

## **2021 Year of the Eucharist and St. Joseph**

### **Homily Aid: August 29, 2021 – *The Eucharistic Prayer***

- “For what great nation is there that has gods so close to it as the Lord, our God, is to us whenever we call upon him?” (Deuteronomy 4:7)
  - This amazing truth proclaimed in our First Reading today is celebrated and experienced in the most powerful of ways each time we gather for worship at Mass, for indeed our God is present with us!
- Today as we continue our Year of the Eucharist and St. Joseph preaching series on the Mass, we focus upon on *The Eucharistic Prayer* – the “Great Prayer” of the Church
  - Having heard and encountered the Lord through the Liturgy of the Word, we now rightly respond to God in the Liturgy of the Eucharist with praise and thanksgiving, for as St. James tells us in the Second Reading, we must be “doers of the word and not hearers only” (James 1:22)
- The Eucharistic Prayer is the “**center and high point of the entire celebration,**” through which “**the whole congregation of the faithful joins with Christ in confessing the great deeds of God and in the offering of Sacrifice**” (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 78)
  - This central prayer of the liturgy is why we frequently refer to the entire celebration as Eucharist, which is not a *thing*, but rather an *action* – Eucharist (a Greek term) literally means “to give thanks”
  - Although this prayer is spoken mostly by the priest, the gathered faithful are in no way spectators
    - ◆ We are all doing something even if we are not speaking – our active participation is paramount here, for we are offering our very selves in thanksgiving for all God has done to save us and we join our prayer to that of Christ who speaks through the priest (NB: the prayer is always “We”)
- The Church has many different Eucharistic Prayers that may be used at Mass, but all have certain elements:
  - *Thanksgiving* (especially in the Preface)
    - ◆ Opening Dialogue of priest and people (“The Lord be with you” / “Lift up your hearts” / “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God”): something amazing and powerful is happening here! Christ desires to raise our hearts to heaven to join Him there in praise and thanksgiving to the Father. The priest invites us to what we all are about to do together with Christ through him – give thanks!
    - ◆ Thanksgiving: in the name of the whole people of God, the priest glorifies God the Father and gives thanks for all God has done to bring our salvation to fulfillment in Christ
    - ◆ Holy, Holy, Holy: Heaven and earth have come together, for we join the angels and saints to give praise and glory to God. As we chant *Hosanna* in the midst of this hymn, we see that we are both rejoicing because of Christ’s victory and preparing to offer ourselves with Him in His Passion
  - *Invocation of the Holy Spirit (Epiclesis)*: we pray that the Holy Spirit will come down upon the gifts we offer that they may be consecrated/transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ AND that we who receive Christ will be transformed for our own salvation and the salvation of the world
  - *Institution Narrative*: we recall the words and actions of Jesus Christ at the Last Supper through which he offered to us His Body and Blood and gave the command: “Do this in memory of me.”
    - ◆ It is by the words of Christ and the invocation of the Holy Spirit that the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1333)
  - *Memorial of Christ (Anamnesis)*: we here fulfill Jesus’ command to do this in His memory, but it is not a mere remembering – through this prayer, His Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension are made present and effective for us now! The grace and love of God poured forth in these saving events are present now
  - *Offering (Oblation)*: the faithful present (and really the whole Church) offer Christ – the sacrificial victim – and themselves in loving sacrifice to God, our Father
  - *Intercessions*: we pray for the whole Church in heaven and on earth, her needs, and the salvation of all
  - *Doxology*: The “Great Prayer” is concluded through the glorification of God and the affirmation and assent of all through the “Great Amen”
- The Eucharistic Prayer, therefore, leads us miraculously beyond space and time – earth is joined to heaven and past, present, and future become one in our celebration, enabling us at each Mass to be with Christ at His sacrifice on the Cross (past) and with Christ and all the angels and saints at the heavenly banquet (future)
  - Active participation in the Eucharistic Prayer means fixing our hearts and minds upon God in thanksgiving and in offering our lives to God as Christ has done. This is what it means to be a Eucharistic People! Through our continued participation in this “Great Prayer” may we conform ourselves more and more to Christ and with Him offer our lives for the salvation of all the world. The Lord, our God, is close to us indeed!