

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

As we continue looking at the infinitely powerful prayer, which is the Mass, we look more deeply at the Liturgy of the Eucharist. After the Preparation of the Altar is the prayer over the Offerings. This prayer often asks God to accept our sacrifice, and to open us to what God is about to do in the Eucharist.

Then we enter into the high point of the Mass – the Eucharist Prayer. This starts with what we call the Preface Dialogue. You remember this: “The Lord be with you. *And with your spirit.* Lift up your hearts. *We lift them up to the Lord.* Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. *It is right and just.*” Again, the Second Vatican Council reminds us that we are all to have full, conscious, and active participation in the Mass. This Dialogue between the priest and the assembly is a reminder that we are not merely spectators, but participants in the Mass; we do not simply watch, but enter into the Mystery. We are reminded that there is something specifically priestly about to happen (“And with your spirit” signals this) – something that Christ instituted to happen through the gift of Holy Orders. We are also called to give our hearts to Almighty God, and to thank Him for all He has gifted to us... it is truly right and just!

After the Preface Dialogue, the priest prays the Preface (imagine that!). The Preface is a prayer of praise to God and is meant to draw us into the Paschal Mystery (the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ). At the end of the Preface we hear words about the Angels. Sometimes it is simple: “*And so, with the Angels and all the Saints we declare your glory, as with one voice we acclaim...*” and sometimes it is more complex: “*And so, with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominions, and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven, we sing the hymn of your glory, as without end we acclaim...*”

What’s going on here? First, we see that there are levels of the “Celestial Hierarchy” (nine levels, to be exact). Angels are those closest us of the Spirit, but Archangels, Thrones, Dominions and Powers are also in God’s presence, always singing His praise. There are also Seraphim, Cherubim, Virtues, and Principalities (listen carefully – they are mentioned at different times of the year).

Second, we are reminded that when we are at Mass, we are not alone – we join with the whole Church, which is the Body of Christ. Remember, there is only ONE Body of Christ, not many. At Mass, the whole Church is present – yes, all of those physically in the building, but also all of the Church on earth, the Church in Purgatory and in Heaven. The Saints and Angels REALLY are here with us at Mass. We are not in this alone, but are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12:1).

Third, we notice that the Angels are not joining us in this song of praise, but we are joining them! Remember when we would watch the State of the Union address, and then afterward a voice would come on saying, “And now to join our regularly scheduled program, already in progress.” We are joining a song already in progress! And what is this song? “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory.” This is the song of the Angels (like the *Gloria* at the beginning of Mass) that we hear in the Bible (see Isaiah 6:3 and Revelation 4:8). We get to join in the Angels’ Song! This should blow your mind! Remember, Angels are not cute little babies with wings. Angels are the spiritual armies God! Your Guardian Angel, if God gave it the command, could destroy all of the physical universe. This is who you have protecting you all the time! We join in praising God with them! *Cool.*

The “Holy, Holy” continues with “*Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.*” This is the cry of praise of the crowd on Palm Sunday as Jesus enters into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:9, Mark 11:9-10, John 12:13). Hosanna means “O Lord, grant salvation.” This is a GREAT song of praise, and a great beginning to the Eucharistic Prayer.