

# EDITH STEIN

## “THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH”

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## 1.2. The Prayer of the Church

“Through him, with him, and in him in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory is yours, Almighty Father, for ever and ever.” With these solemn words, the priest ends the Eucharistic prayer at the centre of which is the mysterious event of the consecration. These words at the same time encapsulate the prayer of the church: honour and glory to the triune God through, with, and in Christ. Although the words are directed to the Father, all glorification of the Father is at the same time glorification of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the prayer extols the majesty that the Father imparts to the Son and that both impart to the Holy Spirit from eternity to eternity.

All praise of God is *through, with, and in* Christ. *Through* him, because only through Christ does humanity have access to the Father and because his existence as God-man and his work of salvation are the fullest glorification of the Father; *with* him, because all authentic prayer is the fruit of union with Christ and at the same time buttresses this union, and because in honouring the Son one honours the Father and vice versa; *in* him, because the praying church is Christ himself, with every individual praying member as a part of his Mystical Body, and because the Father is in the Son and the Son the reflection of the Father, who makes his majesty visible. The dual meanings of *through, with, and in* clearly express the God-man’s mediation.

The prayer of the church is the prayer of the ever-living Christ. Its prototype is Christ’s prayer during his human life.

### 1. The Prayer of the Church as Liturgy and Eucharist

The Gospels tell us that Christ prayed the way a devout Jew faithful to the law prayed. Just as he made pilgrimages to Jerusalem at the prescribed times with his parents as a child, so he later journeyed to the temple to celebrate the high feasts there with his disciples. Surely he sang with holy enthusiasm along with his people the exultant hymns in which the pilgrim’s joyous anticipation streamed forth: “I rejoiced when I heard them say: Let us go to God’s house” (Ps 122:1). From his last supper with his disciples, we know that Jesus said the old blessings over bread, wine, and the fruits of the earth, as they are prayed to this day. So he fulfilled one of the most sacred religious duties: the ceremonial [p. 8] Passover seder to commemorate deliverance from slavery in Egypt. And perhaps this very gathering gives us the most profound glimpse into Christ’s prayer and the key to understanding the prayer of the church.

While they were at supper, he took bread, said the blessing, broke the bread, and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take this, all of you, and eat it: this is my body which will be given up for you.”

In the same way, he took the cup, filled with wine. He gave you thanks, and giving the cup to his disciples, said, “Take this, all of you, and drink from it: this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven.” [Mt 26:26-28]

Blessing and distributing bread and wine were part of the Passover rite. But here both receive an entirely new meaning. This is where the life of the church begins. Only at Pentecost will it appear publicly as a Spirit-filled and visible community. But here at the Passover meal the seeds of the vineyard are planted that make the outpouring of the Spirit possible. In the mouth of Christ, the old blessings become life-giving words. The fruits of the earth become his body and blood, filled with his life. Visible creation, which he entered when he became a human being, is now united with him in a new, mysterious way. The things that serve to sustain human life are fundamentally transformed, and the people who partake of them in faith are transformed too, drawn into the unity of life with Christ and filled with his divine life. The Word's life-giving power is bound to the sacrifice. The Word became flesh in order to surrender the life he assumed, to offer himself and a creation redeemed by his sacrifice in praise to the Creator. Through the Lord's last supper, the Passover meal of the Old Covenant is converted into the Easter meal of the New Covenant: into the sacrifice on the cross at Golgotha and those joyous meals between Easter and Ascension when the disciples recognized the Lord in the breaking of bread, and into the sacrifice of the Mass with Holy Communion.

