1088, 1382, 2192



# STRUCTURE OF THE MASS part II

## The Liturgy of the Eucharist

### Overview of Part of the Liturgy of the Eucharist:

Collection of Gifts and  
Preparation of the Altar  
Prayer over the Gifts

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#### **The Eucharistic Prayer (Preface & Acclamation, Prayer, Memorial Acclamation, Great Amen.)**

- This is said to be the heart of the Mass. In this time of celebration we 1 call upon God, 2 gratefully remember what God has done for us, 3 ask for something from God.
  - The “Roman Canon”, the first of 4 current Eucharistic prayers, is from the sixth century. This central proclamation of the Liturgy of the Eucharist is a prayer of thanksgiving and sanctification, and consists of
    1. Thanksgiving: expressed especially in the preface, for salvation or some specific aspect of it;
    2. Acclamation, in the “seraphic Hymn” or “Holy, Holy”, so called because it was sung by the seraphim (Is 63), all proclaim, united with the angels, the holiness of God.
    3. Epiclesis: invoking the Holy Spirit, asking that the gifts be consecrated and become a source for salvation. In the Orthodox Church, considered essential for the validity of the Eucharist. Since Vatican II, all Eucharistic prayers include it. (We ask for God to change the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, and to change us, who eat His body and blood, into the Body of Christ. {*This part of the prayer is usually split into two parts, one before and one after the institution narrative*})
    4. Institution and Consecration Narrative, in the words and actions of Christ at the Last Supper.
    5. Anamnesis, acclaiming, at Christ’s command, Christ’s presence: passion, resurrection and ascension. We recall what Jesus did in His dying and rising to save us.
    6. Offering, of the victim in memorial, whom the Church becomes in Eucharist, to the Father in the Spirit.
    7. Intercessions, expressive of the Eucharist as an assembly’s celebration with the whole Church of heaven and earth and for the Church and all her members, living and dead.
    8. Doxology, expressing praise of God, confirmed and concluded by the acclamation of the people by at least three times: Holy, “Christ has Died...” and the great “Amen” or “Alleluia, Amen”.
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***The Communion Rite***

The Lord's Prayer  
Sign of Peace  
Breaking of the Bread  
Preparation for Communion  
Invitation to Communion  
Communion Song  
Distribution of Holy Communion  
Thanksgiving Prayer after Communion

***Concluding Rite***

Announcements  
Greeting  
Blessing  
Dismissal – Go and be / do for all you meet.  
Recessional

**EUCCHARIST: Principal Eucharistic “Presence” of Christ  
In the Celebration of the Sacred Liturgy**

**Real Presence**, the teaching of the Catholic Church that Jesus Christ is present at and in the Eucharist in His body and blood, humanity and divinity, under the form of bread and wine.

Throughout the first millennium, the faith of the Church in the presence of the body and blood of Christ went relatively undisturbed. Diverse terminology was used to describe the change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, and theologians sought to relate this presence of the body and blood of the Lord to his historical and risen body as well as to his ecclesial body. But some controversy erupted in the ninth century and developed further in the eleventh century between extreme positions that saw the bread and wine either as mere signs or as totally changed even in their physical elements. Out of these controversies came the Church's teaching on transubstantiation, which held that the substances of the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ. This was taught by Latern IV (1215) and Trent (1551). In the latter case, the council reiterated the doctrine in response to perceived distortions of the tradition by Reformers.

Contemporary Church teaching and theology has placed the doctrine of the Real Presence within the context of the many ways in which Christ is present in the Church. Vatican II's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (1963) spoke of Christ's presence not only in the consecrated bread and wine but also in the proclaimed word, the person of the minister, and the worshiping assembly itself.

# **Eucharistic Commentary : Breakdown of Liturgy of Eucharist**

## **PREPARATION**

### Gifts Brought to the Altar

- In taking the bread and wine at the Last Supper Jesus was setting these elements apart – we do the same – “presenting them as a sign of the community’s desire to incorporate itself in the sacrifice of Christ.”
- The bread and wine, and money, are brought to the altar – ALL GIFTS of OURSELVES – handed to a minister.
- Generally the procession of the gifts is accompanied by music.

### Altar Prepared

- signifies that something new is about to begin – becomes the focal point of the Eucharistic liturgy – *similar to setting the table for dinner*.
- Done by an acolyte or deacon generally as the gifts are being brought to the altar
- The corporal (table cloth), purificator (napkin), chalice (cup) and sacramentary (prayer book) are placed on the altar.

