

## THE MASS: THE CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST

Talk given by P. Breen, O.Carm., at the annual Day of Recollection for Lay Carmel in Ireland, May 2012.

### Introduction

We are all very familiar with the Eucharistic celebration, what we commonly refer to as 'Mass'. We are aware of the ordinariness of it on a daily basis but also of the extraordinariness of it on special and solemn occasions such as Christmas, Easter, weddings and funerals. Over the past eight months the Mass, for those of us in the English-speaking world, has changed, not in structure, but in terms of the words we use. Many people – both clergy and laity – have found the changes to familiar prayers to be somewhat difficult to adjust to. We can still hear people say “And also with you” instead of “And with your spirit”, or “It is right to give him thanks and praise” instead of “It is right and just”, especially at weddings and funerals. The old translation had been with us since the early 1970s and worked fine so why the sudden change? In fact, the change had been a long time in the pipeline but, when working with so many countries and colloquialisms, agreeing on such things can be very slow. Our 1970s translation had worked but it wasn't always faithful to the original texts which came with the new way of saying Mass – they were a very loose translation at times. When missionaries came to translate the new Mass into the local languages and dialects they often worked from the English text which gave an even poorer text for the local church. So our new texts are to be more faithful to what had been intended following the Second Vatican Council which opened fifty years ago this year. It is interesting that the Irish language texts were correct.

I'm not going to deal with the background to the new texts, I mention them simply because I will be using those new texts in this article as we look at the structure of the Eucharistic celebration to remind ourselves and to better understand where the different parts come from and how they all fit together and point to the Eucharist – the true presence of Jesus Christ.

As we know, the Lord instituted the Eucharist on Holy Thursday evening and instructed that this be repeated in his memory. This was done and in various parts of Europe the Mass began to be celebrated in various ways – what we call 'rites'. Several of the Religious Orders, including the Carmelites, had their own rites as had many different regions of Europe. However,

*Through the Middle Ages, there was a movement toward standardization of the rite of celebration of the Mass, especially as the countries of Europe worked to achieve more open lines of communication and trade. Saint Francis asked his friars to offer the Mass as it was offered at the papal court; and so Franciscans spread the Roman ritual as they went about their ministry. They also lent mighty efforts to the collection and editing of the rites and their orderly arrangement in books.*

*With the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, Church discipline broke down in many areas. In some places, would-be reformers took liberties with the ancient texts and rewrote the rites to suit their understanding of theology. The Church found it necessary to enforce uniformity as*

*much as possible – and, because of the advent of the printing press, it was possible to a greater degree than ever before.*<sup>1</sup>

So, as time moved on, the way in which we celebrate became standardised throughout the world as did the texts used. The result is that no matter what Roman Catholic Church we attend when at home or on holidays, we find the same celebration and if we don't understand the local language, we still recognise the key elements and know that we are receiving the Body of Christ. We would find a similar uniformity of formal worship in Judaism and Islam.

### **What is the Mass?**

Cardinal Donald Wuerl says the following:

*The Mass is what Catholics do. It's the heart of Catholic life, for individuals and for the community.*

*A Catholic may fill up hours with devotional prayers and volunteer service, public witness and almsgiving. A parish may sponsor a school and a soup kitchen, a scouting troop and several Bible study groups.*

*The Mass, however, is the heart that gives life to all of it. Our tradition describes the Mass beautifully as "the source and summit of the whole Christian life." Catholicism means many things to the world. It has inspired the art and architecture of the great masters. Our sanctuaries have echoed with masterworks of music. Our saints have served the poorest of the poor. Yet all these things we trace back to a single source: the Mass.*<sup>2</sup>

"The Mass is what Catholics do." This opening statement is very true and it is what sets us apart from other religions and other faith groups. The Mass is very much in the mind of and associated with Catholics. It is unusual to have a service in a Catholic church or chapel to mark some occasion and not have Mass. The Mass is the first thing we think of when planning something in the Church whereas for other Christian groups even with a Eucharistic tradition this would not always be the case.

As Cardinal Wuerl tells us this religious ceremony has inspired incredible works of art, stunning cathedrals and breath-taking sanctuaries. It has given rise to moving pieces of music which are older than churches in this country. And yet, for all of this – certainly in this country – we are quite happy for a quiet Mass and one that doesn't go on for hours.

