

The Eucharistic Prayer: Meal and Sacrifice (1)

As I noted last week, the word *eucharist* is of Greek origin. But our celebration of the Eucharist is of Jewish origin, and involves elements of both a *sacrificial offering* and a *fellowship meal* as practiced in ancient Israel. Our Eucharistic Prayer is based on Jewish prayer forms and ritual practices which praise God for God's many works on our behalf. These Jewish prayers and practices have been "baptized" as it were by Christian's use of them to praise and thank God for the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. As a sacrificial prayer the Eucharist remember and renews in us the sacrifice of Jesus himself. The heart of Jesus' lifetime of self sacrifice was expressed in his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before he died: *Not my will but yours be done*, and as he died on the Cross: *Father, into your hands I commend my spirit*. His sacrifice on Calvary was the fulfillment of his whole lifetime, or lifestyle, of surrender to the Father's will in all things, no matter what the cost. Historically, these events are not repeated, but Jesus' surrender to the Father's will is eternal, and it is this aspect of his sacrifice that we are invited to share in our celebration of Eucharist. In our celebration of the Eucharist we recall what Jesus did so that we might go and do the same ourselves, being willing to accept whatever comes to us as a result of our faithfulness to the Father's will. We share in Christ's sacrifice to the extent that we embrace his attitude, his act of willful surrender to God, his relationship with the Father. In this process we become united with Christ, and are one with his self-offering to the Father. Our sharing in Christ's self sacrifice takes place sacramentally during the Mass, but is not meant to be limited only to mass time at church. If we are to fully and authentically join Christ in his surrender to the Father's will, then we have to live that out all week long, in every situation and circumstance of our daily lives. We truly live as members of Christ and give true praise to God only when we live and give our lives in service of others as Jesus himself did. The *full, conscious, and active participation* in the Liturgy called for by Vatican II doesn't begin and end at the church door on Sunday. It reaches out into every moment of our every day.

Please let us know what else about our faith tradition you'd like to find out more about.
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