### Gifts Presented

- the presentation of the gifts to the minister “is intended to carry on the spiritual value and meaning of the ancient custom when the people brought bread and wine for the liturgy from their homes”
- The minister receives the bread, wine & /or money and places them in the appropriate place – bread and wine on the altar (the food which will nourish us), money generally in front of the altar (to continue bringing this nourishment to others and ourselves).

## **Eucharistic Prayer/Canon of the Mass**

The Eucharistic prayer is the long prayer proclaimed at the heart or main section of the liturgy of the Eucharist in the Mass. This Eucharistic prayer is sometimes still referred to as the CANON of the Mass.

The Roman Canon, known today as Eucharistic Prayer I, probably was first formed in the 600’s. It has remained intact, in today’s basic form, since the 800s. This basic Roman Canon can be prayed at Mass on any occasion. Since 1975, the Church has added a number of additional Eucharistic prayers, including three for use with Masses with children and two for liturgies with a theme for reconciliation.

The canon of the Mass calls to mind essential events in religious history and prayers for the living church, the dead, and the saints. Its proclamation begins immediately after a prayer called Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord and is concluded just as the congregation prepares to join in the Lord’s Prayer. During the Eucharistic prayer, bread and wine are consecrated. The culmination of this prayer occurs when the presider holds up the consecrated bread and wines, saying “Through him, with him, and in him, etc.” to which the assembly responds aloud, “Amen.”

The Eucharistic prayer emphasizes the death and resurrection of Jesus and our own self-sacrificing dyings and risings as Christians. The faith expressed in the

Eucharistic prayer is meant to encourage Church members to choose ever-new life, love, and personal sacrifice in daily service to the human community.

Only the main presider and celebrants are allowed to pronounce the Eucharistic Prayer at Mass. In 1987, the bishops of the United States re-emphasized that no unofficial form of Eucharistic canon may be used in Church liturgies. As noted, Eucharistic Prayer I can be used in any situation. Eucharistic Prayer II, the briefest canon, has its roots in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and is well suited for daily Mass. Eucharistic Prayer III, with its fine remembrance of those who have died, is often chosen for use on Sundays and important feasts. Eucharistic Prayer IV, with its roots in primitive Christian communities and its emphasis on historical religious events, can be used effectively especially in worshiping groups aware of Scripture themes and church history.

Although it is debated whether the Last Supper was a Passover meal or simply a farewell religious meal, this meal setting and its interpretation of the death of Christ provided a model for the early Christian communities in fulfilling Christ's command, "Do this in memory of me."

*Early Christian Eucharist:* The earliest Christian communities were composed of Jewish converts whose worship was modeled on that of the Temple and synagogue. There is still disagreement among scholars as to the particular Jewish prayer forms that influenced the Eucharistic prayers of these communities. (the *berakah*, or "blessing," models, for example, are favored by some, while others point to the *todah*, or "sacrifice of praise," as the chief source of inspiration.) What is more certain is that the Eucharist of these first Christians continued to be celebrated within a meal, through by Paul's time, a decade or so after the Last Supper, the Eucharist followed the meal in the Christian community at Corinth. There are no exact Eucharistic prayers from this earliest period because improvised or extemporaneous prayers were the normal style of worship, a practice that continued until at least the fourth century.

*Texts of Early Eucharistic Prayers:* In the *Didache* (Gk., "The Teaching," a late-first-century document on church practice) we find the first example of Jewish prayers, transformed by belief in Christ, that served either as table prayers or as a very early example of a Eucharistic prayer (possibly the end of the first century). In ch. 9 the meal begins with a prayer of thanksgiving over the cup followed by a similar prayer over the bread and then a petition for the Church. In Ch. 10, at the end of the meal, the prayers follow the order of the Jewish blessings for this portion of the meal (*Birkat ha-Mazon*) with three sections: God's name is blessed for the work of creation and redemption; there is a blessing of spiritual food and drink given to those who believe in Christ, and finally, there is a prayer for the Church, whose gathered members are a promise of God's final banquet at the end of time. Since the Lord's words over the bread and cup are lacking, some scholars believe this could not have been a Eucharistic prayer. Others believe that it still might have been.

When the earliest known texts of Eucharistic prayers are examined, the influence of Jewish prayer is still seen. In the *Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus* from Rome (the text dates from 215, but the prayer itself may be much older) and in the prayer of *Addai and Mari* from Syria, there is either praise or thanksgiving for creation, followed by thanksgiving for redemption ( a Last Supper narrative in the *Apostolic Tradition*), and then intercessions, a calling down of the Holy Spirit, and a final praise of God. The

themes of these prayers generally centered on Christ (who is called God's servant-child), who has restored creation, revealed God's life, and destroyed evil.

