

THE FOURTH EUCHARISTIC PRAYER
A General Analysis of its Structure and Content
to appreciate its Ecclesiological Meaning

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Introduction: The Eucharistic Prayer — Climax and Heart of the Mass

In the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (1970), it is asserted that the Eucharistic prayer is the “climax and the very heart of the entire celebration [of the Mass], a prayer of thanksgiving and sanctification”.¹ In fact, each of the Eucharistic prayers — whether present in the liturgy of the early Church or else introduced after the reforms of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council — is a lyric proclamation “of what it means for the Church to celebrate the Eucharist”.² On closer examination and upon meditation of the text of any Eucharistic prayer, one encounters the use of highly evocative language which is pregnant with Christological and ecclesiological meaning.

Eucharistic prayers are so structured as “to speak for and to the entire praying

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1. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* in *The Sacramentary*, (Catholic Book Publishing Company; New York 1985) n.54. Cfr G. O'Collins – E.G. Farrugia, “Eucharistic Prayer”, in Id., *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, (Paulist Press; Mahwah, New Jersey 1991) 71.
2. Ralph A. Keifer, “Eucharistic Prayers”, in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, XVII, (The Catholic University of America; Washington, D.C. 1979) 213.

assembly”.³ The celebration of the Eucharist by the liturgical assembly is indeed — as one reads in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council — “... the principal manifestation of the Church ... [This] consists in the full, active participation of all God’s holy people in the same liturgical celebrations, especially in the same Eucharist, in one prayer, at one altar, at which the bishop presides, surrounded by his college of priests ...”⁴

Now, in the Eucharistic prayer — which as stated above is the very heart of the celebration of the Eucharist — the priest exhorts those who constitute the liturgical assembly to uplift their hearts to God “in praise and thanks, and associates them with himself in the prayer which he addresses to God the Father, through Jesus Christ, in the name of the whole community”.⁵ During this liturgical action, the whole gathered assembly — with the president at its head — unites itself with Christ in praising God’s wonderful deeds in salvation history and in offering sacrifice.⁶

The aim of this article is to study the ecclesiological content of the fourth Eucharistic prayer. The language in the liturgical text of this prayer will be put under scrutiny. This linguistic analysis points to many interesting nuances regarding the *ekklēsia*. Particular phrases will be indicated which are very rich in meaning — a meaning which can sometimes be traced to Jewish meal practices, the early liturgy of the Church, or else, to the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council. The dialogue with the liturgical assembly as well as the gestures used will be delved into. All these features will assist the reader in appreciating the fecundity of the various ecclesiological aspects intertwined within the fourth Eucharistic prayer.

1. *The Fourth Eucharistic Prayer: Genesis and Background*

Writing on the wide, far-reaching reform of the liturgy — as carried out to implement the changes advocated in the Second Vatican Council — Archbishop Annibale Bugnini (who was very involved in liturgical commissions and bodies at

3. *Ibid.*

4. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n.41.

5. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, n.54.

6. *Ibid.*

the Roman Curia from 1948 to 1975) asserts that “once eucharological pluralism and rubrical flexibility had been rediscovered after centuries of fixism, it was unthinkable that a monolithic approach to the Eucharistic prayer should long endure”.⁷

Soon after the end of the Second Vatican Council, the idea of composing new Eucharistic prayers gained ground. As one would expect, great prudence was exercised in this process, especially when considering the fact that the Roman Canon was the only Eucharistic prayer used in the West for centuries. In May 1966, the Consilium for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Liturgy, of which Bugnini was secretary, presented Pope Paul VI with a report explaining the endeavours carried out on the revision of the Rites of the Mass. It stated that if it were asked to compose new models for Eucharistic prayers, it would feel responsible “to see to it that any new prayer still displayed the Roman genius, so that the Roman Mass would continue to be faithful to the spirit of the Roman liturgy”.⁸

When it was decided to compose new Eucharistic prayers, in-depth studies were made by liturgists and other scholars on early liturgical texts. The relators of the sub-committee for the fourth Eucharistic prayer were Joseph Gelineau and Cipriano Vagaggini. Paul VI suggested that anaphoras were to be sought from the vast richness of liturgical texts from both East and West. This proved to be very valuable in the composition of new Eucharistic prayers and helped “to emphasise the different aspects of the mystery of salvation, and to express a variety of motives for giving thanks to God”.⁹

Initially, a proposal was considered of taking an Oriental anaphora *in toto* into the Latin Rite. One of the anaphoras of St Basil was seen as a likely text to carry out the proposal. Although this suggestion never materialised, one can still observe several similarities between the fourth Eucharistic prayer and the mentioned anaphora. The endeavour of composing new Eucharistic prayers was not, short.

7. A. Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948-1975*, (The Liturgical Press; Collegeville, Minnesota 1990) 448.

8. *Ibid.*, 449.

9. Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution on the Roman Missal *Missale Romanum*, in A. Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents*, (The Liturgical Press; Collegeville, Minnesota 1980) 139.

