



## Fr. Daniel's Corner

### Mass Moment: Part 21 | THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER: Preface

The Eucharistic Prayer begins with the short preface dialogue. The preface is the prayer that the priest addresses to God the Father with outstretched arms. Every preface reflects on the greatness of God in the incarnation, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension and the redemptive action it achieved. Here is a rendering of the preface dialogue: the call and response.

**V. Dominus Vobiscum (The Lord be with you)**

**R. et cum spiritu tuo (And with your Spirit)**

**V. Sursum corda (Hearts, on high!)**

**R. habemus ad Dominum (We have, to the Lord!)**

**V. Gratias agamus, Dominio Deo nostro (Let us give thanks to the Lord our God)**

**R. Dignum et justum est (It is right and just).**

What is the priest really inviting us to do? After greeting us in the Lord, he invites us to go to heaven! But remember the priest is *in persona Christi* (acting in the person of Christ). Hence when he speaks it is really the Lord Jesus who speaks making use of the voice of the priest. And what does the Lord really say to us in the magnificent dialogue and preface that follows?

*“Let your hearts be taken up! Come and go with me to the altar that is in heaven where I, Jesus the great High Priest, with all the members of my body render perfect thanks to God the Father! You are no longer on earth; your hearts have been swept aloft into the great liturgy of heaven! Come up higher. By the power of my words, you are able to come up higher! Since you have been raised to new life in Christ, seek the things that are above where I am at my Father’s right hand. Come up now and enter the heavenly liturgy. Hearts aloft!”* (Msgr. Charles Pope, [www.adw.org](http://www.adw.org))

The congregation’s response is meant to be a joyful acknowledgment and acceptance of the Lord’s action in summoning us to the heavenly liturgy.

*“We have our hearts lifted to the Lord. We have entered the Heavenly Liturgy by the power of your grace, for you our head have taken us, the members of your body there. We are in the heavenly realms with you, worshipping the Father and giving him perfect thanks and praise. It is right and just that we should do this through you, with you and in you!”* (Msgr. Charles Pope, [www.adw.org](http://www.adw.org)).

Then the celebrant sings or says the preface, wherein specific things that we are thankful for are enumerated. The preface in its Latin sense “*prae-fari*” meaning “to do in front of” or “proclaim in the presence of” captures what the entire eucharistic prayer will be: a proclaiming before God the Father of the Church’s prayer. The text of the preface varies from Sunday to Sunday, from feast to feast, and from season to season; but it has a structure that is always the same and always serves the same purpose. There are three parts.

**Part one** picks up the very words of the last phrase of the preceding dialogue and begins speaking to the Father with the words, “It is right and just, our duty and salvation always and everywhere to give you thanks, Father ...” The Father is named in various ways in different prefaces, such as Lord, almighty and eternal God. Pay attention to the direction of the prayer as it is addressed to the Father: “You, Father” eloquently highlights our prayer (from the Church to God). Notice also that this prayer is made “through Jesus Christ our Lord.” If this is not in the first part, it will appear in the second part of the preface. The Trinitarian shape of this movement of direction immediately begins to unfold.

**Part two** picks up on the phrase “through Christ our Lord” (or inserts it for the first time) and develops it in a way that is unique to each preface. This is always some succinct expression of what Christ has done for us, phrased to express the particularity of the feast of the season. This structure of prayer can tell us something of the unique way in which Christians give thanks. It consists in a profound recognition and confession of the great deeds of God in Christ Jesus. What is confessed here is the magnificence of God. The second part also tells us what to keep our eyes on throughout the whole eucharistic prayer.

**Part three** connects with the preceding by always saying (sometimes only implicitly), “Therefore” or “And so with all the angles and archangels...” With this statement it presents our desire and our request of God that our voices might blend now with the voices of all the angels and saints in singing God’s praises. We sing because of what we have just recounted in part two. We sing with the angels and saints because we are conscious of our hearts being on high.

*And that is your Mass Moment for the week.*