



## # 20 THE UNENDING HYMN OF PRAISE

In the last article, we briefly outlined the parts of the Eucharistic Prayer and discussed the Preface. This week we continue our conversation by examining the *Sanctus* and the *Epiclesis*.

The Preface, which recalls the events of salvation, moves the assembly to give thanks and praise to God. The final words of the Preface invite us to join the angels and the saints in “their unending hymn of praise”: the *Sanctus* or three-fold Holy. This hymn of praise is an ancient and bold prayer in which we unite our song to the jubilant song of the angels who surround the throne of God and perpetually sing of God’s holiness. This is the unending song of all creation; “[a]ll things seen and unseen . . . becomes caught up in thanksgiving” (McCarron). Stop for a moment and think of the last time you sang the Holy. What was your experience? Did you sense that the community was truly lifting its heart up in passionate praise to God? This segment of the Eucharistic Prayer is a very profound moment, in which we unite our voices to the ecstatic song of all creation and sing our song of praise from the depths and core of our being.

There is evidence that this hymn of praise was used in the liturgy as early as the end of the fourth century. The first line of the text is based on Isaiah 6:3. In the beginning of this chapter, the prophet Isaiah sees the “Lord seated on a high and lofty throne” and hears the hosts of angels crying out, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts! All the earth is filled with his glory!” (*New American Bible*).

In the new translation, the Holy has one minor revision. Currently, we sing *Holy . . . God of power and might*. In the new translation, we will sing, ***Holy . . . Lord God of hosts***, which is more faithful to the Latin text and the passage from Isaiah. This first line is a statement that testifies to God’s rule or command over all creation. “It proclaims the power of God” (Turner) and the “hosts,” are the angels who surround the throne in incessant adoration.



After the *Sanctus*, the Eucharistic Prayer “moves from thanksgiving to supplication that God act once more” (McCarron). After the brief transition, the celebrant continues with the *epiclesis* or prayer that asks God to send down the Holy Spirit on the community’s gifts of bread and wine and make them the body and blood of Christ. All of the Eucharistic Prayers, except the Roman Canon (Prayer I), mention the Holy Spirit. In any case, it is through divine intervention that our gifts are sanctified and become the “bread of life” and “our spiritual drink.” We are also transformed by sharing in the Eucharistic meal, with the hopes that we will carry forth the gospel of salvation “from the rising of the sun to its setting.”

Next time we will continue by examining the Supper Narrative, Anamnesis, and Offering.