



The Mass calls us to enter into a great mystery as full, active and conscious participants. The introduction to the new missal, which will be introduced in November 2011, puts it this way: *“the faithful form a holy people...so that they may offer the spotless Victim not only through the hand of the priest but also together with him, and so that they may learn to offer themselves.”* (GIRM # 95)

The missal quotes this passage, the essence of the paschal mystery, from the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. In celebrating Christ's life, death and rising in the liturgy of the Eucharist, we learn to die to self and live for others.

The implementation plan for the *Roman Missal* in the Diocese of Erie suggests that priests ask their parishioners to engage this mystery with greater intensity and purpose through silent prayer in the collect. When the priest says, “Let us pray,” we pray silently for a brief time so that we may act as a community “together with him.” This action is called for by the nature of the prayer itself. Following an invitation, we pray silently. Then the priest gathers — or collects — the various prayers of the assembly as he says the formal prayer of the day. (GIRM #54)

The silent prayers of the people are an important component of the entire collect. They express the relationship of each person with God at that moment. If you could listen in on these silent prayers, you might hear something like this:

Active participants in the Mass

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“Lord, I am grateful today for all you have done for me.” “God, I am confused; I don’t know what to do.” “I am sick; please help me.” “I am worried about my teenage son.” “I’ve lost my job what will happen to me and my family now?” These very personal prayers help us to interiorize the mystery we celebrate. They help us to recognize our need for God. They help us to recognize that God is with us. They allow us to connect the joys, hopes and fears of our lives with the celebration of the Mass. They allow us to place side-by-side the mystery of who we are with the mystery of Christ's presence among us.

As you read Rita Thiron's article, think of this simple method to make the collect prayer your own: First, pay attention to the silence. Second, reflect on what is happening in your life. Third, share whatever comes to mind with God. Fourth, listen as the priest collects your prayer with those of others. Fifth, affirm Christ's presence in your life by your “Amen.” Do this at every Mass. See how Christ works in you.

What will we be saying at Mass?

The presidential prayers – propers

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Four times during the Mass, the priest, who presides over the assembly in the person of Christ, addresses God in the name of all those present. We call these the presidential prayers because they are voiced by the preside. (GIRM 30) Foremost among these is the Eucharistic Prayer, but three other orations (*ora*, “to pray”) are offered that are proper to the Mass, that is, they are particular to the liturgical day or rite.

The collect

We encounter the first one at the conclusion of the introductory rites. First, the priest says, “Let us pray” and in the silence that follows, we focus on the fact that we are in God’s presence and call to mind all the intentions we may bring before the Lord this day. Then the priest begins the opening prayer, or “the collect,” so called because it “gathers together” the silent intentions of the faithful. (GIRM 54)*

Like all Roman Rite prayers, it is marked with noble simplicity and clarity of expression. The collect concisely expresses the character of this particular celebration. It has three major parts – the address (“Heavenly Father,” “Almighty God”), the **petition** (“Grant that we may ...”) and the **conclusion**, which acknowledges the mediation of Christ. The conclusion changes depending on the rest of the prayer.

- If the prayer is addressed to God the Father, it will conclude with “Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever.
- If the prayer is directed to the Father, but the Son is mentioned at the end: “who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever.”

- On the rare occasions when it is directed to the Son, the prayer ends with “You live and reign with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever.”

In the current translation, you hear the phrase “We ask this through...” But there are no words for “we ask this” in the Latin original, so in the new translation, the priest will merely say “Through Christ our Lord...”

We make the prayer our own by responding “Amen.” This is a great Aramaic word. It sounds the same in Latin. It means “so be it” or “it is so.” With this word we assent to what is true. (cf. Deut 27:15; 1 Cor 14:16)

Prayer over the offerings

“At the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the gifts of bread and wine are brought forward. After they have been placed on the altar and the accompanying rites completed, the priest invites us to pray that these gifts may be acceptable to the Father. He then prays the prayer over the offerings.” (GIRM 77)

There is evidence that the church has prayed a prayer over gifts since the 11th century. For many centuries, the prayer was recited quietly and was called “the secret.” But in the reforms of Vatican II, the name of the prayer and its manner of recitation were restored.


In the Mass, only one prayer over the offerings is said and it ends with the shorter conclusion: *Per Christum Dominum nostrum* – “Through Christ our Lord.” As before, the people unite themselves to the entreaty and make the prayer their own with the acclamation, “Amen.”

The prayer after Communion

After the distribution of Communion, the people pray together silently or sing a hymn of thanksgiving. (GIRM 164) “To bring to completion the prayer of the people of God, and also to conclude the entire Communion rite, the priest says the prayer after Communion, in which he prays for the fruit of the mystery just celebrated.” (GIRM 89) He uses the shorter conclusion *Per Christum Dominum nostrum* – “Through Christ our Lord.” We affirm the prayer with our “Amen.”

These prayers have a long history and are part of the rich heritage of the church. All of them have undergone a new translation so you may hear a phrase that is new to you. Listen attentively to the theology they contain and to the petitions that they address to the Father. Then give the prayer your sincere and hearty “Amen.” ☩

* GIRM stands for General Instruction of the Roman Missal.



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