

Fourteenth Week of Ordinary Time (English)
Sixth Sunday after Pentecost (Latin)
July 5, 2026
Year of the Church in History

“Lex orandi, Lex credendi, Lex vivendi” (Ancient Latin Maxim)

As we proceed to read and reflect upon The First Apology of Saint Justin Martyr. I would like us to keep in our minds the ancient Latin maxim which translates into: ***Lex orandi*** (how we worship), ***Lex credendi*** (what we believe), ***Lex vivendi*** (how we live). In essence, the way we pray and worship shapes what we believe which in turn determines how we choose to conduct our lives. It is my intention, in the following reflections, to repeat this first paragraph so we may have a visible reminder each time we read. Likewise, I will present key statements from Saint Justin, using our Eucharistic Liturgy (Mass) as a benchmark.

“Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to this ability, and the people assent, saying Amen;. . . And when he has concluded the prayers and Thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying Amen. This word Amen answers in the Hebrew language to genoito [so be it].” (Saint Justin, First Apology)

The president (bishop or presbyter) offers a prayer of Thanksgiving, to the best of his ability, after receiving the people’s offering of bread, wine and water. At the conclusion of this prayer, the people give their assent by saying Amen. Did you notice what is happening? Although Saint Justin does not go into detail concerning what the president said during his prayer, we may conclude these brief lines are describing what would later be called the Eucharistic Prayer.

The Eucharistic Prayer is the heart of the Sacrifice of the Mass. A later Father of the Church, Saint Cyril of Alexandria, AD 350, would spell out those words which begin this offering of the Body and Blood of the Son to His Father. Saint Cyril wrote: *“The priest cries out: ‘Lift up your hearts!’ For in this most solemn hour it is necessary for us to have our hearts raised up with God, and not fixed below, on the earth and earthly things. It is as if the priest instructs us at this hour to dismiss all physical cares and domestic anxieties, and to have our hearts in heaven with the benevolent God. Then you answer: ‘We have lifted them up to the Lord,’ giving assent to it by the acknowledgement that you make. Let no one come here, then, who could say with his mouth, ‘We have lifted them up to the Lord,’ while he is preoccupied with physical cares.” (Catechetical Lectures)*

It would be quite interesting to take our time and examine each part of the Eucharistic Prayer, as it has been set down over time. However, this would extend our gaze away from Saint Justin and how these first and second century Christians worshipped God. Let us rather focus our gaze upon two points. One is mentioned directly. While the second is implicitly expressed by what is not stated.

The first of the two is mentioned and easier to be understood. The people give their assent to what has been said in the Prayer by saying Amen. For one to say Amen, one has to believe in what was prayed for in the Prayer. Saint Justin would later explain this Prayer asks for God to make present the *Eukaristia* (Eucharist). Next week, we will examine what Saint Justin meant when he used this word. The second part concerns the invocation of the Holy Spirit (*Epiclesis*). For the Eucharist to become the Body and Blood of Jesus, the Holy Spirit MUST make this miracle possible. Through our shared Christian history, no one man, however holy we presume him to be, is worthy to make bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus without the Divine Assistance given by the Holy Spirit. By saying Amen, you join your voices to a chorus which has resounded since the beginning stating: "I believe what has happened upon the altar (bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus) is TRUE. I believe it with every part of my being. I believe it, not because a person said this to be true. No, I believe it because Jesus said, "THIS IS MY BODY. THIS IS MY BLOOD." Amen, Lord Jesus, I believe this to be true.