

Number Twelve: Eucharistic Prayers

After the Preface, we typically use one of four Eucharistic Prayers at Mass for the prayers that consecrate the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. The First Eucharistic Prayer (the Roman Canon) is most often used on Sundays and special feasts and it dates back to the 4th century under Pope Damasus I (who also commissioned St. Jerome to produce the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible). The Second Eucharistic Prayer is even older as its origins can be traced back to the third century; we often use this prayer at weekday Masses. The Third Eucharistic Prayer, used as well on Sundays and festive days, was composed after the Second Vatican Council and it resembles the Second Eucharistic Prayer in many ways. The Fourth Eucharistic Prayer is a little different because it is very similar to the ones used in the Eastern Liturgy of the Church (called the *anaphora*). One difference with this fourth prayer is that it has its own proper Preface that must be used with it because the Preface and the Eucharistic Prayer form a seamless whole to present the entire history of salvation. In the New Missal, the English translation will be much closer to the Latin original. Isn't it amazing to know that we will be praying very closely resembles what the Church has celebrated for over almost 1,700 years in both the West and the East?