

Series on the Mass, Part 49: The Canon, Per Omnia Saecula Saeculorum

February 7, 2021

The Canon of the Mass is entirely said in a low voice with the exception of “nobis quoque peccatoribus” where the priest elevates his voice slightly. The choreography of the movements and the ringing of the bells allow the attentive faithful to follow the prayer very closely and truly participate in the sacrifice. At the conclusion of the Canon, the priest says out loud or sings, in the case of a High Mass, the Per Omnia and all the faithful respond “Amen”. The Amen brings to an end this wonderful prayer and we have the opportunity to give the fervent response of a soul united to this sacrifice by giving our own “so be it, amen”.

The last part of the prayer is somewhat broken off from the rest of the prayer since the priest has to place the host back on the altar, cover the chalice and genuflect. He then turns the page of the missal (at least in most altar missals), to this concluding line and the Pater Noster. A similar situation occurs at the end of the Secret Prayer, where the same conclusion is said loudly or sung at the beginning of the Preface. The repeated action, in a sense, opens and closes the Canon, such that even the melody that is used to sing the Per Omnia at the conclusion of both prayers is the same. This melody will be used again before the intinction, after the breaking of the host and the separating of a small particle to drop in the chalice.

The repetition of the same melody and words acts as a framework to enclose this beautiful prayer before moving on to the next part of the Mass, which is the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ offered for the remission of our sins.

Sincerely in Christ,

Rev. Charles Van Vliet, FSSP
Pastor, Regina Caeli Parish