

LET'S TALK LITURGY! – Liturgy of the Eucharist: Key Concepts

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The last article in this series broke out the **many** parts of the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Before we begin a discussion of all of those parts, it might be helpful to share some information about terminology that may be unfamiliar to some of us.

Let's begin with the word **EUCCHARIST** – perhaps, not so unfamiliar. We use this word often but where does it come from? What does it mean? In its roots the word is from the Greek and it means to give thanks or praise for the wonderful works of God. The Greek word may itself be a translation of the Hebrew word BERAKAH. Giving thanks and praise is what the Liturgy of the Eucharist is all about! And notice that it is an active word. It is a VERB not a noun!

BRK or BERAKAH is an ancient Jewish prayer form. Jesus, as an observant Jew, would have been familiar with this way of praying. There are three parts to this prayer form:

1. Naming God
2. Recalling/remembering the wonderful works and deeds of God
3. Petitioning

The first time we see this during the Liturgy of the Eucharist is during the Preparation of the Gifts and the Altar. After the gifts have been placed on the altar, we see Fr. Tom raise up the bread and he says (sometimes silently) a Berakah:

1. "Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation.
2. Through your goodness we have this bread to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made.
3. It will become for us the bread of life."

The same prayer form is used with the wine. God is named, God's goodness is recalled/remembered, and we ask (assuming God's goodness, we really assert) that these gifts will become our food and drink for eternity.

Now that we understand this prayer form, it is important to know that the ENTIRE Eucharistic Prayer is a Berakah. The remembering during the Eucharistic Prayer is in the form of **ANAMNESIS**. This kind of remembering makes us present to that which we are remembering. What are we remembering during the Eucharistic Prayer? The Christ event – Jesus' life, death and resurrection. So, then, what happens as we pray together is NOT a reenactment of those events. It is NOT a mere thinking back upon those events. The prayer moves us from the chronological time (chronos) in which we exist into "God's time" (Kairos). Through the power of the Spirit in our prayer, we are made present to the once and for all (unrepeatable) events of our salvation. WOW!!

And in this great Berakah, what do we petition of God in the face of that remembering? In the **EPICLESIS** of the Eucharistic Prayer, we ask our God to send the Spirit upon our gifts of bread and wine to change them into the body and blood of Christ AND to make of us one body, one spirit in Christ.

There are many versions of the Eucharistic Prayer and these elements may be differently ordered in different Eucharistic Prayers. Often the EPICLESIS is split. But if you listen to the Eucharistic Prayer closely, you will always hear the remembering that makes us present (ANAMNESIS) and the calling down of the Spirit upon the gifts and the community (EPICLESIS).

Next time, we will continue the discussion of the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Until then, listen carefully on Sunday for the elements we discussed here.