As the Lord took the cup, he gave thanks. This recalls the words of blessing thanking the Creator. But we also know that Christ used to give thanks when, prior to a miracle, he raised his eyes to his Father in heaven. He gives thanks because he knows in advance that he will be heard. He gives thanks for the divine power that he carries in himself and by means of which he will demonstrate the omnipotence of the Creator to human eyes. He gives thanks for the work of salvation that he is permitted to accomplish, and *through* this work, which is in fact itself the glorification of the triune Godhead, because it restores this Godhead's distorted image to pure beauty. Therefore the whole perpetual sacrificial offering of Christ—at the cross, in the holy Mass, and in the eternal glory of heaven—can be conceived as a single great thanksgiving—as [p. 9] Eucharist: as gratitude for creation, salvation, and consummation. Christ presents himself in the name of all creation, whose prototype he is and to which he descended to renew it from the inside out and lead it to perfection. But he also calls upon the entire created world itself, united with him, to give the Creator the tribute of thanks that is his due. Some understanding of this Eucharistic character of prayer had already been revealed under the Old Covenant. The wondrous form of the tent of meeting, and later, of Solomon's temple, erected as it was according to divine specifications, was considered an image of the entire creation, assembled in worship and service around its Lord. The tent around which the people of Israel camped during their wanderings in the wilderness was called the "home of God among us" (Ex 38:21). It was thought of as a "home below," in contrast to a "higher home." "O Lord, I love the house where you dwell, the place where your glory abides," sings the Psalmist (Ps 26:8), because the tent of meeting is "valued as much as the creation of the world." As the heavens in the creation story were stretched out like a carpet, so carpets were prescribed as walls for the tent. As the waters of the earth were separated from the waters of the heavens, so the curtain separated the Holy of Holies from the outer rooms. The "*bronze*" sea is modelled after the sea that is contained by its shores. The seven-branched light in the tent stands for the heavenly lights. Lambs and birds stand for the swarms of life teeming in the water, on the earth, and in the air. And as the earth is handed over to people, so in the sanctuary there stands the high priest "who is purified to act and to serve before God." Moses blessed, anointed, and sanctified the completed house as the Lord

blessed and sanctified the work of his hands on the seventh day. The Lord's house was to be a witness to God on earth just as heaven and earth are witnesses to him (Dt 30:19).

In place of Solomon's temple, Christ has built a temple of living stones, the communion of saints. At its centre, he stands as the eternal high priest; on its altar he is himself the perpetual sacrifice. And, in turn, the whole of creation is drawn into the "liturgy," the ceremonial worship service: the fruits of the earth as the mysterious offerings, the flowers and the lighted candlesticks, the carpets and the curtain, the ordained priest, and the anointing and blessing of God's house. Not even the cherubim are missing. Fashioned by the hand of the artist, the visible forms stand watch beside the Holy of Holies. And, as living copies of them, the "monks resembling angels" surround the sacrificial altar and make sure that the praise of God does not cease, as in heaven so on earth. The solemn prayers they recite as the resonant mouth of the church frame the holy sacrifice. They also frame, permeate, and consecrate all other "daily work," so that prayer and work become a single *opus Dei*, a single "liturgy." Their readings from the holy Scriptures and from the fathers, from the menologies of the church and the teachings of its [p. 10] principal pastors, are a great, continually swelling hymn of praise to the rule of providence and to the progressive actualization of the eternal plan of salvation. Their morning hymns of praise call all of creation together to unite once more in praising the Lord: mountains and hills, streams and rivers, seas and lands and all that inhabit them, clouds and winds, rain and snow, all peoples of the earth, every class and race of people, and finally also the inhabitants of heaven, the angels and the saints. Not only in representations giving them human form and made by human hands are they to participate in the great Eucharist of creation, but they are to be involved as personal beings—or better, we are to unite ourselves through our liturgy to their eternal praise of God.

"We" here refers not just to the religious who are called to give solemn praise to God, but to all Christian people. When these stream into cathedrals and chapels on holy days, when they joyously participate daily in worship using the "people's choral Mass" and the new "folk Mass" forms, they show that they are conscious of their calling to praise God. The liturgical unity of the heavenly with the earthly church, both of which thank God "through Christ," finds its most powerful expression in the preface and Sanctus of the Mass. However, the liturgy leaves no doubt that we are not yet full citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, but pilgrims on the way to our eternal home. We must always prepare ourselves before we may dare to lift our eyes to the luminous heights and to unite our voices with the "holy, holy, holy" of the heavenly chorus. Each created thing to be used in the worship service must be withdrawn from its profane use, must be purified and consecrated. Before the priest climbs the steps to the altar, he must cleanse himself by acknowledging his sins, and the faithful must do so with him. Prior to each step as the offertory continues, he must repeat his plea for the forgiveness of sins—for himself and for those gathered around him as well as for all to whom the fruits of the sacrifice are to flow. The sacrifice itself is a sacrifice of expiation that transforms the faithful as it transforms the gifts, unlocks heaven for them, and enables them to sing a hymn of praise pleasing to God. All that we need to be received into the communion of saints is summed up in the seven petitions of the Our Father, which the Lord did not pray in his own name, but to instruct us. We say it before communion, and when we say it sincerely and from our hearts and receive communion in the proper spirit, it fulfils all our petitions. Communion delivers us from evil, because it cleanses us of sin amid gives us peace of heart that takes away the sting of all other "evils." It brings us the forgiveness of past sins and strengthens us in the face of temptations. It is itself the bread of life that we need daily to grow into eternal life. It makes our will into an instrument at God's disposal. Thereby it lays

the foundation for the kingdom of God in us and gives us clean lips and a pure heart to glorify God's holy name.

