

## The Holy Eucharist and The Order of the Mass

### I. The Entrance Rites

In the very early Roman times, people gathered as an assembly. As they were gathering, oftentimes psalms were recited in preparation for the Mass.

To give a definite starting action, at a very early age, an entrance ritual evolved whereby the priest passed into the community to recite the first prayer. Eventually, the priest entered to the accompaniment of the choir.

The incensation ritual came from the East. The blessed smoke was intended to signify and awaken sentiments of purification and sanctification. Psalm 50, the Miserere, was chanted. In pre-Christian times, incense was believed to keep demons away.

The asperges, or sprinkling with holy water, developed about the eighth or ninth century, which paralleled the usage of incense. Again the Miserere was recited. This sprinkling ritual reminded the faithful of their baptism.

In both the incensation and the asperges, the faithful called to mind sins, and the priest prayed for the forgiveness of sins for himself and for the whole community.

The formal greeting at the beginning of Mass goes back to the time of St. Augustine, as he records in his work *The City of God*. Since the earliest times of the Church, the Mass began with the sign of the cross.

The Penitential Rite was prescribed by the *Didache*. This rite involved an examination of conscience and a public confession of sins before the celebration of the Eucharist. In the early Church, the asperges with the renewal of baptismal vows was moved to this point and formed part of, if not the whole, penitential rite. However, this is not to be confused with the Sacrament of Penance.

The Confiteor ("I confess...") originated about the eighth century, but the one we have today is from the Mass of Pope St. Pius V.

The Kyrie which spread through the Church about the sixth century, preceded the priest's prayer. It was first used as early as the fourth century. The Kyrie was adapted to be the ending of various petitions. In the East as many as 42 petitions were offered. Until the eighth century, the litany would continue until the Pope gave a signal to stop. In the ninth century, it was fixed at nine. Presently, in the Mass, three petitions may be offered ending with either "Lord have mercy" or "Christ have mercy." The plain chanted Kyrie also follows the recitation of the Confiteor. The use of three petitions arose because of the Trinity.

The Gloria is a hymn of praise. The Greek version appeared about the year 380 in the *Apostolic Constitution* and the New Testament *Codex Alexandrinus* (5th century) which contain the gloria almost exactly in its present wording. In the Middle Ages, it was used as a solemn hymn for special feasts. By the sixth century, it was used on Sunday and feasts.

The Gloria is indicative of the glory of God. Coming together in the Mass, the faithful give glory to God. The Gloria has two sections: the first praises God, the Father, and the second, Christ. In the first part, we thank the Father for His glory: after all, the fact that God has revealed His glory to His people in creation and in history is the most important reason not only for our adoration but also for our gratitude. In the second part, the hymn focuses on Jesus not only as the Lamb of sacrifice but also as the triumphant Christ. The Gloria ends with a Trinitarian acclamation.

The Opening Prayer or Collect (for summing-up or gathering) concludes the Entrance Rites. The Prayer is addressed to God, the Father. The mystery commemorated on the particular day or the special basis for the faithful's confidence is mentioned in an attitude of praise and worship. The prayer itself is a petition. The prayer ascends to the Father "through Jesus Christ," for He is the bridge, the mediator and advocate, the one who became like us so that we might be united with the Father; and "in the unity of the Holy Spirit" recognizing the Holy Spirit as the personified union between Father and Son as well as the uniting force between the Church and God.

## II. The Liturgy of the Word

In the early Church, the Readings varied for each liturgy. Some had multiple readings. In the West, the pattern developed where a reading from one of the epistles would precede the Gospel, since Easter was a New Testament event. The acclamation "Thanks be to God" (*Deo gratias*) was in use as early as the fourth century.

The Gradual or Responsorial Psalm was also used. A cantor came forward with a book of chants on the psalms (Cantatorium). The people would sing the refrain. The cantor could go up to the next to the top step to the ambo. This step was called the gradus, hence the term gradual.

The Alleluia verse preceding the Gospel also is of ancient tradition. This song was the recalled the Easter proclamation.

