

Week 4 Session Talk Notes

The Liturgy of the Eucharist: *The Preparation of the Gifts and Eucharistic Prayer A.*

Preparation of the Gifts

1. Presentation of the Gifts
 - a. Bread: the staff of life
 - i. Offered for sacrifice: Exodus 29:2
 - b. Wine (see Exodus 29:38-41, Numbers 15:2-15)
 - c. Our lives sacramentally joined to Jesus' sacrifice

2. Washing of Hands
 - a. Old Testament tradition: Exodus 30:17-21
 - i. Ritual purification
 - ii. Preparing to enter a new Holy of Holies

B. Eucharistic Prayer

1. Preface ("The Lord be with you ... Lift up your hearts")
 - a. Lamentations 3:41
 - b. Colossians 3:1-2
 - c. Lifting hearts to heaven: St. Cyril of Jerusalem¹ (*See Notes below*)

2. The *Sanctus* ("Holy, holy, holy") - ends the Preface
 - a. Three-fold repetition: Reflects Hebrew superlative
 - b. Source in the heavenly liturgy
 - i. Isaiah 6
 - ii. Revelation 4

 - c. Echoes "Palm Sunday": welcoming the King

3. Words of Consecration ("This is my body ... this is my blood")
 - a. Original context for the Mass as Sacrifice: the Last Supper / Passover
 - i. Celebrated as a memorial (Heb. *zikaron*, Gk. *anamnesis*: making the past present) ii. Sacrificial language: "body and blood," "offering up" iii. "Do this is memory of me"

 - b. In the Eucharist, Christ's sacrifice is made present for us (*Catechism* No. 1368)

c. Updated translation

i. "Chalice" instead of "cup"

ii. "For many" (*pro multis*) instead of "for all"

Quote from St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat. Myst.*, 5, 4-5. (See Notes below)

- Faithful to Latin text and Scripture.
- Theological point: not all choose to accept Christ's salvation and live by it
- Reflects suffering servant of Isaiah 53: "the many" 3x
- Universal scope (light to all nations, Isaiah 42,49,52)

4. The Great Amen (conclusion of Eucharistic Prayer A.

Elements of the Liturgy of the Eucharist:		
A. Preparation of the Gifts	B. Eucharistic Prayer	C. Communion Rite
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparation of the Altar and Presentation of the Gifts• Prayers at the Preparation of the Gifts• Mixing Water and Wine• Washing Hands• Prayer over the Offerings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preface• <i>Sanctus</i>: "Holy, Holy, Holy Lord"• <i>Epiclesis</i>• Words of Institution and Consecration• Mystery of Faith• <i>Anamnesis</i>, Offering, Intercessions & Final Doxology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lord's Prayer• Rite of Peace• The Fraction, Commingling & "Lamb of God"• Holy Communion• Prayer after Communion

Notes

1, See quotes from our Church Fathers, St. Cyprian and St Cyril on the last page of the Week 4 Handout.

Week 4 Session Responses

The Liturgy of the Eucharist:

A BIBLICAL WALK THROUGH
THE MASS

The Preparation of the Gifts and Eucharistic Prayer

Preparation of the Gifts

Presentation of the Gifts

1. a. Bread was the most basic food needed to sustain life (Sirach 29:27; 39:31). The expression "to eat bread" described eating in general (see Genesis 31:54; 37:25). Thus, the image of a staff being associated with bread is quite fitting. Like a staff for walking, bread as a basic form of nourishment is a support for human life.
- b. Wine is depicted as a symbol of life and joy because it gladdens the heart (Psalm 104:15) and is the life of man, making him glad (Sirach 31:27). It is a basic necessity of life (Sirach 39:26-27).
- c. Offering bread and wine back to God at Mass can be seen as a sacrifice in light of this background, as it expresses a willingness to part with some of the basic necessities and enjoyments of life. In the early Church, the people brought bread, wine, and other gifts to present to the priest at Mass. The gifts typically were from home or were handmade, expressing a gift of oneself to God. Similarly, at Mass, the rite of offering bread and wine expresses the people's desire to give themselves to God. "Even though the faithful no longer bring from their own possessions the bread and wine intended for the liturgy as in the past, nevertheless the rite of carrying up the offerings still retains its force and is spiritual significance" (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 73).