*Later Eucharistic Prayers:* Eucharistic prayers from the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries in the Eastern and Western churches show that improvisation is no longer common and that there is a wide borrowing of texts from one another. (Some scholars believe that the Eucharistic prayer in the west was already fixed by the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.) The prayers usually are longer than earlier prayers, are more developed in their theology, and have acquired certain characteristics and order that permit us to divide them into families (East Syrian, West Syrian, Western, etc.). In the Western Church, the so-called Roman Canon gradually became the only text used.

On April 3, 1969, Pope Paul VI approved the new Roman Missal, which had been called for by Vatican II. It contained three new Eucharistic prayers, in addition to the so-called Roman Canon. (The words of institution over the bread and wine were, however, to be identical for all forms of the Eucharistic Prayer.) In 1974, three Eucharistic prayers for children and two for Masses of Reconciliation were also approved for experimental use. Subsequently, Eucharistic prayers for some local churches (e.g., that of Switzerland and Zaire) have also been approved.

### **ANAMNESIS**

- From the Greek word for memory – more than just our understanding of “to remember”
- Recalls the passion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus
- Redeeming actions Christ actually made present here and now.

### **OFFERING**

- In this memorial, the Church – and in particular the Church here and now assembled – offers the spotless victim to the Father in the Holy Spirit. The Church's intention is that the faithful not only offer this victim but also learn to offer themselves and so to surrender themselves, through Christ the Mediator, to an ever more complete union with the Father and with each other, so that at last God may be all in all. (GIRM)
- By making this memorial of the salvific events, continuous and living, the Church is able to make Christ's offering its very own.
- “...we offer you...this HOLY and LIVING sacrifice...”, “...we offer you...this LIFE GIVING bread, this SAVING CUP...”

### **PREFACE**

- comes to us from our Jewish roots – berakah (prayer)
- proclamation of praise and thanksgiving to God...for God's work in creation and redemption.
- Although “thanksgiving” characterizes the entire Eucharistic Prayer, it is expressed especially in the Preface
- Dialogue inviting all to enter into the action of the Eucharistic Prayer- dialogue between presider and congregation
- Focus attention on particular mystery, aspect of salvation, or feast being celebrated
- Concludes by evoking the angels who praise God

## **HOLY, HOLY, HOLY**

- text inspired by Isaiah's vision 6:2-3
- believed to have made its way into the liturgy through Jewish Christians in the post-apostolic community – by way of synagogue morning service
- also known as the *Sanctus*
- verse “blessed is He” is the acclamation used by the people as they greeted Christ on Palm Sunday – joined to the *Sanctus* in 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> centuries
- the way we join all of creation in giving praise to God.

## **EPICLESIS**

- invocation of the Spirit “call on God's power and asks that the gifts offered by human hands be consecrated, that is, become Christ's body and blood” (GIRM)
- the priest will impose hands over the bread and wine, which is an ancient and primary symbol of invoking the Spirit

## **INSTITUTION NARRATIVE**

- “in the words and actions of Christ, that sacrifice is celebrated which He Himself instituted at the Last Supper, when, under the appearances of bread and wine, He offered His body and blood, gave them to His apostles to eat and drink, then commanded that they carry out this mystery” (GIRM)
- found in almost every Eucharistic Prayer since the early Church
- CRUCIAL to the entire Eucharistic Prayer which not only makes Christ present (body and blood), but also the entire redemptive mystery (death, resurrection, glorification)
- The priest generally raises the consecrated bread and wine to show the “sacred bread and wine” to all present – not a gesture of offering.

## **MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION**

- immediately follows the institution narrative
- supports the Eucharistic Prayer as prayed by the priest in the name of the people
- proclaims the “total mystery of Christ present & active among His people and still awaited by them” (GIRM)
- short-since acclamations are generally spontaneous (In East people sing Amen throughout)

## **INTERCESSIONS**

- “...intercessions make it clear that the Eucharist is celebrated in communion with the entire Church of heaven and earth and that the offering is made for the Church and all its members, living and dead, who are called to share in the salvation and redemption purchased by Christ's body and blood.” (GIRM)
- intercessory prayers were present in early Jewish meal prayers & therefore carried over into Christian prayer
- prayers for bishops, pastors, community, the dead, and invoke the assistance of Saints

## **DOXOLOGY**

- “Final Doxology: the praise of God is expressed in the doxology, to which the people's acclamation is an assent and a conclusion.”(GIRM)
- the Eucharistic Prayer begins with praise of God and so it concludes in the same manner – follows the Jewish *berakah* prayer (solely prayed by the head of the family)

which contains 4 parts: exclamation, memorial (remembrance), supplication, and doxology