The Eucharist goes back to the Upper Room in Jerusalem, to the night before the Lord suffered and died for us and to his commandment – "*Do this as a memorial of me*" (Luke 22:19; 1Corinthians 11:24-25). From that command comes the Mass as we know it today. The following quote is a description of the celebration of the Eucharist:

*On the day we call the day of the sun, all who dwell in the city or country gather in the same place.*

*The memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read, as much as time permits.*

*When the reader has finished, he who presides over those gathered admonishes and challenges them to imitate these beautiful things.*

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<sup>1</sup> *The Mass: the Glory, the Mystery, the Tradition.* Cardinal Donald Wuerl & Mike Aquilina. Doubleday: New York. 2011. Page 37.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Page 21.

*Then all rise together and offer prayers for ourselves . . . and for all others, wherever they may be, so that we may be found righteous by our life and actions, and faithful to the commandments, so as to obtain eternal salvation.*

*When the prayers are concluded we exchange the kiss.*

*Then someone brings bread and cup of water and wine mixed together to him who presides over the brethren.*

*He takes them and offers praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and for a considerable time he gives thanks [in Greek: eucharistian] that we have been judged worthy of these gifts.*

*When he has concluded the prayers and thanksgiving, all present give voice to an acclamation by: "Amen."*

*When he who presides has given thanks and the people have responded, those whom we call deacons give to those present the "Eucharisted" bread, wine and water and take them to those who are absent.<sup>3</sup>*

That quotation is 1,850 years old and yet in it we can recognise our Eucharistic celebration quite easily. It comes from St Justin the Martyr who was put to death for the faith in 165AD and wrote this about the year 155AD. So this description comes just 100 years after the origins of the Christian faith.

It is clear from this that the early Christians gathered each Sunday to celebrate the Eucharist and that the deacons took the body of Christ to those who were absent. Over time the Eucharistic celebration became a daily one and, in our own time, it became permissible to receive Holy Communion more than once a day. Depending on circumstances, locale and those involved – both priest and people – the ceremony can be plain and simple and yet dignified, or it can be an extravaganza of incense and singing. In any case, the same elements that Justin Martyr spoke about all those years ago are still to be found in today's celebration, albeit with slight change of location or timing for some elements such as the Sign of Peace which we have in the Communion Rite but Justin places between Gospel and Offertory.

We can look at the Mass as having two distinct parts: the central parts are the Liturgy of the Word which leads into the Liturgy of the Eucharist which is the climax; and the other parts, called 'Rites', which prepare us for the central elements and which conclude the celebration. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal tells us:

*The Mass consists in some senses of two parts, namely the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, these being closely interconnected that they form but one single act of worship. For in the Mass is spread the table both of God's Word and of the Body of Christ, and from it the faithful are to be instructed and refreshed. There are also certain rites that open and conclude the celebration.<sup>4</sup>*

I won't give a very detailed explanation of each of the various parts, and indeed there isn't time for that, but I will say a few words about each part and pick out some phrases or lines which may give us something to think about as we attend Mass over the coming weeks and months.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Pages 61/62.

<sup>4</sup> *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*. Catholic Truth Society: London. 2005. Number 28.

## **The Introductory and Penitential Rite**

When we have gathered and the appointed time arrives, the priest processes to the altar and venerates the altar with a kiss. Even today the principal altar in churches contains a small relic of a saint while at the same time, and more importantly, this altar has been consecrated as the altar or table of sacrifice of the Lord. Therefore the priest shows his respect by kissing the altar both at the beginning and at the end of the Mass. He then begins with the Sign of the Cross – a summary of our faith, a reminder of the Trinity, a reminder of the fact that we were each baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit following the Lord’s mandate to his Apostles after the resurrection (Matthew 28:19). It is the most common action for us as Catholics and it opens and concludes our celebration. The priest greets and welcomes us and we respond with ‘And with your spirit’ – the new phrase for the English-speaking world but one which is rooted in the Bible as it is found in the conclusions of the letters of St Paul to the Galatians (6:18), Philippians (4:23), Philemon (25), and in the second letter to Timothy (4:22). In fact a large amount of the changes to the texts of the Mass have come from the Bible, from the New Testament, and therefore make an even stronger link for us with Jesus Christ and those who encountered him as he lived among them as a man.