The Gospel was always given a place of honor. A member of the clergy always read the gospel. In the Roman liturgy, the priest or deacon would take the gospel book from the altar and be lead to the ambo in a small scale procession with acolytes bearing candles and incense. St. Jerome recounted that a similar procession was performed when a dignitary entered a room in ancient court ceremonies. The acclamation "Glory to you, O Lord" (*Gloria tibi, Domini*), which occurs for the first time at this Expositio, expresses the conviction of Christ's presence

in the Gospel as does the altar itself and the acclamation "Praise to you, O Christ" (*Laus tibi, Christe*). These acclamations date to the fourth century.

Since the earliest times, people sat for the readings. However, they always stood for the gospel. By the ninth century, the three-fold sign of the cross was used, signifying that the mind is open to receive Christ's word, that it is confessed with our lips, and above all that it is taken to heart.

Vatican II implemented the usage of one ambo, and also a three-year cycle of readings for Sundays and a two-year cycle for weekday Masses.

After the Gospel, the priest delivered the Homily which served as a catechetical instruction. The task of the homily is to help the faithful understand the reading of Sacred Scripture and to make the word of God relevant for today. It should link the Word of God with the Holy Eucharist.

The Profession of Faith or Creed is the response to the proclaimed Word and the homily. The Creed was formally introduced into the Mass about the 500s, although it was generally recited prior to that time. By 800, it had usage throughout the Carolingian Kingdom of Charlemagne, who used the Creed of Nicea (with the additions of Constantinople) with the *filioque* clause. The entire congregation recited the Creed. Unfortunately, singing as well as Latin eventually transferred this task to a choir, but this practice has now changed.

The Petitions or General Intercessions have been in usage since the early days of the Church. There was a three part structure: a call to prayer, the petitions, and the priest's concluding prayer. St. Justin said that the intentions should remember the Church; bishop and clergy; peace in the world; a good harvest; country and city; the sick, poor, and needy; the dead; the forgiveness of sins; and a holy death.

### III. The Liturgy of the Eucharist

Here the focus of action is on the altar, as the Liturgy of the Word was on the ambo. At this point the catechumens are led from the church; only the baptized could participate in the Liturgy of the Eucharist (*disciplina arcana*).

In the 300s, a formal offertory procession evolved. People would bring to the altar the bread and wine to be offered. They would sometimes be accompanied by incense and candles, signifying Christ going to his own sacrifice; this practice was found especially in the East.

In the Middle Ages, people also would bring other gifts-- money, food, medicine, clothing-- which would be offered to God and for the usage of the church. After Mass, these other gifts would be distributed to those in need. In the eleventh century, this offertory generally gave way to simply a money collection.

The offertory prayers go back to the *Didache* and are originally rooted in Jewish blessings. The new formula, "Blessed are you, Lord, . . .," has a threefold idea: The bread and wine are products of this our earth and thus symbolize our world and our life; they also signify the work of our hands and our daily labor; and they are offered here as the matter or material disguise for what they will become in the Eucharistic mystery.

The prayers for the comingling of the water and wine are found in the eleventh century Roman sacramentaries. Prior to this time, St. Cyprian, however, underscored that this symbolized the divinity of Jesus who became man and took on also a human nature.

Originating in the fourth century, the lavabo or washing of hands sometimes occurred at the very start of the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The washing symbolized the interior purity with which the priest wanted to enter into the sacred mystery.

In the early days, the priests said the offertory prayers inaudibly, because only he should enter into the holy of holies before God. They were then followed by *Orate, fratres et sorores* (Pray brethren that . . .) inviting the congregation now to participate. This practice arose about the eighth century.

The Anaphora or Eucharistic Prayer is the heart of the Liturgy of the Eucharist and contains several parts:

The Preface goes back to the earliest times of the Church. Even the *Didache* has these words. The new missal offers various Prefaces for feast days and the various liturgical seasons. The Preface is a "speaking before" as a praise of God and as a proclamation before the community of the faithful. This prayer is offered in union with all of the angels and saints, showing the linkage between the Church on earth with the Church in heaven.

The Sanctus also appears in the earliest forms of the Mass, possibly dating to the time of the apostles. Several 4th and 5th century documents record the Sanctus, but surprisingly it is missing from St. Hippolytus' Eucharistic Prayer. This hymn was inspired by the text of Isaiah's vision (6:2-3), which was incorporated in the Synagogue worship during the second century after Christ.

