

## EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER IV

*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.**

*It is not permitted to change the Preface of this Eucharistic Prayer because of the structure of the Prayer itself, which presents a summary of the history of salvation.*

*The Priest, with hands extended, continues the Preface.*

**It is truly right to give you thanks,  
truly just to give you glory, Father most holy,  
for you are the one God living and true,  
existing before all ages and abiding for all eternity,  
dwelling in unapproachable light;  
yet you, who alone are good, the source of life, have made all that is,  
so that you might fill your creatures with blessings  
and bring joy to many of them by the glory of your light.**

**And so, in your presence are countless hosts of Angels,  
who serve you day and night,  
and, gazing upon the glory of your face,  
glorify you without ceasing.**

**With them, we, too, confess your name in exultation,  
giving voice to every creature under heaven, as we acclaim:**

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

## COMMENTARY

Eucharistic Prayer IV was composed after Vatican II, inspired by the Eastern one of St. Basil, but modified to fit the western structure of eucharistic prayers.

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

The focus on the Father as source of all creation is one of the distinctive marks of Eastern theology. Because the preface with what follows the Sanctus forms one complete unit, recounting all of creation-salvation history, the rubric about not permitting other prefaces was included, lest they lessen the focus on the creative and saving work of God the Father. In practice there are other prefaces that can theologically fit with this prayer.

Originally, no eucharistic prayers would have included **the Sanctus (Holy, Holy)**. But once it became inserted more naturally into these eastern-styled prayers (right after recounting the ministry of angels before the face of God), it then became accepted into other eucharistic prayers, and eventually into all in the western tradition.

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### OTHER WORDS/CONCEPTS:

- **“the one God living and true”**: The eastern tradition very strongly roots the oneness of God in the person of the Father. Son(Word) and Spirit are also the one God. But the Father, as source of all that is, is given the strongest emphasis as source also of that oneness in God. The western tradition tends to focus the oneness of God in the shared “Godhead” or shared divine nature of all three persons. Thus, saying that the Father is the one God needs to be understood as not denying that the Son and Spirit are also the one God as well.

**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/sings:  
(Celebrant alone)*

**We give you praise, Father most holy, for you are great  
and you have fashioned all your works in wisdom and in love.  
You formed man in your own image  
and entrusted the whole world to his care,  
so that in serving you alone, the Creator,  
he might have dominion over all creatures.  
And when through disobedience he had lost your friendship,  
you did not abandon him to the domain of death.  
For you came in mercy to the aid of all,  
so that those who seek might find you.  
Time and again you offered them covenants  
and through the prophets taught them to look forward to salvation.**

**And you so loved the world, Father most holy,  
that in the fullness of time you sent your Only Begotten Son to be our Savior.  
Made incarnate by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary,  
he shared our human nature in all things but sin.  
To the poor he proclaimed the good news of salvation,  
to prisoners, freedom, and to the sorrowful of heart, joy.  
To accomplish your plan he gave himself up to death,  
and, by rising from the dead, he destroyed death and restored life.**

The beauty of this Eucharistic Prayer is its complete story of salvation from creation to Jesus' saving death, recounting that history of salvation in short images.

The phrase "have dominion over all creation" needs to be understood carefully. It is not a dominion to do anything we like with the earth and creation. Notice that dominion happens when we serve God, the Creator, alone. If we are serving our needs and not God, then dominion turns to exploitation. At times it might be good to change that phrase to "guide with wisdom all creation" so that we never forget that our "dominion" is a vocation to responsible stewardship of God's created gifts to us.

The English translation does have a significant number of male-gendered pronouns, which can be off-putting. It is very easy, and flows smoothly, to change that to plurals such as "we" and "us".

"To accomplish your plan" does not mean that God has one, pre-determined plan and is orchestrating everything "from on high". God endows creation with its own freedom and so it is "plan of salvation" which includes the cooperation of human freedom and the reality of human sin which flows from that freedom.

