

THE MASS AS THE BEGINNING OF HEAVEN ON EARTH – PART V

THE CLOSING OF THE LITURGY OF THE WORD AND THE BEGINNING OF THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

I. The Creed, a term taken from the Latin word "credere," or "to believe," expresses both the individual faith, and faith within the context of the Church. See Catechism 166-167.

A. The current translation begins each section with the words, "We believe," but the new translation will follow the Latin in beginning with "I believe," or later "I confess,"

1. From ancient times, the profession of faith has been a prelude to baptism. See Act 8:37. From the early Church on, when an adult is baptized, he professes this faith in the form of the Apostles Creed, which was developed in the early Church and is currently used in the Rosary. Likewise, when an infant is baptized, his parents make this profession of faith on his behalf.

- The Apostles Creed, made in the form of answering questions "I do" is also present at the Masses of Easter; it can also be used as Masses for children.
- This Creed was developed in the first century to express what a person must believe to be Christian.

2. The Nicene Creed, which we profess at Mass, was later developed at the Council of Nicea (325) and later expanded at the Council of Constantinople (381) and a bit later (as described below.) Those Councils emphasized the divinity of Jesus Christ and then the Holy Spirit, as well as emphasizing such points as the true inspiration of what is now called the Old Testament. As a result, they expanded the Creed to what it is now.

3. The Apostles' Creed began with the words "I believe," which express one's own faith in Christ and His Church. The Nicene Creed begins with the words "We believe" to express the faith of the universal Church.

- Both formulations express a rightful aspect of the faith. For faith begins with the witness of others, but gradually leads to a more personal relationship as well, although still in the context of the community of faith. See, e.g.,

John 1:7, 12; 4:42. See Catechism 167-68. The unity of Christianity is crucial to bringing the faith to the world. See John 17:20-21

4. Faith is also more than mere belief; it is the entry into a personal relationship with God. See Catechism 177. Thus, the words "Credo in unum Deum" literally mean "I believe in one God." Belief in this sense is a personal relationship with God that leads to our trust in Him. See Catechism 177. The Gospel according to John especially describes this growth in personal relationship, which leads to a greater faith. See the progress of the apostles in John 6:68-69 to 14:1, 11; 20:29; see also John 11:26-27. By contrast, being in Christ's presence, but not believing has negative consequences. See John 6:64.

5. Although generally following the Nicene Creed, the Latin uses, and the new translation of the Creed will use, the words "I believe." While either expression would be legitimate, the Creed is in this context a preparation for one's own receipt of Communion.

B. The Creed is basically in three parts, the first dealing with God the Father and creation; the second, and longest part, dealing with Jesus Christ as both the Second Person of the Trinity and as become man to save us; and the third dealing with the Holy Spirit and the Church whom the Spirit guides. In calling for unity among Christians, St. Paul calls describes the common faith in Trinitarian terms, especially associating guidance of the Church and each person with the Spirit; faith and baptism with Jesus the Lord; and reigning power to God the Father. See Eph. 4:4-6. In his Trinitarian formulas, St. Paul consistently refers to the Father as God in general, and the Son as Lord or Christ Jesus. See, e.g., 1 Cor. 2:7-13, 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:15; Col 1:6-8. Part of his purpose was to distinguish between the persons of the Trinity.

C. The first part of the Creed deals with God the Father Almighty. The ancient Jews came to belief in one God first, and then received the revelation of the Trinity. See, e.g., John 5:46, 14:1. And so we profess first a belief in one God. The Creed says, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth." "God the Almighty" (in Hebrew El Shaddai) is the way in which God first reveals Himself to the patriarchs, before He reveals more to Moses. See Gen. 17:1, 35:11; Ex. 6:3. The name emphasizes the mystery of God, and is used most often in the Book of Job (31 times), reflecting the mysterious judgment and providence of God. See, e.g., Job 5:17, 8:3-5; 22:3, 27; 40:2. The next most common use is in the Book of Revelation (8 times), especially with reference to the worship given to God and the judgment of God, all of which ends in the peace of the heavenly Jerusalem. See Rev. 1:8, 4:8, 11:17, 15:3, 16:7, 14; 19:15; 21:22.

