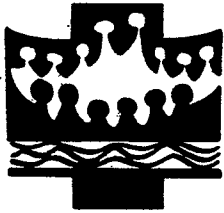


Insights In Liturgy



By Sister Estelle Martin RSM

Eucharistic Prayer III

In Eucharistic Prayer III, the traditional Roman structure characteristic of prayers I and II is enriched by allusions to Gallican and Spanish expression. The overall joyful tone makes it particularly appropriate for use on Sundays and feasts. The prayer also contains a special in-

tercession for the dead. The uniqueness of this prayer is found in its "earthiness," and in its attention to the worshipping community -- a people of God -- praying that they "...may become one body, one spirit in Christ." Liturgy and life merge more clearly in a language which rises from familiar human expressions: pilgrim, family, friendship, inheritance. These words speak for us and to us within the

context of our act of praise and thanksgiving for the redeeming dying and rising of Jesus.

The opening lines of Eucharistic Prayer III gather and summarize the elements of praise incorporated into any of the various prefaces which can precede it: "Father, you are holy indeed and all creation gives you praise." The verbal link is forged by the words "holy indeed" and "all creation."

The first epiclesis (invocation of the Spirit) prays that "these gifts (of bread and wine) be made holy by the power of your Spirit." This reinforces the previous lines which acknowledge that "all holiness comes from you (the Father) through

Christ by the working of the Holy Spirit." The flow from one section to another is particularly evident in this Eucharistic prayer, and structurally it emphasizes the spirit of unity present in the content of the prayer. The second epiclesis invokes the Spirit to fill those present that they may become one. Thus, the action of the Spirit integrates both gifts and people in praise before their Creator.

The words of institution are the same as in the other Eucharistic prayers, but here this section is introduced with the words of St. Paul: "On the night he was betrayed..." making a specific time reference in place of the general one of the other

prayers: "Before he was given up..." (E.P. II), and "When the time came..." (E.P. IV).

The intercessions capture the spirit of praise and thanksgiving which permeate the prayer. They expand and specify "all" into the saints, the Pope, bishops and clergy, the entire people on earth and our departed brothers and sisters. They conclude with the eschatological expression of hope and unity that all may one day "enjoy for ever the vision of your glory."

The intercessions (remembering) recalls the death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord and then, with a touch of unrestrained human eagerness to identify with Christ, prays that we may

be "ready to greet him when he comes again." The incorporation of the community with Christ is again brought forward in the offering of a "holy and living sacrifice" of all who have been reconciled to Christ and to one another that they may become "one body, one spirit in Christ."

The final doxology, as in the other Eucharistic prayers, becomes the collective culmination of the entire prayer. The hope of all the Church is placed in Christ through whom God's blessings are freely bestowed upon his world, and through whom all glory returns to the Father in unity with the Spirit. To this the gathered community rises and affirms: "Amen" -- "So let it be."

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