

## EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER III

*Then the Priest begins the Eucharistic Prayer. Extending his hands, he says:*

**The Lord be with you.**

*The people reply:* **And with your spirit.**

*The Priest, raising his hands, continues:*

**Lift up your hearts.**

*The people:* **We lift them up to the Lord.**

*The Priest, with hands extended, adds:*

**Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.** *The people:* **It is right and just.**

*The Priest, with hands extended, continues the Preface. At the end of the Preface he joins his hands and concludes the Preface with the people, singing or saying aloud:*

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts.**

**Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

*The priest, with hands extended, says:  
(Celebrant alone)*

**You are indeed Holy, O Lord,  
and all you have created righty gives you praise,  
for through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,  
by the power and working of the Holy Spirit,  
you give life to all things and make them holy,  
and you never cease to gather a people to yourself,  
so that, from the rising of the sun to its setting,  
a pure sacrifice may be offered to your name.**

## COMMENTARY

Eucharistic Prayer III was newly composed after Vatican II, not based on any previous text, but structured as a model of a full Eucharistic prayer with all the elements clearly delineated.

The Eucharistic Prayer (also called the Anaphora or “Lifting Up” of Thanksgiving) begins with the **Preface Dialogue** and **Preface**.

Some Eucharistic Prayers have their own preface attached to them and are intended be used with these set prefaces (for example, Eucharistic Prayer IV). Others, such as Eucharistic Prayer II have their own preface but any suitable Preface for the feast day or season may be substituted. And, finally, some such as this Eucharistic Prayer III have no specific Preface attached to them and so a Preface suitable to the day or season needs to be chosen.

The Preface leads directly to the **Holy, Holy Acclamation** (traditionally named the *Sanctus* for the Latin word for “holy”).

The typical Eucharistic prayer has several parts. All begin with the Preface dialogue, Preface (with its focus on thanksgiving) and the first acclamation (Sanctus).

---

### OTHER WORDS/CONCEPTS:

- **“God of hosts”**: literally “Yahweh Sabaoth” in the Hebrew. one of the many titles given to God in the Old Testament, meaning “God of the heavenly armies”, emphasizing God’s power and might, which is what this phrase is focusing us on.
- **“From the rising of the sun to its setting”**: we used to pray “From east to west” but that is not the underlying Latin and not to be taken in a geographical sense. Rather, there is a continuous offering of this eucharistic praise. Also, the language is now much more poetic, one of the principles used in some of the new translation.
- **“pure sacrifice”**: Along with the previous phrase, this reflects a direct reference to the prophet Malachi 1:11 and captures some of that sacrificial language of the Old Testament (bringing an unblemished or pure offering to God for sacrifice). However, in contemporary usage there is a danger of too closely tying “purity” to a focus on chaste sexuality alone, and that would be too limiting. The previous translation of “perfect” better captured the theological insight, but lost the immediate connection to the biblical passage.

*He joins his hands and , holding them extended over the offerings, says:  
(Celebrant with concelebrants)*

**Therefore, O Lord, we humbly implore you:  
by the same Spirit graciously make holy these gifts  
we have brought to you for consecration,**

*He joins his hands and makes the Sign of the Cross once over the bread and the chalice together,  
saying:*

**that they may become the Body and ✠ Blood of your Son,  
our Lord Jesus Christ.**

*He joins his hands.*

**at whose command we celebrate these mysteries.**

*In the formulas that follow, the words of the Lord should be pronounced clearly and distinctly, as  
the nature of these words requires.*

**For on the night he was betrayed,**

*He takes the bread and, holding it slightly raised above the altar, continues:*

**he himself took bread, and, giving thanks, he said the blessing, broke the bread  
and gave it to his disciples, saying:**

*He bows slightly.*

**TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND EAT OF IT,  
FOR THIS IS MY BODY, WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP FOR YOU.**

*He shows the consecrated host to the people, places it again on the paten, and genuflects in  
adoration.*

*After this, he continues:*

**In a similar way when supper was ended,**

*He takes the chalice and, holding it slightly raised above the altar, continues.*

**he took the chalice,**

**and, giving you thanks, he said the blessing,**

Most Eucharistic Prayers then have an **epiclesis** or “invoking/calling upon” the Holy Spirit, with the gesture of a laying on of hands over the gifts. Whenever that gesture is used, it is signaling a need for and a desire that the Holy Spirit come and strengthen or change us or some other reality. But it needs to be remembered that this is not a magician’s gesture. The bread and wine represent all that we have brought to this altar—our entire lives—and so is to be understood as a prayer that the Holy Spirit come upon us as well as the gifts of bread and wine. At the Second Vatican Council the Catholic Church of the west learned that it needed to appreciate and emphasize more the work of the Holy Spirit in all that the Church does. This is reflected here and in all the many Eucharistic Prayers composed after that Council.

