

Re-visioning Lay Participation in the Eucharistic Prayer

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Frank Henderson's Page on Liturgy and Medieval Women

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The eucharistic prayer is central to the church's liturgy, and in our own times the lay members of the church are expected to participate in it. Here I examine both the theory and practice of lay participation in the eucharistic prayer and explore possible ways of enhancing and increasing this participation in the future.

Lay Participation and the Eucharistic Prayer

“Participation” of the laity is a basic principle of the renewed liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church following Vatican Council II. Thus the Constitution on the Liturgy states:

It is very much the wish of the church that all the faithful should be led to take that full, conscious and active part in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy, and to which the Christian people, “A chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people” (1 Pt 2:9, 4-5) have a right and to which they are bound by reason of their Baptism.

In the restoration and development of the sacred liturgy the full and active participation of all the people is the paramount concern, for it is the primary, indeed the indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit. (n. 14)

At the level of practice, lay participation in the liturgy is complex and multifaceted. It includes nonverbal aspects such as posture, gesture, movement, art, architecture, space, time, and seeing the actions and actors of the liturgy. It includes speaking and singing, as well as listening and silent prayer and reflection. The relative significance of the various modes of participation varies from one liturgy to another, one type of prayer to another, the occasion, and other factors. Individual worshipers and worshipers in different cultures may value some modes of participation more than others.

Reflections on the nature of participation continue, as do efforts to make the actual experience of participation more full, active and conscious.

The general principle of lay participation quoted above applies to the eucharistic prayer as much as it does to other parts of the church's liturgy. At the same time, the eucharistic prayer is considered to be a “presidential prayer,” one that is spoken primarily by the priest-president. Voiced in the first person plural, however, it is understood to be the prayer of all present.

The Roman Missal of 1970 introduced opportunities for verbal-musical participation of the laity through three “acclamations”: the “Holy holy,” the memorial acclamation, and the great amen. In addition, lay persons participate nonverbally through posture, by seeing the altar, president, etc., and by listening to the words of the president. (This liturgical book is the Missal in Latin and the Missal in the United States; in Canada it is referred to as the Sacramentary.)

More recently, additional or alternative acclamations have been included in eucharistic prayers intended not for general use but rather for particular occasions. These developments will be considered further below.

Diverse Responses

The theology and practice of lay participation in the eucharistic prayer just described is only some thirty years old. It is therefore not surprising that reactions and responses to this “innovation” have varied among individuals and among local church communities. For the sake of simplicity these diverse experiences, understandings and expectations may be lumped into three categories.

Some lay persons wish to do less than the present liturgical books expect. They do not participate fully in the three acclamations; they are more likely to speak them than sing them. They may not have received appropriate instruction regarding the meaning and importance of the acclamations and about the nature of the eucharistic prayer, or may not be convinced by such instruction. They may feel that the eucharistic prayer is entirely the priest’s (as it used to be) and have no great desire to participate in it. They may view it as something that is too holy for lay persons to participate in.

Other laity find that the present practice of three acclamations is satisfactory and satisfying. They sing them, they consider them to be important parts of the eucharistic liturgy, and they have received some education regarding them. They have no great desire to participate further.

A third category of lay persons believes that the present modes of lay participation are good but insufficient. They stand during the eucharistic prayer, sing the acclamations, have a decent understanding of what the prayer and the acclamations are all about, and try to live eucharistic lives. However, they still experience the eucharistic prayer as primarily that of the priest and do not fully experience it as theirs as well. In some cases they have experimented with other – unofficial – forms of participation and find that some of these are quite helpful. They understand that the entire liturgical assembly is supposed to be “doing” the eucharist and wish to participate in the eucharistic prayer to a greater extent than is now permitted.

Open Questions and Remaining Issues

As already mentioned, Vatican Council II’s theory of lay participation in the liturgy was brought to expression in the Roman Missal of 1970; this included the singing of three acclamations during the eucharistic prayer. In view of the fact that laity had been excluded from any participation in the eucharistic prayer for the previous 15 centuries or so, and that

acclamations had not previously been used in the eucharistic liturgy of the western church, the 1970 missal represented a considerable advance.

Precisely because it represented such a profound change both in theory and in practice, however, and because there is so little historical basis in the western church for the practice of acclamations, questions still remain. Were the changes in practice established in the 1970 missal (presidential prayer plus acclamations) sufficient to express the Council's theology of lay participation and to bring about a transformed and transformative experience for the laity? (Just saying that this is the case doesn't necessarily make it so.) At the very least it seems appropriate to evaluate the present practice of lay participation in the eucharistic prayer and consider possible adjustments and improvements. Though I raise certain general questions here regarding this matter, they will not be discussed in any depth.

The human experience of presidential prayer

In addition to singing the acclamations, the laity are expected to listen to the texts of the eucharistic prayer that are spoken or sung by the priest-presider and to make them their own prayer. This goes beyond listening to a text that is the prayer of the priest alone (where the laity are spectators as it were); instead the laity are supposed to become real and active participants. This is a complex and challenging matter.

