

ADORATION 101

THE SACRAMENT OF CHARITY:

The Eucharistic Prayers and The Sign of Peace

We pick up this week in paragraphs 48 and 49 of Pope Benedict XVI's 2007 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Eucharist as the source and summit of the Church's life and mission, and discuss the Eucharist in relation to the Eucharistic Prayer and the sign of peace during Holy Mass.

We begin by reminding ourselves that the Eucharistic Prayer said during Holy Mass is the center and summit of the entire celebration; it is when the Mass reaches its pinnacle. Filled with theological richness and spiritual beauty, the Eucharistic Prayers need to be appreciated and revered. They contain eight basic elements: thanksgiving, acclamation, epiclesis (the invoking of the Holy Spirit), institution narrative and consecration, anamnesis (the prayer of remembrance in which the Church calls to mind the Lord's passion, resurrection, and ascension into heaven), offering, intercessions, and final doxology (a hymn or formula praise to God). What is most profound is when the Eucharistic Prayers take place, heaven touches earth, and our faith becomes a reality. The Holy Spirit is called and the substance of bread and wine transform into the very substance of Jesus Christ right before our very eyes. The spiritual meets the material, the natural meets the supernatural and the visible meets the invisible. It is the means which creates the very Source of power we need to live truly as followers of Christ.

The sign of peace given during Holy Mass, moving forward, depicts the peace and unity Christ calls for between His followers and ultimately, between the entire world. The Eucharist itself is a sacrament of peace. Especially during our present time in which we live, among all of the fear and conflict, the sign of peace stands out and can be a witness to the world of the very peace that Jesus Christ brings. Moreover, the Church encourages us that there should be a greater restraint in this gesture of peace, and ought not be exaggerated so as to cause distraction. We are reminded that, "It should be kept in mind that nothing is lost when the sign of peace is marked by a sobriety which preserves the proper spirit of the celebration, as, for example, when it is restricted to one's immediate neighbors." NEXT WEEK: The distribution and reception of the Most Holy Eucharist – Paul A. Ray