Certain requirements had to be adhered to in order to retain a common structure for these prayers. Yet, while respecting a basic structure, each of the new Eucharistic prayers was to have its own "spiritual, pastoral, and stylistic characteristics".¹⁰

With regard to the fourth Eucharistic prayer which is being studied in this article, the study group in question attempted to satisfy the

"need for an anaphora in which the account of institution would be preceded by a leisurely but still summary exposition of the entire economy of salvation. To this end the preface had to limit itself to praising God in himself and for creation in general ... Then, after the *Sanctus* ... the anaphora would run through the economy from the creation of the human person down to Christ and Pentecost. All this means that in such an anaphora the preface cannot change ... but always remain the same. The result: Eucharistic prayer IV".¹¹

Annibale Bugnini illustrates the *mens* underlying the fourth Eucharistic prayer. As indicated above, the main intention was "to develop the total picture of the economy of salvation on a much broader scale than in the other anaphoras".¹² Analysing this Eucharistic prayer, one can see that it has the form and structure of a Roman anaphora, yet it is blended with several characteristics which contribute to give it its Oriental tinge.¹³

The resulting fourth Eucharistic prayer is hence very strongly scriptural in its images and language.¹⁴ In fact, such a broad exposition of the economy of salvation could be best done using scriptural language. The fourth Eucharistic prayer has its own preface which cannot be substituted. This is because what precedes and what follows the *Sanctus* together constitute a single unit describing the plan of

10. Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy*, 452.

11. *Ibid.*, 452-453.

12. *Ibid.*, 458.

13. Cfr Burkhard Neunheuser, "Eucaristia perenne", *Rivista Liturgica* 55 (1968) 799; Adrien Nocent, "Storia della celebrazione dell'eucaristia", in AA.VV., *Anàmnesis*, 3/2, *La liturgia, Eucaristia: teologia e storia della celebrazione*, (Marietti; Casale Monferrato 1983) 254.

14. Cfr Joseph Gelineau, "La quarta preghiera eucaristica", in AA.VV., *Le nuove preghiere eucaristiche*, (Queriniana; Brescia 1969) 57, where he asserts that "l'influsso della Scrittura sullà IV preghiera eucaristica è diretto e molteplice".

Salvation.¹⁵ The text of the Eucharistic prayer under study mentions the more significant moments of this divine plan — a panorama which is fulfilled in the Paschal mystery of Jesus Christ.¹⁶

In the presentation of God's salvific plan, the text of the fourth Eucharistic prayer is clearly of the *narrative* type. Furthermore, the style used in this narrative is highly lyrical.¹⁷ The texts of the new Eucharistic prayers were promulgated by a decree of the Congregation of Rites, on May 23, 1968, and were first used on August 15, 1968.

The fourth Eucharistic prayer follows the Antiochene type of anaphoras very closely.¹⁸ As referred to above, it resembles one of the so-called anaphoras of St Basil, which can be traced back to the fourth century.¹⁹ The fourth Eucharistic prayer is hence often envisaged as being *ecumenical* in character, because in it, aspects which are characteristic of Oriental rites are seen to merge with the Latin milieu of the Western liturgy.²⁰

2. *The Celebration of the Eucharist — An Ecclesial Act*

Before delving into the fourth Eucharistic prayer, it is necessary to pause for a moment and recall briefly the qualities which are to characterize participation by the liturgical assembly. Participation is to be full,²¹ conscious²² and active.²³ By being fully aware²⁴ of what is taking place during the fourth Eucharistic prayer (and, for that matter, in every other liturgical celebration) — that is, by being aware of the depth of meaning in the language used, the gestures of the president, the

15. Cfr *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, n.322.

16. Cfr Peter Coughlan, "The New Eucharistic Prayers", *The Furrow* 19 (1968) 384.

17. Cfr Luca Brandolini, "La IV Preghiera Eucaristica", *Rivista di Pastorale Liturgica* 6: 31 (1968) 602.

18. Cfr Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy*, 458.

19. Cfr Ralph A. Keifer, "Eucharistic Prayers", 214.

20. Cfr Theodor Schnitzler, *I tre nuovi canoni ed i nuovi prefazi*, (Edizioni Paoline; Roma 1970) 107.

21. Cfr Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nn. 14; 21.

22. Cfr *ibid.*, nn. 14; 48.

23. Cfr *ibid.*, nn. 11; 14; 21; 50.

24. Cfr *ibid.*, n. 11.

different postures at different moments,²⁵ the interventions by the assembly (for example, in song) — each member of this assembly can truly take part with devotion and full collaboration.²⁶

Participation — both internal and external²⁷ — is not only an individual or personal matter,²⁸ but an action carried out as a community.²⁹ This feature, coupled with all the above-mentioned characteristics, helps the faithful to be spiritually enriched by participation in the celebration.³⁰ The mode of participation by members of the assembly differs according to their respective ministry in the Church.³¹ This helps us to understand why the presence and active participation of the faithful clearly manifests the ecclesial nature of the Eucharist.³² The whole assembly — with Christ at its centre and the ministers manifesting his presence — is the subject of the liturgical celebration. In the celebration of the Eucharist, “the unity of the faithful is effected and symbolized: they constitute one body in Christ”.³³ This is seen more clearly in the Eucharistic prayer itself where it is the one and holy Catholic Church present and made manifest in every local Church which enters into dialogue with God.³⁴ It is in this light that we can appreciate better the celebration of the Eucharist as *signum unitatis* and *vinculum caritatis*.³⁵ This will now be illustrated with reference to the fourth Eucharistic prayer.

25. Cfr *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, n. 62.

26. Cfr *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 48.

27. Cfr *ibid.*, n. 19.

28. Cfr *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, n. 62.

29. Cfr *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 21. On the theology of the celebrating community, cfr Hector Scerri, *Koinonia, Diakonia and Martyria. Interrelated Themes in Patristic Sacramental Theology as Expounded by Adalbert-G. Hamman O.F.M.*, Melita Theologica Supplementary Series 4, (Foundation for Theological Studies; Malta 1999) 137-139.

30. Cfr *ibid.*, n. 11.

31. Cfr *ibid.*, n. 14; 26; 28; *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, n. 58.

32. Cfr *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 41; Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, Circular Letter on the Eucharistic Prayers *Eucharistiae Participationem*, n. 11; Scerri, *Koinonia, Diakonia and Martyria*, 142-145; 151-159.

