

Lesson 11--Prayers of the Faithful

Last week we went over the Niceno Constantinopolitan Creed. The Nicene Creed, as we commonly refer to it, was written in the fourth century. It briefly states the basic elements of our Catholic faith. Specifically, that God is One and that the Second Person in the Holy Trinity became man in order to save us from sin and death.

Next follows the Prayer of the Faithful which may also be called the General Intercessions or Universal Prayers.

Action

Standing at his chair the priest introduces the Prayer of the Faithful. These requests to God may be read either by the priest, deacon or the lector. The introduction to this prayer is always addressed to the people. At the end of the intercessions the priest offers a prayer to the Father. History:

The intercessory prayers are some of the most ancient in the liturgy. They were prayed in the Jewish Synagogue and were part of the Mass from the beginning. Writing in the mid-second century St. Justin in his description of Sunday Mass is our first witness that the prayer of the faithful was included at Mass. At St. Augustine of Hippo would often end his homily by asking those in attendance to turn to the Lord. He would say, “Let us pray to him for ourselves and all of his people who are here with us in his house, that he may deign to guard and protect them through Jesus Christ...”

The prayer of the faithful is important in itself but they also serve as a transition. They transition from the Liturgy of the Word to the Liturgy of the Eucharist. They are important in themselves because we present to our Lord, in

faith, our needs. Jesus told us, “Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you. (John 15:16).

Our intercessions are usually arranged so that first we pray for the needs of the Church. Next for public authorities and for the salvation of the world; Third, for those oppressed by any need; Fourth, for the local community and finally, we pray for the dead.

The response to the Prayers of the Faithful is usually, “Lord, hear our prayer” though some other response may sometimes be used.

How we might better participate in this part of the Mass.

We present our petitions to God in the belief that He cares for us. Unlike other religions where god is far away or uncaring, we Christians believe that God is intensely interested in every aspect of our lives.

Finally, the Prayer of the Faithful calls to mind the last part of the Creed: “We believe in one holy Catholic and apostolic Church.” Our membership in the Body of Christ is not a local or a national membership, but one that extends across the world and, in fact, extends even across time and space, since we pray for those who have gone before us and now live with Christ.