

## FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

Our survey of the Mass has brought us in the heart of the Mass, the Eucharistic Prayer. Last week, we finished with the Holy, Holy – the song of the angels. At this point, the Church gives us several Eucharistic Prayers to use, but each of them have the same outline, even if some are longer than others.

The next key moment is the *Epiclesis*, or the invocation of the Holy Spirit. You'll recognize when this is happening because the priest will hold out his hands over the bread and wine. This is a common gesture during the Sacraments, and is a sign of asking the Holy Spirit to be present. The Bishop does this at Ordinations and Confirmations as he asks the Holy Spirit to come upon the Candidates. The Priest holds out his hand(s) over the penitent as the words of absolution are being said during Reconciliation (Confession).

So too, at the Mass the priest asks the Father to make the gifts holy "*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*" (Eucharistic Prayer II). The image of the dewfall goes back to the 40 years the Israelites were in the desert. They had to rely on God for their daily bread. Every morning (except the Sabbath) as the dew would dry, the Israelites would find *manna*, the bread from heaven, on the ground. They would collect it and make it into little cakes to eat. So we ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit, "like the dewfall," so that we can have the true bread from heaven – Christ the Lord in the Eucharist.

After the *Epiclesis*, we pray through the *Institution Narrative*. This is where we retell the story of how Jesus gave us (instituted) the Eucharist, even using Jesus' own words. The key words here are took, thanked, broke, and gave. Whenever you hear these words together in the Bible or at Mass, it is always referring in some way to the Eucharist. In fact, the early Christians often referred to the Mass as "the breaking of the bread."

Then we have the very words of Jesus,

"Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my Body, which will be given up for you.... 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."

With these words, bread and wine disappear, and they become the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ, our God. Not a symbol. Not just words. Really the God who walked this earth 2000 years ago. In this Sacrament is the fullness of the sacrifice of Christ – His deep suffering (physical mental, emotional, and the deepest darkness of spiritual suffering), His atoning death (as He Himself becomes the bridge over the infinite chasm between us and God), and His glorious resurrection (breaking the power of sin and death, and giving us the hope of eternal life). Within this Sacrament is all of this, all at once!

Jesus gives Himself to us so we can get close to Him, so that we will not be afraid of His getting close to us. He humbles Himself to be handled by us. We get to be in His Presence and adore the God who becomes small. He became small at Christmas. He continues to be small for us each day. This is how much God loves us! Love does crazy things. This is what love is willing to do for you and me, each and every day! He comes to us, even when we can't come to Him. He even allows Himself to be manhandled and desecrated by those who hate Him, through satanic rituals. All because He is longing for our love, He thirsts for our love.

He wants YOUR love! Did you ever ponder that, how much God longs for YOU?! This is the Mystery of the Eucharist!