

The Preface and the *Sanctus*

The Eucharistic Prayer: the “Center and Summit” of the Mass

Benedict XVI: *The Eucharistic Prayer is “the centre and summit of the entire celebration”* [GIRM no. 78]. Its importance deserves to be adequately emphasized. *The different Eucharistic Prayers contained in the Missal have been handed down to us by the Church's living Tradition and are noteworthy for their inexhaustible theological and spiritual richness. The faithful need to be enabled to appreciate that richness.* (Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis* no. 48)

Names of the Eucharistic Prayer

1. Thanksgiving: (Greek *eucharistia*) (“It is truly right and just... to give you thanks”)
2. Canon: (Greek *kanon*) the “rule” of prayer (cf. *Ordo Romanus* I)
3. Anaphora: (Greek *ana-pherein*), “to offer up” (cf. Latin *oblation*)
4. The Prayer: (Latin *prex*) (St. Cyprian of Carthage)

The Preface and Acclamation (2011)

Priest: *The Lord be with you.*
People: *And with your spirit.*
Priest: *Lift up your hearts.*
People: *We lift them up to the Lord.*
Priest: *Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.*
People: *It is right and just.*

[Then follows the Preface, to be used in accord with the rubrics, which concludes:]

<i>Holy, Holy, Holy</i>	<i>Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus</i>
<i>Lord God of hosts.</i>	<i>Dominus Deus Sabaoth.</i>
<i>Heaven and earth are full of your glory.</i>	<i>Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua.</i>
<i>Hosanna in the highest.</i>	<i>Hosanna in excelsis.</i>
<i>Blessed is he who comes</i>	<i>Benedictus qui venit</i>
<i>in the name of the Lord.</i>	<i>in nomine Domini.</i>
<i>Hosanna in the highest.</i>	<i>Hosanna in excelsis.</i>

(Roman Missal, *Order of Mass*, no. 31)

Scripture

Ancient Israelite Greeting

And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem; and he said to the reapers, “*The Lord be with you!*” (Latin *Dominus vobiscum*). (Ruth 2:4, Vulgate)

St. Paul’s Words to St. Timothy

I remind you to rekindle *the gift of God* that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a *spirit* (Latin *spiritum*) of timidity but *a spirit of power and love and self-control*... The Lord *be with your spirit* (Latin *cum spiritu tuo*). (2 Timothy 4:22, Vulgate)

Jeremiah: Lift Up Our Hearts to God in Heaven

Let us lift up our hearts (Latin *levemus corda*) and hands
to God in heaven (Latin *ad Dominum in caelos*). (Lamentations 3:41, Vulgate)

Isaiah's Vision of the Heavenly Holy of Holies

I saw the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim; each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;

[Hebrew, *qadosh, qadosh, qadosh, YHWH Tzeba'oth*;

Greek, *hagios, hagios, hagios, kyrios sabaoth*;

Latin *Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus exercituum*]

the whole earth is full of his glory." And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and *the house was filled with smoke*. And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" *Then flew one of the seraphim to me, having in his hand a burning coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven."* (Isaiah 6:1-7)

Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

And the crowds that went before him and that followed him shouted, "*Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!*" (Matthew 21:9).

Tradition

Pope Sixtus Adds the *Sanctus* to the Mass (2nd Century)

Liber Pontificalis: Sixtus [ca. 117-ca. 127], born in Rome, [...] decreed that within the celebration [of Mass] *the people sing*—with the priest beginning—the "*Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth*," etc.¹

St. Hippolytus of Rome and the Thanksgiving (2nd-3rd Century)

Apostolic Tradition: The deacons then present him [the bishop] with the offering, and he, imposing his hand upon it with the whole presbytery, gives thanks together with the whole presbytery as he says,

"The Lord be with you."

¹ *Liber Pontificalis* 8.1, 2. In Johnson, *Worship in the Early Church*, 4:54.

