

Pastor's Message

Remember when we were told that the most important part of Mass was the consecration, that part where the priest turns the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus? That suggestion makes the Eucharist look like a collection of parts and pieces with some parts more important than others. It also leads to the practice of deciding how late one could arrive at Mass and how early one could leave and still have the Mass "count". That understanding of Mass is a little like trying to understand what part of your Thanksgiving dinner is most important. If you make dinner when the turkey is being carved or before dessert has been served, does Thanksgiving with your family still count? The Mass, like any meal of thanksgiving, is a whole event, each part and piece playing its particular and different role in making the entire feast special.

After we sing the *Sanctus* (Holy, holy, holy...) the Eucharistic prayer (EP) gives us a bridge to the *epiclesis*. In the second EP we pray: "You are indeed holy, O Lord, the fount of all holiness." This line is the bridge to the *epiclesis*, the calling down of the Holy Spirit upon our gifts of bread and wine. *Epiclesis* means "invocation upon" in Greek. We are invoking upon the bread and the wine God's Holy Spirit. Notice two things: 1. this prayer is being prayed by the priest on our behalf to God, the Father. Our Eucharistic prayers are prayers directed to God. 2. We are asking God to send the Holy Spirit to change our gifts (which also and especially symbolize our lives) into the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are asking the Holy Spirit to come upon these gifts not only "so that they may become for us the Body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ" but also "that, partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, we may be gathered into one (family) by (that same) Holy Spirit". The Spirit is being invoked (called down) upon our gifts of bread and wine and upon us. The insight that St. Augustine had about the gifts of bread and wine offered at the Eucharist is profound and true. Augustine invited all believers to see themselves in the bread offered and broken and to see their blood in the chalice shared! Our Eucharistic prayers are praying that we all might be changed into the Body and Blood of the Lord.

The Mass will next recall the night of the last supper where Jesus blessed the bread and wine and told us that whenever we do this, he will be among us. Or, as St. John Chrysostom suggested, the Mass now invites us into that eternal and heavenly celebration of the last supper where we are lifted out of our earthly reality into God's reality. Each part of our Mass serves its special function, one not more important than any other but rather forming a whole and grand celebration of the mystery of God with us.

Fr. Chris