

The Intercessions – (Part 7 of The Eucharistic Prayer) – Praying for others through Christ

As Catholic Christians, one of our duties is to pray for other people. This is a very clear command from Jesus as well as all throughout the entire Bible (e.g. Gen. 18:20-33, 1 Tim. 2:1-2, Mt. 5:44, 2 Cor. 1:11, etc.). However, it is also important to remember that we pray through Jesus to the Father. In other words, Jesus is always interceding (praying) for us in heaven, and through His power, He is able to make our prayers spiritually fruitful by offering them to God the Father. For example, Jesus talks about His prayers for the Church and the world extensively in John 17:1-23f, and there is also a beautiful passage in Hebrews 7:25 about Jesus, the high priest, who “always lives to make intercession for them.” Jesus is at the right hand of the Father in heaven, and He is the one who is both always praying for us AND always desiring us to pray for other people (so that He can make our prayers beneficial as well by offering them to the Father).

The Catholic Mass, and especially the Eucharistic Prayer is therefore the perfect time for us to reflect and meditate on this truth as well as for us to pray for people all around the world. The very last main part of the Eucharistic Prayer is called *The Intercessions*. There are so many beautiful prayers within this section, and they are similar yet a bit different within each variation of the Eucharistic Prayer that is being said by the Catholic Priest (one quick reminder that there are 10 different Eucharistic Prayers, and four main options that are most often used Eucharistic Prayers #1 through #4). One of the ways that can help us approach all these intercessions we make for other people during the Eucharistic Prayer is by realizing that there are at least three main types of intercessions that are said: {1} for Christians that are alive, {2} for those who have died, and {3} asking the Saints to pray for us as well.

You may have noticed that we always pray for the Pope (currently Pope Francis) as well as for our current Bishop (last year this was Bishop Ronald Gainer, and now it is Bishop Timothy Senior). In addition, there are prayers for the unity of the Church, for an increase in faith and charity among Christians, for those present at Mass, for clergy (the Catholic bishops, priests and deacons around the world), and for all the people that are members of the Church in general. It is well worth your time to turn to page 27-28 of our St. Augustine Hymnal here at OLV to look at the end of Eucharistic Prayer III (the one I currently use on most Sundays here at OLV) to see all these intercessions and to help you remember to pray for the Church here on this earth during this part of the Mass.

The next type of intercessory prayer that we say during the Eucharistic Prayer is a prayer for those who have died. We are meant to bring to mind both our friends and family who have passed away as well as all of those people who may be in purgatory and are journeying through purgatory towards heaven. It is a beautiful moment to realize that we can help be an instrument of God's grace for those we remember and those that are forgotten about by the world as Christ takes our prayers to the Father and pours out Divine Grace on those who need it in purgatory. Finally, we are actually petitioning God to encourage the Saints to pray for us from their place in heaven! Each Eucharistic Prayer usually includes a special mention of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph as well as sometimes a list of early Saints and Martyrs who we know are praying for us every day. It is such an important thing for us to remember this truth and then to be encouraged by their prayers so that we can continue offering our entire lives as a prayer through Jesus to the Father! May we enter into this part of the Eucharistic Prayer with hearts full of love to pray and intercede for the entire world. This happens through Jesus, and He brings our prayers to God the Father, and the Mass is perfect place to pray for other people as Jesus taught us.