The Benedictus of the Sanctus is the acclamation with which the crowds greeted Jesus on Palm Sunday (Matthew 21:9). This was probably added to the Sanctus in about the 5th century. The Benedictus reflects the Apocalypse's praise "to God and to the Lamb" (5:13).

The congregation always sung the Sanctus.

The Canon developed from the words of Christ used at the Last Supper, as recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The words of consecration used at Mass exhibit a close parallelism between the bread and wine, a close adherence to the Gospel words, and embellishments to these words also.

The consecration takes place within the context of a thanksgiving prayer, which continues as a petition begging God to accept and bless the offering.

The Epiclesis is the calling down of the Holy Spirit, generally symbolized when the priest places his hands over the bread and wine. Originally it was after the consecration.

The Words of Consecration or Institution Narrative are the words of Christ, which are efficacious, and with the power of the Holy Spirit and through the priesthood of Christ entrusted to a validly ordained priest, transform the bread and wine substantially and make sacramentally present the Body and Blood of our Lord. At this point, at the beginning of the words of consecration, transubstantiation takes place.

The Anamnesis is the remembrance, the first prayer after the words of the institution narrative. The whole Mass in a sense constitutes an anamnesis, a remembrance of the death and resurrection of the Lord. Here specifically the priest recalls the Lord's mandate to remember Him, what He did, and His glorious return.

The Supplices is when the Church prays to God to take the sacrifice to His heavenly altar, so that those who receive from it the Body and Blood of Christ may "be filled with every heavenly grace and blessing."

Since the beginning of the fourth century, the Eucharistic Prayer has included Petitions: "We pray for...." Here, the saints are invoked, especially the apostles and martyrs, the Blessed Mother, and St. Joseph. As a sign of unity throughout the Church, the intentions of the Holy Father and the local Bishop are remembered. Finally, the living and deceased members of the Church are remembered.

The Second Vatican Council mandated that the liturgy should be reformed with "due care ... taken to preserve their substance" (#50). At the same time, however, the Council decreed that the reform should be such that the faithful not merely understand the rites and prayers (the wording suggested by the preparatory commission), but "through a proper appreciation of the rites and prayers" they reach out to and actively participate in the mystery thereby signified (#48). Therefore, during the Canon, the priest pray aloud and the people responded with the memorial acclamation. Also, vernacular languages were allowed to aid in the congregation's participation.

Eucharistic Prayer I (the Roman Canon) originates in its present form with the Mass of Pope Pius V (1570). In the revisions of the Mass in 1969, three new Eucharistic Prayers were approved and have the following distinctions:

Eucharistic Prayer II is substantially the one of St. Hippolytus of Rome, written about 215 AD. Having its own special Preface, the prayer has simple clarity in its thanksgiving prayer and brevity. Eucharistic Prayer II is not intended for Sunday Mass, but for week days.

Eucharistic Prayer III reflects the Roman tradition. It has the traditional pattern of the Roman Canon, with a varying Preface and invariable Canon. The narrative after the Preface

is neither too short nor too long. The introduction focuses on the Church, the fruit of the redemption: God gathers all people from all ages.

Eucharistic Prayer IV was modeled on the anaphoras of the West Syrian type. Having its own Preface, the prayer describes salvation history in the introduction after the Sanctus. It is saturated with Biblical phrasing.

In these three new Eucharistic Prayers, the petitions appear after the consecration: the Church, the community, the dead, the saints.

The Eucharistic Prayers end with the doxology, "through him...", recited or sung during the elevation of the Sacred Species. This practice was in current usage since the third century.

Probably, Pope Gregory the Great (d. 604) added the Lord's Prayer after the Eucharistic Prayer. The perfect nature of the prayer was looked upon as good preparation to receive holy communion.

The Lamb of God symbolizes Christ's passion. In the seventh century, the hymn was sung during the breaking of the consecrated bread.

The comingling action represents the unity of Christ's Body and Blood. He is the one Christ. This action shows unity of the sacrifice despite the two separate consecrations.

The Kiss of Peace was described by Tertullian (c. 220). In the beginning, it occurred after the Liturgy of the Word, the token of brotherly love before offering sacrifice (MT 5:23-24). However, Pope Innocent I in 416 AD advocated its present location.

#### IV. The Concluding Rites

The Mass concludes with the Concluding Prayer, the Blessing, and the Dismissal.