

“YEAR OF THE EUCHARIST” - MASS PARTS (PART 2) - Fr. Steve Lape

Last week, we focused on the 1st section of the Mass: the Introductory Rite. Today, we'll focus on the 3 remaining sections: the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and the Concluding Rite.

Liturgy—This is any religious ceremony or a ritual within a service. In “the Liturgy of the Word,” God’s Word is proclaimed. “Liturgy” comes from a Greek word “leitourgia,” meaning “the work of the people.” Thus, people “work” at Mass through giving praise to God in Jesus Christ to draw closer to Him and seek His will.

Homily—After the Scripture readings are proclaimed at Mass (which is an example of a liturgy), a homily is usually given—a commentary by a clergy member (bishop, priest, or deacon) to relate the proclaimed Scriptures to congregants’ everyday lives. The homily may also focus on the significance of the special day on which a Mass is celebrated, or the season that it’s taking place in. God’s grace still comes through the homilist to bless the people, no matter how good, poor, or hard to understand the homilist may be. That’s important to remember.

Nicene Creed—This is the set of beliefs that Catholics hold and say out loud after the homily, based on what was agreed on by church officials at the Council of Nicaea (a city which today is called Iznik, in western Turkey) in 325 A.D. It states what we believe about our Lord and saving God, Jesus Christ, who suffered, died, rose, and ascended into Heaven, offering all believers the hope of eternal life, through the guidance of His Holy Spirit.

Intercessions—These are prayers offered for various needs of the local community and the rest of society. They are said after the Creed. They are also referred to as “Prayers of the Faithful” or General Intercessions. Whenever people “intercede,” they act on behalf of another person or group of people. Thus, the congregation gives voice to various needs for healing and help on behalf of others in need. This concludes the Liturgy of the Word.

Offertory—This kicks off the 3rd section of the Mass: the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Gifts of bread, wine, water & money are brought forth from the gathered community, as they symbolize our offering praise and thanks to God.

Preface (pronounced PREH-fuss)—This introduction to the Eucharistic Prayer is said after the bread, wine & water are prepared at the altar, and the presider’s prayer over the gifts. The presider begins the Preface with a brief dialogue: Presider: “The Lord be with you.” (People: “And with your spirit.”) Presider: “Lift up your hearts.” (People: “We lift them up to the Lord.”) Presider: “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.” (People: “It is right and just.”) Then the Presider prays on behalf of the people, joining the angels & saints in praise at Mass.

Sanctus—A Latin word for “holy.” It is the term to describe the “Holy, Holy, Holy” hymn, which could either be sung or spoken. This concludes the Preface to the Eucharistic Prayer.

The Eucharistic Prayer is the high point of the Mass. It draws worshippers into the mystery of God’s saving plan through Jesus’ ministry on earth, His suffering, dying, rising & ascending for our sakes, especially recalling His words at His Last Supper with the Apostles (the very 1st Mass), while He offered bread and wine to them as His Body and Blood, miraculously transformed by the Holy Spirit. Those words, uttered by the presiding priest who acts in the person of Jesus Christ, comprise “the Institution Narrative,” recalling when Jesus instituted the Eucharist for future believers to continue doing in His name, as He said, “Do this in remembrance of me.”

Epiclesis (epi-CLEE-sis)—This is the section of the Eucharistic Prayer when the presiding priest invokes the Holy Spirit to change the bread and wine on the altar into the Body and Blood of Christ.

Anamnesis (an-am-NEE-sis)—This is from a Greek word meaning, “recollection” or “memorial.” Also known as the Memorial Acclamation, this Mass part takes place right after the Institution Narrative, as the presider invites the congregants to respond to “the mystery of faith” in the middle of the Eucharistic Prayer by singing or saying together one of 3 responses. In this acclamation, we proclaim our faith in: what Jesus has done for us through His death & resurrection, His giving us His Body and Blood sacramentally to nourish us through the Eucharistic celebration, and looking ahead to future joy for all who believe and remain close to the Lord in His promises.

Doxology—This is a brief hymn of praise to God, usually found at the end of a prayer. There are several in the Mass. The longest one is the *Gloria*, sung or said in the Introductory Rite. The 2nd one comes at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer, when the presider says: “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, forever and ever.” People reply: “Amen” (meaning, “so be it.”) Another is after the Lord’s Prayer: “For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever.” You may also have used another doxology when praying the Rosary or other prayers, and it goes: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning is now, and will be forever. Amen.”

Embolism—After the “Great Amen” is sung or said at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer, the Lord’s Prayer is spoken. In between the “Our Father” and the “For the kingdom, the power...” is the presider’s short prayer that begins with “Deliver us, O Lord, we pray, from every evil...” That prayer is called the embolism (an insertion.)

The Liturgy of the Eucharist concludes with the Sign of Peace, “Lamb of God” hymn, and distribution of Communion. The Concluding Rite (4th Mass section) has the priest’s Closing Prayer, final blessing, & final hymn.