

THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

PART FOUR: THE EPICLESIS, THE INSTITUTION NARRATIVE & THE CONSECRATION

Elements of the Eucharistic Prayer: The Eucharistic Prayer is constituted or made up of a number of elements, each of which is vital for an understanding of the true nature of the prayer. Although the elements may be worded differently from one prayer to another, they all must be present. Previous bulletin inserts have already described two of these elements: (1) Thanksgiving, chiefly found in the Preface, but in some Eucharistic Prayers continued through the section following the Holy, Holy, Holy; and (2) The People's Acclamation, *Holy, Holy, Holy!* that concludes the Preface.

The Epiclesis: The Epiclesis is another of these essential elements. Epiclesis is a Greek word meaning "invocation." In the Eucharistic Prayers there are two such invocations, both of them calling on the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Blessed Trinity, who prays for and in us, even when we do not have words to pray. In the first Epiclesis, prayed immediately before the words of Institution and the Consecration, the Church implores the Holy Spirit to bless these gifts of bread and wine so that they may become the body and blood of Christ. The second Epiclesis, is a prayer that the Holy Spirit, the source of all unity in the Church, will bless the assembled faithful, so that through sharing in the body and blood of the Lord in Holy Communion, their unity may be strengthened, that they may become truly *one body, one spirit in Christ*.

The Institution Narrative and Consecration: The Narrative of Institution and the Consecration is perhaps the most familiar of the essential elements. The Institution Narrative, is the description of what the Lord did when he instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper. The words of this description are slightly different in each of our current Eucharistic Prayers, for example, in Eucharistic Prayer One we find: *On the day before he was to suffer he took bread in his holy and venerable hands, and with eyes raised to heaven to you, O God, his almighty Father, giving you thanks, he said the blessing, broke the bread and gave it*

to his disciples, saying:

while Eucharistic Prayer Three reads: *For on the night he was betrayed he himself took bread, and giving you thanks he said the blessing, broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying:*

The Institution narrative in each Eucharistic Prayer is followed immediately by the words of Consecration which are exactly the same in every Eucharistic Prayer. It is the teaching of the Church that through the words of Consecration, the action of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit, the body and blood of Christ, and his sacrifice offered for us on the cross, become sacramentally present.

The Sacrifice that Continues: The Institution Narrative first proclaimed by Christ at the Last Supper on Holy Thursday links this event with the Sacrifice of Calvary which would take place on Good Friday. Christ's words, *This is my body which will be given up for you and This is the cup of my blood . . . which will be poured out for you and for all for the forgiveness of sins.*, foreshadow the saving death of Christ. And at each celebration of the Eucharist, once again, his perfect and unending sacrifice becomes present in our midst.

The Food that Nourishes our Souls:

In this great act of the Eucharist Christ once again becomes present under the signs of bread and wine. Bread and wine as food and drink nourish and quench thirst. Our Savior makes use of these life-giving natural elements to feed and nourish us spiritually, to quench our hunger and thirst for him on the journey of life. Whoever eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood has *eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my Flesh is true food, and my Blood is true drink.*

In Memory of Me: The Consecration concludes with the words *Do this in memory of me*. Whenever we come together for the celebration of Mass, we carry out this command of the Lord, gathering in memory of his saving deeds and once again offering these saving deeds in praise and honor of the Father.