#### **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.
- **"Only Begotten Son...Made incarnate by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary"**: Just as in the Creed and Gloria "only begotten" signals Jesus' unique status and relationship to God the Father. "Incarnate" always signals that Jesus, though Son of God, is fully and completely human by nature as well. Interestingly, whereas in the Creed the translators wanted to use the word "born" with "born of the Father before all ages", here they use it in the more typical way of "born of Mary". In other words, the meaning of "born" needs to be understood from the context in which it is used..

**And that we might live no longer for ourselves  
but for him who died and rose again for us,  
he sent the Holy Spirit from you, Father,  
as the first fruits for those who believe,  
so that, bringing to perfection his work in the world,  
he might sanctify creation to the full.**

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

**Therefore, O Lord, we pray:**

**may this same Holy Spirit graciously sanctify these offerings,**

*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 our Lord Jesus Christ**

*He joins his hands.*

**for the celebration of this great mystery,**

**which he himself left us as an eternal covenant.**

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

**For when the hour had come for him to be glorified by you, Father most holy,  
having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end:  
and while they were at supper,**

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

**he took bread, blessed and broke it, 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.*

Most Eucharistic Prayers 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 throughout this prayer, which has references to the Holy Spirit more times than any other of the Eucharistic prayers.

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

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

- **“eternal”**: The translators chose to use this word rather than the previously preferred one “everlasting” because communion with God, “heaven”, is not unending time (which some might understand by ‘everlasting’) but a personal communion which is not marked by time or space.
- **“the hour...loved them to the end”**: This is New Testament language from the gospel of John 13:1.

*After this, he continues:*

**In a similar way,**

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

**taking the chalice filled with the fruit of the vine,**

**he gave thanks, 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,**

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 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

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#### **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.

for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.

*Then the Priest, with hands extended, says:  
(Celebrant with concelebrants)*

**Therefore, O Lord, as we now celebrate  
the memorial of our redemption,  
we remember Christ's Death and his descent to the realm of the dead,  
we proclaim his Resurrection and his Ascension to your right hand,  
and, as we await his coming in glory, we offer you his Body and Blood,  
the sacrifice acceptable to you, which brings salvation to the whole world.**

**Look, O Lord, upon the-Sacrifice  
which you yourself have provided for your Church,  
and grant in your loving kindness  
to all who partake of this one Bread and one Chalice,  
that gathered into one body by the Holy Spirit,  
they-may truly become a living sacrifice in Christ  
to the praise of your glory.**

**Therefore, Lord, remember now all for whom we offer this sacrifice:  
especially your servant Benedict our Pope, Allen our bishop and the whole  
Order of Bishops, and all the clergy,**

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

**those who take part in this offering,  
those gathered here before you, your entire people,  
and all who seek you with a sincere heart.  
Remember also those who have died in the peace of your Christ,  
and all the dead, whose faith you alone have known.**

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.

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 our own transformation and the importance, therefore, of communion.

Eucharistic Prayer IV, along with Eucharistic Prayer III, are 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.

This is followed by intercessions: especially for the whole Church, its leaders and for those who have died. The strict hierarchical ordering of prayers for the people is a bit offset here with extending that even to those who faith is not known.

It is to be noted that this "moment" of the Eucharistic Prayer has been duplicated at the

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#### **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").

**To all of us, your children, grant, O merciful Father,  
that we may enter into a heavenly inheritance  
with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God,  
and with your Apostles and Saints in your kingdom.**

**There, with the whole of creation, freed from the corruption of sin and death,  
may we glorify you through Christ our Lord.**

*He joins his hands.*

**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.**

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 the ability to be intercessors for others.

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. True to the tone and theology of this prayer, Eucharistic Prayer IV ends with a prayer for the whole of creation to share in the salvation envisioned by God, using biblical language from Paul's letter to the Romans chapter 8.

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.

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**OTHER WORDS/CONCEPTS:**

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