1. The term "Almighty" is complemented by the reference to God as Father, which has two meanings: God is the eternal Father of the divine Son, and He is Father through His love for His people. See John 1:14, 18, 10:30. The two come together in the fact that we receive God as our adoptive Father through union with the Son. See Rom. 8:15, 2 Cor. 1:3; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 1:5; Col. 1:3.
2. In the Old Testament, God revealed Himself as a Father to creation and to His people generally, and to the king specifically, but not so much specifically for each person. See, e.g., Duet. 32:6, Mal. 2:10; Ps. 103:13 (referring to God as Father of creation); Hos. 11:3-8; Jer. 31:9, 20; Mal 1:6; Is. 63:15, 64:8; The New Testament would more reveal God as the loving Father to each of His faithful. See, e.g., Luke 15:11-32 (parable of the prodigal son.) But even now, we refer to "Our Father" together as a Church, rather than "my Father" as only Jesus could rightfully do. Contrast Matt. 6:9 with John 10:29; see John 20:18.
3. The reference to God as "creator of heaven and earth" harkens back to the beginning of the Bible and to the blessing that Melchizedek, the priest-king of Salem, gave to Abraham. See Gen. 1:1; 14:19-20. Melchizedek, who represents a primordial priesthood, was a pre-figurement of Jesus as the final high priest. See Ps. 110:4; Heb. 5:6, 7:1-25. It was also part of one of the earliest prayers of the Church, which expressed God's triumph over the enemies of His people. See Acts 4:24.
4. The current reference to "all that is seen and unseen" will be translated instead "the visible and the invisible," to be more faithful to the Latin and to emphasize that God makes a spiritual realm that is not only unseen by us (as for example distant planets are) but invisible to material eyes by its nature. This phrase emphasizes that both the material realm and the spiritual realm are good and created by God, although parts of both are in part fallen. It also recalls the hymn near the beginning of Colossians, which celebrates Jesus as the one through whom both the original creation and the new creation came about. See Col. 1:14-20. The letter to the Romans draws a contrast between the faithful who worship the true God and the pagans who turn from the creator to worship creatures. See Romans 1:20-23.

C. The Creed then turns to Jesus Christ, God the Son. It first describes the Son in Himself, and then His role in creation and salvation.

1. Again, the Creed says that we believe into a relationship with our one Lord, Jesus Christ. Part of the idea is that we

should not pledge final obedience to any other power; thus the Lordship of Jesus set us free. See John 8:32, 36; Gal. 4:1-11; 5:1. Furthermore, although Gabriel and John the Baptist says that Jesus is the Lord, see, e.g., Matt. 3:3, Mark 2:28; Luke 2:11; John 1:23, Jesus does not take that title to Himself until the Crucifixion is near. See Matt. 26:63-65; Mark 14:61-62; Luke 22:67-70; After the Resurrection, Jesus is recognized more easily as Lord, a term that St. Paul uses often. See John 20:25, 28, 21:7, 21; Rom. 4:24, 6:23; 10:9, 1 Cor. 9:1, 12:3; 2 Cor. 4:14; Phil 2:11. Part of the idea is that, while He is rightfully Lord by His participation in creation, He does not show forth His power in full until He has also shown His love for us. Phil 2:6-11. Asking that the Lord Jesus come is part of the final prayer of the Bible. Rev. 22:20.

B. The Creed then affirms the divine Sonship of Jesus, first identifying Him as the only-begotten Son, and then emphasizing six more times His divine nature.

1.. The prologue of John and the angel first identify Jesus as the Son of God, see Luke 1:35; John 1:18. And the Bible picks up on this title repeatedly.

- In the Old Testament, kings and the whole people of God were sometimes called sons of God by adoption, but here the Creed emphasizes Jesus as the "only" full Son of God. The prologue of John uses different words to describe the Sonship of the divine Word (hyios) and the adopted sonship of all who believe in Him (tekna). John 1:14-18; see also John 3:16-18.

- The new translation will restore the words from Latin "only begotten" emphasizing that all others are adopted, while Jesus is God by His nature. In addition, this phrase harkens back to Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his "only son" Isaac, although in the case of God it is all the more poignant because Abraham did have a son outside of wedlock, Ishmael. See Gen.22:2; Heb. 11:17. The description of Jesus as the only Son of God is almost always in the context of His saving mission, showing forth God's love. See John 3:16-18; 1 John 4:9-5:1.

