

# Mass Parts 28/52:

## *Epiclesis*



The *epiclesis* is the calling down of the Holy Spirit as a blessing. In the Mass, just before the Words of Institution for the Eucharist, the priest spreads his hands over the bread and wine and asks for the blessing of the Holy Spirit upon them. There is a second *epiclesis* in the Mass towards the end of each Eucharistic Prayer. The word comes from the Greek word “to call” and the preposition for “down, upon, towards.” Hence the *epiclesis* is: “to call down upon.” In the Mass, we are addressing God the Father to send down the Holy Spirit to transform the bread and wine into the Son. The Trinity is present in the action of the *epiclesis*.

An *epiclesis* is present in all of the sacraments. An *epiclesis* is used at the Chrism Mass each year to bless the holy oils used in the sacraments (for the sick, the catechumens, and the Sacred Chrism). In Baptism we call upon the Spirit to bless the water and the person being baptized. In

Confirmation, there is a long special prayer to the Spirit with the laying on of hands as part of the ritual. In Holy Orders, the essential part of the ordination is the Spirit called down in prayer and the laying on of hands by the bishop on the head of the ordinand. In a Matrimonial Mass, the long Nuptial Blessing after the Lord’s Prayer has a calling down of the Spirit on the couple. The Anointing of the Sick begins with a silent laying on of hands of the sick person to call down the Spirit. The first half of the prayer of Anointing includes this call of the Spirit:

*Through this holy anointing,  
may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit.*

In Reconciliation, though there is no explicit *epiclesis*, the Holy Spirit is in the prayer of absolution:

*God, the Father of mercies through the death and resurrection of his Son  
has reconciled the world to himself  
and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins;  
through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace,  
and I absolve you from your sins  
in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*

-Fr. Kopp

Next Week: Institution Narrative