

#19 LIFT UP YOUR HEARTS: THE DIALOGUE AND PREFACE

In the last article, we briefly reflected on the word Eucharist to help frame our study of the Eucharistic Prayer. In this article, we begin our discussion on the structure of this prayer, and point out some of the changed text. As we proceed, let us keep in mind the profundity of this prayer as it unites us to God through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. May this, our prayer of great thanksgiving, always draw us closer to the heart of Christ.

According to number 79 of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, the Eucharistic Prayer is comprised of eight sections: 1). Thanksgiving or Preface, 2). Acclamation or *Sanctus*, 3). Epiclesis, 4). Institution narrative, 5). Anamnesis, 6). Offering, 7). Intercessions, and 8). Final doxology. Our current Missal has several different Eucharistic Prayers, which have either been revised from older texts (like the third century *Apostolic Tradition*) or newly composed (like the prayers from the Swiss Synod: Eucharistic Prayers for Masses for Various Needs and Occasions).

The Eucharistic Prayer begins with a dialogue between the celebrant and the assembly. The celebrant says, “The Lord be with you” and the people respond, “And with your Spirit.” We have discussed this change in previous articles. This formal exchange “affirms the unity of the Body of Christ rooted in the Spirit” (McCarron). The exchange will continue:

P:	Lift up your hearts.
A:	We lift them up to the Lord.
P:	Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
A:	It is right and just.

This simple ritual exchange makes visible the relationship between celebrant and assembly. Our response is an affirmation for the presider to continue the prayer on our behalf.

The prayer continues with the preface. These proper texts have been retranslated and will sound new to our ears. It will take some time to get used to the more formal style, but in the end, these prayers will still invite us into the mysteries we are celebrating. The preface “has preserved the character of the *eucharistia* most perfectly” (Emminghaus). In this part of the prayer, we glorify God and “give thanks for the whole work of salvation” through Christ (*GIRM* 79a). It gives voice to our gratitude for God’s saving deeds. I encourage you to listen assiduously to these prayers, especially as we approach the seasons of Advent and Christmas. There is an abundance of rich images, which can be used in your private prayer or for reflection during faith formation. The preface concludes by inviting us to join all the angels and the saints in their ecstatic hymn of praise: Holy, Holy, Holy!

Next time, we will begin with the changes to the Holy, Holy, Holy and continue the discussion of the Sanctus and Epiclesis.