2. Describing Jesus as light from light refers to the fact that Jesus brings the light of glory, knowledge, grace, and joy to the people of God by showing forth the glory of God. See, e.g., John 1:4, 16-18. Light reflects the joy of the presence of God and delight in His creation and saving action. See, e.g., Is. 9:1-2, 60:1-4; Micah 7:9. Darkness, by contrast, reflects sin, distance from God, and death. See Ps. 88:7-13, Isaiah 45:19. By bringing God's presence and salvation,

Jesus is the light of the world. See Matt. 4:16, Luke 2:32; John 8:12, 9:5, 12:44-46. As a result for all eternity, all nations who are in God's presence in heaven will be in the light of God provided through the Lamb of God. See Rev. 21:22-24.

3. The Creed says the Son is "true God from true God" in part to contrast the worship of the one true God with the worship of many false gods. See 1 Cor. 8:5.

4. The Creed then says again that Jesus was begotten, not made. To reiterate the point, the current translation says that Jesus is "one in being" with the Father; the new translation will make the same point with the more philosophically correct term "consubstantial," which means, having the same nature (here divine, as opposed to human or angelic.)

- A person begets one of the same nature as himself. One makes something of a lower nature. A human begets another human, but makes a thing. God makes the heavens and the earth, and even human beings, see Gen. 1:1-3, Is. 29:16, but can beget only One of His own nature. 1 John does say that those who believe in Jesus are begotten "from God." See 1 John 3:10, 5:1. However, even here 1 John still says that the Son is the "only begotten" of God. 1 John 4:9. The idea is that we are made by God in the first instance, but we have a partial share in God's life through Christ.

- Giving a more vivid image, the new translation will say that Jesus was "born of the Father before all ages." While "eternally begotten" is philosophically accurate, the new phrasing, following the Latin and reflecting the royal Psalm 110, will give a more visual image.

5. The Creed then concludes the part on creation by saying all things were made through the Son. The idea is that the love between the Father and the Son, which is the Holy Spirit, is the basis for all of the creation. See John 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 1:9-10; Col. 1:16-17.

6. The Creed then turns to Christ's saving work through His Incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension.

- The Creed describes the Son as coming down from heaven for our sake. Jesus said to Nicodemus that no one has gone up to heaven except He who came down from it; and by coming down from heaven He paves the way for us to return. See John 3:13-15. Thus, He fulfilled, and continues to fulfill at every Eucharist, the vision of

Psalm 68, which describes God triumphantly descending from His throne in heaven to lead His people to victory over their enemies. See Ps. 68:18, Eph 4:8-10.

- The next phrase, "By the power of the Holy Spirit, he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man," reflect the words of an angel to Joseph. See Matt. 1:20; see also Luke 1:35. Those words will be retranslated to say the "by the Holy Spirit [He] was incarnate of the Virgin Mary. That phrasing more accurately expresses the fact that the Son of God became man, not at the Nativity, but at the Incarnation, when He was conceived. The instructions say that the priest and the people are to bow at these words, except at the Feast of the Annunciation and at Christmas, when we genuflect at these words. The idea is both that the mystery of the Incarnation is central to our faith and that there is a connection between the Incarnation and Jesus' presence in the Eucharist at every Mass.
- The Creed then says He was crucified "for our sake" and "under Pontius Pilate." The first phrase emphasizes the fact that the crucifixion was not an accident but was willingly accepted by Christ to achieve our salvation. See John 10:17-18; Heb. 9:11-15. But to emphasize human participation in the crucifixion, as well as to date it more precisely in time and space, the Creed also says that He was crucified under Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea from 26-36 A.D. See Acts 4:27-28.
- The Creed emphasizes that He truly suffered, died, and was buried emphasizing His entrance into the fullness and depth of the human condition, showing the depth of His obedience to the Father and of His love for us. See John 10:17; Phil 2:8, Heb 12:2.
- The Creed then emphasizes the fact that He rose on the third day "in fulfillment of the Scriptures." See 1 Cor. 15:1-11. Rising from the dead, He became the cause of the resurrection of all the dead. Without the Resurrection, the forces of death would be triumphant, and the faith would be in vain. See 1 Cor. 15:15-28; 1 Thess. 4:14; Rev. 1:17-18. He not only brings about the resurrection of the dead, but "is the resurrection and the life." John 11:25.
- The Creed emphasizes that the Resurrection fulfills and reflects the Scriptures in part to reiterate that the resurrection fulfills the prophesies of old, see Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Zech. 12:10-13:1; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; Luke 24:25-

27, and in part to emphasize that the Old Testament is the inspired word of God. The new translation will, in accord with the Latin, change the words "in fulfillment of" to "in accordance with." Part of the idea is to include the New Testament, which proclaims the Resurrection as a past event, in this phrase.

