

The Eucharistic Prayer's Prayers - Institution Narrative

Last week we considered the *epiclesis* of the Eucharistic Prayer, the invocation of the Holy Spirit upon the gifts of bread and wine. There is an *epiclesis* in each EP, though the form and wording vary from prayer to prayer.

In each EP there is also an *Institution Narrative*, also called the *Consecration*, which reflects the words of Jesus found in the various scriptural accounts of the Last Supper (Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 22; 1Corinthians1). The words of institution are part of the EP as a consecratory, thanksgiving prayer of praise. All of our EPs have the exact same words of institution, although the narratives in which they are presented differ in each specific EP. These words are: *Take this, all of you, and eat it: this is my body which will be given up for you... Take this all of you, and drink from it: this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of me.* These words of institution and consecration are essential to the EP. Though based on the various scriptural accounts of the Last Supper, the exact wording of the narrative we pray at Mass is not found in any one of the four biblical accounts of the institution of the Eucharist, liturgical tradition thus being different from scriptural tradition. They probably go back to a liturgical tradition that was already in use before the New Testament documents received their final form. The elevation of the host at the words of institution dates from the early thirteenth century when people did not receive communion often, but took great satisfaction in simply seeing the consecrated bread. The elevation of the chalice appeared in the late fourteenth century and gained universal acceptance only in the late sixteenth century. In this time of the Middle Ages the words of institution were also highlighted by a number of solemn signs, such as genuflections in adoration, incensation as an expression of reverence and prayer, and the ringing of bells. Regarding the ringing of bells, the General Instruction of the Roman Missal says: *A little before the consecration, when appropriate, a server rings a bell as a signal to the faithful. According to local custom, the server rings the bell as the priest shows the host and then the chalice.* This topic of *Bells at Mass* will be our topic next week.

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

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