33. Cfr Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, n. 3.

34. Cfr *ibid.*, n. 23; *Eucharistiae Participationem*, n. 11.

35. Cfr Augustine, *In Ioannis Evangelium*, 26, 13. Cfr *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 47.

3. Un “nous” ecclésial

Paul De Clerck talks of the use of the first person plural in the Eucharistic prayers, what he calls *un nous ecclésial*. This helps to convey a sense of the *ekklesia* which is assembled to celebrate the Eucharist. De Clerck asserts that “the subject of the Eucharistic prayer is the People of God gathered for the celebration; like all liturgical prayer, it is formulated in the first person plural, in an ecclesial *we*”.³⁶ One can understand the celebrating *ekklesia* under three senses, which can be envisaged concentrically: (i) the universal Church; (ii) the particular local Church; (iii) the concrete here-and-now gathering for worship. These senses can be rightly applied to all the instances where the *nous ecclésial* features.

A careful examination of the fourth Eucharistic prayer indicates that the personal pronoun *we* is used twelve times as the subject of an action-verb. For ten times, it is used by the priest, who presiding “in the person of Christ ... over the assembly ... [addresses prayers to God] ... in the name of the entire holy people and of all present”.³⁷ The use of the first person plural, instead of the singular, helps to emphasize the sacramental action of the priest as an ecclesial gesture. Hence, the assembly can really associate itself with the presidential prayers. The ecclesial *we* is used to express thanksgiving, praise, the assembly’s *confessio*, celebration and offering.

- Thanksgiving:

“...it is right *we* should give you thanks and glory”. (Preface)

- Praise:

“... *we* too praise your glory...” (Preface)

“... *we* shall sing your glory...” (Intercessions)

36. Author’s translation of Paul De Clerck, “La prière eucharistique”, in Joseph Gelineau, ed., *Dans Vos Assemblées*, II, (Desclée; Paris 1989) 482: “Le sujet de la prière eucharistique est le Peuple de Dieu réuni pour la célébration; comme toute prière liturgique, elle est formulée à la première personne du pluriel, en un ‘nous’ ecclésial”. Adalbert-G. Hamman talks about *le nous des baptisés* and *le nous de la foi*. Cfr Adalbert-G. Hamman, *Je crois en un seul baptême*, (Beauchesne; Paris 1970) 39; 45; Scerri, *Koinonia, Diakonia and Martyria*, 145.

37. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 33.

- *Confessio*:

- “Father, we acknowledge your greatness”. (Post-*Sanctus*)

- “... We proclaim your death, Lord Jesus...” (Memorial acclamation)

- “We recall Christ’s death...” (Anamnesis)

- Celebration:

- “... as we celebrate the great mystery...” (Epiclesis I)

- “Father, we now celebrate this memorial of our redemption”. (Anamnesis)

- Offering:

- “... we offer you his body and blood...” (Anamnesis)

- “Lord, remember those for whom we offer this sacrifice...” (Intercessions)

- Other actions:

- “... that we might live no longer for ourselves...” (Post-*Sanctus*)

- “When we eat this bread and drink this cup...” (Memorial acclamation)

This reflection on the *nous ecclésial* helps one to appreciate better the fact “that because the Eucharistic prayer is the prayer of the Church, it belongs to the whole community and not exclusively to the priest”.³⁸ This does not detract from the presidential prayer “precisely because it is the prayer of the Church”,³⁹ and so it is led by the head of the community, namely the bishop or his representative,⁴⁰ who proclaims the Eucharistic prayer in the name of the whole community.⁴¹

4. *An Appreciation of the Ecclesiological Meaning of the Fourth Eucharistic Prayer: An Analysis of its Form and Structure*

Some of the aspects which shall be discussed in this section of the article are common to the other Eucharistic prayers. Such features include the Introductory Dialogue, the *Sanctus*, the Memorial Acclamation, the Intercessions and the

38. James Dallen, “The Congregation’s Share in the Eucharistic Prayer”, in Kevin R. Seasoltz, ed., *Living Bread, Saving Cup*, (The Liturgical Press; Collegeville, Minnesota 1982) 113.

39. *Ibid.*

40. Cfr *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nn. 41; 42.

41. Cfr *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, nn. 13; 54.

Doxology. Nonetheless, the fourth Eucharistic prayer shall be treated *in toto*, in order to appreciate the full ecclesiological content and nuances present in the celebration of this anaphora.

4.1 *The Introductory Dialogue*

It has already been pointed out that the Eucharistic prayer is said "*nomine totius communitatis*"⁴² and that it belongs to the whole community. This is made clear from the very start when, in the Introductory Dialogue, the priest invites the members of the assembly to associate themselves with him in the celebration of the Eucharistic prayer.⁴³ The assembly's responses during the dialogue function as "the assembly's assent to the president's request to pray in their name".⁴⁴ Furthermore, the dialogue — as the other parts of the Eucharistic prayer — are in the plural "which presumes a gathered community".⁴⁵

In this dialogue, one notes the spiritual relationship between the priest and the assembly. The former urges the gathered faithful "to adopt the spiritual attitude ... [necessary] ... for the prayer of thanksgiving".⁴⁶ Even the priest's gesture accompanying the words "The Lord be with you" is indeed an important and expressive sign. In outstretching his fore-arms, this gesture by the president helps to express "the mental attitude and dispositions ... and enhances"⁴⁷ the sense of the *ekklesia*. Not only is this a gesture of invitation, but it can be seen as a gesture whereby the president is "embracing" the whole assembly.