- Praise is given to the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) as the priest / deacon raises the chalice and bread plate
- The assembly energetically proclaims “AMEN” (Hebrew for “so be it”)

## **COMMUNION RITE**

### **LORD’S PRAYER (Our Father, Who Art ...)**

- 1<sup>st</sup> appeared in Roman Mass during 4<sup>th</sup> century – long standing tradition
- appropriate because:
  1. we ask for “our daily bread”, the Eucharist, but recalls the final, ultimate feasting in God’s kingdom
  2. asks for “forgiveness of sins” so that “what is holy may be given to those who are holy”
  3. reminds us to find peace and unity with our neighbor “forgive those who trespass against us”
- introduced by the priest at the end of the Doxology of the Eucharistic Prayer
- all pray the Lord’s Prayer together with the priest ending with “... but deliver us Lord from every evil...”
- we respond with an acclamation “For the kingdom, the power & the glory are yours, NOW AND FOREVER.”

### **RITE OF PEACE**

- before sharing in the same bread, we implore peace and unity for the Church and the entire human family – offering some sign of mutual love and peace for one another that comes from one’s union with Christ
- the way the sign of peace is exchanged follows local custom – could be handshake, use of both hands, hug, kiss, etc.
- occurs after the Lord’s Prayer
  - Priest: “Lord, Jesus Christ. You said to your...” or similar words
  - Priest: “the peace of the Lord be with you always”  
(extending his hands & then joining them together)
  - People: “and also with you.”
  - Priest: “Let us offer each other a sign of Christ’s peace” or similar words
- a CALL TO ONENESS and a SIGN OF ONENESS from membership in the body of Christ

### **BREAKING OF THE BREAD**

- taking of the large host and breaking it into smaller pieces to be distributed to the congregation – calls to mind the Last Supper – Jesus breaking the one bread
- symbol of the community’s unity [oneness – one family] in the Body of Christ with Christ and one another [charity]

- St. Paul: “the bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread (1Cor 10:16)
- 12<sup>th</sup> century – “coin-sized” host came into being and priests no longer broke “large” host into smaller pieces – lost the symbolism of unification. Lost to the fear of crumbs of the breaking.

### **COMMINGLING**

- dropping a part of the host into the chalice (commingling) while speaking the prayer “May this mingling of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ bring eternal life to us who receive it”
- At least 2 explanations:
  - 1: some scholars believe derived from old Roman custom where the Pope sent a piece of the consecrated host (fermentum) to the priests of neighboring churches where the priest would drop it in the chalice at the next Eucharistic celebration – sign of unity with the Pope/Bishop
  - 2: some scholars believe it was a rite adopted from Syria, symbolizing the resurrection of Christ and his presence on the altar [i.e. the unification of Christ’s body & blood since the consecration symbolized His death].

### **LAMB OF GOD (AGNUS DEI)**

- based on Scripture: Isaiah 53:7 “like a lamb that is led to the slaughter” & used in John’s Gospel and the Book of Revelation
- introduced in the late 7<sup>th</sup> century to “fill” the time it took to break the loaves of leavened bread [repeated as often as necessary]
- as hosts changed, leavened – unleavened – wafer, the Lamb of God seen as preparing for communion
- 9<sup>th</sup> century – only sung it 3 times & in 10<sup>th</sup> century added the “Grant us peace” as reference to the Rite of Peace [which in Gaul occurred after the bread breaking]
- song of praise to Christ who sacrificed Himself for us, and who alone has the power to grant us mercy and peace
- kneel after completed

### **PREPARATION / INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

- private prayers of preparation for receiving communion occurs after the rites above – prayers are from the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century Gaulish / Frankish liturgies
- after genuflecting the priest says the following while holding the host over the paten: “This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are those who are called to this supper.” – recalls Christ’s redeeming death and attaches petition.
- Priest & congregation say together: “Lord, I am not worthy to receive You, but only say the word and I shall be healed.” Reference to Paul’s warning against an unworthy reception of communion
- Priest prays: May the body and blood of Christ bring me to everlasting life.” & then receives both sacred species

## **DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION**

- how the priest distributes the Eucharist to the extraordinary ministers (lay ministers) varies
- priest and lay ministers take the paten and cups, and proceed to their stations, where they will distribute
- we process to the station, receiving the Body of Christ first and then the Blood of Christ

## **GESTURES /WORDS, SILENT PRAYER / SONG OF PRAISE**

- words of priest or lay minister when offering Jesus' Body: "The Body of Christ" our response: Amen
- Words when offering Jesus' blood: "The Blood of Christ" our response: Amen
- AMEN – not a "thank you" but a profession of faith – faith that Christ IS sacramentally present in the forms of bread and wine, faith that Christ is present in the assembly and in the one receiving communion
- Receiving the Eucharist is a personal action, yet a public act of the community worshipping together
- "Holy Communion has a more complete for as a sign when it is received under both kinds. For in this manner of reception a fuller light shines on the sign of the Eucharistic banquet (GIRM 240)

**Receiving the Body of Christ on the TONGUE:** open mouth and stick out tongue, minister will place the wafer on the tongue.