[p. 11] So we see again how the offertory, communion, and praise of God [in the Divine Office] are internally related. Participation in the sacrifice and in the sacrificial meal actually transforms the soul into a living stone in the city of God—in fact, each individual soul into a temple of God.

## **2. Solitary Dialogue with God as the Prayer of the Church**

The individual human soul a temple of God—this opens to us an entirely new, broad vista. The prayer life of Jesus was to be the key to understanding the prayer of the church. We saw that Christ took part in the public and prescribed worship services of his people, i.e., in what one usually calls “liturgy.” He brought the liturgy into the most intimate relationship with his sacrificial offering and so for the first time gave it its full and true meaning—that of thankful homage of creation to its Creator. This is precisely how he transformed the liturgy of the Old Covenant into that of the New.

But Jesus did not merely participate in public and prescribed worship services. Perhaps even more often the Gospels tell of solitary prayer in the still of the night, on open mountain tops, in the wilderness far from people. Jesus' public ministry was preceded by forty days and forty nights of prayer. Before he chose and commissioned his twelve apostles, he withdrew into the isolation of the mountains. By his hour on the Mount of Olives, he prepared himself for his road to Golgotha. A few short words tell us what he implored of his Father during this most difficult hour of his life, words that are given to us as guiding stars for our own hours on the Mount of Olives. “Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, let your will be done, not mine.” [Lk 22:42] Like lightning, these words for an instant illumine for us the innermost spiritual life of Jesus, the unfathomable mystery of his God-man existence and his dialogue with the Father. Surely, this dialogue was life-long and uninterrupted. Christ prayed interiorly not only when he had withdrawn from the crowd, but also when he was among people. And once he allowed us to look extensively and deeply at this secret dialogue. It was not long before the hour of the Mount of Olives; in fact, it was immediately before they set out to go there at the end of the Last Supper, which we recognize as the actual hour of the birth of the church. “Having loved his own..., he loved them to the end.” [Jn 13:1] He knew that this was their last time together, and he wanted to give them as much as he in any way could. He had to restrain himself from saying more. But he surely knew that they could not bear any more, in fact, that they could not even grasp this little bit. The Spirit of Truth had to come first to open their eyes for it. And after he had said and done everything that he could say and do, he lifted his eyes to heaven and spoke to the Father in their presence. We call these words Jesus' great high priestly prayer, for this talking [p. 12] alone with God also had its antecedent in the Old Covenant. Once a year on the greatest and most holy day of the year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest stepped into the Holy of Holies before the face of the Lord “to pray for himself and his household and the whole congregation of Israel.” [Lv 16:17] He sprinkled the throne of grace with the blood of a young bull and a goat, which he previously had to slaughter, and in this way absolved himself and his house “of the impurities of the sons of Israel and of their transgressions and of all their sins.” [Lv 16:16] No person was to be in the tent (i.e., in the holy place that lay in front of the Holy of Holies) when the high priest stepped into God's presence in this awe-

somely sacred place, this place where no one but he entered and he himself only at this hour. And even now he had to burn incense “so that a cloud of smoke.. .would veil the judgment throne.. .and he not die.” [Lv 16:13] This solitary dialogue took place in deepest mystery.

The Day of Atonement is the Old Testament antecedent of Good Friday. The ram that is slaughtered for the sins of the people represents the spotless Lamb of God (so did, no doubt, that other—chosen by lot and burdened with the sins of the people—that was driven into the wilderness). And the high priest descended from Aaron foreshadows the eternal high priest. Just as Christ anticipated his sacrificial death during the last supper, so he also anticipated the high priestly prayer. He did not have to bring for himself an offering for sin because he was without sin. He did not have to await the hour prescribed by the Law, nor to seek out the Holy of Holies in the temple. He stands, always and everywhere, before the face of God; his own soul is the Holy of Holies. It is not only God’s dwelling, but is also essentially and indissolubly united to God. He does not have to conceal himself from God by a protective cloud of incense. He gazes upon the uncovered face of the Eternal One and has nothing to fear. Looking at the Father will not kill him. And he unlocks the mystery of the high priest’s realm. All who belong to him may hear how, in the Holy of Holies of his heart, he speaks to his Father; they are to experience what is going on and are to learn to speak to the Father in their own hearts.

