

The Year of Faith

Catechesis on the Mass

The Eucharistic Prayer (Part I)

This week as well as next in our Catechesis on the Mass, we will cover the high point of the Mass: the Eucharistic Prayer which follows the *Sanctus*.

In today's Missal there are a number of options for the Eucharistic Prayer from which the priest may choose. There are four Eucharistic Prayers for general use, as well as prayers which may be used for the Masses of Reconciliation or for Various Needs and Occasions. The first Eucharistic Prayer has a special name: the Roman Canon, so called because it was the only option prior to the 1960s and had been substantially unchanged for many centuries. The lists of martyrs which are invoked indicate that it dates back to the earliest years of the Roman Church. The other prayers are either edited prayers from our Catholic tradition or new compositions.

The Core of each Eucharistic Prayer is that part where the priest first holds his hands over the offerings of bread and wine to call down the Holy Spirit upon them and then recites the very words of Christ as he proclaims "This is my body..." and "This is the chalice of my blood." These words of Christ are said solemnly and clearly with the priest bowed, for at that moment is not merely the priest who says the words but Jesus Christ himself. Before the words of consecration, bread and wine were once on the altar. Now, there remains no bread nor wine but rather the Body and Blood Christ. To this miracle the Church proclaims: "The Mystery of Faith!"

Next week, we will take a look at the various things which we pray for during the Eucharistic Prayer...

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