At the external level, what actually happens? First, the priest reads aloud (or sings) a fairly long text that is printed in the missal. Next, this is supposed to become real prayer for him; he is not just reciting narrative or poetry or academic theology. Thirdly, the laity are expected to listen to the prayer text spoken or sung by the priest. Finally, what the laity listen to is supposed to become real prayer for them, and this prayer is intended to be transformative for their lives.

Without judging intentions or interior dispositions, what the priest speaks does not always seem to listeners to be prayer for him. What effect might this have on efforts by the laity to make it their prayer? Additionally, by the way they read or sing the eucharistic prayer, priests sometimes give the impression that they do not care if the laity enter into the eucharistic prayer as prayer; pace, audibility, enunciation, inflection, etc., may give this impression. What effect might this have on lay participation?

Even when the priest speaks the prayer well and in an invitational manner, it still can be a challenge for lay persons to make it their own prayer. In an age of short attention spans, it requires paying close attention to a fairly lengthy text. In an age of print, television and the cinema, it requires mostly listening. In an age of simple public language and inexact use of language, it requires appreciating language that may be nuanced, dense, traditional and relatively formal. It also requires appropriate spiritual dispositions and the living of a eucharistic life.

Does the presidential manner of praying the eucharistic prayer really work the way it

intended to? Can it do so?

The nature of acclamations

In the modern liturgy, the three acclamations are the sole means of active verbal-musical participation in the eucharistic prayer for the laity. This prayer form is not an independent text of the people but rather a response to what the priest has just spoken or sung. In theory the acclamations presuppose that the laity listen to and understand what the priest says and prays, and that – intellectually and spiritually - they are led to respond aloud and in words provided in the liturgical books. If the people listen to the priest's prayer but for one reason or another do not really enter into it as prayer for themselves, the acclamations become semi-independent texts that are not deeply rooted in the text of the eucharistic prayer; hopefully they are still real prayers. It can also happen that laity speak or sing the acclamations without paying much attention to what the priest speaks at all.

Certainly it is good to be able to respond to and within the eucharistic prayer. But is this completely satisfying or entirely sufficient? Do the present acclamations by themselves embody and implement fully the principle of full, conscious and active participation?

The nature of liturgical presidency

What the priest does as presider varies in the course of the eucharistic liturgy. Sometimes he sits or stands in the place of presidency and simply listens to others read or sing. Sometimes he issues invitations to the people. Sometimes he speaks certain prayers, and of course he preaches. During the eucharistic prayer the priest says and does almost everything himself – certainly all the central and essential actions and texts.

This seems quite natural to us, but do these various dimensions of presiding serve the goal of fostering full, active and conscious participation of the laity equally well? Is it the only way to preside at the eucharistic prayer? Might some other way of presiding better facilitate the participation of the laity?

In fact, the practice of concelebration as it is now practiced shows that presidency can be shared at least to some extent. This is considered further below.

Values to be Balanced

Participation of the laity is of course not the only value that needs to be taken into account when thinking about the eucharistic prayer. Several other issues of significance are named here, though not considered in any detail.

Textual unity. The eucharistic prayer, though it has structure and subdivisions, is also considered to be a unity.

Presidential unity. The priest is usually the sole presider over the eucharistic prayer (though this presidency is at times shared with concelebrants), and this is thought to represent the sole presidency of Jesus Christ.

Ministerial identity. Presiding at the eucharist, and especially speaking the words of Jesus in the institution narrative of the eucharistic prayer, is central to the ministerial identity of Roman Catholic priests.

Theological efficacy. The eucharistic prayer with ordained priest as presider is a prayer of consecration and transformation. For some this is associated with the prayer as a whole, for some with the institution narrative, and for some with the epiclesis or invocation of the Holy Spirit plus the institution narrative.

Does lay participation in the eucharistic prayer adversely affect any of these values, or threaten to do so, or appear to do so? For example, might increased lay participation diminish the textual unity of the eucharistic prayer, or challenge the presidency of the priest, or diminish the ministerial identity of the priest, or affect the transformative efficacy of the eucharistic prayer?

These values should not be regarded as competing with each other or in tension, but rather to be held in healthy balance. How this balance might be achieved is not considered here; instead I set these other issues aside and focus on lay participation.

Aims and Approaches

The aim of this study is to try to discern possible ways of enhancing lay participation in the eucharistic prayer and thereby to suggest possible future developments in the church's liturgy.

My method is simple: First I examine in some detail the present eucharistic prayers and present forms of lay participation. Second, I try to imagine ways of expanding and enhancing what is already being done.

Starting Places

I take the present official eucharistic prayers of the Roman Catholic Church as the starting place for exploring increased lay participation. Further, I assume that the presiding priest will sing, say and do virtually everything that he now says, sings and does. Increased lay participation, therefore, will take the form of additions to the present texts.

Terminology

It is important to define certain frequently-used terms.

By “lay person” or “laity” I mean the lay members of the assembly as a whole, also referred to as “the people.” Additionally, this term may refer to one or more lay musical leaders or to smaller groups or laity such as a choir or schola.

