

Liturgy Lesson Twenty Four: Eucharistic Prayer

Part VI

A few weeks ago, the Liturgy Lesson focused on a component of the Eucharistic Prayer called the “epiclesis,” the calling down of the Holy Spirit to “make holy” our gifts of bread and wine and to make us “one body, one spirit in Christ.” We now focus on another Greek word, “anamnesis,” another essential component of the Eucharistic Prayer.

Sometimes Catholics, especially those raised before the reform of the Liturgy by the Second Vatican Council, so emphasized the presence of Christ at the Consecration that we ignored much of the rest of the Eucharistic Prayer. After the Consecration, the priest, quoting our Lord, says, “Do this in memory of me.” “anamnesis” means “memory.” The Last Supper was probably a Passover Meal, a Seder. At Passover, even today, a part of the ritual is that a young Jewish boy will ask, “Why is this night different from all other nights?” The rest of the Passover Meal is a remembering of their deliverance from Egypt and the journey to the Promised Land. Again, this remembering is their “anamnesis.”

After the priest says, “Do this in memory of me,” one of us might well ask, “Why is this meal different from all other meals?” The priest then reminds us of the “death Jesus endured for our salvation,” and “his glorious resurrection and ascension into heaven.” This is our “anamnesis.” We call it the Paschal Mystery. “Paschal” is the Greek word for “Passover.”

Whenever we remember, during our celebrations of the Mass, what Jesus did for us, we also enter into, that is, celebrate again, his Paschal Mystery. Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection is celebrated again by our community. It is, in a way, a living “anamnesis.”