Eucharistic Prayers then have a **consecration** prayer. Although it is not required, in our western, Roman tradition this done by praying what we call the **institution narrative**, recalling what Jesus did with his disciples at the Last Supper.

The one change here from the previous English translation is to move from “eat it” to “eat of it”. A very minor change but it helps capture the reality that our partaking of communion is not an individual reality but is part of a larger unity, a larger whole. We eat “of it”, enter into that

---

#### **OTHER WORDS/CONCEPTS:**

- **“we humbly implore you”:** Words such as these are often used now in the Eucharistic prayers, to convey a sense of an unworthy petitioner coming before someone much greater than they. Because it can sound a bit “off” or even false to our modern ears, we need to be careful with how we understand it. We are not the wily petitioner who is trying to sweet talk God into something. We are truly in awe of what God has done for us in and through Jesus by the work of his Holy Spirit. It is a humility that comes from reverence and awe, one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- **“we have brought to you”:** This prayer makes a clear distinction between the “bringing” of the gifts and the “offering” of them. Many of us think of the time of the Preparation of the Gifts as the “Offertory” or offering of the gifts. This makes clear that only in the Eucharistic prayer of thanksgiving, once the Holy Spirit has sanctified/consecrated them, can the gifts be truly offered by Christ for our salvation.

**and gave the chalice to his disciples, saying:**

*He bows slightly.*

**TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND DRINK FROM IT,  
FOR THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD,  
THE BLOOD OF THE NEW AND ETERNAL COVENANT,  
WHICH WILL BE Poured OUT FOR YOU AND FOR MANY  
FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.  
DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.**

*He shows the chalice to the people, places it on the corporal, and genuflects in adoration.*

*Then he says (sings):* **The mystery of faith.**

*And the people continue, acclaiming:*

**We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection  
until you come again.**

*or*

**When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup,  
we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.**

*or*

**Save us, Savior of the world,  
for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.**

*Then the Priest, with hands extended, says:*

---

#### **OTHER WORDS/CONCEPTS:**

- **“chalice”**: A direct translation of the Latin calix and is used for ordinary cups. However in English we tend to reserve it for special cups, highly decorated cups, and so we have to be careful not to misunderstand its use here. Jesus is not using some specially ornamented cup. His would have been the blessing cup many households used in prayer. But his transformation of that ritual prayer into one connected to his body and blood does make the cup we drink from special—not because it is made of gold or other precious material—but because of what happens in its use here. In many ways it would have been clearer if the present translation still used “cup” rather than “chalice” prior to the consecration of the wine and reserve “chalice” for the consecration prayer and afterwards.
- **“for many”**: It can’t be emphasized strongly enough that these words in English are not to be seen as limiting for whom Jesus is offering his life. It would be heresy to believe that Jesus died for only some of humanity and not for all humanity, past, present and future. The previous translation was much better at conveying this directly. Why the change? Because in Scripture we have the gospel stories using the phrase “for many”, most likely in reference to Jesus taking on the role of the Suffering Servant prophesied in Isaiah. But in Hebrew that is a euphemism for “all”. And in the gospels Jesus is basically saying: “my blood will be poured out not just for you few who are here, but for the many”; that is, an open-ended phrase that is emphasizing how God’s salvation in Christ is not to be limited to a few. The problem is that in English the word “many” is usually heard as meaning “some but not all”. We have to work hard at always remembering that Jesus died for all and that is what is being expressed in this consecration prayer. Periodically praying “for all” at this point might help emphasize the correct meaning.

larger unity.

The consecratory words with the cup of wine have changed a bit more than the ones over the bread. “Poured out for you” includes the meaning of the previous translation’s “shed for you” but also captures the sacramental reality of the consecrated wine that will be “poured out” for our communion.

One change that can be easily misunderstood is the change for “for all” to “for many”. See some of the comments at the bottom for why we need to be very careful in our interpretation of what that means.

