



NATIONAL  
**Eucharistic  
Revival**

**Step-by-Step Walk Through the Mass  
Do This in Remembrance of Me, Part 48,  
The Epiclesis**  
by FR. LUKE SPANNAGEL



Continuing now with the individual parts of the Eucharistic Prayer, we come to a really action-packed moment: the *Epiclesis*. What is the “Epiclesis”? How do we even pronounce it? (A common pronunciation is Epp-eh-lee-sis.) Charles Belmonte teaches, “In the Epiclesis, the priest requests God the Father to send the Holy Spirit so that the bread and wine offered may become Christ’s Body and Blood and so we may be able to celebrate the Eucharistic mystery, and to make all the effects of the sacrament operative in us. At the same time, the priest extends his hands, palms downward, over the chalice and host, and traces the sign of the cross over them. With this gesture, he asks God to pour his blessing over the gifts offered and to turn them into his Son’s body and blood” (*Understanding the Mass*, p. 135). That is a lot of action for a few quick words! This is an important moment because it gives us notice about what is soon to come: the changing of the bread and wine into the very Body and Blood of Jesus.

### **Why Bells Are Sometimes Used during the Epiclesis**

According to the Diocese of Peoria, “The Epiclesis is the invocation of the Holy Spirit upon the gifts to be offered... It is through the power of the Holy Spirit who descended upon the apostles at Pentecost that the priest, through his hands, offers the human gifts and earthly elements to be consecrated into Godly gifts and heavenly realities. Often we may hear the ‘*sanctus* bell’ to call our attention to this invocation and calling down of the Holy Spirit” (“A Study of the Mass,” p. 14). This might be a good time to mention the use of bells which, depending on your local traditions, you may hear a few different times during the Eucharistic Prayer, including at the Sanctus, Epiclesis, elevation of the Body and Blood of Jesus after Consecration, and after the priest receives Communion. Why bells? Perhaps especially our students will recognize the importance of bells (or similar signals), which help call our attention to a significant moment. For me, during my school years, the lunchtime bell was always a welcome sound! Similarly, during the Eucharistic Prayer, the sound of a bell can direct our attention to important moments, such as kneeling in preparation for Jesus who is to become present, asking the Holy Spirit to make our gifts of bread and wine worthy for the sacrifice of Mass, looking upon our Lord truly present in adoration elevated above the altar, or in our immediate preparation for Holy Communion. Although some may note that the bell is a tradition from times past when people often didn’t know the language of the prayers, in humble honesty, many of us will recognize that we still often need a call to attention so we don’t miss these important moments.

### **A Prayer Asking for the Holy Spirit’s Help**

Although we normally think of the Epiclesis as the calling down of the Holy Spirit in anticipation of the changing of the gifts into the Most Holy Eucharist, as is often the case with the prayers of the Mass, there is even more there. Fr. Guy Oury explains, “The sign of acknowledgment and acceptance by God will be fruitful union with the sacrifice... But there can be more than one reason for this prayer. It may be to ask for acceptance of the sacrifice. It may also be to ask for fruitful participation in the sacrifice through Holy Communion. Or it may be to ask for the Consecration” (*The Mass*, p. 100). The bottom line is that we know we need the Holy Spirit’s help! To celebrate the Mass faithfully, receive Communion faithfully, and live faithfully: for all these acts, we need the Holy Spirit.

So, the next time you hear that bell or see the priest extend his hands palms-down over the offering, remember that we are asking the Holy Spirit to sanctify the gifts and each one of our hearts!