**Why We Do What We Do VII: The Liturgy of the Eucharist, Part 3**

*While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.”*

Matthew 26:26-28

*The priest invites the people to lift up their hearts to the Lord in prayer and thanksgiving; he unites the congregation with himself in the prayer that he addresses in the name of the entire community to God the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the meaning of the Prayer is that the entire congregation of the faithful should join itself with Christ in confessing the great deeds of God and in the offering of Sacrifice.*

(General Instruction of the Roman Missal)

 We now move to the most solemn part of the Mass, the Eucharistic Prayer. Here the priest prays over the gifts, brought forward by the community, and offers the gifts and the community’s prayers to Almighty God. In this great offering, Christ is present in a very special way, changing the bread and wine into his own body and blood, broken on the Cross for our salvation, given that we might have life.

 There are a number of Eucharistic Prayers that can be used, but all of them have the following essential elements. Don’t worry about the Church jargon names for these elements, but instead reflect on how each of these elements forms the prayer of the Church at this most sacred moment:

 **Thanksgiving:** This is generally found in the preface that precedes the “Holy, holy, holy.” Here we give thanks for our salvation, and remember the feast of the day.

 **Acclamation:** Here the Assembly sings the “Holy” together, joining in the song of all the powers of heaven.

 **Epiclesis:** At this time, the Holy Spirit is invoked that he would sanctify the offerings of the Church to become the Body and Blood of the Lord.

 **Institution narrative and consecration:** Here the Lord’s own words are recalled in which he gave the bread and wine to become his own Body and Blood. In this way our own sacrifice is joined to the action of our Lord.

 **Anamnesis:** At this time the Church remembers the saving actions of the Lord: his Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension into heaven. It is important, though, to understand that this isn’t just recalling a fond memory of a distant past event. Anamnesismeans that we participate in that very mystery, right here and now.

 **Offering:** Here, the Church offers the consecrated Body and Blood of the Lord, and also offers the lives of each one present, that the sacrifice of the Lord may one day reach completion.

 **Intercessions:** Here the prayers of the Church are offered, lifting up the Church, and especially those who have died, so that the sacrifice is made for both the living and the dead.

 **Final Doxology:** This expresses God’s glory, which the Assembly confirms by its acclamation, “Amen,” which makes the prayer of the priest also the prayer of the people. The priest does not say or sing the “Amen,” because he has already made the prayer. The people say or sing the “Amen” to signify their assent.