**Receiving the Body of Christ in the HAND:** lift hands shaped as a throne

- earliest centuries received Body IN THE HAND but the development of ON THE TONGUE came out of the development of the feeling of unworthiness – by the 9<sup>th</sup> century communion IN THE HAND was no longer the universal practice
- IN THE HAND "restored" after Vatican II as a return to the earliest tradition

### **STANDING or KNEELING when receiving the Eucharist**

- earliest tradition STANDING which recalls that we are a people risen with the Lord through baptism
- STANDING also practical way of facilitating orderly procession
- KNEELING expresses adoration and dates for the Middle Ages – never in the Church's prescribed instructions

### **Song of Praise / Silent Prayer**

- communion song is outward expression of our spiritual union by means of union of our voices – union of all of us through the Body and Blood of Christ.
- Silent prayer – time of meditation and thanksgiving to the mystery celebrated

## **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

**Presider Prayer** concludes the Communion Rite

**Prayer Petitions** for the effects of the Mystery just celebrated

- it asks for the spiritual effects of the Eucharist
- it is not a prayer of thanksgiving
- people respond AMEN and make the prayer their own.
- REFLECTION:
- The desire to express verbally the effects of the Eucharist gave rise to a presidential prayer after the communion. First appearing in the 5<sup>th</sup> century and arranged in the manner of the opening prayer, it was called the prayer at the conclusion since it ended

the Eucharistic celebration. It was also known as the prayer after communion or the post communion. Just as the number of opening collects multiplied during the Middle Ages, so a corresponding series of post communion commemorations was prayed at most celebrations.

- Today only one prayer, known as the prayer after communion serves to conclude the communion rite. It is preceded by a period of silence, either immediately after the communion or after the invitation “Let us Pray.”
- The prayer after the communion is not a prayer of thanksgiving, since this is the nature of the Eucharistic prayer, particularly in its preface. It is a prayer asking for the spiritual effects of the Eucharist. “The priest petitions for the effects of the mystery just celebrated, and by their acclamation, Amen, the people make the prayer their own.” (GIRM # 56k)

### **CONCLUDING RITE** **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- Parish announcements or “pastoral instructions” may be given following the prayer after communion
- Ought to be BRIEF, especially if the announcement already appears in the Bulletin

### **GREETING**

- serves as the “introduction “ to the blessing
- with hands outstretched, the priest greets the people, “The Lord Be With You”  
People respond: “And Also With You.”
- The Blessing follows

### **BLESSING**

- the priest makes the sign of the cross over the congregation and blesses them: “May Almighty God Bless You, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit”
- We respond in affirmation AMEN
- On more solemn occasions (Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, The Passion of Our Lord, Easter Vigil, Easter Sunday, etc.) there are more formal blessings where the priest, or deacon, if present will say, “Bow your heads and pray for God’s Blessing”
  - # the priest will extend his hands over the congregation as we bow our heads (asking for God’s power & strength to descend upon us)
  - # after each prayer, which may be known by the drop in the priest’s tone of voice or the priest makes eye contact with the assembly, we respond “AMEN”
  - # The priest concludes in the same manner as above “May Almighty God bless you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”
- prayers of blessing of the people were previously frequently used in the liturgy, then fell into restricted use only during Lent, but NOW may be used during the entire year.

### **DISMISSAL**

- we are SENT to continue using God’s gifts in service of the reign of God ... doing good works, “while praising & blessing the Lord” ... spreading the peace & love of Christ ... SENT TO LIVE WHAT WE HAVE JUST CELEBRATED
- with hands joined the priest says, “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord” or “The Mass is ended, go in peace” or “Go in the peace of Christ”

- We respond: “thanks be to God.”

### **RECESSIONAL**

- a processional closing hymn is generally sung
- The priest & deacon move to respectfully kiss the altar as the symbol of Christ, and then all ministers move to an appropriate place where all bow
- All ministers, in procession, leave and we follow