Washing of Hands

2. a. In these verses, the ritual hand washings symbolize the need for interior purification (a spiritual cleansing) before drawing near to God's presence in the Temple: The ritual hand washing in Psalm 24 is envisioned as taking place in Jerusalem ("the hill of the Lord"), which is where "the holy place" of the Temple resides. Psalm 26 refers to the ritual hand washing taking place in God's house (another reference to the temple), which is also described as the place where God's glory-presence dwells (Psalm 26:8).
- b. Aaron and his sons (the priests of Israel) are commanded to wash their hands when they enter "tent of meeting" and when they approach the altar to offer a burnt offering.
- c. In light of this biblical background, the ritual of the priest washing his hands at Mass signals that he is preparing to enter a new holy place—like the Temple that housed God's glory-presence. Indeed, the bread and wine on the altar are about to be changed sacramentally into the body and blood of Christ. Thus, like the priests of old who washed their hands before entering the Temple, the priest at Mass cleanses his hands before he consecrates the bread and wine. The ritual also may symbolize that the priest is preparing to offer a sacrifice. Indeed, through the hands of the priest, Christ's sacrifice on the Cross is sacramentally made present as a memorial for us in the Eucharistic prayer. Hence, like the priests of the old covenant, the priest at Mass cleanses his hands before offering this sacrifice of Christ (see *Catechism* No. 1366).

The Eucharistic Prayer

Preface

3. a. Christ, **who is seated** at the right hand of God, is the one who is above and on whom we are to set our minds.

- b. At this point of the Mass, Jesus, the one enthroned in heaven, is about to become present sacramentally on the altar under the species of bread and wine. Therefore, we should lift up our hearts to heaven where Jesus is as we prepare for his coming to meet us in holy communion. Moreover, our participation in the Mass is a participation in the worship of God in heaven. So at this moment, as we enter the most sacred part of the Mass, it is important to focus our minds on these heavenly things that are above. This is not the time to be thinking about problems at work, what to cook for brunch, or the football game that Sunday afternoon. For, as Vatican II teaches, "In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the Holy City of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, Minister of the holies and of the true tabernacle" (Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, No. 8).

Holy, Holy, Holy

4. a. The seraphim in Isaiah's vision are in awe in God's presence. They humbly cover their faces, acknowledging their unworthiness to stand in the presence of Almighty God. Their only response is to worship God. They call out to each other, almost stammering in their reverence as they say "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts...."
- b. Isaiah, too, is in awe and wonder and does not feel worthy to be in God's presence. He admits that he himself is sinful ("unclean") and that he comes from a sinful people.
- c. We may not receive a heavenly vision like Isaiah did, but we do draw near God's presence in a unique way in the Eucharistic Prayer at Mass. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is about to become present sacramentally on our altars and unite himself to us in holy communion.
- d. Think about it: How might Isaiah's and the angels' response to the divine presence serve as a model for how we should approach the Eucharistic Prayer?

As we approach the Eucharistic Prayer, we can follow Isaiah's and the angels' response to God's presence by showing God tremendous reverence. Like Isaiah, we should realize our own sinfulness and our complete unworthiness to have the all-holy God draw so near to us. Recognizing what a privilege it is to be close to God in this way, we should also respond with praise like the angels did before the throne of God. Hence, it is quite fitting that we repeat some of the same words of the angels in Isaiah 6 here in the Eucharistic Prayer "Holy, holy, holy Lord..."

Words of Institution

5. a. i. Luke 2:24-A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons is given up in sacrifice.
- ii. 1 Maccabees 2:49-50 - This scene takes place in a time when the Syrians are systematically outlawing the practice of the Jewish laws. Sacrifice, circumcision, keeping the Sabbath and feasts, and reading the Law are all being outlawed. Mattathias exhorts his sons to have zeal for the law of God even in the face of persecution and to be willing to give up their lives rather than be unfaithful to God's law. Hence, the expression "to give" here refers to giving up one's life.
- iii. 1 Maccabees 6:43-46 - Eleazar gave up his life in battle in an attempt to save his people
- iv. Mark 10:45 - Jesus, calling himself the "Son of Man," speaks of giving up his life as a ransom to save the people from sin.
- b. The blood being poured out in Leviticus 4 is associated with sacrifices offered by the priests.
- c. At the Last Supper, Jesus uses sacrificial language in reference to himself. It is his own body that will be offered up and his own blood that will be poured out in sacrifice.