And all say, “And with your spirit.”
“Lift up your hearts.”
“We lift them up to the Lord.”
“Let us give thanks to the Lord.”
“It is right and just.”²

The Sanctus Sung in the Roman Mass (7th Century)

Ordo Romanus I: The regionary subdeacons, after the offertory is finished, *go behind the altar, looking at the pope*, standing upright until they begin to chant the angelic hymn, that is the *Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus*. When they have finished it, the pope alone rises and begins the Canon.³

Mystagogy

“Lift Up Your Hearts” and Focused Prayer (3rd Century)

St. Cyprian of Carthage: Beloved, when we stand for prayer, we ought to be watchful and diligent in praying with all our being. May every bodily and worldly thought depart; may the soul, when you are at prayer, think only of the object of your prayer. *This is why the priest before the [eucharistic] prayer prepares the minds of the brethren by a preface as he says, “Lift up your hearts” so that when the people respond, “We lift them up to the Lord,” they might be reminded that they should think of nothing other than the Lord...* It is not the sound of our voice but the mind and the heart which should pray to God with sincere intent.⁴

The Angelic Hymn to the Trinity (4th Century)

St. John Chrysostom: *The seraphim above have resounded the hymn of the three-fold Holy; here below the crowd of people singing the same hymn! Those in heaven and those on earth form one festive assembly... From on high comes the rhythm of its singing; touched by the Trinity as by a bow, it resounds with a pleasing and joyful song, with an angelic melody, with an uninterrupted symphony.*⁵

The Divinity and Humanity of Christ (9th Century)

Amalar of Metz: *After he had received the prayers of the singers, [Christ] entered Jerusalem and the Lord’s temple, where the altar was, and there he presented himself to God the Father for his coming sacrifice...* After the hymn, *Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus* has begun, those who stand behind and those who stand facing the celebrant bow, namely to

² Hippolytus of Rome, *Apostolic Tradition*, 4. In Johnson, *Worship in the Early Church*, 1:201.

³ *Ordo Romanus I*, no. 87-88. In Romano, *Liturgy and Society in Early Medieval Rome*, 242-43.

⁴ Cyprian of Carthage, *On the Lord’s Prayer*, 31. In Johnson, *Worship in the Early Church*, 1:153. The last sentence of this translation is from Tertullian, Cyprian, and Origen, *On the Lord’s Prayer* (Popular Patristics 29; trans. Alistair Stewart-Sykes; Crestwood, N.Y.: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2004), 88.

⁵ John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Isaiah*, Homily 1. In Johnson, *Worship in the Early Church*, 2:176.

venerate the divine majesty and the Lord's incarnation, which were announced by the song of the angels and the crowds. *The choir of the angels, by saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth," announces the divine majesty; the harmony of the crowds announces the Lord's incarnation, by saying, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest."*⁶

The Eucharistic Prayer as the Holy of Holies (13th Century)

William Durand: Once the temple was divided into two parts separated by a veil. The first part was called the Holy [Place]..., and the second (or inner) the Holy of Holies... *All that take place during the service of the Mass before the Secret [= the Prayer over the Offerings] is somehow in the first part of the sacred edifice, but what takes place during the Secret [=the Eucharistic Prayer] is in the Holy of Holies.*⁷

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. What are the biblical roots of the Preface and the "Holy, holy, holy"? Why is this solemn introduction to the Eucharistic Prayer so important?

2. How is the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer a doorway into the "Holy of Holies"?

For Further Reading

- Jungmann, Joseph, S.J. *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development*. 2 Volumes. Translated by Francis A. Brunner, C.S.S.R. Reprint. Notre Dame, Ind.: Christian Classics, 2012. Volume 2, pp. 1-40. [An in-depth study of the history of the offertory procession.]
- Amalar of Metz, *On the Liturgy*. 2 vols.; trans. Eric Knibbs; Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 36; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2014. Volume 2, pp. 109-133 [An in-depth examination of the spiritual meaning of the Offertory in the Medieval Church.]

⁶ Amalar, *On the Liturgy*, 3.19.14, 20. In Amalar of Metz, *On the Liturgy* (2 vols.; trans. Eric Knibbs; Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 36; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2014), 2:117, 121, 147.

⁷ Durandus, *Rationale of the Divine Offices*, 4.1.13. In Guillaume Durandus, *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, 3:5.