In the triple invitation and the triple response which takes place in the dialogue, one observes a crescendo.⁴⁸ The verbal sequence employed in this gradual build-up helps to unite the assembly as one body, as the climax and heart of the celebration

42. *Ibid.*

43. Cfr *ibid.*, nn. 14; 15; Louis Ligier, "La struttura della preghiera eucaristica: diversità e unità", *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 82 (1968) 198.

44. Dallen, "The Congregation's Share", 115.

45. James Challancin, "Local celebration, a realization of the Universal Church", *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 91 (1977) 312.

46. Robert Cabié, *The Eucharist*, in Aimé Georges Martimort, ed., *The Church at Prayer*, II, (The Liturgical Press; Collegeville, Minnesota 1986) 92.

47. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, n. 20. Cfr *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 30.

48. Cfr Joseph Gelineau, "Gli interventi dell'assemblea", in Aa.Vv., *Nelle Vostre Assemblee*, (Queriniana; Brescia 1976) 226.

of the Eucharist is reached. After the first response by the assembly, the president urges the assembly to adopt the proper spiritual attitude and disposition for the celebration. Then the priest exhorts the faithful "Lift up your hearts", the response being "We lift them up to the Lord". The heart here refers to humanity in its totality. The *ekklesia* is then urged to give thanks to God.

The final response ("It is right to give him thanks and praise") is indeed significant. Its remote origins will be discussed below. This response⁴⁹ is "the high point of the dialogue".⁵⁰ The *ekklesia* is *with* the Lord, whose presence is symbolized by the priest who has received the Spirit of the Lord in his ordination. In the light of what has been discussed above, it is important that the assembly's responses be real acclamations. The invitations of the president are to create the desired attention and active participation on the part of the assembly.⁵¹ The dialogue also serves to forge a bond of communion between the priest (and the concelebrants if present) and the remainder of the assembly.⁵² This is enhanced if the dialogue is sung, because the assembly's prayer is done in harmony, as a body.

4.2 *The Preface*

In the Preface, the priest "in the name of all the People of God, offers praise and thanksgiving to God the Father for the whole work of redemption".⁵³ It should be noted that a philological analysis of the term *preface* does not primarily refer to the fact that this prayer is situated at the beginning of the anaphora, as a prologue to it, and *preceding* what follows. Rather, the term *praefatio* refers to a solemn announcement, a prayer *spoken before* the people, a prayer in the presence of the

49. It is interesting to note this response in other translations. The Latin original is "Dignum et iustum est". One notes a different emphasis from that found in the English translation, due to the use of two adjectives: "È cosa buona e giusta" (Italian); "Cela est juste et bon" (French); "Es justo y necesario" (Spanish); "Das ist würdig und recht" (German).

50. Cabié, *The Eucharist*, 92.

51. "Le varie parti di questo dialogo devono ... costituire un vero crescendo. Le risposte devono essere delle vere acclamazioni. Gli inviti devono favorire questa intensità e sincerità nella risposta. Sarà da evitarsi in ogni modo la fretta e il tono meccanico che sarebbero quanto mai in contrasto con la ricchezza di significato di queste brevi frasi e con la loro funzione che è appunto di impegnare l'attenzione e la partecipazione attiva di tutta l'assemblea", (Gelineau, "Gli interventi dell'assemblea", 226).

52. Challancin, "Local celebration, a realization of the Universal Church", 325; Scerri, *Koinonia, Diakonia and Martyria*, 144-145.

53. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, n. 55a.

people.⁵⁴ Johannes Hermans goes on to assert that “it is evident that the word *preface* is used to refer to a public prayer, which is proclaimed loudly. One is praying ‘in front of the people’ and ‘in front of God’; the *pre* here conveys the idea of space”.⁵⁵

The high ecclesial significance of the preface is hence understood by referring to the proclamatory and public nature of this prayer of thanksgiving. In the fourth Eucharistic prayer, the preface — which is a fixed one — inaugurates the account of God’s plan for creation, which is continued in the Post-*Sanctus*. Reference is made in the preface to the attributes of God and the vastness and beauty of the cosmos. A deep sense of thanksgiving is clearly evident, use being made of the *ecclesial we* and the first person plural: “... it is right that *we* should give you thanks ... *We* too praise your glory”.

It is appropriate to stop and meditate on the opening words of the Preface: “Father in heaven, it is right that we should give you thanks and glory”. The Latin original states: “Vere dignum est tibi gratias agere, vere iustum est te glorificare, Pater sancte”. The Italian translation states: “È veramente giusto renderti grazie, è bello cantare la tua gloria, Padre santo”. The *vere dignum* (“It is right”) is intimately linked with the third response by the assembly in the preceding dialogue. It is a further invitation by the president to the assembly so that it may join in prayer and thanksgiving. The idea conveyed by *vere dignum* is found in the *Shema* in the Hebrew morning prayer.⁵⁶ The same meaning can be traced to the Greek polis when the local assembly uttered the word *axios* (which means *dignum est*) as an acclamation of consent.⁵⁷ Hence, the remotest origins of the phrase portray a vivid idea of an assembled gathering whose members are united in their acclaim. This helps one appreciate the pregnant ecclesial sense behind the phrase as used today in the preface.

54. Cfr Johannes Hermans, *La celebrazione dell’Eucaristia*, (Elle Di Ci; Leumann 1985) 313.

55. Author’s translation of Hermans, *ibid.*, 314: “È evidente che la parola *prefazio* viene usata per indicare la preghiera pubblica, a voce alta. Si prega ‘davanti al popolo’ e ‘davanti a Dio’; il *pre* ha qui un significato spaziale...”