- The Creed then describes His ascension and enthronement "at the right hand of the Father." The ascension, which is described in Mark, Luke, and Acts of the Apostles, is the triumphant entrance in His humanity into heaven, to reign over the Church from His divine throne and draw people's to Himself. See Mark 1:19; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-1; see also Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:1. From His throne in heaven, He becomes in the Eucharist "the bread that comes down from heaven." See John 6:50, 61-62.

7. Finally, the second part of the Creed says that Jesus will return again in glory to judge the living and the dead and establish the kingdom without end.

- The angel promised that Jesus would establish a kingdom without end. See Luke 1:32-33. In one sense the kingdom is here among us, in Christ's presence, and especially in the Church. See Matt. 3:2, 4:17; Luke 17:20-21. But the parable and discourses of the kingdom describe a final kingdom that Jesus will establish. See, e.g., Matt. 13:24-30, 16:24-28; 25:14-46; Luke 13:2-30.

- The letters to the Thessalonians and the Book of Revelation, reflecting the Book of Daniel, also emphasize Jesus' return in glory to judge the living and the dead, i.e., those who die before the return of Christ, and those who are still alive at that time. See 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; Rev. 19:11-21; 20:11-15, 21:5-8; Dan. 7:9-14.

D. The last third of the creed recited at Mass states our belief and relationship with the Holy Spirit, the source of life and inspiration.

1 The Creed affirms the divinity of the Holy Spirit both by referring to Him as Lord and by saying that, with the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is worshiped and glorified.

- The Creed has already referred to the Son of God as "Lord" the term used in its fullest for God. While the term "lords" could be used simply in a lesser sense of people with authority, see, e.g., Judges 16:5-30, 1 Sam. 5:8-

6:18; Dan. 5:1-23, the Bible uses the term "Lord" (Adonai in Hebrew and Kyrios in Greek) in a singular and unqualified sense only for God. See, e.g., Gen. 18:27, Duet. 10:18; Ps. 135:5, 136:3; Matt. 4:10; Mark 1:3; John 20:28.. (Mark, perhaps subtly indicating Jesus' hidden divinity, does describe a Syropheneican woman referring to Jesus as "Lord," perhaps not recognizing the full meaning of her words. See Mark 7:28.) St. Paul frequently refers to Jesus as Lord. See, e.g., Rom. 5:1; 1 Cor. 2:8, 12:3. Consistent with the rest of the Bible, he also uses the term "Lord" for God in general. See, e.g., 1 Cor. 4:4; 2 Cor. 10:17. And, on at least one occasion, St. Paul also refers to the Holy Spirit as "Lord." See 2 Cor. 3:17.

- The Bible indicates the divinity of the Holy Spirit both in Jesus' final commissioning, see Matt. 28:19, and in the Trinitarian teachings of St. Paul, see 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:13.

2. The Creed describes the Holy Spirit as the giver of life, both in the sense that the Spirit of God is the divine life that humanity was meant to share in and in the sense that the Spirit restores life with God. See, e.g., Gen. 2:7; Ezek. 37:9-11; Rom. 8:9-11. And even now we live a life of faith and life with God because of the guidance of the Holy Spirit. See, e.g., John 3:5-6; 14:13; 1 Cor. 12:3, Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22.

3. The Creed says that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

Originally, the Creed as developed by the Council of Constantinople said only that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. Pope Leo the Great (440-461) approved of the addition that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son as well, but it was not commonly used until Charlemagne's reign in the late eighth century. Eventually, with the Holy Father's approval it became universal by the West. The Eastern rites of the Catholic Church, although agreeing that that formulation is consistent with the faith, do not use it, generally describing the procession of the Holy Spirit as from the Father through the Son. The Orthodox churches, although they may agree that the addition can legitimately be made, dispute the Pope's ability to authorize it without an ecumenical (universal) council agreeing.

- From the standpoint of human experience, the Father and the Son both send the Holy Spirit, see John 14:16, 15:26, 16:7.