The Saviour’s high priestly prayer unveils the mystery of the inner life: the circumincession of the Divine Persons and the indwelling of God in the soul. In these mysterious depths the work of salvation was prepared and accomplished itself in concealment and silence. And so it will continue until the union of all is actually accomplished at the end of time. The decision for the Redemption was conceived in the eternal silence of the inner divine life. The power of the Holy Spirit came over the Virgin praying alone in the hidden, silent room in Nazareth and brought about the Incarnation of the Saviour. Congregated around the silently praying Virgin, the emergent church awaited the promised new [p. 13] outpouring of the Spirit that was to quicken it into inner clarity and fruitful outer effectiveness. In the night of blindness that God laid over his eyes, Saul awaited in solitary prayer the Lord’s answer to his question, “What do you want me to do?” [Ac 9] In solitary prayer Peter was prepared for his mission to the Gentiles. [Ac 10] And so it has remained all through the centuries. In the silent dialogue with their Lord of souls consecrated to God, the events of church history are prepared that, visible far and wide, renew the face of the earth. The Virgin, who kept every word sent from God in her heart, is the model for such attentive souls in whom Jesus’ high priestly prayer comes to life again and again. And women who, like her, were totally self-forgetful because they were steeped in the life and suffering of Christ, were the Lord’s preferred choice as instruments to accomplish great things in the church: a St. Bridget, a Catherine of Siena. And when St. Teresa, the powerful reformer of her Order at a time of widespread falling away from the faith, wished to come to the rescue of the church, she saw the renewal of true interior life as the means toward this end. Teresa was very disturbed by the news of the continually spreading movement of apostasy:

...As though I could do something or were something, I cried to the Lord and begged him that I might remedy so much evil. It seemed to me that I would have given a thousand lives to save one soul out of the many that were being lost there. I realized I was a woman and wretched and incapable of doing any of the useful things I desired to do in the service of the Lord. All my longing was and still is that since He has so many enemies and so few friends that these few friends be good ones. As a result I resolved to do the little that was in my

power; that is, to follow the evangelical counsels as perfectly as I could and strive that these few persons who live here do the same. I did this trusting in the great goodness of God... Since we would all be occupied in continual prayer for those who are the defenders of the Church and for preachers and for learned men who protect her from attack, we could help as much as possible this Lord of mine who is so roughly treated by those for whom He has done so much good; it seems these traitors would want Him to be crucified again....

O my Sisters in Christ, help me beg these things of the Lord.

This is why he has gathered you together here. This is your vocation.

[Teresa of Avila, *The Way of Perfection*, see *The Collected Works of Teresa of Avila*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh & Otilio Rodriguez, vol. 2 (Washington: ICS, 1980) chap. 1, sect. 1 & 5, pp. 41 & 42]

To Teresa it seemed necessary to use:

...the approach of a lord when in time of war his land is overrun with enemies and he finds himself restricted on all sides. He withdraws to a city that he has well fortified and from there sometimes strikes his foe. Those who are in the city, being chosen people, are such that they can do more by themselves than many cowardly soldiers can. And often victory is won in this way....

[p. 14]

But why have I said this? So that you understand, my Sisters, that what we must ask God is that in this little castle where there are already good Christians not one of us will go over to the enemy and that God will make the captains this castle..., who are the preachers and theologians, very advanced in the way of the Lord. Since most of them belong to religious orders, ask God that they advance very far in the perfection of religious life and their vocation....

These persons must live among men, deal with men..., and even sometimes outwardly behave as such men do. Do you think, my daughters, that little is required for them to deal with the world, live in the world, engage in its business while interiorly remaining its strangers...; in sum, not being men but angels? For if they do not live in this way, they do not deserve to be called captains; nor may the Lord allow them to leave their cells, for they will do more harm than good. This is not the time for seeing imperfections in those who must teach....

