

## #16 LORD, HEAR OUR PRAYER

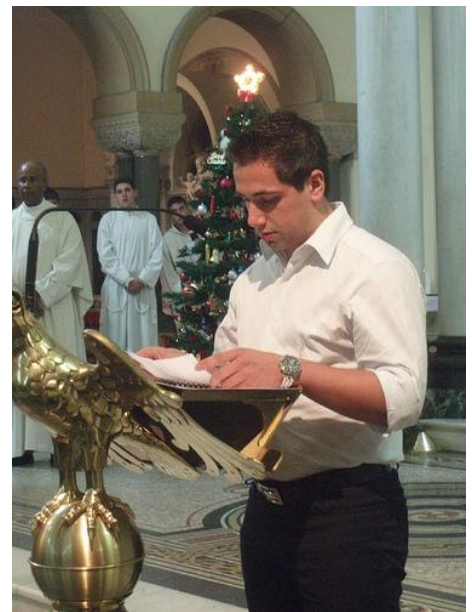
**B**efore we begin our discussion on the General Intercessions, I wanted to share that on Friday, August 20 the USCCB announced that they had received the final text of the third edition of the *Roman Missal*. The Bishops' Conference has set an implementation date of November 27, 2011, the first Sunday of Advent. This is great news! Stay tuned for the many formation opportunities the diocese will host, including the Southwest Liturgical Conference Study Week February 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>.

In the last several articles we have covered the main components of the Liturgy of the Word. In this article we arrive at the end of this section of the liturgy. The *Prayers of the Faithful* or *General Intercessions* conclude our reflection on God's word and lead us to the Eucharistic table.

The intercessions are among the oldest parts of the Eucharist. In his *First Apology*, St. Justin, Martyr (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) bears witness to communal prayer after the homily on Sundays. Eventually these prayers were absorbed into the Kyrie and disappeared, except on Good Friday, until the Second Vatican Council restored them (see the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* 53). After hearing the Word of God and being challenged by it, we are invited to open our hearts and minds to the needs of the whole world. Exercising our baptismal priesthood, we raise our voices in petition to our loving God through Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit for the "salvation of the whole world" (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal* 69).

General Intercessions can be tricky. These prayers are called *general* for a reason; they are the prayers of the whole Body of Christ and are inclusive of the poor and broken, the sick and the outcast, the lost, and the rich and powerful. Unfortunately, many of us have heard prayers that exclude or are politically driven; these are not general and not rooted in the gospel. The prayers should not be a mini homily or a "moral appendix" to the homily (Emminghaus).

The *GIRM* (70) provides four themes for the intercessions: "a). For the needs of the Church; b). For the public authorities and the salvation of the whole world; c). For those burdened by any kind of difficulty; [and] d). For the local community." For special occasions, such as Marriages or Funerals, intentions particular to the circumstances may be incorporated. The minister(s) charged with preparing the intercessions should take great care to reflect on the Scriptures for the celebration and also be attentive to the needs of the local parish family.



After each intention is announced, and before the assembly responds, there is supposed to be a moment of silence for individual prayer. After all the prayers have been announced, the presider collects the prayers we offered in the silence and lifts them to God. I invite you to listen more attentively to these prayers and allow the Holy Spirit to pray in and through you. The next article will begin a section on the Liturgy of the Eucharist and highlight the coming changes.