

Thirty-Second Week of Ordinary Time
November 10, 2024
Year of the Most Holy Eucharist
Reflection #46

“Does my reception of the Eucharist, like intercessory prayer, help those I love as well as myself?”
(Peter Kreeft, Practical Theology, p.283)

At one time or another, each of us have been asked to offer prayers for someone or some situation other than ourselves. Generally, this request was made by a sincere person who truly believed prayers were needed to assist or resolve the particular situation. As Catholics, we believe and profess the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice (the Mass) is the greatest prayer any person may offer. It is the true offering of the Body and Blood of the Son of God, to God the Father for universal and specific needs. Furthermore, we believe and profess that the proper reception of the Eucharist, again free from the state of mortal sin, provides the grace needed to the recipient. One may wonder if our celebration and reception of the Body and Blood of Jesus could, not only provide graces for ourselves, but provide grace for those we know and love? If this is possible, then how could we explain our belief to another?

For us to offer an explanation to this question, we must take a moment to examine the prayers which are offered during the Mass. I would like to offer two examples for our reflection from the Roman Canon (Eucharistic Prayer I) using the same paragraphs from both the Ordinary Form (English Mass) and the Extraordinary Form (Latin Mass):

Ordinary Form - *Remember, Lord, your servants N. and N. and all gathered here, whose faith and devotion are known to you. For them, we offer you this sacrifice of praise or they offer it for themselves and all who are dear to them: for the redemption of their souls, in hope of health and well-being, and paying their homage to you, the eternal God, living and true.*

Remember also, Lord, your servants N. and N., who have gone before us with the sign of faith and rest in the sleep of peace. Grant them, O Lord, we pray, and all who sleep in Christ, a place of refreshment, light and peace.

Extraordinary Form - *Be mindful, O Lord, of Thy servants, N. and N., and of all here present, whose faith and devotion are known to Thee, for whom we offer, or who offer up to Thee, this sacrifice of praise, for themselves, their families, and their friends, for the salvation of their souls and the health and welfare they hope for, and who now pay their vows to Thee, God eternal, living, and true.*

Be mindful also, O Lord, of Thy servants N. and N., who have gone before us with the sign of faith and who sleep the sleep of peace. To these, O Lord, and to all who rest in Christ, grant, we beseech Thee, a place of refreshment, light, and peace.

You will notice contained within both prayers are requests to God for others, both living and dead. These are only two of the numerous examples available found within this Eucharistic Sacrifice which ask God to bless others. Intercessory prayers offered for others are not separate from the Church's Liturgy; they are part of that Liturgy. The prayers offered in the Mass are more efficacious than those offered outside of the Mass for one main reason: It is Christ who prays, in the person of His minister (the priest) and not you or I alone or even within a group. This idea may seem different, but we must understand the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Jesus, is not solely offered for those in attendance who receive it during communion. Christ prays and offers Himself for all, even those not in attendance. The saving action of Jesus upon the cross was a sacrifice offered for the sins of all. Therefore, it is truly right and worthy of our highest praise to attend the Eucharist as often as possible to participate in this most splendid offering. We should want all men to come to know and serve Jesus and receive Him in this great sacrament as a means of both love and contrition for all. As we come together at each Mass, let us offer to God the Father this sacrifice of His Son, being as free as possible from sin, as a way to ask God to bring mankind back together with Him both in this life and in the one to come.