4. The Creed says that, with the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is "worshiped and glorified." The new translation will say that he is "adored and glorified," but the meaning will be the same. The Bible also consistently speaks of glorifying God by recognizing His saving power and the power of His word and acting upon this power. See, e.g., Ps. 29:1-2, 86:10-13; Is. 25:3; Luke 2:20, 5:25; 2 Thess. 1:10-12 God glorified Himself in Christ by showing forth His saving power. See, e.g., John 12:16-28, 13:31-32. It is the enemies of God who glorify themselves. See Rev. 18:7. By contrast, those who honor God share in His glory. See Is. 60:7-9.

5. Affirming the divine inspiration of the Old Testament, the Creed affirms that the Holy Spirit has spoken through the prophets.

- We particularly attribute the inspiration of Sacred Scriptures to the Holy Spirit. See 2 Peter 1:20-21, Vatican II, Dei Verbum 1; Catechism 105. Affirming again that the Old Testament was inspired by God, the Creed specifically refers to the Holy Spirit as speaking through the prophets. The Bible especially associates the voice of prophecy with the Spirit of God. See, e.g., Num. 11:24-30; Is. 61:1-3; Ezek. 3:12-14; Micah 3:8; Hosea 10:7. The spirit was also associated with the divinely appointed king and with wisdom. See 1 Sam. 10:5-13; Is. 11:1-4; Wis. 1:4-7.

- There is a present element as well to the Spirit speaking through the prophets. For, although the Sacred Scriptures are completed, there are gifts given to Christians through the Spirit who unites them all. See 1 Cor. 12:4-11. Moses wished for a time in which the spirit of prophecy would come to all of the people; and Joel, and possibly Ezekiel, foresaw such a time. See Num. 11:29; Joel 3:1-3; Ezekiel 36:26-27, 37:14. At Pentecost, this time was fulfilled, but as Confirmation emphasizes, the notion of Christians bearing a prophetic voice to the world continues. See Rite of Confirmation, Renewal of Baptismal Promises; see also Acts 8:14; 10:45; 11:12, 24, 13:52.

6. The Creed then affirms our belief in (or into) one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. Although these words are never used together in the Bible, they emphasize the aspects of the Church (or marks of the Church) that the Bible emphasizes.

- Although the Gospels only twice record Him as using the term "Church," Jesus prayed passionately at the Last

Supper that His followers may be one. John 17:20-22; see also John 10:16. The Acts of the Apostles presents a unified Church and St. Paul picks up on this theme, emphasizing the importance of maintaining unity of faith, worship, and mutual charity. See Acts 2:42-46, 4:32-37, 9:31; Rom. 12:1-8; 1 Cor. 12:7-31; Gal. 1:8-9; Eph. 4:1-6; Col. 3:12-17.

- The Church is holy in the fullest sense in heaven, where Jesus and Mary reign with all the saints, or the "holy ones." See Rev. 5:8. Even on earth, her members are referred to in Scripture as "the holy ones." Acts 9:13, 1 Cor. 6:1, 16:1; 1 Peter 2:9.. The idea is in part that, to the degree we are in Christ the head of the Church, we are without sin; however, because we are still dragged down with sin, our unity in Christ is incomplete. See 1 John 1:8-9, 3:9. The Bible tends to describe the Church herself as holy in the context of her being the mystical bride of Christ. Eph. 5:26-27; Rev. 21:2, 9-10.
- The Church is "catholic," which means universal. She is universal both insofar as she has the full means of grace and insofar as she encompasses all cultures. The Acts of the Apostles emphasizes the Church as encompassing all peoples. See, e.g., Acts 2:5-12; 10:34-11:18, 15:6-21, 28:28.. Likewise, the Book of Revelation describes Christ's message to each of seven churches, representing individual churches throughout the world, but then concludes with the one Church coming to Jesus as His bride. Rev. 2-3, 21:1-21. St. Paul also emphasizes the same Spirit working through all of the gifts given to the members of the one Body of Christ. See, e.g., Rom. 12:2-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-31; Eph. 4:7-16.
- The Church is apostolic, because she is built upon the foundation of the apostles, she continues their tradition and authority, and her members are sent forth into the world. The letter to the Ephesians emphasizes the fact that the Church was built upon the foundation of the apostles. Eph. 2:20. Revelation picks up on this theme, saying that the names of the apostles are on the foundations of the wall of the heavenly Jerusalem. See Rev. 21:13. However, the office of "apostle" continued after the original twelve, along with St. Paul, through appointments and the laying on of hands. See Acts 14:4, 14; 1 Cor. 4:9-13, 9:5; Gal. 2:9; Some other references are ambiguous. E.g., 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11. Thus, the office of guiding and teaching was meant to continue after the original twelve and St. Paul had died. The term apostle as an office in the church would later be replaced with "episcopos" (literally meaning overseer) and then "bishop." See Phil 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:7. The term "apostle" originally meant one who is sent forth, and the Church is also apostolic insofar as her members are sent

