

Pastor's Message

The Roman Missal gives us four main Eucharistic prayers. The old Roman Canon that many of us remember from pre-Vatican II days is the first of our options for Mass. Although parts of this text are ancient, dating back to the fourth century, many people, myself included, find this prayer hard to pray. I find it convoluted, alternating between petition and thanksgiving. I find that it lacks unity and focus but I appreciate that some find it beautiful, noble and mysterious. It is also very long.

Our second Eucharistic prayer, as I have mentioned in a previous pastor's message, is the oldest and most ancient text we have. It was written by St. Hippolytus in the third century. It is our shortest Eucharistic prayer without redundancy or unnecessary additions. This prayer is clear and gets right to the heart of the matter.

The third Eucharistic prayer was the most popular one before the language revisions of 2010. I must confess that the revisions have made this prayer harder for me to pray. The English translation now has too many latinized words and phrases that do not easily communicate in English, e.g., "Therefore, O Lord, we humbly implore you: by the same Spirit graciously make holy these gifts we have brought to you for consecration..." Still, this Eucharistic prayer gives us a structure for praying the Mass that is clear and direct. Remember, the Mass is OUR prayer, not just the prayer of the priest. We are all praying the Eucharistic prayer through the mouth of the priest for good order and so that there is not chaos and confusion in our celebration. The priest is the "alter Christus" (other Christ or in the place of Christ) for us at Mass. The priest as "the other Jesus Christ" is praying with and for us in the Eucharist.

The structure that the third Eucharistic prayer gives us is:

- Dialogue of Introduction and Preface
- Sanctus and Post-Sanctus (Holy, holy...)
- Epiclesis (calling down the Holy Spirit on our gifts)
- Words of Institution, consecration, and anamnesis (We remember...)
- Epiclesis (asking Holy Spirit to be with us)
- Intercessions
- Final Doxology and Great Amen.

We will discuss each of these parts one by one in future weeks.

The fourth Eucharistic prayer is modeled on an ancient prayer from our Eastern Catholic church and written by St. Basil in the fourth century. I used to pray this Eucharistic prayer on special occasions in its previous translation (before 2010) because it has some beautiful, poetic phrases. Unfortunately, once again in the new translation, I find it convoluted, cumbersome and long.

During the "penitential seasons" of Lent and Advent I will usually pray the two Eucharistic prayers for reconciliation. For variety and because I find them sometime beautifully written I will pray one of the four Eucharistic prayers for various needs which were approved in 1995.

Next week we will begin to look at the basic structure of the Eucharistic prayer as described above and learn how and why we pray as we do.

Fr. Chris