

# How to Teach the Eucharistic Prayer

## Why the Eucharistic Prayer is important

The General Instruction on the Roman Missal says the Eucharistic Prayer is “the center and high point of the entire celebration” (78)

To understand why this is true, we have to understand anamnesis

- Anamnesis is difficult to translate
- It can mean “memorial”
- A better translation might be “remember”
- But it is not just about the past. We “remember” past, present, and future

The praying of the Eucharistic Prayer is an active remembering of God's saving action

By remembering who God is, we remember who we are

It is this active remembering that is consecratory

### **Key teaching points for the neophytes**

- The praying of the Eucharistic Prayer is an actualization of the saving event of Jesus Christ, right now, right here, right in our midst
- This saving event happens in us
- Because Jesus is now in us, and we in him, we now have obligations
- We cannot leave Mass and go on with our lives as though nothing has changed
- The bread and wine are changed so that we will be changed

## What kind of prayer is the Eucharistic Prayer?

The origins of the Eucharistic Prayer are the berakah prayers of Judaism

The beginning of a berakah is usually, "Blessed are you, Lord our God..."

### Key teaching points for the neophytes

- The purpose of a berakah, and of the Eucharistic Prayer, is to acknowledge God as the source of all blessing
- The Eucharistic Prayer is also a prayer of thanks
- The dialogue and the (85-plus) prefaces emphasize this element of the prayer
- Thanksgiving for the acts of salvation leads to unrestrained acclamation (Holy, holy, holy)
- The Eucharistic Prayer is also a prayer of sacrifice
- When we pray this prayer, we are praying with all the angels and saints in heaven
- At this moment, we are most what the Christian community looks like
- We join ourselves with the sacrifice of the cross
- We present ourselves as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God

### *A simplified structure of the Eucharistic Prayer*

**You**      *You are indeed holy,  
O Lord*

**Who**      *You [are the one  
who] gives life to all  
things and makes  
them holy*

**Do**        *Make holy these  
gifts*

**Through** *Through him  
[Christ], with him,  
and in him*

## How to teach about the prayer

As with all things in the initiation process, the best teaching method is mystagogical

The neophytes have to experience the Eucharistic Prayer before you can effectively teach about it

- Recall what happened
- Ask for memories of experience
- What did you see?
- What did you hear?
- What did it mean?
- What difference does it make in your life?

For your mystagogical catechesis to be effective, neophytes will have to actively participate in the prayer

- Start the prayer in silence
- Sing the dialogue (and the preface)
- Pay attention to posture
- Acclaim well
- Integrate the supper narrative into the rest of the prayer
- Make the doxology doxological

During the catechumenate, before they will have prayed the Eucharistic Prayer, be sure to teach the key elements of the prayer

- God is the source of all blessing
- God is the source of salvation (in Jesus Christ)
- Christ becomes present in us
- We are obligated to offer thanks
- We are obligated to share our gifts with the world (sacrifice)

### ***Structure of the Eucharistic Prayer in the Roman Rite***

**Dialogue:** the oldest part of the prayer

**Thanksgiving** (especially expressed in the Preface): we give praise and thanks to God for our salvation.

**Acclamation:** the Sanctus or “Holy Holy”

**Epiclesis:** invoking the Holy Spirit to consecrate the gifts offered by human hands to become the Body and Blood of Christ.

**Institution Narrative and Consecration:** following the words and actions of Christ, “This is my body” and “This is my blood.”

**Anamnesis** (Memorial Acclamation/Mystery of Faith): we acclaim Christ’s death and resurrection and look forward to his coming in glory.

**Offering:** “The Church’s intention, however, is that the faithful not only offer this spotless Victim but also learn to offer themselves and so day by day to be consummated, through Christ the Mediator, into unity with God and with each other, so that at last God may be all in all.” (GIRM 79f)

**Intercessions:** petitions for the entire Church, our Pope and Bishop, and for those living and dead.

**Final Doxology:** in which we give glory to God through Christ, with him and in him.

**Great Amen:** Endorses and ratifies the glory given to God in this prayer.

## The true power of the Eucharistic Prayer

### Key teaching points for the neophytes

- We believe that when we pray this prayer, the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ
- We believe that we too are changed into the presence of Christ
- If we are changed, then we are obligated to change the world
- The great power of the Eucharistic Prayer is not solely that the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ
- It is that the change of the elements then requires a change in the deadly things in the world
- We present ourselves as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God

“Today there is a need to rediscover that Jesus Christ is not just a private conviction or an abstract idea, but a real person, whose becoming part of human history is capable of renewing the life of every man and woman. Hence the Eucharist, as the source and summit of the Church’s life and mission, must be translated into spirituality, into a life lived ‘according to the Spirit.’” (Sacramentum Caritas, 77)

“A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented.” (Deus Caritas Est, 14)

— *Pope Benedict XVI*

**TIP:** The section of Eucharistic Prayer IV just after the Holy is a catechesis on our faith

Spend some time in your daily prayer meditating on the section of Eucharistic Prayer IV that begins just after the Holy, holy, holy:

“We give praise, Father most holy...”

and ends just before the prayer to the Holy Spirit:

“...so that, bringing to perfection his work in the world, he might sanctify them to the full.”

## Eucharistic Prayer Bibliography

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