

CHAPLAIN'S BULLETIN JULY 24, 2022



Dear Folks,

Our readings today talk about the power of prayer. We know that praying better is not about building technique to be able to manipulate God (an unworthy enterprise that always fails anyway), but about bringing more and more of ourselves to God, that we may be all His. Part of that is understanding and being more conscious of what we are praying. The Mass, of course, is our central prayer, and it is good to understand it more and more. Today I'm going to unpack the third Eucharistic prayer. We pray it very often, but perhaps most people don't give a lot of thought to what we are really saying.

The liturgy of the Eucharist begins with gathering and bringing forward the gifts which represent all we have done with what God has given us. As the bread and wine are placed on the altar, we intentionally offer ourselves with them, that we may be consecrated.

We pray the prayer over the gifts, then there is the preface, with praises God for His gifts to us.

Then comes the Holy, Holy, the hymn with which we unite with the heavenly liturgy (see Isaiah 6 and Revelation 4).

Then we start the Eucharistic prayer proper, and number three begins with praising God for His holiness and the work of creation, and then says how creation is meant to praise Him. God gathers us to Himself so that "from the rising of the sun to its setting a pure sacrifice may be offered to your name (see Malachi 1:11)."

Then we ask for the Holy Spirit to "graciously make holy these gifts we have brought to you for consecration, that they may become the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ." This is called the "epiclesis" the calling upon, and it is worthy of extra note.

Then we get to the words of institution, recounting what Jesus said and did at the Last Supper, giving Himself sacramentally as He would give Himself on the Cross. This is worthy of extra special note, and we respond to the moment with proclaiming the mystery of faith.

Next, we speak of celebrating the memorial of the pascal mystery by which we are saved. We remember that in the Bible, remembering means something stronger than we are used to: making a past event present and effective. (If you read Genesis 8:1; 1 Samuel 1:19; Jeremiah 31:34; Luke 1:54 and 72 in that light, I think it will make sense). And we gratefully offer "this holy and living sacrifice." Jesus died once and will never die again, but His sacrifice has an eternal power, and He allows us to unite ourselves to that sacrifice that we "make become one body, one spirit in Christ." As we asked for the Holy Spirit to transform the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, so we ask the Holy Spirit to transform us into the body of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12; and Ephesians 4:1-16). We seek to be ever more perfectly the Body of Christ, and the body that is offered to the Father (see John 17: 20-21; and perhaps 1 Corinthians 15:25-28). We ask, "May he make of us an eternal offering to you so that we may obtain an inheritance with your elect" and we mention the saints. Heaven is receiving God's love and loving Him in return brought to infinity, and that is being an eternal offering to Him.

"May this Sacrifice of our reconciliation, we pray, O Lord, advance the peace and salvation of all the world," and we pray that the power of Jesus' Sacrifice continue to transform the people of the world, both those gathered and those scattered throughout the world. Then we pray for those who have died. Finally comes the doxology: "Through him, and with him, and in him, O God, almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, for ever and ever." Responding with the Great Amen, the people join in saying the whole prayer. We offer all to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.

This is our faith: God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, gathers a sinful people to Himself by the power of Jesus' sacrifice, and

makes us a part of that union of self-gift, which is heaven for all eternity, and we want everyone to share in it. To quote an old beer commercial, "It doesn't get any better than this."

Blessings

Fr. Jim