forth to witness to the Gospel. See John 17:19-21; see also Romans 16:7; 1 Cor. 15:7; Rev. 28:20 (using the term "apostle" apparently more as a missionary or witness.)

7. Continuing along the lines of the mission of the Church, the Creed ends with an affirmation of one baptism for the forgiveness of sins, and in the resurrection and life everlasting.

- The language will change from "believe" to "confess" because the relationship with God through the Church has already been established. The remaining matters are affirmations, based upon the entry into the relationships just described.

- The Creed affirms baptism as more than a mere symbol, but necessary for the forgiveness of sins. At Pentecost, Peter says, "Repent and be baptized , every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins." Acts 2:38-41; see Matt. 28:20-2. Likewise, baptism is continually associated with salvation and entrance into the Church. See Acts 8:12-13, 38; 10:47-48; 16:33. St. Paul naturally associates baptism and union with Christ. See Rom.6:3, 1 Cor. 1:13-16; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:5; Col. 2:12. Part of the idea of reaffirming the importance of baptism is that, through baptism one gains the gift of faith and union with the Church, and is therefore, able to participate fully in the Mass.

8. The Nicene Creed says that we "look forward to" the resurrection of the dead. (The Apostles' Creed has said resurrection of the body, in part to refute Gnosticism, which denied the goodness of material creation.)

- a. The current translation says we "look for." The Latin and the new translation indicate more clearly that the resurrection is in the future by saying that we "look forward to."
- b. The saints are already in heaven by means of their soul, but they await the resurrection of the body that will complete their glory and ability to be joined to those on earth. That is why the Bible speaks both of the dead currently interceding for the living and concerned about earthly affairs, see Matt.27:51-53, Heb. 12:10; Rev. 6:10, but also of a future resurrection of the dead and "awakening" of the dead. 1 Cor. 15:18, 51; 1 Thess 4:14; see also Rev. 20:4-6. Jesus speaks of the elect as being "like the angels" after the resurrection of the dead, see Matt. 22:30-31, Mark 12:23; Luke 20:35-36. Jesus' own resurrection shows forth the glorified body, which is related to the current body, but also vastly greater. See Luke

II. After the Creed, the Liturgy of the Word proceeds onto the prayers of the faithful, as it has from the first days of the Church. See St. Justin Martyr, *Apologia* 1:65-67.

A. The order of intercessions is meant to be: (1) for the needs of the Church; (2) for public authorities; (3) for those burdened by any kind of difficulty; and (4) for the local community. General Instructions to the Roman Missal 69-70; Catechism 1349; see Vatican II Council, Sacrosanctum Concilium 53. Because most Masses are offered for the deceased, we also often add an intercession for the dead. See 2 Macc. 12:42-46; see also 1 Cor. 15:29.

B St. Paul especially exhorts the faithful to pray together for the needs of others, especially for those in ecclesial or secular office. See Rom. 15:30-32; Eph. 6:18-20; Phil 4:6; Col. 4:2-4; 2 Thess. 3:1; 1 Tim. 2:1-2. See also James 5:15 (prayers for the sick.)

C. With the prayers of the faithful, the priest calls the people to prayer, the deacon (if there is one present) or lector is meant to offer the prayers, and the priest concludes by offering the prayers to God. The response is either: "Lord, hear our prayer" or "Lord, have mercy." Both phrases frequently accompany prayers for help in times of trouble, expressing confidence that God will make His power known. See Ps. 27:7, 30:11; 51:3. See also Ex. 2:24; Ps. 18:7. Isaiah warns that prayers offered without an attempt to do what is right will not be heard. See Is. 1:15; see also John 15:7; 1 John 4:6; Sir. 34:24-26.

D. Jesus' own words indicate that prayers are more powerful when offered together and in His presence. See Matt; 18:19-20.