By “cantor” I mean a lay musical leader.

By “acclamation” I first of all mean anything and everything that the people sing or say during the eucharistic prayer; this follows present official usage. Acclamations may be “brief” or longer.”

Issues and Approaches Set Aside

I have consciously set aside certain possible approaches other than those stated above. These might indeed be fruitful in other hands but are not considered here. Thus:

Increased lay participation will not be modeled on that of concelebrants when they collectively speak certain parts of the eucharistic prayer together with the principal presider.

Increased lay participation will not be modeled on that of individual concelebrants, who may speak certain parts of the eucharistic prayer in place of the principal presider.

Increased lay participation will not take the form of laity singing in ostinato manner in the background while the priest-presider speaks or sings his texts.

Additionally, the singing of the entire eucharistic prayer by the priest presider (in contrast to just the preface and doxology, for example) is not seen as a model for increasing lay participation. It is true that the singing of the eucharistic prayer, as with any musical text, may heighten texts, uncover deeper meanings, give beauty and emphasis, and express joy and enthusiasm. However, singing the entire text makes an already long prayer even longer, and the acclamations sung by the people decrease in relative importance. In addition, this practice puts even more focus on the priest.

The composition of entirely new eucharistic prayers that might build in increased lay participation has been set aside, as has the use of eucharistic prayers of other churches.

Two other issues have also been set aside: musical unity and the theological orientation of the acclamations. Thus it is considered desirable (by some) or required (by others) that all the

music sung during the eucharistic prayer be consistent in terms of style; still others don't care, of course. I consider this a desirable eventual goal, but not a matter that should hold up the promotion of increased lay participation. Additionally, some feel strongly that the acclamations of the eucharistic prayer be addressed to God (the First Person of the Trinity), while others believe that they should be addressed to Jesus Christ; still others believe that this is not an important matter. Again, while this needs to be discussed by those competent to do so, I do not consider it a matter that should hold up promotion of increased lay participation.

The Present Eucharistic Prayers: A Close Look

I begin by taking a close look at the present official eucharistic prayers of the Roman Catholic Church, both to make any discussion of lay participation in them intelligible and in the expectation that ideas for increased lay participation will be found in what we now possess and practice.

Number, Designation, Intended Use

There are now four eucharistic prayers for “regular” use:

Eucharistic Prayer I or the Roman Canon

(This has a distinct structure and approach and will not be considered further)

Eucharistic Prayers II, III and IV

In addition, there are nine more for use on “particular occasions.”

Eucharistic Prayer for Children I, II and III

Eucharistic Prayer for Masses of Reconciliation I and II

Eucharistic Prayer for Various Needs and Occasions I, II, III, and IV.

A musical setting of these includes more acclamations than does the non-musical version.

Internal Structure

Though the eucharistic prayer is a unity, it also has a structure and order, with parts and divisions. This structure may be outlined as follows:

Preface dialogue

Preface

Acclamation: Holy holy (Sanctus)
Post-sanctus
First epiclesis or invocation of the Holy Spirit
Institution narrative: Introduction; Bread words; Wine words; Do this...
Acclamation: Memorial acclamation
Anamnesis and offering
Second epiclesis or invocation of the Holy Spirit
Prayer for the church
Prayer for the dead
Prayer for the reign of God
Doxology
Acclamation: Great Amen.

A few comments may be made regarding this structure. First, it is sometimes appropriate to refer to the “first half” and “second half” of the eucharistic prayer. The latter is what follows the institution narrative and memorial acclamation.

It may also be noted that the post-sanctus section may be of varying length and may include subsections of its own. In addition, the prayers that follow the anamnesis and offering are not always in the same order.

The preface plus post-sanctus may be thought of as prayers of thanksgiving for God’s marvellous deeds in the past, which we expect to be continued in the present and future. They therefore have somewhat the character of story.

The first epiclesis or invocation of the Holy Spirit is a prayer for the transformation of the bread and wine, while the second epiclesis asks for the transformation of the church (including all present) that shares in communion.

The first epiclesis – a relative innovation in the Roman Catholic eucharistic prayers – is of great importance in that (a) it parallels the institution narrative as a prayer of conversion and transformation, (b) it makes it clear that God, through the Holy Spirit, effects the transformation of the bread and wine, and (c) it is a prayer of the entire assembly – therefore also the laity – inasmuch as it is worded in the first person plural.

The institution narrative of course tells the particular story of the Last Supper and includes descriptive narrative plus words of Jesus.

The anamnesis-offering prayer states that we today are faithfully following Jesus’ command to “do this as his memorial feast” and it makes the connection between our action today and that of Jesus on the night before he died.

Various intercessions and other prayers follow, and the eucharistic prayer concludes with the doxology and great amen.

Acclamations

Acclamations are first of all everything and anything that the laity say or sing during the eucharistic prayer. On the basis of length and character they may be divided into brief acclamations and longer acclamations. Finally, depending on the eucharistic prayer in which they are found, they may be considered to be for regular use or for use on particular occasions.

