
When Pope Paul VI approved in 1968 the use at Mass of three new eucharistic prayers together with the Roman Canon, he decisively influenced the course not only of Catholic eucharistic worship but also that of other Christian churches. Just as the Roman liturgy had known only one eucharistic prayer for almost fifteen hundred years, so also had the various liturgical orders of the Reformation churches maintained a notable uniformity in their manner of praying the Lord’s Supper. By opening up the Mass to alternative texts of the eucharistic prayer, Catholic liturgical reform provided a model for Protestant worship committees charged with the revision of rites. Grounded in historical scholarship that had crossed ecumenical lines, the view now prevailed that several eucharistic prayers could be provided as options within one eucharistic rite. Such a consensus implied the recognition that the eucharistic prayer expresses the meaning of the celebration, that eucharistic meanings are multiple and may receive different emphases in different times and places, and that no one form can be regarded as more authentic or “apostolic” than any other.

Such is the background for the contemporary proliferation of eucharistic prayers, considered by the editor as “one of the most remarkable aspects of recent liturgical revision” (p. 1). This collection of essays is the outgrowth of a study group on the eucharistic prayer organized within the North American Academy of Liturgy, an ecumenical professional society of liturgists. The participating scholars represent mainstream Christian churches in the United States: Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran, United Methodist and Presbyterian. Several of them served on the committee preparing new eucharistic texts in their respective churches.

The eucharistic prayers discussed are about fifty in number. For the Roman Catholic Church, they are the ancient but slightly revised Roman Canon, the three new eucharistic prayers promulgated in 1968 and the eucharistic prayers for Masses with children (3) and for reconciliation (2) which were approved in 1974. Among the Protestants, the Methodists have the largest number of eucharistic prayers (22). The Episcopalians have six, the Lutherans five, and the Presbyterians eight. It is understandable that the texts of all these prayers could not be reprinted in this book. The editor indicates where available collections of the texts can be found (p. 7).

In the first part of the book entitled “The Development of New Eucharistic Prayers,” the contributors give historical background for the adoption of eucharistic prayers in their respective churches and describe the process of preparation and acceptance. They likewise provide a commentary on the
component elements or theological themes of the prayers. The Roman Catholic and Presbyterians essays frequently cite the actual text. One gets a thorough acquaintance with this aspect of liturgical reform in these churches.

The second part of this volume, "Analysis of the New Eucharistic Prayers," studies more deeply the component elements of the prayers both in themselves and as articulated by the eucharistic texts of various churches. Here we find separate essays on such topics as "The Institution Narrative," "The Anamnesis: Remembering, We Offer," and "The Epiclesis Revisited." Charts are sometimes provided to give a clearer picture of similarities and contrasts across ecumenical lines. Of special interest is the section's final essay on "Non-Verbal Symbols and the Eucharistic Prayer," by Kevin Seasoltz. It calls attention to the physical environment in which the eucharistic prayer is prayed, the musical settings of the prayer, and the postures of the presider and assembly. While it mostly surveys the practices of the churches up to the present, it challenges us to explore new directions for the future in proclaiming the eucharistic prayer.

Though the third and final section of this book, "The Ongoing Agenda," includes only one essay, it is an informative and stimulating one. In "The Eucharistic Prayer: Another Look," David Power keeps us abreast of recent research into the history of the eucharistic prayer by summarizing and evaluating six major hypotheses of liturgical scholars. From this overview, he focuses on "the harvest of guiding insights" (p. 245), including what it means to keep memory by telling the story, the importance of the creation motif, and the possibility of including a confession of fault within the prayer of thankful remembrance. This leads him to his final reflection on the link between eucharistic celebration and Christian commitment. "Eucharistic memorial has to be renewed through lament," argues Power. "To give thanks, the community must weep, and the two may be strangely combined" (p. 251). In support of this conviction, he concludes by offering a prayer "by way of provocation" (pp. 251-55).

This ecumenical study forcefully demonstrates that "the eucharistic prayer is the climax and the very heart of the entire celebration," as stated in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (no. 54). It likewise testifies to the important ecumenical dimension of the church's liturgical renewal in our times. Again, it reminds us that the reform of the eucharistic prayer is by no means finished. Important questions remain unsettled, questions involving "the intersections of historical tradition and contemporary concerns, worship and culture, piety and theology" (p. 8) as well as questions on the selection and arrangement of component elements in a eucharistic prayer. The experience of the churches in preparing and praying these new eucharistic texts can be mutually enriching.

It is unlikely that anyone will be inclined to read straight through this collection of essays. Catholic readers will surely be enlightened by the first two
chapters explaining our post-Vatican II eucharistic prayers. Members of other churches will similarly find profit in the chapters pertinent to them. At the same time, the ecumenical spirit will lead many a reader to learn more about the life of worship among our brothers and sisters in other churches. Finally, liturgists and theologians will find much to appreciate and ponder for a deeper understanding of eucharistic theology and spirituality.

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The first copy of this handsomely-produced collection of essays on the 1987 encyclical of Pope John Paul II was presented by President Aquino to the Pope on the occasion of her visit in June 1988. It is not, however, simply a commemorative volume, more meant to honor the author of the encyclical than for practical use. It is meant, as the introduction indicates, to be "a companion volume that would clarify the ideas of the encyclical, and show their application to the Philippine condition . . ." This purpose it fulfills with some distinction, and will be useful to all Filipinos who concern themselves with the problems of development, justice, and peace, with which the encyclical deals.

The editors chose ten men and women from the institutional Church, from government, from business, and from academic life, all of them with different competencies and qualifications, to give their reflections on the encyclical and their thoughts on the Philippine response to it. Though all the authors take care to relate their reflections to Philippine realities, those of Foreign Secretary Raul Manglapus, Bishop Francisco Claver, Father Catalino Arevalo, and Archbishop Orlando Quevedo focus more on explaining the encyclical itself, its relation to Populorum Progressio, and its context within Church social teaching and the teaching of John Paul II in particular. Those of former Chief Justice Claudio Teehankee, Constitutional Convention President Cecilia Muñoz Palma, Dr. Jose Abueva, Sister Ma. Ramona Mendiola, Dr. Gaston Ortigas, and Dr. Bernardo Villegas address the encyclical more from within their respective areas of special competence, which as the names indicate, are varied and distinguished. Though, as in any collection, readers will find some of more particular interest to themselves, all contribute in their own way to a Filipino understanding of the encyclical's teaching and its application. Likewise, though originally written with a different audience in mind, Ambassador Howard Dee's address given in place of Secretary Manglapus at a symposium on the encyclical sponsored by the Italian Christian Democratic Party, forms