III. After the intercessions, the Liturgy of the Eucharist begins. This liturgy has four basic parts, following the description from the Gospels and First Corinthians that Jesus took bread, blessed it (or gave thanks), broke the bread, and gave it to His disciples. See Matt. 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:23-24. The four parts are: (1) the preparation of the altar, reflecting Jesus taking the bread; (2) the Preface and the Eucharistic Prayer , reflecting Jesus blessing the bread and giving thanks (eucharistian in Greek);

(3) the Our Father and the fracturing rite, reflecting Jesus breaking the bread, now His body and blood; and (4) the Rite of Communion, reflecting Jesus giving the consecrated Eucharist to His disciples.

A. The focus of the Mass moves from the lectern as the place for the spoken word of God to the altar where the personal Word of God will become present. The Scripture that we here is then fulfilled. See Luke 4:21. Thus, the altar servers bring the paten, chalice, corporal, purificator, and often the sacramentary or missal, to the altar.

1. The idea is that we are preparing place for God on the altar. God is, of course, willing to be anywhere He is needed. But it is only fitting that we should do what we can to make the alter as worthy as we can for God's presence, as we make our own souls fitted for His presence. Doing so allows God's blessings to flow more toward us. See Haggai 1:3-11, 2:12-14

2. The people, or the altar servers bring bread and wine to the altar, preferably in a procession. Long ago, Melchizedek offered bread and wine, and Jesus, through His sacrifice, became, among other things, the fulfillment of the priesthood of Mechizedek. Gen. 14:18; Heb. 7..

- The notion of a bread of life and a spiritual drink also reminds one of the manna and water that sustained the Chosen People in the desert. See John 6:30-40; 1 Cor. 10:2-3. Wine is often a symbol of prosperity and joyousness in the presence of God. See Ps. 4:8, 104:14-15, Joel 2:24, Is. 55:1. Bread and wine are also a symbol of unity, both with each other and with God, for many grains are combined to make bread, and many grapes to make wine. See 1 Cor. 10:16-17. (Wine given to the unjust can also be a symbol of the wrath of God. Ps. 60:5, 75:9; Is. 51:17, 21-23; Rev. 14:15, 18-20)

3. An offering for the Church or the poor may also be brought up. There is an idea that we respond to God's generosity, and therefore become more capable of receiving more of His favor. See, e.g., Duet 16:17; Matt. 19:29; Mark 10:29-30.

B. The priest prays over the bread and wine in words that combine elements of the prayer of Melchizedek with the words of Jesus at the Bread of Life discourse. See Gen. 14:19-20; John 6:34ff.

1. The prayer refers to God of heaven and earth, both in recognizing His lordship, and in appreciating the original

goodness of creation, which although fallen, still awaits redemption. Isaiah and the Book of Revelation speak of a "new heavens and a new earth," indicating that the final kingdom will reflect the goodness of this creation, but be much greater. See, e.g., Is. 65:18-25, 66:22-23; Rev. 21:1ff.; see also Haggai 2:6, 21; Joel 3:3..

- The prayer emphasizes also that the bread and wine we offer comes from God's generosity (*largitas*), from the fruitfulness of the earth and from human labor. There is an image here of the primordial fruitfulness of the earth before the Fall, and the fruitfulness of the messianic era. See, e.g., Gen. 1:29-32, 2:8-17; Is. 51:2; Ez. 47:7-11; Amos 9:11-15; Joel 4:19; Rev. 22:1-2; see also John 2:1-11. There is also unity among God's work, nature, and human labor. All work together. See Ps. 104:19-23; Phil 2:12.

2. If there is no music during this preparation of the bread and wine, the priest can pray these prayers in a voice for all to hear. In that case, The response is: "Blessed be God forever." That response may reflect Psalm 68, which describes God's magnificent and awe-inspiring approach towards His people to save them, ends with that phrase. Also, in the Old Testament that or similar phrases were also used to express of thanksgiving either for an impending marriage, see Gen. 24: 27, 48 (Jacob and Rachel), at worship, see 1 Kings 8:15, 56, 2 Chron. 6:4 (the consecration of the Temple), or for the enthronement or restoration of a king, see 1 Kings 1:48, 10:9; Ezra 7:27. In the New Testament, the phrase "Blessed be God," and as completed by a phrase such as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," begins three poetic expressions of the grace, guidance, and deliverance that God provides us through Jesus Christ. See 2 Cor. 1:3, Eph. 1:3, 1 Peter 1:3. The idea is that we are celebrating the glorious approach of Jesus, the King and spouse of the Church, coming to the altar.