There have been three stages of development in providing acclamations for lay participation in the eucharistic prayer; the second and third stages are little known.

Eucharistic Prayers I-IV (1970)

Eucharistic Prayers for Children I-III and for Masses of Reconciliation I-II (1975)

Eucharistic prayers for Various Needs and Occasions I-IV (1994)

The second and third stages enlarge the practice of acclamations considerably.

Acclamations for regular use

The three acclamations included in eucharistic prayers I-IV are the Holy holy, the memorial acclamation, and the great amen.

The Holy holy is a “longer” acclamation and it follows the preface. It is to be said or sung by both people and priest.

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

The memorial acclamation is a “brief” acclamation and follows the institution narrative. In English language usage there are four variant texts. These are designated for use by the people.

Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.
Dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life, Lord Jesus, come in glory.

When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim your death, Lord Jesus,
until you come in glory.
Lord, by your cross and resurrection you have set us free.
You are the savior of the world.

The great amen is also a brief acclamation, which follows the doxology and therefore concludes the entire eucharistic prayer. It is sung or said by the people. The amen may be single or multiple (and sometimes expanded in other ways).

The Holy holy and great amen are also included in the eucharistic prayers for particular occasions; the memorial acclamation may or may not be included in these.

Acclamations for particular occasions

The eucharistic prayers for particular occasions may include acclamations in addition to and/or instead of those named above. This is the case with EP Children II, EP Children III, and the musical setting of EP Various Needs and Occasions I-IV.

These additional acclamations may be considered in terms of their location within the prayer and also in terms of their text.

Location of additional acclamations

Three types of additional acclamations may be distinguished on the basis of their location within the eucharistic prayer.

A. At the conclusion of individual sections of the eucharistic prayer.

Post-sanctus

EP Children II

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Anamnesis-offering

EP Children II

We praise you, we bless you, we thank you.

EP Children III

Glory to God in the highest

Unique prayer following the anamnesis

EP Children III (twice)

Glory to God in the highest

Second epiclesis

EP Various Needs and Occasions I-IV

Unite us in love, holy and faithful God

Prayer for the church

EP Children II

We praise you, we bless you, we thank you

EP Various Needs and Occasions I-IV

United us in love, holy and faithful God

Prayer for the dead

EP Children II

We praise you, we bless you, we thank you

EP Various Needs and Occasions I-IV

Unite us in love, holy and faithful God

Prayer for mission and witness

EP Various Needs and Occasions III, IV (twice)

Unite us in love, holy and faithful God

Prayer for the reign of God

EP Children II

We praise you, we bless you, we thank you

B. Within individual sections of the eucharistic prayer:

Preface

EP Children II (Three times within the preface)

Glory to God in this highest. Or: Hosanna in the highest

Institution narrative

EP Children II (After the bread words and after the wine words)

Jesus has given his life for us

C. Surrounding (before and after) a section of the eucharistic prayer:

First epiclesis

EP Various Needs and Occasions I-IV (musical setting)

Blessed are you, holy and faithful God

Texts of additional acclamations

Bringing together what has just been described, the following acclamation texts are used in the several eucharistic prayers for particular occasions.

EP Children II

Glory to God in the highest
Hosanna in the highest
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest
Jesus has given his life for us
We praise you, we bless you, we thank you.

EP Children III

Glory to God in the highest

EP Various Needs and Occasions I-IV (musical setting)

Blessed are you, holy and faithful God
Unite us in love, holy and faithful God.

This practice of acclamations, taken as a whole, suggests that there is ample basis in the present official texts for extending these usages in order to foster increased participation by the laity.

Alternative and Additional Texts

The eucharistic prayers are not invariant texts. They include variable alternative texts that may be substituted one for another on particular occasions. The most prominent of these is the preface. Within the Roman Canon there is also a long tradition of variable Hanc igitur and Communicates.

Prayers may also be expanded, and I have considered these in general to be “additional” texts. Such expansions or additions, for example, are found in certain ritual masses, as for that for baptism.

EP II

...and all the clergy.
Remember also those who have been baptized (and confirmed) today
as members of your family.
Help them to follow Christ your Son with loving hearts.

EP III

...gathered here before you.

Strengthen those who have now become your people
by the waters of rebirth
(And the gift of the Holy Spirit).
Help them to walk in newness of life.

EP IV

...who take part in this offering,
those here present,
those born again today
by water and the Holy Spirit,
and all your people.

In addition, the prayer for the dead may be expanded, and sometimes this amounts to an alternative text of some substance.

Finally, certain of the eucharistic prayers for particular occasions contain additional texts that are novel, having to do with the church's mission in the world.

EP Children III

Help all who follow Jesus
to work for peace
and to bring happiness to others.

EP Various Needs and Occasion III

Keep your Church alert in faith to the signs of the times
and eager to accept the challenge of the gospel.
Open our hearts to the needs of all humanity,
so that sharing their grief and anguish,
their joy and hope,
we may faithfully bring them the good news of salvation
and advance together on the way to your kingdom.

