



The Mass in Slow Motion



The Epiklesis and Consecration

This is a series on the Mass explaining the meaning and history of what we do each Sunday. This series of flyers is an attempt to add insight and understanding to our celebration of the Sacred Liturgy. You are also invited to learn more by attending Sunday School classes for adults which take place in the school cafeteria each Sunday from 9:45 am. to 10:45 am.

This series will follow the Mass in order.

There are two moments in the Eucharistic Prayers to highlight: **The Epiklesis and the Consecration. Both moments and the words that accompany them are the essential focus of the whole Mass.** Everything else prepares us for this and frames it. Let's look first at the "epiklesis" (pronounced "eh-pee-CLEE-sis).

"Epiklesis" is a Greek word which literally means "a calling upon." In terms of the Mass, it is the name of the prayer in which the celebrant asks God to send down His Holy Spirit to change the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus. As he says this prayer, he extends both his hands over the hosts and chalice which serves as a visible gesture of what he asks. In the Second Eucharistic Prayer the words of the epiklesis are,

Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your spirit upon them like the dewfall so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And in the Third Eucharistic Prayer:

Therefore, O Lord, we humbly implore you: by the same spirit graciously make holy these gifts we have brought to you for consecration, that they may become the Body and Blood of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ, at whose command we celebrate these mysteries.

Some claim the First Eucharistic Prayer has an epiklesis that is less clear since the name of the Holy Spirit is not explicitly mentioned. However, at the Council of Florence in 1439, the Church answered that it was a true epiklesis. Its wording is:

Be pleased, O God, we pray, to bless, acknowledge, and approve this offering in every respect; make it spiritual and acceptable, so that it may become for us the Body and Blood of your most beloved son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

There are some different views between the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Catholic Church as to whether the words of the epiklesis are as essential as the words of consecration in bringing about the miraculous change of the bread and wine to the Body and Blood of Christ. Generally, the view of the Eastern Orthodox Churches is that the epiklesis is every bit as essential as the words of consecration, while the Catholic Church holds that the words of Jesus said at the Last Supper are alone sufficient to bring about the miraculous change.

For many of us, such debates may seem remote and complex. Perhaps it is best for us to simply recall that in the Masses of both the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, the epiklesis and words of consecration are always said together. We leave to sweet mystery the exact moment of the miraculous transubstantiation from ordinary bread and wine to the Body and Blood of Christ. We know this much for sure: when the Sacred Host and chalice are held aloft by the priest, our Lord Jesus is truly present upon the altar: Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity!





The Consecration. Having prayed the epiklesis, the priest now takes some of the bread into his hands (this is usually a larger host which he will show the faithful after the consecration). Though he is holding only the larger host, this demonstrates his intention to consecrate all the hosts placed before him in the center of the altar. Addressing the heavenly Father, the priest recalls how Jesus took bread at the Last Supper, blessed it, broke it and gave it to his disciples. Now the priest says carefully and exactly the words of consecration spoken by Jesus at that first Mass:

TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND EAT OF IT, FOR THIS IS MY BODY, WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP FOR YOU.

Now he holds the consecrated host aloft for the faithful to see and adore. It is appropriate at a moment like this to acknowledge the Lord's presence. Many use the words of the Apostle Thomas and say quietly, "My Lord and My God!" The priest himself is directed to genuflect in adoration of the Lord.

Next, he takes the chalice with the wine and again, addressing the Heavenly Father, recounts the words of Jesus

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. DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.

Here too he holds aloft the chalice now containing the Blood of Christ for the faithful to adore. It is appropriate to express love for our Lord at this moment saying quietly something like, "Lord save me by your precious Blood."

The transformation of the bread and wine that happens at the consecration is called "transubstantiation." This means that the substance of the bread and wine "go across" (trans) to being the substance of the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus. Ordinary bread and wine cease to exist. Even though their appearances remain, we know by faith, in what Jesus says, that this is now his Body and Blood, His Soul and Divinity! It is a miracle that takes place each time Mass is celebrated.

Note too that the Body and Blood are consecrated separately. This shows forth the nature of the Mass as the making present of the death of the Lord. For, when the blood and body of any living thing are apart, there is death. Jesus himself ties the Eucharist not just to the Last Supper but to his cross by speaking of his Body which will be given up, and his Blood which will be poured out. Later in the Mass, after the Agnus Dei, the priest takes a small portion of the Host and places it in the Chalice. This is piously held to be a sign of the Resurrection of the Lord!

So here is the crux, the highpoint of the whole Mass. Jesus who has joined with us in the Mass, and instructed us by his Word, now becomes truly present on our altar. May all glory be given to him! In the next flyer we will look at the acclamations that the faithful make to rejoice in and acknowledge his true presence.

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Mass schedule: Sundays: 8 am, 9:30 am, 11 am & 7 pm; Saturdays: 8 am & 4:30 pm; Daily: 7 am in the chapel