56. Cfr *ibid.*, 317-318.

57. Cfr *ibid.*, 318.

Addressing God as “Father in heaven” or “Pater sancte” recalls the Johannine text of the prayer of Jesus on the eve of his passion. The use of this term helps to bring out the idea of the adoptive sonship of the Christian faithful.⁵⁸ The notion of a common sonship is linked to the concept of the *ekklesia*, in the light of the Pauline text which states: “As you are sons, God has sent into our hearts the Spirit of his Son crying ‘Abba, Father’” (Gal 4,6). In the Preface, the assembly contemplates God the Creator in himself and in his works, and proclaims his greatness and his sanctity.⁵⁹ This helps to explain the fixed nature of the preface of the fourth Eucharistic prayer, so that together with the text of the Post-*Sanctus*, it forms an uninterrupted *corpus* of the history of salvation.

The conclusion of the Preface offers also a brief comment on the different nuances conveyed by different translations. The English text states: “United with them (i.e. the angels), and in the name of every creature under heaven, we too praise your glory as we say...”. The Latin text states: “Cum quibus et nos et, per nostram vocem, omnis quae sub caelo est creatura nomen tuum in exultatione confitemur, canentes ...”. The Italian is expressed as follows: “Insieme con loro anche noi, fatti voce di ogni creatura, esultanti cantiamo ...”.

The idea of unity in praise with the heavenly choirs is expressed clearly in the English translation, “*united* with them”, and also in the Italian, “*insieme* con loro”. The original Latin simply resorts to using *cum*, followed by the ablative to express the same notion, without however mentioning unity at all. Yet, this seems to be made up for by the pregnant phrase “per nostram vocem”. Even the Italian text is very condensed when it states “noi, fatti voce di ogni creatura”. In other words, paraphrasing the Latin and the Italian texts one can say that the uttered praise embodies the praise and the glory of all the cosmos. According to Enrico Mazza, “this phrase condenses the doxological vocation of all creation. ... All creation celebrates the greatness of the Lord by means of man who becomes its synthesis and interpreter”.⁶⁰

58. Cfr Enrico Mazza, *Le odierne preghiere eucaristiche*, I, (Edizioni Dehoniane; Bologna 1984) 199; Vittorino Joannes, “I temi teologici delle nuove preghiere eucaristiche”, *Rivista di Pastorale Liturgica* 6: 31 (1968) 564; Theodor Schnitzler, *I tre nuovi canoni*, 108.

59. Cfr Carlo Rocchetta, *I sacramenti della fede*, (Edizioni Dehoniane; Bologna 1987) 361; Joseph Gelineau, “La quarta preghiera eucaristica”, 54.

60. Author’s translation of Mazza, *Le odierne preghiere eucaristiche*, 200: “Questa frase condensa la vocazione dossologica di tutto il creato ... Tutto il creato celebra la grandezza del Signore attraverso l’uomo che ne è diventato la sintesi, l’interprete”.

In the English translation, the embodiment of the praise of creation is, in a way, slightly diluted by attributing to man a vicarious role: “*in the name of every creature ... we too praise your glory ...*”. In the Latin and Italian versions, we not only praise God in the name of every creature, but even more than that: we become the very voice and mouthpiece of every creature. Man, therefore, has the important role “to become one with creation and the cosmos in order to be its voice in a continuous hymn of praise to God”.⁶¹ This notion widens the ecclesial nature of the Preface, and makes the assembly’s prayer extend its arms wider, in order to embrace all creation. A note of joy is evident in the conclusion of the Preface, especially by the terms “in exultatione” (Latin) and “esultanti” (Italian), which convey a deeper sense of rejoicing than the English “we too praise your glory”. The sentiment here is not only one of praise, but furthermore, one of deep joy, rejoicing and celebration. Such a feeling helps to cement together the celebrating assembly in its hymn of joy, thanksgiving and praise to God.

4.3 *The Sanctus*

The theme of praise and thanksgiving continues in the *Sanctus*. This is probably the oldest section of the Eucharistic prayer to be proclaimed by the liturgical assembly.⁶² This prayer is highly scriptural in origin, a “collage” of biblical texts.⁶³ Its biblical content, coupled with the fact that it is introduced by the closing phrase of the Preface, is a strong indication that the *Sanctus* was intended “as the Eucharistic assembly’s *joining* in the song of all creation in praise of God”.⁶⁴ This acclamation is indeed “an integral part of the Eucharistic prayer itself”⁶⁵ and directly involves the members of the assembly in their celebration of the Eucharist.⁶⁶ Participation is enhanced when the *Sanctus* is sung.⁶⁷ The singing helps the various biblical concepts to sink into the minds of the members of the praying assembly, and fosters the unity of the communal action.⁶⁸

61. Author’s translation of *ibid.*, 201: “... di immedesimarsi nella natura e nel cosmo per esserne la voce in un inno continuo di lode a Dio”.

62. Cfr Dallen, “The Congregation’s Share”, 115.

63. Cfr Mazza, *Le odierne preghiere eucaristiche*, 203.

64. *Ibid.*, 116.

65. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, n. 55b.

66. Cfr Dennis C. Smolarski, *Eucharistia: A Study of the Eucharistic Prayer*, (Paulist Press; Ramsey 1982) 56; Hermans, *La celebrazione dell’eucaristia*, 322-323.

67. Cfr *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, nn. 15; 17; Mazza, *Le odierne preghiere eucaristiche*, 202.

68. Cfr Sacred Congregation of Rites, *Instruction on Music in the Liturgy Musicam Sacram*, n. 16; *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, n. 15.