EP Various Needs and Occasions IV

Open our eyes to the needs to all,
inspire us with words and deeds
to comfort those who labor
and are burdened,
keep our service of others
faithful to the example and command of Christ.

Let your Church be a living witness

to truth and freedom,
to justice and peace,
that all people may be lifted up
by the hope of a world made new.

Study of the alternative and additional texts within the present official eucharistic prayers provides another starting place for considering increased lay participation.

Diaconal Texts

By “diaconal” texts, I mean those that give direction to the people, or invite the people to sing or do something, or that supply a text that the people will use. In the context of the eucharistic prayer, acclamations may be preceded by an invitation (e.g., “Let us proclaim the mystery of faith.”) In addition, some acclamations are preceded by a “cue” (e.g., “And so, with all the angels and saints, we sing the joyful hymn of your praise” or “With Jesus we sing your praise.”) In the case of the doxology, the cue for the great amen is “for ever and ever.” (In the eucharistic prayers for particular occasions some acclamations have neither invitation or cue, however.)

At the present time such diaconal texts are generally said or sung by the priest-president. The very nature of diaconal texts suggests that they be shared with another minister.

The Cantor

In EP Various Needs and Occasions I-IV (musical setting), the church introduced a role for a cantor in the celebration of the eucharistic prayer. Though not always necessarily the case, for present purposes I take it that this musical leader is a lay person.

Thus before the first epiclesis the rubrics state, “The cantor sings the following acclamation and the people repeat it.” Following the epiclesis the rubrics state merely, “The people take up the acclamation.” Later, following the second epiclesis, and at the beginning of the several prayers for the people, the dead, et al., the same rubrics are given.

The cantor thus has two roles: (a) to teach the people the acclamations, by modeling them; and (b) to signal the people when to sing the acclamation. The form used is responsorial (or lining out or call and response). (Note that the people also sing acclamations (previously taught by the cantor) without the cantor and without any cue or invitation.)

In the context of the present study, consideration might be given to applying the cantor’s ministry to other eucharistic prayers and to expanding this role in other ways as well.

Concelebration

In some eucharistic prayers the principal presider is flanked by other presbyters who say certain parts of the eucharistic prayer together with him (though the voice of the principal presider should predominate). In addition, certain prayers may be spoken by individual concelebrants instead of by the principal presider.

At the very least this shows that presidency can be shared, at least by other presbyters, and in different ways.

Presiding is also shared when a bishop “presides” over the eucharistic prayer while remaining at the episcopal chair; a priest “celebrant” actually stands at the altar and presides in the usual way. In the Ceremonial of Bishops this is designated under the title, “Mass at which the bishop presides but not as celebrant.”

Nonverbal Participation

Ideally all the laity present will be able to see the altar and what has been placed on it, as well as the priest presider.

At the present time, posture varies with place and time. All stand during the preface dialogue, the preface, and the Holy holy. After this, some kneel for all the rest of the eucharistic prayer, all stand throughout, and some kneel until the end of the institution narrative, rise for the memorial acclamation and remain standing until the end.

Increasing Lay Participation: Possible Future Directions

Lay participation in the eucharistic prayer may potentially be enhanced by attending to the brief acclamations, the longer acclamations, the diaconal texts and those of the cantor, and to nonverbal forms of participation.

Additional Brief Acclamations

It is assumed, unless indicated to the contrary, that the regular memorial acclamation and great amen will be used and that they will be sung.

It is assumed as well that any additional brief acclamations will be sung.

Texts of any additional acclamations is not considered here. A variety of such texts have been used in the brief acclamations of the eucharistic prayers for particular occasions (see above), and these are regarded as examples, not a restrictive list. The same applies to the melodies that might be used.

The following specific suggestions regarding the use of additional brief acclamations in EP II-IV follow from existing practices and are offered for consideration. Such acclamations, like the ones now in use, have the character of responses to the texts spoken by the presider.

1. EP Various Needs and Occasions (perhaps with new names) might be listed among those used on regular occasions, including the brief acclamations given in the musical setting. (The priest's texts, however, need not be sung in their entirety.)
2. Brief acclamations might be used following the second epiclesis, prayer for the church, prayer for the dead, prayer for the reign of God, and prayer for mission and witness (when it occurs). (EP Children II-III and EP Various Needs and Occasions I-IV are models here.)
3. The memorial acclamation following the institution narrative might be replaced by a brief acclamation following the anamnesis (or the memorial acclamation might be moved to this location). (EP Children II is a model here.)

Some liturgists have long felt that the anamnesis and institution narrative form a single unity, which is disrupted by the present memorial acclamation. In this view, the memorial acclamation should follow the anamnesis.

4. Brief acclamations might be used within the institution narrative, following both the "bread words" and the "wine words." (EP Children II is a model here.)

(I am not entirely sure this is a good idea, but it deserves to be evaluated in practice. Might such acclamations disrupt the unity of the institution narrative?)

5. Brief acclamations might be used with the first epiclesis. The acclamation might both precede and follow the epiclesis (as in EP Various Needs and Occasions I-IV), or merely follow it.

