

## RETURN TO THE NEW ROMAN MISSAL THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST - PART IV

Following Vatican II, **Eucharistic Prayer III** (hereafter EPIII) was created as an entirely new composition, but it also drew on a variety of ancient liturgical texts. At the very beginning of this prayer, the translators of the *New Roman Missal* gave us two beautiful and significant changes. Previously, the priest-presider addressed God in this way: *Father, you are holy indeed, and all creation rightly gives you praise. All life, all holiness comes from you...by the working of the Holy Spirit.* Now we pray: **You are indeed holy, O Lord, and all you have created** rightly gives you praise....*by the power and working of the Holy Spirit, you give life to all things and make them holy.* This new wording expresses more clearly the activity of God as Creator – *all you have created, you give life, verses all creation* – and shines a brighter and wider light on the recipients of life and holiness, namely *all things* – not just us, but the entire created world.

This section of EPIII continues with the addition of a strikingly poetic image that changes and dramatically expands the meaning of words that were already powerful, but ultimately limited. Where the priest-presider used to proclaim that *from east to west a perfect offering may be made to the glory of your name*, we now hear that *from the rising of the sun to its setting a pure sacrifice may be offered to your name.* East/west, rising/setting sun: what's the difference? I always considered the original text particularly beautiful because it emphasized the universality of the sacrifice being offered – *from east to west*, from one end of the world to the other – **everywhere** God is being praised. But praise from east to west isn't meant to be merely geographical. Rather, think about it: *from the rising of the sun to its setting* – every moment of every day, the sun is either rising or setting somewhere on this earth. The image is meant to be **not** geographical, but temporal. God has created us and our world not simply to praise the Creator in every place, but **always**, in every moment of every day – endlessly and eternally!

The last text to consider in EPIII comes near the end. For over forty years we prayed: *Father, hear the prayers of the family you have gathered here before you. In mercy and love, unite all your children wherever they may be.* But now: **Listen graciously** to the prayers of this family **whom you have summoned before you:** *in your compassion, O merciful Father, gather to yourself all your children scattered throughout the world.* There are three important theological and poetic changes to be found here. The previous translation can imply that we're commanding God to do something: *Father, hear the prayers....* Now, here and in many other prayers of the *New Roman Missal*, there's a certain tone of humility: *listen graciously* – a more appropriate way to petition our Creator. Then, to acknowledge that God has **summoned** us to worship creates a powerful statement, a reminder that it's not merely a privilege but our **duty** to offer this *pure sacrifice* to God's name. And then, when we ask God to *gather...your children scattered throughout the world*, we're praying with a much greater certainty and clarity than are found in

*wherever they may be.* After all, God certainly **knows** where those children are; God sent Jesus into the world to gather what was scattered and I think we can be sure that he'll be able to find them!

Almost finally, a word about a word, one that is heard often in our prayer but likely never in everyday conversation (like *consubstantiation*): **oblation**. This rare word is used in the Eucharistic and Presidential prayers of the Mass as a synonym for the Mass itself or for *offering* or *sacrifice*. But its origin is in the Old Testament and implies a change in the substance of what is offered, e.g., a burnt offering that becomes a "pleasing fragrance" to God. And isn't that what we believe about the bread and wine when they truly become the Body and Blood of the risen Lord – *transubstantiation*. Again, not a word you're going to use any time soon in a text or e-mail, but one that expresses a unique truth of faith.

And finally, a word about the four new Eucharistic Prayers we received in the *New Roman Missal*. Together they are *Eucharistic Prayers For Use in Masses For Various Needs*. Individually, they are named: *The Church on the Path of Unity*; *God Guides His Church Along the Way of Salvation*; *Jesus, the Way to the Father*; and *Jesus, Who Went About Doing Good*. Each one has its own proper section near the end that reflects its title, but they all begin with what I think is some of the most beautiful language ever written for the Mass which is why I use them quite often:

*You are indeed Holy and to be glorified, O God, who love the human race  
and who always walk with us on the journey of life.  
Blessed indeed is your Son, present in our midst  
when we are gathered by his love  
and when, as once for the disciples, so now for us,  
he opens the Scriptures and breaks the bread.*

Next week: some final thoughts.

Fr. Bob