The sense of the *ekklesia* is strengthened by the following attitudes of prayer, all present in the *Sanctus*:

- Adoration: “Holy, holy, holy Lord”.
- *Confessio*: a solemn acknowledgement of the divine attributes: “God of power and might”.
- Praise: “Heaven and earth are full of your glory”.
- Acclamation: “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”.
- Petition: “Hosanna”, which means ‘Save us, Lord!’. This is envisaged as a petition to God to accept the assembly’s thanksgiving for his saving power.⁶⁹

By joining in the singing of the *Sanctus* the assembly is united in the heavenly praise given to God. This form of participation owed its earliest origin to the service of the synagogue by the Jews. In order to conclude the prayer of blessing uttered by the president of the synagogue assembly, the Jews who were present sung a similar hymn based on Isaiah 6,3 (“Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh Sabaoth. His glory fills the whole earth”).

Reflecting upon the impact of the *Sanctus* in the Eucharistic prayer, Dennis Smolarski observes that here the assembly “is joining in a praise of the Father which is even wider than the Church on earth”.⁷⁰ Furthermore, the eschatological thrust of the *Sanctus* (“heaven and earth” joined in praise) helps one to appreciate the fact that the celebrating *ekklesia* is in “union with the Church throughout the ages”⁷¹ — in other words, one here refers to the *pilgrim Church*, as described in chapter VII of Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*. In the latter, one reads that “it is especially in the sacred liturgy that our union with the heavenly Church is best realized ... [and] ... when ... we celebrate the eucharistic sacrifice we are most closely united to the worship of the heavenly Church”.⁷²

69. Cfr Gelineau, “Gli interventi dell’assemblea”, 227.

70. Smolarski, *Eucharistia*, 57.

71. *Ibid.*

72. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, n. 50.

4.4 *The Post-Sanctus*

This prayer is one of praise to the Father for his plan of salvation. In fact, one encounters an account of humanity within the history of salvation⁷³ — an anamnesis of salvation.⁷⁴ Focus is made on the alliance between God and humanity,⁷⁵ reference being made to the latter's infidelity throughout the ages, and to redemption "in the fullness of time".

In the *Post-Sanctus* of the fourth Eucharistic prayer, one encounters a number of phrases which are of ecclesiological significance. The opening words — "Father, we acknowledge your greatness" (*Confitemur tibi, Patre sancte*) — refer to the public praise which was part and parcel of the Jewish thanksgiving or *todah*.⁷⁶ The *ekklesia* here thanks God for his marvellous plan of salvation. The phrase "... but helped all men to seek and find you" is indeed significant because it reflects the ecclesiology of Vatican II. *All men* are called to salvation. Recalling also St Paul's speech in the Areopagus ("... and, by feeling their way towards him, succeed in finding him" [Acts 17,27]) and the prophet Jeremiah ("When you search for me, you will find me; when you search wholeheartedly for me..." [Jer 29,13]), reference is being made to "those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or the Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart".⁷⁷

Reference is made to the mission of Jesus (Lk 4,18), especially when the outcasts of society are mentioned. Indirect reference is then made to the Church instituted by Christ: "... he sent the Holy Spirit from you, Father, as his first gift to those who believe ...". One hence observes, in the fourth Eucharistic prayer, a movement from the proclamation of the Paschal mystery of Christ to the sacramental presence of the Church.⁷⁸

73. Cfr John Fuellenbach, *The Kingdom of God*, (Logos Publications; Manila 1993) 38; Gelineau, "La quarta preghiera eucaristica", 51.

74. Cfr Adrien Nocent, "Storia della celebrazione dell'eucaristia", in Aa.Vv., *Anamnesis*, 3/2: *La liturgia, Eucaristia: teologia e storia della celebrazione*, (Marietti; Casale Monferrato 1983) 254.

75. Cfr Luis Maldonado, "La preghiera eucaristica", in Aa.Vv., *Nelle vostre assemblee*, 595; Joannes, "I temi teologici", 565; Mazza, *Le odierne preghiere eucaristiche*, 207.

76. Cfr Gelineau, "La quarta preghiera eucaristica", 63.

77. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 16. Cfr Schnitzler, *I tre nuovi canoni*, 121.

78. Cfr Gelineau, "La quarta preghiera eucaristica", 65.

4.5 *The Epiiclesis (I) and the Institution Narrative*

During the Epiiclesis, the priest, on behalf of the assembled community, asks the Father so that the Holy Spirit may sanctify the offerings which have been brought to the altar by members of this same community, so that they may become the Body and the Blood of Jesus Christ. As stated earlier, the priest uses the first person plural, *we* — “as *we* celebrate the great mystery” — and so associates the whole *ekklesia* in the celebration of the sacrament of the Eucharist. The whole *ekklesia*, with Christ at its head, is the subject of the celebration of the Eucharist. The words addressed by Jesus to his disciples at the Last Supper are now addressed by the priest, acting *in persona Christi*, to the liturgical assembly: “Take this, *all of you...*” One also hears the very evocative phrases: “my body which will be given up for you” and “shed for you and for all men”.

4.6 *The Memorial Acclamation and the Memorial Prayer*

The Memorial Acclamation “succinctly commemorates the triple aspect of the Paschal mystery”⁷⁹ — Christ’s death, resurrection and parousia. There are a number of possible acclamations. The *ecclesial we* can be observed in the formula “When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim your death, Lord Jesus, until you come in glory”. This is based on 1 Cor 11,26. According to Burkhard Neunheuser, these acclamations constitute a precious enrichment to the celebration of the Eucharist, and also offer an active participation by the assembly,⁸⁰ more so if they are sung. The references to the Parousia (“Christ will come again”; “Lord Jesus, come in glory”; “until you come in glory”) help the assembly to reflect upon the eschatological image of the pilgrim Church, as described in the previous section. The standing posture of the assembly signifies a people redeemed and free, a people whose hearts are imbued with eschatological hope.