To use an acclamation prior to the text, of course, means that it is not really a response, but an anticipation. This is somewhat unusual but signals the special significance of the first epiclesis and raises up the role of lay people in the consecratory dimension of the eucharistic prayer.

Additional Longer Acclamations

It is desirable that longer acclamations be sung, either by the lay members of the liturgical assembly as a whole, or (sometimes) by a cantor or choir, or (often) by the people and cantor in some dialogical manner. Some suggestions are made here, but more needs to be worked out.

I offer for consideration the following specific suggestions regarding the use of longer acclamations in EP II-IV. Most have the character of responses. In addition, however, all constitute substantive additions to the text of the eucharistic prayer.

6. A “blessing for creation” might be used as a longer acclamation at the beginning of the preface, following the dialogue.

Jewish models would suggest that our eucharistic prayers begin with blessing or thanksgiving to God for creation. Modern Roman Catholic eucharistic prayers are weak in referring to creation, however. It may be noted that the Book of Alternative Services of the Anglican Church of Canada inserts the words, “Blessed are you, gracious God, creator of heaven and earth” at the beginning of many prefaces, immediately following the preface dialogue.

I suggest that a longer acclamation that thanks and blesses God for creation be inserted in the same way, following the preface dialogue and at the beginning of the preface. At the end of this acclamation the priest would take up the regular texts of the preface.

Some possible texts along these lines are given in Appendix I. They need to be adapted for musical use, and they might be sung by all, by the cantor (or choir), or in a dialogical manner by the people and the cantor.

7. An “invocation for ministry” might be used as a longer acclamation following the second epiclesis.

Prayers for the church’s mission and witness are provided by additions to EP Children III and EP Various Needs and Occasions III-IV, as described above. This is an area in which, in my view, the present Roman Catholic eucharistic prayers are weak. It would be good to remedy this deficiency.

Theologically, such prayers for mission and witness would be based on the second epiclesis or invocation of the Holy Spirit, which is directed to the transformation of the church. They would also be extensions of the prayer for the church.

The present texts in EP Children III and EP Various Needs and Occasions III-IV are intended for the priest-presider and I would not alter this arrangement. New texts in other eucharistic prayers, however, might be said or sung by the laity. Some possible texts along these lines are given in Appendix II. They need to be adapted for musical use, and they might be sung

by all, by the cantor (or choir), or in a dialogical manner by the people and the cantor.

8. A “hymn of praise for eucharist” might be used as a longer acclamation following the anamnesis.

The theology of the anamnesis is profound but also dense and phrased in language that may be difficult for all to appropriate. I suggest that longer acclamations could be used here to express something of the significance of the eucharist in language that is more accessible to the people and that is actually put on the people’s lips.

Possible examples are one or several verses plus refrains from well-known songs such as “Bread of Life”, “Hope of the World,” “life-Giving Bread, Saving Cup,” and “The Harvest of Justice” (from the hymnal “Gather”). Verses might be sung by the cantor while the rest of the assembly might sing the refrain (preferably without books). Other arrangements are of course possible as well.

9. A “hymn of praise for church” might be used as a longer acclamation following the intercessions for the church.

Longer acclamations here might identify the people present (the liturgical assembly) as church and hence as those who “do eucharist.” Such acclamations might use accessible language and put this self-identification on the lips of the people themselves.

As an example, the refrain to “We Are The Light Of The World” might be sung by all, with the cantor (or choir) singing one or two verses.

The Cantor and Diaconal Texts

The following suggestions are offered regarding the role of the cantor in the singing of diaconal and other texts in any eucharistic prayer.

10. The cantor might sing most or all of the diaconal texts. These include the final words of the preface that provide a cue for the Holy holy, the invitation to the memorial acclamation, and any other cues that might be used.

11. The cantor might lead and assist in the singing of brief acclamations, at least sometimes. Thus the cantor might line out the text of an acclamation, and the people would repeat it.(EP Various Needs and Occasions is a model here.)

12. The cantor might play a role in proclaiming some of the longer acclamations just suggested.

Nonverbal Participation

The following specific suggestions regarding nonverbal participation in any eucharistic prayer are offered for consideration.

13. The people might stand during the eucharistic prayer, from beginning to end. This is a more active and participatory posture than kneeling, accords with ancient tradition, and is recognized in the text of the Roman Canon.

14. The people might adopt the same orans gesture that the presider uses during most of the eucharistic prayer. This was in fact the practice of the church for some centuries.

15. If numbers and architectural considerations permit, the people might move as close to the altar as possible.

Implementation

I have suggested a number of possible approaches to enhancing lay participation in the eucharistic prayer. However, I certainly do not intend that all of these possibilities be used at the same time. They need to be used judiciously and in a balanced manner. The following are several criteria that might be followed in choosing among the various possibilities for an individual eucharistic prayer and for a particular celebration.

