



Last time, we took a closer look at the Preface, which in many ways sets the tone for the Eucharistic Prayer. At the end of the Preface, as the Diocese of Peoria teaches, “we join with the choirs of heaven in singing the endless song of praise. The Second Vatican Council teaches that the Liturgy is both a foretaste and promise of the heavenly Liturgy. The Liturgy on earth is united to the Liturgy in heaven, and this is made vividly clear when we join them in song. ‘Holy, Holy, Holy’ is a heavenly superlative acclamation of praise and worship” (“A Study of the Mass,” p. 13).

### **A Foretaste of Heaven**

This next part of the Mass is called the **Sanctus**, perhaps more commonly referred to as the **Holy, Holy, Holy**. As is true with many parts of the Mass, we can find these words in the Holy Scriptures. The prophet Isaiah saw a vision of the Lord on a throne with angels singing, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts!” (Is. 6:3). In St. John’s vision of heaven, the four living creatures continuously exclaim, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come” (Rev. 4:8). Perhaps we will also recognize the second part of the Sanctus from the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday: “Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest” (Mt. 21:9).

Charles Belmonte recalls how the Sanctus reminds us of the beautiful presence of the angels at the Mass: “We join our own voices with those of the hosts of angels in awe, wonderment, and great enthusiasm... St. John Chrysostom describes the presence of angels during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass with these words: ‘The angels surround the priest; all the temple, especially the sanctuary, is populated with celestial hosts of angels who honor God, present on the altar’” (*Understanding the Mass*, p. 131). Have you ever thought of this? In a very real way, the Sanctus helps to remind us that our participation in the Mass is truly a foretaste of heaven. When we gather as the Body of Christ for the Mass, united with Jesus truly present, the **WHOLE** Body is present there! That means every member of the Christian faithful is present with us—all those around the world, all those from various times (including those who have gone before us), and all those who are gathered together in heaven around the throne of God... including the heavenly hosts of angels! Imagine telling your friends on Monday: “All the angels of heaven were at my church on Sunday!” It’s true!

### **Singing with the Angels**

With this wonderful image in mind, when we sing the Sanctus, we are joining in the praise the angels are singing for God. What exactly is this song of praise? Charles Belmonte relates that a certain “Cardinal Bona (seventeenth century) explains that this hymn contains three praises and two petitions: First, we extol the holiness, power, and supreme dominion of God, when we say, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of [hosts].’ Then, we praise his glory which shines forth in all creatures, when we say, ‘Heaven and earth are full of your glory.’ Third, we laud Christ by saying, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’ While saying this, we invite him to come to our souls with the same affection and devotion with which his Blessed Mother received him at the annunciation. The two petitions are: ‘Hosanna in the highest;’ we say it twice, asking for our salvation and everything that leads to it. The first petition is addressed to God, and the second to Christ” (*Understanding the Mass*, p. 133–134).

If praising the Lord with the angels is this exciting, just imagine how joyful we will be when Jesus is truly and substantially present on the altar!