

Lesson 21--Intercessions

In the prior week, we discussed the key elements of the Eucharistic Prayer: the acclamation, the anamnesis, and the offering. Today we discuss the intercessions. Because the Eucharist is celebrated in communion with the entire Church, offering of remembrance is made for her and for all her members, living and dead.

The priest prays that we will benefit from this sacred sacrifice. He mentions the Virgin Mary, the apostles and the saints as examples of those whom this sacrifice has helped and we ask for their intercession. He asks the Father to strengthen in faith and love our pope and bishop and the entire people Jesus has brought into union with the Father.

If the Roman Canon (Eucharistic Prayer I) is prayed, there are two places at which the priest will stop and allow the people to silently include the names of those they wish to pray for personally.

History

The intercessions are recognition that the Mass is celebrated with the entire Church; those living on earth and those who are already in heaven or undergoing purification in Purgatory.

From the earliest times people have asked God to help them and their loved ones in their daily activities. Praying for the dead also has an ancient history going back at least as far as the Book of Maccabees (but probably much further). In 2 Maccabees (2:12:38-46), Judas Maccabee ordered that sacrifices be offered in the Temple in Jerusalem for slain Jewish soldiers who had worn pagan amulets (good-luck charms). In 211 AD, Tertullian wrote that Christians offered prayer and the Eucharist for those who have died on the anniversaries of their death. And St. Augustine (354 - 430) wrote that, “Neither are the souls of the pious dead separated from the Church, which even now is the Kingdom of Christ. Otherwise there would be no remembrance of them at the altar of God in the communication of the Body of Christ.”

What you can do to better participate in this part of the Mass.

In whatever Eucharistic Prayer that is prayed by the priest, include your intercessions for those you most desire Our Lord to help whether it is yourself or your relatives or friends.