1. There should be an appropriate balance between brief and longer acclamations.
2. There should be an appropriate number of acclamations, not too many and not too few.
3. They should be used with reasonable frequency within the eucharistic prayer, but not too often. (Too many acclamations used too frequently can be tiresome or boring.)
4. They should be long enough to show a seriousness of purpose; acclamations that are too brief can seem trivial. (In some cases the context may require brevity, however.)
5. They should require little or no paper in the hands of the people.
6. They should provide meaningful opportunities for lay people to respond to the content of the eucharistic prayer.
7. They should provide opportunities for the laity to make substantive contributions to the eucharistic prayer.
8. The value of increased lay participation needs to be balanced with other values having to do with the eucharistic prayer, as named above.

Appendices

Appendix I: Blessings for Creation

The following are seven prayers of blessing for creation, or seven sets of resources for such blessings. They are to be regarded as models and resources, not finished products.

Each prayer, as presented here, consists of four parts. One or more of these may be used at a time, and it is expected that they will be adapted in appropriate ways.

They also need to be adapted for musical use.

1
Blessed are you, Lover of Creation,
creator of heaven and earth.

We give you thanks for humankind:
for crafting us with ingenuity, beauty and
humor,
and inspiring us to care for creation and tell
of your glory.

Like a divine seamstress you have fashioned
us,
building both unity and diversity into all of
creation,
and calling us to appreciate the beauty of
your universe.

We thank you for your gift of holy wisdom;
she fills our world with her produce
and brings peace and wholeness.

2
Blessed are you, Heart of the Universe,
creator of heaven and earth.

We give you thanks for the sky that envelops
and embraces us,
and for the clouds that dance across the
heavens
to bring shade and moisture.

Like an older sister you have inspired us,
teaching us the skills of daily living
and calling us to give thanks for your care.

We thank you for your gift of holy wisdom;
she gives help to those who seek her,
and blesses those who hold her fast.

3
Blessed are you, Weaver of Dreams,
creator of heaven and earth.

We give you thanks for thunder and
lightening,
which reveal the power and energy of
creation;
and for rain and snow, which replenish the
oceans,
quench our thirst, and support growth.

Like a divine midwife you have called us
forth,
setting us on a new path of life
and calling us to marvel at your love.

We thank you for your gift of holy wisdom;
she walks with us on difficult paths,
gladdens our hearts
and leads us on the straight path to insight.

4

Blessed are you, Womb of the Cosmos,
creator of heaven and earth.

We give you thanks for oceans, lakes, rivers
and streams,
which move constantly over much of planet
earth
and provide food, employment and
recreation.

Like a divine bakerwoman you have
nourished us,
sustaining us with the good things of your
world,
and calling us to marvel at your fruitfulness.

We thank you for your gift of holy wisdom;
she understands what is pleasing in your
sight
and is a tree of life to those who hold her
fast.

5

Blessed are you, Mother of the Universe,
creator of heaven and earth.

We give you thanks for sun, moon and stars,
which mark days and seasons, give light,
and lead us to marvel at the immensity of
creation.

Like a divine weaver you have crafted us,
clothing us in righteousness and justice
and calling us to be grateful for your beauty.

We thank you for the gift of holy wisdom:
she knows and understands all things
and guides us wisely in our actions.

6

Blessed are you, Vigilant Lover,
creator of heaven and earth.

We give you thanks for heights and depths,
which invoke awe,
inspire us with their beauty
and challenge us to explore.

Like a nanny you have encouraged us,
praising us for doing our best
and calling us to wonder at your patience.

We thank you for the gift of holy wisdom;
she is radiant and unfading,
easily discerned by those who love her
and readily found by those who seek her.

7

Blessed are you, Wisdom of the Cosmos,
creator of heaven and earth.

We give you thanks for darkness and light,
which mark the rhythms of our lives
and make possible our work and play.

Like a mother eagle you have challenged us,
pushing us out of the nest,
and calling us to delight in your cosmos.

We thank you for the gift of holy wisdom;
she is more precious than jewels;
her paths are peace.

Appendix II: Invocations for Ministry

The following are seven prayers of invocation for ministry, or seven sets of resources for such blessings. They are to be regarded as models and resources, not finished products.

Each prayer is presented in two formats. The first is shorter and consists of one sentence; the Holy Spirit is referred to in a simple manner. These may be adapted as seems appropriate. The second format is longer, names the Holy Spirit in three ways, and consists of three sentences. One or more of these may be used at a time, and it is expected that they will be adapted in appropriate ways.

They also needs to be adapted for musical use.

1a
May your Holy Spirit transform us today,
that we may
affirm the goodness of all persons,
challenge unjust political and economic
systems,
clothe the naked
feed the hungry,
support women and men who confront
oppression,
promote creativity in the arts,
and exercise wisdom in caring for our
children.

1b
Transform us today by the Holy Spirit, your
Flowing Love,
that we may
affirm the goodness of all persons
and support women and men who confront
oppression.

Empower us by your Spirit of new life,
to challenge unjust political and economic
systems,
clothe the naked
and feed the hungry.

Fill us with the Holy Spirit
that we may promote creativity in the arts

and exercise wisdom in caring for our
children.

