

Mass Parts 25/52: *Preface Dialogue*



The first part of the Eucharistic Prayer is the Preface, which begins with a dialogue. This dialogue is quite ancient, going back to the 200s. It opens by repeating the standard greeting and invitation to prayer: “The Lord be with you.” Next comes the most important line of preparing ourselves for what we are about to celebrate: “Lift up your hearts!” The Latin is *Sursum corda* = “Hearts upward!” In a commanding tense, the exclamation point is most fitting. The response of “We lift them up to the Lord” is not a simple repeating by rote of meaningless words. We should visualize actually lifting up our whole being and pushing it towards heaven. In anticipation of the Eucharist, we no longer stare at our feet. We no longer look at each other. We lift up the center of our emotions and being and place them in the presence of God. We are paying attention to what is happening, not just waiting for it to end. The Eucharistic presence of God is the answer to all the longings of our hearts, so we lift up our hearts in anticipation, waiting for the coming of our Lord to fill us.

The third part, “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God,” is translated from the word which says what we are doing: Eucharist. The Eucharist means giving thanks. “Let us give thanks” = “Let us Eucharist.” The response to this invitation to give thanks declares the virtue of the Eucharist = “It is right and just.” Justice is one of the four cardinal virtues, along with prudence, temperance, and fortitude. Justice is the giving of what is due. The whole world and our very lives are gifts from God. Even the bread and wine we offer were given to us by God. Through Jesus Christ, the revelation of the perfect way to worship has been given. In justice, we give back to God what God deserves. It is right and just that we give thanks in the way Jesus has revealed. It is only in giving what is deserved that we celebrate the Eucharist.

-Fr. Kopp

Next Week: Preface and the Holy, Holy, Holy