

The Preface: Setting the Stage

As noted last week, our topic for the next several weeks will be the text of *Eucharistic Prayer* number three, (EP III), with a view to hearing and understanding it better. Because we hear it so often, it can run the risk of excess routine familiarity, and not really being heard at all. To begin these reflections I will revisit some of what we've already said about the *Preface*, how its opening dialogue between priest and people expresses the fact that the whole of the Eucharistic Prayer, as the whole of the Mass itself, is the prayer of all those present. For centuries, prior to the renewal of the Liturgy at the Second Vatican Council, the Mass was understood primarily as something the priest did for the people who were basically passive observers, rather than active participants. But the dialogue or conversation between priest and people that begins the EP (*The Lord be with you... And also with you. Lift up your hearts... We lift them up to the Lord. Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God... It is right to give him thanks and praise*) signals that the entire prayer is meant to actively involve all those present, not just the priest. The whole Mass, including the Eucharistic Prayer, is not a private prayer of the priest that others just listen in on, but the prayer and action of all. This fact cannot be stressed enough, because the very connection of our celebration of the Eucharist and our living of our lives is at stake. Just as the full, conscious, and active participation of all is called for in our celebration of the Liturgy, so also all of our life is meant to be lived in view of our prayer and participation at Mass. If our prayer and participation at Mass are minimal, so too its effect on our lives will be minimal.

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