2a
May your Holy Spirit transform us today,
that we may
value the gifts of every person,
commend women and men who act
courageously,
care for the rivers, lakes and oceans of the
world,
affirm women and men who work toward
equality in society,
open our hearts to listen eagerly to God's
word,
encourage creativity in science,
and exercise wisdom in the church's
ministry to the world.

2b
Transform us today by the Holy Spirit, your
Sacred Presence,
that we may
value the gifts of every person
and commend women and me who act
courageously.

Empower us by your Spirit of hope and joy,
to care for the rivers, lakes and oceans of the
world,

and affirm women and men who work toward equality in society.

Fill us with the Holy Spirit,
that we may open our hearts to listen eagerly to God's word,
encourage creativity in science,
and exercise wisdom in the church's ministry to the world.

3a

May your Holy Spirit transform us today,
that we may honor all who are sent by God to touch our lives,
affirm women and men who speak prophetically,
care for the forests and prairies, crops and farmlands,
discern how to share food and water, shelter and clothing,
examine the scriptures, pondering and questioning,
respect women and men who teach and learn,
affirm creativity in drama,
and exercise wisdom in ministering within the church.

3b

Transform us today by the Holy Spirit, your Sevenfold Gift,
that we may honor all who are sent by God to touch our lives,
and affirm women and men who speak prophetically.

Empower us by your Spirit of grace to care for the forests and prairies, crops and farmlands,
discern how to share food and water, shelter and clothing,

and respect women and men who teach and learn.

Fill us with the Holy Spirit,
that we may examine the scriptures,
pondering and questioning,
affirm creativity in drama,
and exercise wisdom in ministering within the church.

4a

May your Holy Spirit transform us today,
that we may support the prophetic and courageous when they are rejected,
praise women and men who foster justice,
care for the air we breathe and the atmosphere of our planet,
create full employment and stop child labor,
affirm women and men who spread the good news,
support creativity in engineering,
and exercise wisdom in the religious formation of our children.

4b

Transform us today by the Holy Spirit, your Song of the Universe,
that we may support the prophetic and courageous when they are rejected,
and praise women and men who foster justice.

Empower us by your Spirit of beauty to care for the air we breathe and the atmosphere of our planet,
and create full employment and stop child labor.

Fill us with the Holy Spirit,
that we may affirm women and men who spread the good news,

support creativity in engineering,
and exercise wisdom in the religious
formation of our children.

5a

May your Holy Spirit transform us today,
that we may
watch over those who are alone and
dejected,
encourage women and men who seek to
make peace,
care for the birds and animals, fish and
everything that moves,
be creative in meeting the needs of refugees,
work hard to be good news in society,
praise women and men who give example of
goodness,
encourage creativity in literature,
and exercise wisdom in administration.

5b

Transform us today by the Holy Spirit, your
Burning Love,
that we may
watch over those who are alone and dejected
and encourage women and men who seek to
make peace.

Empower us by your Spirit of liberation
to care for the birds and animals, fish and
everything that moves,
be creative in meeting the needs of refugees,
and work hard to be good news in society.

Fill us with the Holy Spirit,
that we may
praise women and men who give example of
goodness,
encourage creativity in literature
and exercise wisdom in administration.

6a

May your Holy Spirit transform us today,
that we may stand in solidarity with all who
are punished unjustly,
applaud women and men who challenge
deception and untruth,
care about the disappearance of fish, birds,
insects and animals,
have compassion for children, women and
men who do not have enough to eat,
teach peace, justice, development and
human rights,
rejoice over women and men who promote
harmony in society and church,
support all who struggle in the work of the
gospel,
encourage creativity in medical research and
care,
and exercise wisdom in teaching and
learning.

6b

Transform us today by the Holy Spirit, your
Giver of Gifts, that we may stand in
solidarity with all who are punished
unjustly,
applaud women and men who challenge
deception and untruth
and have compassion for children, women
and men who do not have enough to eat.

Empower us by your Spirit of wholeness
to care about the disappearance of fish,
birds, insects and animals,
teach peace, justice, development and
human rights,
and rejoice over women and men who
promote harmony in society and church.

Fill us with the Holy Spirit
that we may support all who struggle in the
work of the gospel,
encourage creativity in medical research and
care, and exercise wisdom in teaching and
learning.

7a

May your Holy Spirit transform us today,
that we may
support women and men who promote
liberation,
always remember those who are close to
death,
care about the beauty of the oceans and
rivers, mountains, prairies and all your earth;
build up the church in our households and
communities,
commend women and men who provide
leadership in society and church,
applaud creativity in caregiving,
and exercise wisdom in governance.

7b

Transform us today by the Holy Spirit, your
Vibrant Life,
that we may
support women and men who promote
liberation
and always remember those who are close to
death.

Empower us by your Spirit of faith
to care about the beauty of oceans and rivers,
mountains, prairies and all your earth,
and build up the church in our households
and communities.

Fill us with the Holy Spirit
that we may commend women and men who
provide leadership in society and church,
applaud creativity in caregiving,
and exercise wisdom in governance.