6. a. In the Bible, a "memorial" is not merely a recalling of past events. A biblical memorial makes the past event present. For example, each year when the Israelites celebrated the Passover as a memorial, they believed that the past event of that first Passover in Egypt was spiritually made present to them so they could be united to their ancestors in this founding event of their nationhood and participate in it themselves.
- b. In the Last Supper, Jesus refers to the sacrifice of his body and blood. He then commands the apostles to celebrate this as a biblical memorial, which in the Jewish understanding means to make present. Therefore, in saying "Do this in memory of me," Jesus is instructing the apostles to make present the sacrificial offering of his body and blood in the Eucharist. This background helps shed light on the sacrificial aspect of the Mass. In the Mass, Christ's sacrificial offering of his body and blood is made present as a liturgical memorial (see the following box for more information).

Excerpt from *A Biblical Walk Through the Mass*, pp. 110-111.

Understanding this connection between the Last Supper and the cross will shed important light on how the Eucharist we celebrate today commemorates Christ's sacrifice on Calvary. For Jesus concludes the institution of the Eucharist by saying, "Do this in memory of me." What is the "this" that Jesus commands the apostles to do? Celebrate the New Passover sacrifice of his body and blood. And how are they to do it? As a biblical memorial. The word "memory" used in the Mass translates the biblical word for "memorial" (*anamnesis*), which, as we saw, meant much more than merely remembering the past. A liturgical memorial brought the past and present together, making the long-ago event mystically present for the current generation. Hence, when Jesus commands the apostles, "Do this in memory of me," He is not telling them to perform a simple ritual meal that will help people remember him. He is instructing them to celebrate the Last Supper as a liturgical memorial. All that was involved with the Last Supper—most particularly, the sacrificial offering of Christ's body and blood—would be made present to worshippers in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Therefore, as the memorial of the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist makes the events of the Upper Room and Calvary sacramentally present to us today. Just as the ancient Jews year-after-year participated in the Exodus through the memorial of Passover, so do we Christians participate in the new Exodus of Jesus' triumphant death on the cross every time we celebrate the new Passover of the Eucharist.

It is in this sense that the Mass is a sacrifice. As the *Catechism* explains, "In the New Testament, the memorial takes on new meaning. When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, she commemorates Christ's Passover, and it is made present: the sacrifice Christ offered once for all on the cross remains ever present."¹ And this sacrifice is made present for a salvific purpose: so that its power may be applied to our lives for the daily sins we commit and so that we can unite ourselves more deeply to Christ in his act of total self-giving love.²

Catechism No. 1364. See
Catechism No. 1366.

The Doxology

7. a. 1 Chronicles 16:36 - With their "Amen," the people affirm that the Lord should be blessed forever.
 - b. Nehemiah 8:1-6 - The people say "Amen" to the Book of the Law that was read by Ezra the priest.
 - c. Revelation 5:13-14 - The four living creatures say "Amen," expressing their agreement with the heavenly host that God and the Lamb (Jesus) in heaven should be blessed, honored, and glorified forever.

8. On a basic level, our "Amen" at the end of the Eucharistic prayer affirms what the priest just said—that "all glory and honor" is God's forever and ever. St. Augustine also saw this "Amen" as affirming the whole Eucharistic prayer that the priest just recited. He described the people's "Amen" as their signature under the prayer of the priest.

Reference Note from PREFACE

Our Church Fathers,

St. Cyprian (d. A.D. 258), a North African Church Father, explained how this prayer draws our attention away from worldly distractions and is meant to lead us to ponder the awe-inspiring action taking place in the Eucharistic prayer: When we stand praying, beloved brethren, we ought to be watchful and earnest with our whole heart, intent on our prayers. Let all carnal and worldly thoughts pass away, nor let the soul at that time think on anything but the object only of its prayer. For this reason also the priest by way of preface before his prayer, prepares the minds of the brethren by saying, Lift up your hearts, that so upon the people's response, We have them before our Lord, he maybe reminded that he himself ought to think of nothing but our Lord.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, made a similar point and warned believers of the seriousness of this moment. Lift up your hearts: For in this sublime moment the heart should be lifted up to God, and not be allowed to descend to the earth and to earthly concerns. With all possible emphasis the sacrificing priest exhorts us in this hour to lay aside all the cares of this life, all domestic worries, and direct our hearts to God in heaven who hath so loved men.... Let there be none among you, who shall confess with his lips: We have lifted up our hearts, and allow his thoughts to remain with the cares of this life.