This is followed by the Penitential Rite, the moment when we are asked to call to mind our sins, to call to mind those things which have placed a barrier between ourselves and God. Earlier today we spoke about the importance of being in a state of grace as we approach the Eucharist. We are not able to go to Confession before every Mass and we’re not always able to remain in a state of grace and so the Penitential Rite gives us an opportunity to acknowledge before God and our fellow Christians, that we have sinned and to ask for his forgiveness. According to Bro Patrick Mullins, O.Carm., in his book ‘The Mass: Understanding What’s What’,

*It provides an opportunity in a public setting for the general confession of minor transgressions that do not need to be confessed in the sacrament of Penance.<sup>5</sup>*

Our ‘minor transgressions’ can be dealt with here but not the more serious and repetitive transgressions – they still need the Sacrament of Penance and, in fact, given how important the Eucharist is and what it stands for, the Penitential Rite should be a reminder to us to receive the Sacrament of Penance on a regular basis – not necessarily once a week but certainly more than once or twice a year. On Sundays and feasts days the Gloria is said before the Opening Prayer (Collect) of the Mass. This brief Rite, then, helps to settle us and focus our minds for all that is to come.

## **The Liturgy of the Word**

St Justin Martyr described this part of the Mass as:

*The memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read, as much as time permits. When the reader has finished, he who presides over those gathered admonishes and challenges them to imitate these beautiful things.<sup>6</sup>*

The ‘memoirs of the apostles’ no doubt refer to the New Testament while the ‘writings of the prophets’ refer to the Old Testament. We have, everyday, a Psalm and Gospel and, depending

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<sup>5</sup> *The Mass: Understanding What’s What.* Patrick Mullins, O.Carm. Veritas: Dublin. 2009. Page 29.

<sup>6</sup> *The Mass: the Glory, the Mystery, the Tradition.* Cardinal Donald Wuerl & Mike Aquilina. Doubleday: New York. 2011. Pages 61/62.

on the day and season, one or two passages from the Bible outside of the Psalms and Gospels. For weekdays there is a two-year cycle, with the exception of the special seasons, while for Sundays there is a three-year cycle. This means that over a three year period we read almost the entire Bible. Only Biblical texts may be used here

*...because, in the biblical texts, God speaks to his people about their redemption and salvation . . . We make God's word our own by listening attentively, by joining in the responses and by responding to the words that God has addressed to us.*<sup>7</sup>

*When the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to his people, and Christ, present in his word, proclaims the Gospel.*<sup>8</sup>

Over time the readings record the history of God's interaction with his people, of his great love for his people and his desire that they be one with him. The Gospel is the most important reading as it chronicles the life of Jesus Christ, of his ministry and preaching, his miracles and cures. We are reminded of this by standing for the reading and signing ourselves three times with the Sign of the Cross: on our foreheads to show that we take the word to mind and meditate on it, on our lips that we may proclaim the Good News by what we say, and on our chest as we take the word to heart and ponder on it. We give glory to God at the start of the Gospel and praise him at its conclusion. Following the Gospel we have a sermon or homily to help us to understand more about what we have heard in the readings. According to St Justin this should be a challenge to us to *'imitate these beautiful things'*.

On Sundays and solemnities we profess our faith by reciting the Creed – usually the Nicene Creed. Apart from reminding us of the basics of our faith it also reminds us that the faith has persisted through time and that countless men and women across the world share the same faith with us – the Nicene Creed dates back to the Council of Nicaea in 325AD. This part of the Mass concludes with the Intercessions or Prayers of the Faithful in which we place before the Lord our most pressing needs but also those of the Church, of the world, of the society in which we live, and for those who are in need.

### **The Liturgy of the Eucharist**

And so having listened to the Word of God and offered our prayers to him we move to the Liturgy of the Eucharist – the centre-piece of the entire celebration. It begins with the Presentation of the Gifts which will be used in the celebration of the Eucharist and for the good of the Community (the bread and wine and the alms to be used for the upkeep of the church or for helping those in need). After the bread and wine have been received the priest gives thanks and praise to God for these gifts and we join in by saying 'Blessed be God forever.' We then have the Preface and the Eucharistic Prayer which form one prayer but with set elements.

