

Understanding the Mass

Part 19 in a series

The Mystery of Faith

After the priest has genuflected in adoration before the Blood of Christ present in the consecrated chalice he sings the words “The mystery of faith.” We are called to acclaim what is perceived. There are several possible responses with which we may respond. In all of them we are announcing what is hidden under the appearance of the bread and wine. Each of the possible responses is a condensed expression of the central tenet of our salvation and mentions the past event of Jesus’ Death, the present reality of his Resurrection, and his future coming in glory. All of this is hidden in what is on the altar and our faith perceives it and proclaims it at this moment.

The Anamnesis (Greek for “a memorial”)

The Eucharistic prayer continues with what is known as the *Anamnesis* or memorial or remembrance. Christ’s words at the Last Supper were “Do this in memory of me.” The prayer that the priest will now begin states before the Father that we are doing just that. It is in this prayer that the priest will note that we celebrate the memorial of the Passion. He will also pray that “we who are nourished by the Body and Blood of your Son and filled with his Holy Spirit may become one body, one spirit in Christ.” This is the second *epiclesis*, a second request for the Holy Spirit to come. This time we are asking that the Holy Spirit will come upon those who receive the body and blood of Christ and be transformed into one in Christ.

The Intercessions

The prayer continues with the Intercessions. We pray for the intercessions of all the saints in heaven, especially Mary, Peter and Paul and all the apostles and martyrs. Our Pope, representing the universal church and our bishop, representing our local parishes are also mentioned, along with the entirety of God’s people. As we listen attentively to this prayer we should also make it our own, even adding the specific names of loved ones in Christ who have passed before us.

The Doxology (Greek for “a word of praise”)

The Eucharistic prayer concludes with a great “word of praise”, what is called the Doxology. The priest, along with the deacon, if present, lifts up the bread and wine, that which has been transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ, and presents them to the Father as the priest sings, “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, for ever and ever.” The “him” in this doxology is Jesus who is now present in the consecrated bread and wine. We, as the whole Church, are offering the perfect praise to God the Father.

The Great Amen

We now respond with not just an “Amen” but a great, glorious and resounding “AMEN”! This is the biggest AMEN of the Mass because it is the conclusion of the prayer that has made our Lord present to us and has offered Christ in sacrifice to the Father. Knowing this we should all join in singing the Great Amen and sing it with great acclaim!