

# The New Roman Missal

## Eucharistic prayer, first five parts

### The heart of the matter

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**By Sr. Ann Rehrauer**

Last time, we considered the changing style of the proper prayers prayed by the priest. Today, we focus on the center and high point of the Mass — the eucharistic prayer (GIRM, n. 78) in which the whole assembly joins with Christ in offering his sacrifice and in praising God.

The eucharistic prayer has nine different parts. We begin with:

- an introductory dialogue; followed by
- a prayer of thanks called “the preface.” The preface highlights the role of Jesus as the Savior through whom the Father made all things. The titles of “Savior” and “Redeemer” appear often in the prefaces and the new missal will have an added description taken from the Creed: “Incarnate by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin.” In the new translation, instead of “opening his arms on the cross,” we will hear “Jesus stretched out his hands as he endured his Passion, so as to break the bonds of death and manifest the resurrection.”
- The Preface is followed by the sung acclamation (Sanctus); and the
- Epiclesis, an invocation of the Holy Spirit. Today, we ask that God let the Spirit come upon our gifts to make them holy. In November, we will pray, “make holy these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall.” At first, the reference to dewfall may sound strange to us. It recalls God’s gift of manna to the Israelites. As they journeyed through the desert for 40 years, each morning as the dewfall lifted, there was a substance called “manna” which they collected as food for the day. This special food prefigured the Eucharist (see 1 Jn 4:18). As we understand the connection and hear the added phrase, we recall God’s constant care in providing spiritual nourishment for us.
- The institution narrative, or Words of Consecration, follows the epiclesis. The simple change in these words required the specific approval of the Holy Father. In fact, he asked for another change so that the text would repeat exactly the wording in Mk 14:24 and Mt 26:28:

*At the time he was betrayed and entered willingly into his Passion,  
He took bread, and, giving thanks, broke it and gave it to his disciples saying,  
“Take this, all of you and eat of it, for this is my body which will be given up for you.”  
In a similar way, when the supper was ended, He took the chalice and once more giving thanks,*

*He gave it to his disciples and said, "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."*

The translators chose "chalice" rather than "cup" because a chalice is a particular kind of vessel used for Communion and shared with others who drink from it. Christ's blood is poured out. It means the same as "being shed," but the imagery of pouring refers to both his blood poured out on the cross and what is poured into and from the chalice.

Hearing that Christ's blood was poured out for many, may again, give us pause. The church has always taught that Christ's love and redemptive death was for everyone. This change in text does not change that belief, nor does it attempt to restrict salvation.

The change from "for all" to "for many" is the exact wording in the Gospels. One might ask why the Scripture writers chose "for all" so many years ago. We aren't certain. Perhaps it is because while Christ died for all, not all accept the gift of redemption. In any case — there is no change in theology here.

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#### **Next**

The last four sections of the eucharistic prayer: the memorial acclamation, the offering, the intercessions, and the doxology.