Is it not the world they have to deal with? Have no fear that the world will forgive this deficiency; nor is there any imperfection it fails to recognize. It will overlook many good things and perhaps not even consider them good; but have no fear that it will overlook any evil or imperfect things. Now I wonder who it is that teaches people in the world about perfection, not so much that these people might seek perfection..., but that they might condemn others. So, then, do not think that little help from God is necessary for this great battle these preachers and theologians are fighting; a very great deal is necessary.... So, then, I beg you for the love of the Lord to ask His Majesty to hear us in this matter. Miserable though I am, I ask His Majesty this since it is for His glory and the good of the Church; this glory and good is the object of my desires....

And when your prayers, desires, disciplines, and fasts are not directed toward obtaining these things I mentioned, reflect on how you are not accomplishing or fulfilling the purpose for which the Lord brought you here together.”

[Teresa of Avila, *The Way of Perfection*, see *The Collected Works of Teresa of Avila*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh & Otilio Rodriguez, vol. 2 (Washington: ICS, 1980) chap. 3]

What gave this religious, who had been living prayerfully in a monastery cell for decades, the passionate desire to do something for the church and the keen eye for the needs

and demands of her time? It was precisely that she lived in prayer and allowed herself to be drawn ever more deeply by the Lord into the depths of her “interior castle” until she reached that obscure room where he could say to her, “that now it was time that she consider as her own what belonged to him, and that he would take care of what was hers.” [*Interior Castle*, Seventh Dwelling Place, chap. 2, sect. 1: see *The Collected Works of Teresa of Avila*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh & Otilio Rodriguez, vol. 2 (Washington: ICS, 1980)] Therefore, she could no longer do anything more than “with zeal be zealous for the Lord, the God of Hosts” (words of our Holy Father, Elijah, which have been taken as a motto on the shield of the Order). Whoever surrenders unconditionally to the Lord will be chosen by him as an instrument for building his [p. 15] kingdom. The Lord alone knows how much the prayer of St. Teresa and her daughters contributed to protect Spain from dissenting from the faith, and what power it exerted in the heated battles regarding the faith in France, the Netherlands, and Germany.

Official history is silent about these invisible and incalculable forces. But they are recognized by the trust of the faithful and the carefully balanced judgment of the church after extensive investigations. And our time is more and more determined, when all else fails, to hope for ultimate salvation from these hidden sources.

### **3. Inner Life and Outer Form and Action**

The work of salvation takes place in obscurity and stillness. In the heart’s quiet dialogue with God the living building blocks out of which the kingdom of God grows are prepared, the chosen instruments for the construction forged. The mystical stream that flows through all centuries is no spurious tributary that has strayed from the prayer life of the church—it is its deepest life. When this mystical stream breaks through traditional forms, it does so because the Spirit that blows where it will is living in it, this Spirit that has created all traditional forms and must ever create new ones. Without him there would be no liturgy and no church. Was not the soul of the royal psalmist a harp whose strings resounded under the gentle breath of the Holy Spirit? From the overflowing heart of the Virgin Mary blessed by God streamed the exultant hymn of the “Magnificat.” When the angel’s mysterious word became visible reality, the prophetic “Benedictus” hymn unsealed the lips of the old priest Zechariah, who had been struck dumb. Whatever arose from spirit-filled hearts found expression in words and melodies and continues to be communicated from mouth to mouth. The “Divine Office” is to see that it continues to resound from generation to generation. So the mystical stream forms the many-voiced, continually swelling hymn of praise to the triune God, the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Perfecter. Therefore, it is not a question of placing the inner prayer free of all traditional forms as “subjective” piety in contrast to the liturgy as the “objective” prayer of the church. All authentic prayer is prayer of the church. Through every sincere prayer something happens in the church, and it is the church itself that is praying therein, for it is the Holy Spirit living in the church that intercedes for every individual soul “with sighs too deep for words.” [Rom 8:26] This is exactly what “authentic” prayer is, for “no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit.” [1 Cor 12:3] What could the prayer of the church be, if not great lovers giving themselves to God who is love!

The unbounded loving surrender to God and God’s return gift, full and enduring union, this is the highest elevation of the heart attainable, the highest level of prayer. Souls who have attained it are truly the heart [p. 16] of the church, and in them lives Jesus’ high priestly love. Hidden with Christ in God, they can do nothing but radiate to other hearts the

divine love that fills them and so participate in the perfection of all into unity in God, which was and is Jesus' great desire. This was how Marie Antoinette de Geuser understood her vocation. She had to undertake this highest Christian duty in the midst of the world. Her way is certainly a very meaningful and strengthening model for the many people who, having become radically serious about their inner lives, want to stand up for the church and who cannot follow this call into the seclusion of a monastery. The soul that has achieved the highest level of mystical prayer and entered into the "calm activity of divine life" no longer thinks of anything but of giving itself to the apostolate to which God has called it.