#### Opening Dialogue, Thanksgiving, Acclamation

The Preface begins with the Opening Dialogue between the priest and people – 'The Lord be with you' – and where we are invited to give thanks and praise to God. In the body of the Preface the priest gives thanks to God and sets out the reasons for this celebration and so

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<sup>7</sup> *The Mass: Understanding What's What.* Patrick Mullins, O.Carm. Veritas: Dublin. 2009. Page 31.

<sup>8</sup> *General Instruction of the Roman Missal.* Catholic Truth Society: London. 2005. Number 29.

there are several Prefaces depending on the season and the occasion. The Preface itself ends with the Acclamation – the Sanctus or Holy, Holy – which comes from the Book of Revelation.

We then come to the Eucharistic Prayer proper which Jeremy Driscoll, OSB, describes in these words:

*The Eucharistic prayer begins with the preface dialogue (where the priest says, “The Lord be with you,” then “Lift up your hearts,” then “Let us give thanks . . .”) and extends through to the great Amen. What happens during this prayer is stunning. The mind reels before the mystery. The heart is thrilled. Belief strains. And yet in every generation people keep coming back again and again to hold themselves before the unbelievable experience of this prayer, hoping each time to penetrate its mystery more deeply, to participate in it more entirely, to perceive what happens during the prayer and to be a part of it. It is the biggest prayer the Church has. She exists to pray it, and she comes into being by praying it.<sup>9</sup>*

The Eucharistic Prayer is the key moment in the whole celebration for it is during this prayer that unremarkable bread and wine become the very Body and Blood of Jesus Christ through the working of the Holy Spirit. For us as Catholics, they are no longer Blessed Bread or Sacred Bread or Holy Bread – they are truly the Body and Blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ.

We have the traditional four Eucharistic Prayers in use since the reform of the Liturgy following the Second Vatican Council – before Vatican II there was only one Eucharistic Prayer (The Roman Canon). There are now also two Eucharistic Prayers for Reconciliation (which are perfect for Lent) and four Eucharistic Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions. There are six key parts in every Eucharistic Prayer with variations in each one and I will now look at each of these. The order in which these appear can change slightly but they do all appear. The prayers themselves have changed somewhat with the new translations and one very positive effect of this is that we have had to slow down our recitation of these prayers and this is important at this most crucial point in the celebration because no matter what went before, no matter how good a sermon may have been preached, no matter how uplifting the music is, everything pales into insignificance when it comes to this moment. And so it is right that we are a bit slower here and in being slower we get to hear and fully appreciate some of what is being said by the priest.

### Epiclesis

The key moment in each of the Eucharistic Prayers is the Epiclesis – the invocation of the Holy Spirit. In each prayer there is a preamble before we come to this point and this preamble can be short (as in Eucharistic Prayer II) or long (as in Eucharistic Prayer I). The priest holds his hands above the gifts to be consecrated and invokes the Holy Spirit. This gesture is seen in other places too: hands are held over those to be ordained, held over those being Confirmed, held over those who are receiving the Anointing of the Sick, hands are held above the people during the Solemn Blessings at the end of Mass. It is a visible sign to all present that we have reached the climax of this celebration. In Eucharistic Prayer III the priest says:

*Therefore, O Lord, we humbly implore you:  
by the same Spirit graciously make holy*

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<sup>9</sup> *What Happens at Mass.* Jeremy Driscoll, OSB. Gracewing: Leominster. 2005. Page 70.

*these gifts we have brought to you for consecration,  
that they may become the Body and ✠ Blood  
of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ.*<sup>10</sup>

We are told in the Catechism of the Catholic Church that, without the Holy Spirit, all is a waste.

*The Epiclesis ('invocation upon') is the intercession in which the priest begs the Father to send the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, so that the offerings may become the body and blood of Christ and that the faithful, by receiving them, may themselves become a living sacrifice to God.*<sup>11</sup>

St John Damascene (675-749) says:

*You ask how the bread and wine becomes the Body of Christ, and the wine . . . the Blood of Christ. I shall tell you: the Holy Spirit comes upon them and accomplishes what surpasses every word and thought . . . Let it be enough for you to understand that it is by the Holy Spirit, just as it was of the Holy Virgin and by the Holy Spirit that the Lord, through and in himself, took flesh.*<sup>12</sup>