We then have the second acclamation of the Eucharistic Prayer—the **mystery of faith**—previously called the **memorial acclamation**. The priest used to lead us into it by saying “*Let us proclaim the mystery of faith*” but that implied that the mystery of faith was what we said about Jesus’ death and resurrection. Here it is much clearer that the mystery of faith is all that we are doing: bringing ourselves, listening

*(Celebrant with concelebrants)*

**Therefore, O Lord, as we celebrate the memorial of the saving Passion of your Son, his wondrous Resurrection and Ascension into heaven, and as we look forward to his second coming, we offer you in thanksgiving this holy and living sacrifice.**

**Look, we pray, upon the oblation of your Church, and, recognizing the sacrificial Victim, by whose death you willed to reconcile us to yourself, grant that we, who are nourished by the Body and Blood of your Son and filled with his Holy Spirit, may become one body, one spirit, in Christ.**

*(Celebrant or one concelebrant)*

**May he make of us an eternal offering to you, so that we may obtain an inheritance with your elect, especially with the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God,**

to God's Word, offering these gifts, the transformation of these gifts and our faith that these gifts tie us to Christ's saving death and resurrection. We then sing out an acclamation to Christ, to express our wonder at this awesome mystery occurring.

Eucharistic Prayers then have a formal **memorial** or **anamnesis**. The idea of memorial comes from the Jewish celebration of Passover. In remembering, we become participants in the original event. See below for some more discussion.

Eucharistic Prayer III is one of clearest in connecting the transformation of the bread and wine to the transformation of the people, by the action we have just done. This is like a second "epiclesis" or invoking of the Spirit, now on the whole people.

See the note on "oblation" below for how the new translation much more greatly emphasizes

---

#### **OTHER WORDS/CONCEPTS:**

- **"memorial" or "anamnesis":** We are not remembering a past event here, but the present, saving reality of Jesus' death and resurrection. We could not be present at the historical time but our participation here and now through this memorial is just as true a participation as the original participants. All these ideas are conveyed by **"memorial" or anamnesis** (from the Greek word for "to remember").
- **"oblation":** A word used in connection with religions that offer sacrifices, usually a substituted animal or other offering. Along with "sacrificial Victim" language here it captures the sacrificial nature of this act of our Lord. But we need to understand that we are not somehow re-enacting the death of Jesus. He lived, died and is risen. The risen Jesus offers to the Father a continuous sacrifice of praise in and through his Body, the Church. The sacrificial offering now includes us and the gifts that are a sign of all that we are. In fact, the underlying Latin does not use the word "Victim" but *"hostia"* or "sacrifice."
- **"second coming":** Unlike EPI and II, the anamnesis here includes explicit mention of the second coming of Christ. The underlying word here is from the Greek, *parousia*. Language of "second coming" is tricky. It is not as though the risen Christ is "up" in heaven, waiting to return. Christ's presence is on his own terms, not ours, but the risen Lord is not absent from our lives. This use of what is called "eschatological" or final/"last things" language is a reminder of the incompleteness of the historical embrace of the salvation that has been won for us. The previous translation used "looking forward to his coming again", a bit more ambiguous language, which includes both any final and definitive, so-called 'second coming', as well as all the other ways Christ already chooses to come into our lives.
- **"blessed":** We are used to using this adjective with reference to Mary (Blessed Virgin) or to signal one of the beatitudes ("Blessed are they..."). But the current English translation uses it many more times, and it can lose any meaningful nuance to our ears. To be blessed is to be a recipient of God's grace. It is a way to convey that God has been at work, not their status as "happy" or "blessed" people.

**with your blessed Apostles and glorious Martyrs,  
(with Saint N. :) and with all the Saints,  
on whose constant intercession in your presence we rely, for unfailing help.**

**May his Sacrifice of our reconciliation, we pray, O Lord,  
advance the peace and salvation of all the world.**

**Be pleased to confirm in faith and charity your pilgrim Church on earth,  
with your servant Benedict our Pope and Allen our Bishop, the Order of  
Bishops, all the clergy,**

*Mention may be made here of the Coadjutor Bishop, or Auxiliary Bishops, as noted in the GIRM,  
no. 149.*

**and the entire people you have gained for your own.**

**Listen graciously to the prayers of this family,  
whom you have summoned before you:  
in your compassion, O merciful Father,  
gather to yourself all your children scattered throughout the world.**

**To our departed brothers and sisters  
and to all who were pleasing to you at their passing from this life,  
give kind admittance to your kingdom.**

**There we hope to enjoy for ever the fullness of your glory**

*He joins his hands*

sacrificial language. But we have to be careful with understanding that the sacrifice is not simply the moment of Jesus' death on the cross but the offering of all that he is and has lived—Word of God Incarnate, his life, his teaching, his suffering and death—to the Father.