3. Before offering the wine, the priest mixes a small amount of water into it, praying "By the mystery of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled Himself to share in our humanity." Part of the idea is that the water symbolizes the Church and our own life and efforts, and the wine the grace of God and sacrifice of Christ. The two become inexorably mixed. John 15:5-7; Gal 2:20; Col 3:3. In the East, the symbolism is more the combination of the humanity and divinity of Christ in one person.

4. The priest may then incense the gifts, reflecting the lifting up of the prayers to the throne of God. See Rev. 8:3; General Instructions 75. The incense also sets the bread and wine aside as holy, creates a cloud-like image to surround the place where God will be present, see, e.g., 1 Kings 8:10-12, and symbolizes the joining our worship on earth to the

worship of the angels in heaven where smoke fills the temple of heaven. See Is. 6:4, Rev. 15:8.

C. The priest then prays privately that he may be worthy to offer the sacrifice of the Eucharist, and asks the people that God may accept the sacrifice.

1. The priest prays in silence, "Lord, we ask you to receive us and be pleased with the sacrifice we offer you with humble and contrite hearts." The first aspect, that we be received with humble and contrite hearts reflects the prayer of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace as they confess their sins and the sins of their people and ask to be delivered to show forth the glory of God. See Dan. 3:39. The second aspect, that the sacrifice be made pleasing in God's sight because of our acceptance reflects the idea that one purified of sins can then offer acceptable sacrifice to God. See, e.g., Ps. 51:11, 21. John 13:10

2. As a server is pouring water over the priest's fingers, he prays "Lord, wash away my iniquity; cleanse me of my sins." The prayer is taken from Psalm 51, which asks God to forgive the speaker of his sins so that he may offer fitting sacrifice back to God. The sprinkling of water as a symbol for the forgiveness of sins comes from the purification rite for Levitical priests of the Old Covenant, see Num 8:7, and from the prophesies of restoration in Ezekiel and Zechariah, which were one basis of the baptism of repentance that John the Baptist used. See Ex. 36:25-28; Zech 13:1

3. The priest then calls upon the people to pray that the sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the Almighty Father.

- Currently, the prayer is "Pray, brethren (or friends, or brothers and sisters), that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the Almighty Father." The new words will be, "Pray brethren that your sacrifice and mine will be acceptable to God, the Almighty Father."

- The Latin and the new translation distinguish between the sacrifice of the priest and that of the people. Part of the idea is that as Christ offered Himself up to God, so the priest offers the bread and wine to God to become Christ Himself for our salvation. John 10:17-18; Heb. 10:12-14. Meanwhile, we are also asking that God sanctify all of the people and thus make acceptable all the sacrifices we offer Him at the Mass. See, e.g., Is. 1:11-18; Ps. 51:17-18. There is also a notion that the willingness to take the time and energy to praise God is a sacrifice. See Ps. 50:23; Heb. 13:15. We recognize that we are not of our own accord worthy to offer fitting

sacrifices to God, but that with His assistance we can become able to do so fittingly. See, e.g., Rom. 8:26.

4. The people pray that God accept the sacrifice for the praise and glory of His name, for (or more literally "towards") our good and the good of all His Church. The new translation will add the word "holy" to Church, emphasizing the fact that the Church is holy, although on earth her members are still weighed down with sin. See Catechism 825-27. The prayer asks that sacrifice be accepted by God and thus bring greater salvation to all the world for a new and glorious people. See Hag. 2:4-9.

D. The priest then calls upon the people to join him in the prayer over the gifts.

1. This prayer generally again recognizes that we are not of our own merit able to offer sacrifices to God, but that He makes us worthy.
2. The prayer generally ends with "We ask this (or 'Grant this') through Christ our Lord." The idea is that Jesus, as our high priest, combines our prayers with His own and, therefore, makes them more worthy. See, e.g., Heb. 10:19-25. Sometimes, the prayer ends with an offering of the prayer in the name of Jesus. This phrase emphasizes the power of Jesus' name in working wonders for our salvation. See, e.g., Mark 16:17; John 15:16; Acts 3:6, 4:12 16:18.