In the Memorial Prayer, the presider, on behalf of the *ekklesia*, prays to the Father. He states that the gathered assembly has been obedient to the command given by Christ, “Do this in memory of me”. The triple aspect of the Paschal mystery is also recalled in this prayer. Another point worthy of mention is that part of the

79. Smolarski, *Eucharistia*, 63.

80. Cfr Burkhard Neunheuser, “Eucaristia perenne”, *Rivista Liturgica* 55 (1968) 806.

text of the Memorial Prayer which describes the sacrifice of the Eucharist as that “which brings salvation *to the whole world*”. Francis Sullivan refers to this dimension.⁸¹ The fruits of the celebration of the Eucharist are not restricted to the Church, but its benefits reach the whole of humanity. The underlying stratum is hence one which depicts an outward-looking Church: in other words, not a Church apart from the world, but a Church *in* the world, a Church *for the life of the world*, a Church whose presence and action in the world is akin that of leaven in the dough.

4.7 *Epiclesis (II)*

A beautiful prayer, based on 1 Cor 10,16-22, is made to God that the Holy Spirit may bring unity in the Church. For Aidan Kavanagh, this epiclesis is primarily a prayer of unity with the Father and with each other through Jesus Christ. Having recalled the *mirabilia Dei* and responded in acclamation to this “good news”, the *ekklesia* prays that all who participate in the Eucharistic meal may be united together in the Holy Spirit.⁸² The Holy Spirit is envisaged as the source of fellowship (*koinonia*) within the Christian community which celebrates the Eucharist.⁸³ Writing from within an Oriental milieu, Pavel Evdokimov asserts that the Epiclesis is a *Eucharistic Pentecost* which invokes and expresses the action of the Holy Spirit not only on the bread and the wine (which become the Body and the Blood of Christ) but furthermore, in the members of the celebrating assembly.⁸⁴ According to Max Thurian, while the Epiclesis before consecration leads to the sacramental epiphany of Christ at the consecration of the bread and the wine, so this second Epiclesis achieves “a sacramental epiphany of the Church”.⁸⁵

81. Cfr Francis A. Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?*, (Paulist Press; New York – Mahwah, New Jersey 1992) 160.

82. Cfr Aidan Kavanagh, “Thoughts on the Roman Anaphora”, *Worship* 39 (1965) 528-529; 40 (1966) 5-8.

83. Cfr John H. McKenna, “The Eucharistic Epiclesis in Twentieth Century Theology (1900-1966)”, *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 90 (1976) 320; Scerri, *Koinonia, Diakonia and Martyria*, 134-137.

84. Cfr Pavel Evdokimov, *L'Orthodoxie*, (Delachaux et Niestlé; Paris – Neuchâtel 1959) 249-251.

85. Cfr Max Thurian, “La théologie des nouvelles prières eucharistiques”, *La Maison-Dieu* 94 (1968) 91; 100-101.

This second Epiclesis brings about communion between the members of the assembly, this communion being sacramentally realized when the faithful partake in the Body and Blood of Christ. A strengthening of the bonds of *koinonia* takes place.⁸⁶ Therefore, the most important fruit of the presence of the Holy Spirit is the unity of all those who eat the Body and drink the Blood of Christ.⁸⁷ The unity of the Church is the underlying tenet of this second Epiclesis.⁸⁸

4.8 *The Intercessions*

The Intercessory prayers in the Eucharistic prayer “express the truth that the Eucharist is celebrated in union with the whole Church, in heaven and on earth”.⁸⁹ The Pope’s name is mentioned, thus recalling universal unity in the Catholic Church. The bishop’s name is also mentioned: the bishop is a sign of unity in the local Church,⁹⁰ and of unity between the various particular Churches scattered all over the world. The ecclesiological reference can be seen to be in continuation with the theme of unity in the Church, mentioned in the second Epiclesis.⁹¹ What one first encounters in these intercessions is a list of members of the hierarchy in descending order. At the end of the list, “all your people” (cfr 1 Pt 2,10) is included in the text. Commenting on the composition of the intercessions from an ecclesiological point of view, the text seems to place the Pope, the bishops and the clergy apart from the remained of the People of God.⁹² It might have been more appropriate had “all your people” preceded the hierarchy, hence putting the intercessions more in harmony with the vision of the Church as expressed in *Lumen Gentium*.

On the other hand, a very positive ecclesiological point is present in the text of the fourth Eucharistic prayer. One encounters the following words: “Remember those who take part in this offering, those here present and all your people, and *all who seek you with a sincere heart*”. Francis Sullivan asserts that “the ‘people’ and

86. Cfr Pierre Jounel, “La composition des nouvelles prières eucharistiques”, *La Maison-Dieu* 94 (1968) 70; Neunheuser, “Eucaristia perenne”, 803; Mazza, *Le odierne preghiere eucaristiche*, 227.

87. Cfr Smolarski, *Eucaristia*, 65.

88. Cfr Nocent, “Storia della celebrazione dell’eucaristia”, 253.

89. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, n. 55g.