This is repose in orderliness and, at the same time, activity free of all constraint. The soul conducts the battle in peace, because it is acting entirely from the viewpoint of eternal decrees. She knows that the will of her God will be perfectly fulfilled to his greater glory, because—though the human will often, as it were, sets limits for divine omnipotence—that divine omnipotence triumphs after all by creating something magnificent out of whatever material is left. This victory of divine power over human freedom, which he nevertheless permits to do as it pleases, is one of the most wonderful and adorable aspects of God's plan for the world... [Marie de la Trinité, *Lettres de "Consummata" à une Carmélite* (Carmel d'Avignon, 1930) letter of Sept 27, 1917]: see also Raoul Plus, *Consummata: Marie Antoinette de Geuser, her life and letters*, English edition by George Baker (New York: Benziger, 1931)].

When Marie Antoinette de Geuser wrote this letter, she was near the threshold of eternity. Only a thin veil still separated her from that final consummation that we call living in glory.

For those blessed souls who have entered into the unity of life in God, everything is one: rest and activity, looking and acting, silence and speaking, listening and communicating, surrender in loving acceptance and an outpouring of love in grateful songs of praise. As long as we are still on the way—and the farther away from the goal the more intensely—we are still subject to temporal laws, and are instructed to actualize in ourselves, one after another and all the members complementing each other mutually, the divine life in all its fullness. We need hours for listening silently and allowing the Word of God to act on us until it moves us to bear fruit in an offering of praise and an offering of action. We need to have traditional forms and to participate in public and prescribed worship services so our interior life will remain vital and on the right track, and SO it will find appropriate expression. There must be special places on earth for the solemn praise of God, places where this praise is formed into the greatest perfection of which humankind is capable. From such places it can ascend to heaven *for* the whole church and have an influence *on* the church's members; it can awaken the interior life in them and make them zealous for external unanimity. But it must be enlivened from within by this means: that here, too, room must be made for silent recollection. Otherwise, it will degenerate into a rigid and lifeless lip service. And protection from such dangers is provided by those homes for the interior life where souls stand before the face of God in solitude arid silence in order to be quickening love in the heart of the church.

However, the way to the interior life as well as to the choirs of blessed spirits who sing the eternal Sanctus is Christ. His blood is the curtain through which we enter into the Holiest of Holies, the Divine Life. In baptism and in the sacrament of reconciliation, his blood cleanses us of our sins, opens our eyes to eternal light, our ears to hearing God's word.

It opens our lips to sing his praise, to pray in expiation, in petition, in thanksgiving, all of which are but varying forms of adoration, i.e., of the creature's homage to the Almighty and All-benevolent One. In the sacrament of confirmation, Christ's blood marks and strengthens the soldiers of Christ so that they candidly profess their allegiance. However, above all, we are made members of the Body of Christ by virtue of the sacrament in which Christ himself is present. When we partake of the sacrifice and receive Holy Communion and are nourished by the flesh and blood of Jesus, we ourselves become his flesh and his blood. And only if and insofar as we are members of his Body, can his spirit quicken and govern us. "It is the Spirit that quickens, for the Spirit gives life to the members. But it only quickens members of its own body.... The Christian must fear nothing as much as being separated from the Body of Christ. For when separated from Christ's Body, the Christian is no longer his member, is no longer quickened by his Spirit." [Augustine, "Tract 27 in Joannem": in old Roman Breviary, readings 8 & 9 of third day in octave of Corpus Christi]. However, we become members of the Body of Christ "not only through love..., but in all reality, through becoming one with his flesh: For this is effected through the food that he has given us in order to show us his longing for us. This is why he has submerged himself in us and allowed his body to take form in us. We, then, are one, just as the body is joined to the head..." [John Chrysostom, "Homily 61 to the people of Antioch: old Roman Breviary as above] As members of his Body, animated by his Spirit, we bring ourselves "through him, with him, and in him" as a sacrifice and join in the eternal hymn of thanksgiving. Therefore, after receiving the holy meal, the church permits us to say: "Satisfied by such great gifts, grant, we beseech you, Lord, that these gifts we have received be for our salvation and that we never cease praising you" [Postcommunion prayer for 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Pentecost: old Roman Missal].