#### Institution Narrative

This is then followed by the Institution Narrative and, for all its importance, this part is very short, very simple and yet very profound. In all of the Eucharistic Prayers the words of Jesus in the Institution Narrative are identical and come from the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke and St Paul's first Letter to the Corinthians. The words around these two pieces vary slightly but they each remind us of when this took place:

<i>'When the time had come for him to be glorified'</i>	(Eucharistic Prayer IV),
<i>'At the time he was betrayed'</i>	(Eucharistic Prayer II),
<i>'As he reclined at supper'</i>	(Eucharistic Prayer II for Reconciliation),
<i>'The day before he was to suffer'</i>	(Eucharistic Prayer I),

Jesus *'himself took bread'* (Eucharistic Prayer III) and gave thanks to God. Following the Jewish custom he gave thanks and said the blessing over the bread and passed it around to his companions saying:

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

<i>'On that same evening'</i>	(Eucharistic Prayer II for Reconciliation)
<i>'when supper was ended'</i>	(Eucharistic Prayers I-III, Reconciliation I, Needs I-IV)

He said the blessing over the chalice and handed this to his companions saying:

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,

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<sup>10</sup> Eucharistic Prayer III. *The Roman Missal*. Catholic Truth Society: London. 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC). Geoffrey Chapman: London. 1994. Number 1105.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC). Geoffrey Chapman: London. 1994. Number 1106.

WHICH WILL BE Poured OUT FOR YOU AND FOR MANY  
FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.  
DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.

Both of these he gave to his disciples with the instruction to eat of the bread and drink of the chalice for they were now his body and blood. This instruction was not for this once-off occasion but was to be repeated whenever they met together for worship.

Because of the invocation of the Holy Spirit during the Epiclesis, what we now have before us is the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. Some religious groups believe that Jesus never meant the words to be taken literally and so the bread and wine are simply symbols of his presence. But for us as Catholics, there is only one way to take the Lord's words and that is literally. The Lord was human like us and knew our weaknesses and our misunderstandings and yet these words are quite clear and unambiguous and so we have the Lord present in a visible way before us.

### Anamnesis and Offering

After a brief expression of our faith we have the Anamnesis in which we recall the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. It is just a few lines long and leads straight into the Offering where we offer to God the Body and Blood of Christ and also the offering of ourselves. In Eucharistic Prayer IV we say:

*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.*<sup>13</sup>

This is not a new sacrifice that is taking place but the one sacrifice of Christ from that first Holy Week perpetuated through time. In this way it is a living sacrifice because it hasn't stopped or restarted but is always there.

*The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice: 'The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different.' 'In this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the Cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner.'*<sup>14</sup>

Eucharistic Prayer IV continues:

*Therefore, Lord, remember now  
all for whom we offer this sacrifice:  
especially your servant N. our Pope,  
N. our Bishop, and the whole Order of Bishops,*

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<sup>13</sup> Eucharistic Prayer IV. *The Roman Missal*. Catholic Truth Society: London. 2011.

<sup>14</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC). Geoffrey Chapman: London. 1994. Number 1367.

*all the clergy,  
those who take part in this offering,  
those gathered here before you,  
your entire people,  
and all who seek you with a sincere heart.*<sup>15</sup>

This is a strong reminder that while the priest says and leads the Mass, the Mass is the offering of all present and in the name of all God's people. The Catechism of the Catholic Church puts it this way:

*In the Eucharist the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his body. The lives of the faithful, their praise, sufferings, prayer and work, are united with those of Christ and with his total offering, and so acquire a new value. Christ's sacrifice present on the altar makes it possible for all generations of Christians to be united with his offering.*<sup>16</sup>

### Intercessions

The Eucharist creates unity among us and builds the Church, in fact, it creates the Church and the Intercessions reflect that thinking and reality. In Eucharistic Prayer I we pray:

*Be pleased to grant her peace,  
to guard, unite and govern her  
throughout the whole world,  
together with your servant N. our Pope  
and N. our Bishop,  
and all those who, holding to the truth,  
hand on the catholic and apostolic faith.*<sup>17</sup>

Eucharistic Prayer I for Reconciliation:

*Be pleased to keep us always  
in Communion of mind and heart,  
together with N. our Pope,  
and N. our bishop.  
Help us to work together  
for the coming of your kingdom.*<sup>18</sup>

Eucharistic Prayer I for Various Needs:

*Lord, renew your Church  
by the light of the Gospel . . .  
that in a world torn by strife  
your people may shine forth  
as a prophetic sign of unity and concord.*<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Eucharistic Prayer IV. *The Roman Missal*. Catholic Truth Society: London. 2011.

