

### 30th Sunday (B)

Today we continue our catechesis on the Mass, as we talk about the Eucharistic Prayer.

The Eucharistic Prayer is the high point of the Mass, as it is the part when bread and wine become transformed into Jesus' Body and Blood. In the U.S. we kneel for most of this prayer. The Eucharistic Prayer begins with the preface, though we might think it begins when the priest begins after the *Sanctus*.

The *Sanctus* can get overlooked, but it is important as it helps to bring out the spiritual movement that happens during Mass, that is there is a movement from the profane to the sacred, from what is earthly to what is heavenly. There is a spiritually upward movement that happens during Mass, and we see right here when Jesus is about to become present to us in the Eucharist.

Where do the words of the *Sanctus* come from? It comes from a vision that the Prophet Isaiah had. This is how he describes it:

"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim; each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" (Is. 6:1-6)

Isaiah had a vision of the heavenly Temple. For the Israelites, the Temple on earth was just a copy of the true Temple in Heaven. So Isaiah is lifted up into Heaven and given a vision of God's throne room. He sees the Seraphim, who are the highest of the angels. They are worshipping God and saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." These are the exact words we say at the *Sanctus*. We are taking the very words of the angels and making them our own. We are worshipping God at Mass in the same way that angels have been worshipping God in Heaven since the moment they were created. The second part of this comes from Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on what we now call Palm Sunday: "Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"

We also see here how Heaven and earth come together at Mass, and how the entire Church is present whenever Mass is celebrated: Church Militant (Pilgrim Church), Church Suffering, and Church Triumphant. May we never forget that the angels and saints in Heaven are around at Mass, and our deceased loved ones as well, whether they are in Heaven or in Purgatory.

After the *Sanctus*, everyone kneels, and the Eucharistic Prayer proper begins. I tend to use the First Eucharistic Prayer, or the Roman Canon, often on Sundays and other important days. This is the oldest Eucharistic Prayer. Goes all the way back to St. Peter. I like the actions (lifting up my eyes) and some of the

language. When I am bowing towards the end I am asking for the angel of this church to bring this sacrifice and our prayers up to God in Heaven.

There are also things common to all Eucharistic Prayers. The *Epiclesis*, when the priest calls down the Holy Spirit with his hands over the gifts. The **Institution Narrative**, when the very same words that Jesus said over bread and wine at the Last Supper are said by the priest, also over bread and wine. What Jesus said and did in the Upper Room is repeated by the priest at every Mass. We do this because He asked us to repeat this. “Do this in memory of me.” We know that it really and truly becomes Jesus Body and Blood, just like at the Last Supper, because He said, “Do this in memory of me.” We know that the same God who created everything simply by speaking can now act through the priest and change bread and wine into His Body and Blood because He said, “Do this in memory of me.”

There is also the *Anamnesis* where we remember that what we are doing is the same thing that Jesus did. This happens outside of the Institution Narrative. Here it is from the First Eucharistic Prayer: “Therefore, O Lord, as we celebrate the memorial of the blessed Passion, the Resurrection from the dead, and the glorious Ascension into heaven of Christ, your Son, our Lord...” There is also a mention of this being a **oblation**, a sacrifice, an offering to God. That as the Body and Blood of Jesus are presented to the Father by the priest, the entire Church presents itself, too, as an offering to the Father. So we are all united in this one

offering of Jesus to the Father. Jesus is the priest and victim at the Mass, as He was also priest and victim at Calvary. He willingly offered His life to the Father. He is one really doing the offering, as it is the power of Jesus working through the priest. He is also the one being offered in the Eucharist. We then offer ourselves to the Father with Jesus.

The Eucharistic Prayer concludes with the *Doxology*, which is a prayer of praise and glory to the Trinity. Every prayer and every Mass is offered to the Father, through the Son, in union with the Holy Spirit. The *Doxology* reminds us of this, and that all glory is given to God.

May give our hearts to God at every Mass we attend. As Christ gave Himself to God on the Cross, may that act inspire us to give ourselves wholly back to Him. And let us also do this outside of Mass. We are to give ourselves to God according to our state in life everyday. Give our whole self to Him in what we are doing: at our job, in classroom, doing homework, with friends. Whatever we are doing we can give ourself to the Father in imitation of the sacrifice we celebrate at Mass. Let us totally love Him who Himself totally of out love for us.