Immediately tied the remembrance is a formal **offering** to the Father. This is the true Offertory moment in the Mass. The offering is both of the gifts but also of ourselves. It is important to see how the Eucharistic Prayer never ends at the transformation of the gifts but always points to our own transformation and the importance, therefore, of communion.

This is followed by intercessions: especially for the whole Church, its leaders and for those who have died. Eucharistic Prayer III is stronger than EPII in connecting our prayer here to an intercession for the whole world. It is to be noted that this "moment" of the Eucharistic Prayer has been duplicated at the Prayers of the Faithful, where more extensive intercession can take place. But it is important to see how, theologically, our intercession for others is always tied first and foremost to Jesus' own intercession for us and to what he did for us in his death and resurrection. That then gives us

---

#### **OTHER WORDS/CONCEPTS:**

- **"we pray, O Lord"**: One of the challenges in understanding this prayer is the question of who it is we are praying to. Because "Lord" is used of both Father and Son (and even the Spirit at times), it can become confusing as to whether we are focusing on what Jesus is doing, on the Father, or always on the whole Triune God. We are always addressing the fullness of the Triune God, but the traditional language or style for doing that is praying to the Father, through the Son, in union with the Holy Spirit. In other words, just as Jesus offered all that he was to the Father, we are praying to the Father through our union with the risen Jesus.
- **"give kind admittance to your kingdom"**: one challenge with the new translation is the use of a lot of indirect language and language and phrasing of sentences that can seem a bit "odd" to our contemporary ears. This was a decision of the translating committee, to try to re-create the humble, petitionary tone of the underlying Latin. At times it works. At times it does not work all that well. It would be good to remember here the more straightforward, but still quite beautiful, previous translation: *"Welcome into your kingdom, our departed brothers and sisters"*. "Welcome" conveys a more personal, fuller embracing of communion and friendship with God. *"Giving admittance"* conveys an image of opening a locked door and impersonally letting someone in.

**through Christ our Lord,  
through whom you bestow on the world all that is good.**

*In Masses for the Dead, the following may be said:*

**Remember your servant N.,  
whom you have called (today) from this world to yourself.  
Grant that he/she who was united with your Son in a death like his,  
may also be one with him in his Resurrection,  
when from the earth he will raise up in the flesh those who have died,  
and transform our lowly body after the pattern of his own glorious body.**

**To our departed brothers and sisters, too,  
and to all who were pleasing to you at their passing from this life,  
give kind admittance to your kingdom.  
There we hope to enjoy for ever the fullness of your glory,  
when you will wipe away every tear from our eyes.  
For seeing you, our God, as you are,  
we shall be like you for all the ages and praise you without end.**

*He joins his hands*

**through Christ our Lord,  
through whom you bestow on the world all that is good.**

*He takes the chalice and the paten with the host and, raising both, he says:  
(Celebrant alone or with concelebrants):*

**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.**

*The people acclaim: Amen.*

*Then follows the Communion Rite.*

the ability to be intercessors for others.

EPIII here is very good at connecting the prayer to the entire Church. Some of the other Eucharistic Prayers come off a little “clergy heavy”, as though the ordained hierarchy are the key participants. No, the Mass is always a prayer of the whole Church, by the whole Church, for the whole Church and wider world.

The Eucharistic Prayer always tries to convey a sense of the eschatological or full and final celebration that it is pointing toward: the gathering around God’s throne, joined by all the saints and heavenly host. We are never praying alone, never interceding alone, but are joined, through Christ, by all who share in Christ’s salvation.

Eucharistic Prayer III has one of the longer, and quite beautiful, inserts connected to Masses for those who have died. Coming face to face before God—what theology traditionally called the ‘beatific vision’—allows us to become “like God”. There are Scriptural allusions here to Philippians 3:21, Revelations 7:17 and 21:3-4, and 1 John 3:2.

All western Eucharistic prayers end with a hymn of praise to the Triune God, called the **doxology**. All then respond to that doxology with a joyous “Amen,” often called the **Great Amen**, to convey how this third and final acclamation is to sound forth the culmination of all that we have prayed and all that has happened in the Eucharistic prayer.

---

**OTHER WORDS/CONCEPTS:**

•