<sup>16</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC). Geoffrey Chapman: London. 1994. Number 1368.

<sup>17</sup> Eucharistic Prayer I. *The Roman Missal*. Catholic Truth Society: London. 2011.

<sup>18</sup> Eucharistic Prayer I for Reconciliation. *The Roman Missal*. Catholic Truth Society: London. 2011.

<sup>19</sup> Eucharistic Prayer I for Various Needs. *The Roman Missal*. Catholic Truth Society: London. 2011.

We also pray for the dead and the new translations and prayers are an improvement in this respect. In Eucharistic Prayer I we pray:

*Remember also, Lord, your servants  
who have gone before us with the sign of faith  
and rest in the sleep of peace.  
Grant them, O Lord, we pray,  
and all who sleep in Christ,  
a place of refreshment, light and peace.*<sup>20</sup>

Eucharistic Prayer II:

*Remember also our brothers and sisters  
who have fallen asleep in  
the hope of the resurrection,  
and all who have died in your mercy:  
welcome them into the light of your face.*<sup>21</sup>

The expression 'light of your face' is far more intimate than the idea of a place of peace and happiness because in order to enjoy the 'light of your face' our loved ones must actually see God face to face and in person and this only happens in heaven.

Eucharistic Prayer IV for Various Needs:

*Remember our brothers and sisters  
who have fallen asleep in the peace  
of your Christ, and all the dead,  
whose faith you alone have known.  
Admit them to rejoice in the light of your face,  
and in the resurrection give them the fullness of life.  
Grant also to us,  
when our earthly pilgrimage is done,  
that we may come to an eternal dwelling place  
and live with you for ever.*<sup>22</sup>

Eucharistic Prayer I for Reconciliation talks about

*... the hour when we stand before you,  
Saints among Saints  
in the halls of heaven.*<sup>23</sup>

The new Eucharistic Prayers for Various Needs also place on us the requirement to help others, especially the poor and needy:

Eucharistic Prayer III for Various Needs:

*Keep us attentive to the needs of all that,  
sharing their grief and pain, their hope and joy,  
we may faithfully bring the good news of salvation*

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<sup>20</sup> Eucharistic Prayer I. *The Roman Missal*. Catholic Truth Society: London. 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Eucharistic Prayer II. *The Roman Missal*. Catholic Truth Society: London. 2011.

<sup>22</sup> Eucharistic Prayer IV for Various Needs. *The Roman Missal*. Catholic Truth Society: London. 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Eucharistic Prayer I for Reconciliation. *The Roman Missal*. Catholic Truth Society: London. 2011.

*and go forward with them along the path of your Kingdom.*<sup>24</sup>

Eucharistic Prayer IV for Various Needs:

*Open our eyes to the needs of our brothers and sisters;  
inspire in us words and actions to comfort  
those who labour and are burdened.  
May we serve them truly,  
after the example of Christ and at his command.*<sup>25</sup>

### Final Doxology

All of the Eucharistic Prayers conclude with the Doxology ('Through him, and with him...') which the priest says or sings. In responding to this Doxology with the Great Amen we give our assent to the whole of the Liturgy of the Eucharist and also our faith that all that has been said, has and will take place; we acknowledge that on the altar now resides the person of Jesus Christ.

At the Doxology the priest elevates the paten and chalice for the third time and these elevations show in a visual way the change that has taken place. At the Offertory the paten and chalice are raised a little above the altar because they are still only bread and wine. The major elevation is at the Institution Narrative where both are held up for the people to see as they are now the Body and Blood of Christ. At the Doxology they are again held high as we give glory and praise to God for the change which has taken place.