90. Cfr Challancin, “Local celebration”, 331.

91. Cfr Mazza, *Le odierne preghiere eucaristiche*, 233 (note 236).

92. Cfr *ibid.*, 233; Nocent, “Storia della celebrazione dell’eucaristia” 254.

'all who seek you' are undoubtedly the Christians and the non-Christians, for both of whom the Eucharist is offered".⁹³ This phrase indicates that the "horizon" of prayer in the intercessions is not limited just to within the Catholic fold, but embraces the whole of humanity.⁹⁴ Therefore, besides expressing "the concern of the local community for the more universal community of Christians",⁹⁵ these intercessions are ecumenical⁹⁶ and outward-looking in that the *ekklesia* prays for those who "seek God with a sincere heart, and ... his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience".⁹⁷

One can also reflect upon another intercession: "Remember those who have died in the peace of Christ and all the dead whose faith is known to you alone". This last phrase refers to all the members of the human family "who never had the opportunity to profess their faith with the Christian community, and yet arrived at saving faith through the grace which the Holy Spirit offered to them".⁹⁸ This is a reminder of the text of the Pastoral Constitution of Vatican II on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* which states that "the Holy Spirit offers everyone the possibility of sharing in this paschal mystery in a manner known to God (*modo Deo cognito*)".⁹⁹ Sullivan states that these intercessions in the fourth Eucharistic prayer are fully in line with the ecclesiological doctrine of the Second Vatican Council which they reflect.¹⁰⁰ Hence, one can rightly say that both the *mens* and the vision of Vatican II on the Church as universal sacrament of salvation, as well as the missionary spirit animating the Council, exercised a very positive influence on the composition of the intercessions of the fourth Eucharistic prayer.¹⁰¹

93. Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?*, 160.

94. Cfr Carlo Braga, in Aa.Vv., *Il Canone*, (Centro Azione Liturgica; Padova 1968) 202.

95. Smolarski, *Eucharistia*, 84.

96. Cfr Maldonado, "La preghiera eucaristica", 595.

97. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 16.

98. Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?*, 160.

99. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22.

100. Cfr Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?*, 160.

101. Cfr Gelineau, "La quarta preghiera eucaristica", 60.

4.9 *The Doxology and the Final Amen*

The Eucharistic prayer ends with an expression of praise to the Holy Trinity. The doxology is emphasised by the assembly's acclamation, "Amen".¹⁰² James Dallen states that "like the Introductory Dialogue and the *Sanctus*, the Doxology of the Eucharistic prayer has been fairly invariable"¹⁰³ in liturgical texts throughout the centuries. Similar to what is found in the Jewish *berakah*, it entails "a return to the theme of praise and thanks and sets a seal on this dominant eucharistic theme".¹⁰⁴ The assembly intervenes in its acclamation, *Amen*, thus enhancing the ecclesial aspect by forging stronger bonds within the *ekklesia*. The acclamation denotes the congregation's agreeing to, and sharing in, what has been carried out throughout the whole Eucharistic prayer. Dallen asserts that this "ratification of the whole Eucharistic prayer by the congregation is the oldest and most basic form of congregational participation in prayer".¹⁰⁵ It also helps to signify "the people's share in the offering".¹⁰⁶

Joseph Gelineau holds that the assembly's active participation in this *Amen* should bring out the fact that it is the most important *Amen* in the celebration of the Eucharist. It is also called the "Great Amen"; all other responses by the assembly are therefore secondary, when compared to this solemn proclamation "which sums up and affirms the entire preceding prayer".¹⁰⁷ This emphasis is enhanced by singing the *Amen* in polyphony or by being repeated.¹⁰⁸ There are many ways in which this can be achieved, for example, by the musical composition of an *Amen* which includes "a crescendo in its intensity and in its choral nature".¹⁰⁹ This helps the celebrating assembly to understand that the Doxology is, in a way, a synthesis of the whole Eucharistic prayer.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, by saying (or singing) "Per ipsum, et cum ipso et in ipso", the president is affirming that Christ involves all humanity in his praise to the Father. "In unitate" helps recall that it is the whole Church — gathered and

102. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, n. 55h.

103. Dallen, "The Congregation's Share", 121.

104. *Ibid.*

105. *Ibid.*

106. Ralph A. Keifer, "Preparation of the Altar and the Gifts or Offertory?", *Worship* 48 (1974) 597.

107. Smolarski, *Eucharistia*, 88.

108. Cfr Gelineau, "Gli interventi dell'assemblea", 228.

109. Author's translation of *ibid.*: "... un crescendo della sua intensità e della sua coralità".

110. Cfr Mazza, *Le odierne preghiere eucaristiche*, 235.

united in communion by the Holy Spirit — which is celebrating this meal of thanksgiving and praise.¹¹¹

5. Conclusion

This article has studied *per longum et per latum* several features which constitute the fourth Eucharistic prayer. A number of these aspects can also be found in other anaphoras. Yet, it is worth recalling the distinctive features of the ecclesiology underlying the fourth Eucharistic prayer. The panorama of the whole economy of salvation is indeed particular to it. Furthermore, the outward-looking ecclesiology present in the Post-*Sanctus* and the intercessions is highly particular to the anaphora under study. Reference to those “who ... do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart”¹¹² is very significant.

Francis Sullivan, as already pointed out, asserts that the new Eucharistic prayers composed after Vatican II reflect the latter’s doctrine. Their texts, he states, “make it clear that the Eucharist is offered not only for the Christian faithful,”¹¹³ but for all humanity. Regarding the fourth Eucharistic prayer, Sullivan refers to the significant phrases in the text which point markedly to contemporary ecclesiology, and the relationship of members of other religious traditions to the mystery of Christ.

A Eucharistic prayer reflects the faith of the Church. In fact, with every anaphora the *lex credendi* is made evident in the *lex orandi* of the *ekklesia*.¹¹⁴ This has been studied with special reference to the ecclesiological tenets of the fourth Eucharistic prayer. This ecclesiology is coloured with the dialogue between the Church and the world¹¹⁵ — the dialogue which is so much at the heart of the Second Vatican Council.

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111. Cfr Hermans, *La celebrazione dell'eucaristia*, 343.

112. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 16.

113. Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?*, 159.

114. Cfr Luca Brandolini, “Le nuove preghiere eucaristiche (rassegna bibliografica)”, *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 83 (1969) 281; Scerri, *Koinonia, Diakonia and Martyria*, 165.

115. Cfr Brandolini, “La IV preghiera eucaristica”, 603.