

# Preface

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The preface is the part of the Eucharistic prayer that comes between the opening dialogue and the Holy. The priest speaks or sings the text alone. It begins the great prayer of thanksgiving by mentioning some reasons why the community gives thanks on this particular day. It is called the “preface” because of its introductory function.

From the earliest days of worship, all the Eucharistic prayers enumerated reasons for giving thanks, but not all had a discernable separate preface. The preface evolved as an expansion of the praise given to God, tailored to a specific occasion, and concluding in a way that led to the Holy. From its beginnings, the preface has been a soft place in the Mass where the words may change from day to day. For many centuries the Roman Catholic Church used only one Eucharistic prayer; even though its basic content never changed, the preface was flexible. The priest had dozens of options from which to choose. Today there are even more.

During Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter, the preface acknowledges the reasons why the community gives thanks and praise to God during that season of the year. Some special feast days have their own preface. For example, the prefaces for St. Joseph's Day and Transfiguration are used only on those occasions. On most saints' days, the priest uses a preface appropriately associated with apostles, martyrs, pastors, religious, or others who led an exemplary life. Whether the celebration is for Christian unity or the dedication of a new church, for a wedding or a funeral, a special preface names the reasons why, in the midst of triumph or tragedy, the church still gives thanks to God today.

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