

Pastor's Message

Once our gifts of bread and wine (and our lives which they symbolize) are brought forth along with our monetary gifts and our altar is prepared we are ready to enter the Eucharistic prayer. Remember that Eucharist means "to give thanks". In preparation for this prayer we all stand. Standing is the ancient and proper posture for prayer. Kneeling for the Eucharistic prayer which many of us remember and which is making a return in our time is the prayer posture of repentance and penitence, asking for forgiveness. The Eucharistic prayer is a prayer of thanksgiving and praise and so should appropriately be prayed standing and with hands raised.

Then the priest invites the community to "Pray, my friends, that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty." The people reply: "May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church." The dialogue of prayer between the people and the priest as the "stand in" for Christ (alter Christus) has begun. By the way, this welcome into the prayer dialogue and the greater part of the entire Eucharistic prayer is meant to be sung (chanted) by people and priest! In former times we called that a "high Mass".

The dialogue continues:

Priest: **The Lord be with you.** People: **And with your Spirit.**

Priest: **Lift up your hearts.** People: **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Priest: **Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.** People: **It is right and just.**

Next we pray one of our many prefaces. These prefaces are not meant to be like a preface to a book, something to get through before the real thing starts. These prefaces, as the French liturgist Philippe Beguerie wrote: "It is a poem, the cry of joy and recognition, the song of the world discovering its salvation...the certitude of faith making hope spring forth, as had to have been the prayer of Jesus on the night of Holy Thursday". This is a high requirement of any piece of literature and often our prefaces do not rise to the level of poetry or as a "cry of joy and recognition". Too often our prefaces at Mass seem more interested in making theological statements rather than moving our hearts to prayer and praise. One of my hopes is that in future revisions of our Mass texts we will invite more poets to write beautiful prefaces for us to pray. Then, perhaps, our words as we begin our Eucharistic prayer will truly be a "song of the world discovering its salvation".

The preface ends with us all singing the "Sanctus", the "Holy...holy...". There is much to say about this reply to our preface. Next week we will look at how and why we sing "Holy, holy, holy Lord..." as our response to the preface.

Fr. Chris