### **Communion Rite and Concluding Rite**

We then move to the Communion Rite where we recite the Lord's Prayer and pray for peace. Holy Communion follows soon afterwards and is the most intimate moment for each of us as it is the moment when we receive Jesus Christ into ourselves. We approach in reverence and prepare ourselves from seat to sanctuary for what is about to come to us. St Cyril of Jerusalem (313-386) said:

*When you come up to receive the Lord, make your left hand a throne for your right, since your right hand is about to welcome a king.*<sup>26</sup>

Our 'Amen' to the words 'The Body of Christ' signifies our acceptance and our belief that what we are receiving is truly the Body of Christ. We return to our place and spend time in quiet prayer giving thanks for what we have received. Again,

*According to the recommendation of Pius X, Eucharistic Communion must be seen not as a reward for the pure and perfect, but as a strength for the small and weak.*<sup>27</sup>

We are all sinners in need of grace and receiving Holy Communion is one such moment of grace for each of us.

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<sup>24</sup> Eucharistic Prayer III for Various Needs. *The Roman Missal*. Catholic Truth Society: London. 2011.

<sup>25</sup> Eucharistic Prayer IV for Various Needs. *The Roman Missal*. Catholic Truth Society: London. 2011.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in *The Mass: Understanding What's What*. Patrick Mullins, O.Carm. Veritas: Dublin. 2009. Page 45.

<sup>27</sup> *The Eucharist, Gift of Divine Life*. Theological-Historical Commission for the Great Jubilee Year 2000. Crossroad Publishing Company: New York. 1999. Page 133.

In many places the Precious Blood is also given to those who come to Holy Communion. This is something which, in an ideal world, would be the norm but in our world is not always possible for various reasons. Cardinal Wuerl reminds us that

*Christ, after all, is fully present under each species alone. When we receive the host by itself, we receive Jesus' body and blood, soul and divinity. When we receive from the chalice alone, we receive Jesus' body and blood, soul and divinity. People with severe sensitivities to wheat, for example, can receive only from the chalice; but, by doing so, they receive all of Jesus and all the grace of the sacrament.*<sup>28</sup>

The Communion Rite concludes with the priest leading us in prayer. He then moves to the Concluding Rite which includes the Blessing and Dismissal. The dismissals, or the sending out, have all changed and are the result of a Synod of Bishops in Rome. Rather than simply telling us that everything is finished and we can now leave, they are very much in keeping with what we have been doing and they give us a mandate, a mission, to take what we have seen and heard and to make it part of our lives. Two in particular are striking:

*Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.*

*Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.*<sup>29</sup>

These dismissals certainly make us think for a moment because they do not allow us to slip away quietly and tick the box to say that we have fulfilled our duty for this week. The dismissal now places before us that what we have heard and done and received must influence what we are going to do until we come back to the Eucharist tomorrow or next week. The dismissals remind us that we are baptised Christians and that we have a duty to proclaim that Christianity by how we live our life. And so, in some ways, the dismissal is but the beginning of what we have received – the easy part is now done but a very important part now begins as we are sent out to ‘*announce the Gospel of the Lord*’.

## Conclusion

To conclude, this has been a quick trip through the Eucharistic celebration as we know it and as we experience it. It is in the Mass that we come face to face with the Eucharist. And so the Mass, the Eucharist, is not simply something we attend each week, or each day, but must be something which influences everything we do. It must be the centre of our lives from which all our undertakings and relationships find meaning, purpose, direction and inspiration. I conclude with the words of Cardinal Wuerl:

*As we said in the beginning of these pages: the Mass is what we do. It is what we were baptised for. It is what we were created for! It is our only true fulfilment this side of heaven. In the Mass we encounter the glory God wishes to give us in eternity. Then we'll see that glory, because then "we shall see him as he is" (1John 3:2). Yet even now God possesses all that glory, and even now we receive it in the Mass. We have heaven and we hold it close, though we perceive it only by faith.*

*The Mass is what we do; and it's what we should always be doing, not only because we go often, but because the Mass, in a very real sense – and through a very real presence – defines our life.*

*Ours is a life of self-giving, the life of a Christian, the life of Christ.*<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *The Mass: the Glory, the Mystery, the Tradition.* Cardinal Donald Wuerl & Mike Aquilina. Doubleday: New York. 2011. Page 195.

<sup>29</sup> *The Roman Missal.* Catholic Truth Society: London. 2011.

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<sup>30</sup> *The Mass: the Glory, the Mystery, the Tradition*. Cardinal Donald Wuerl & Mike Aquilina. Doubleday: New York. 2011. Page 207.