

Lesson 19--Eucharistic Prayer

The Institutional Narrative and Consecration

In our last liturgy lesson, we discussed the first key element of the eucharistic prayer - the Epiclesis. Today we'll discuss the second key element - the Institution Narrative and the consecration.

Action:

With his hands extended in the Orans (praying) position the priest prays to the Father the narrative of the institution. After the epiclesis, he joins his hands and at the words, "he took bread" taking one large bread into his hands, he bows slightly while saying the words of Consecration clearly and distinctly, "***Take this all of you and eat of it, for this is my body which will be given up for you.***" At this sacred time the priest may lower his voice or even slow the pace of the words. After genuflecting in adoration he then elevates the Body of Christ, showing It to the people.

Next, at the words, "*he took the chalice*" the priest takes the chalice and while raising it a little above the surface of the altar bows forward slightly while saying distinctly the words of Consecration. With his eyes on the chalice, he says the words, "***Take this, all of you, and drink from it...Do this in memory of me.***" The priest then genuflects and shows the chalice to the people.

Lesson 19--Eucharistic Prayer--The Institutional Narrative and Consecration

Each time the priest “shows” the sacred species to the people an altar server may ring a bell to alert the assembly that Christ is present.

History:

The various institutional narratives while similar differ in a variety of ways from the corresponding passages in the New Testament. They vary because they come from traditions that while closely connected to Scripture are independent from them. They include some details that while very ancient are not given in the accounts of the Last Supper that we read in Scripture, e.g., “He raised his eyes to heaven.”

As the priest recites the words of the institution of the Eucharist, recounting what Jesus did at the Last Supper, the Word of God powerfully brings about through the action of the Holy Spirit what it says. The words of Jesus bring about the reality to which they speak. We are in a mystical way truly on Calvary when Jesus suffers and dies.

We in the Latin Church believe that at the words of consecration the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. This happens when the priest, acting in the person of Christ, recites Jesus’ words over them.

The way that the bread and wine are consecrated separately, first the bread and then the wine, symbolizes the Lord’s death on the cross: blood is separated from the body. Later in the Mass, the Body and Blood of our Lord

Lesson 19--Eucharistic Prayer--The Institutional Narrative and Consecration

will be brought together again in the Mingling Rite, so that what we receive at Holy Communion is the Risen Lord.

What we can do to more fully participate in this part of the Mass.

We enter into this part of the Eucharistic Prayer with great reverence. If possible you should not move around the church at this time and we should try to avoid doing anything that might distract others at this sacred time. We might try to imitate St. Thomas Aquinas who said, “When the host and the chalice are raised and I look upon them, I silently say, ‘My Lord and my God!’”