



Amen! Today we look at our response at the end of the doxology: the Great Amen. After the priest sings or says, “Through him, and with him, and in him, O God, almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, for ever and ever,” the people respond with, “Amen!” What exactly does *Amen* mean? *Amen* is a special word that most often is understood to mean, “So be it.”

What Does the Word “Amen” Mean?

As the glossary of our *Catechism* says, *Amen* is “A Hebrew word meaning ‘truly; it is so; let it be done,’ signifying agreement with what has been said. The prayers of the New Testament and of the Church’s liturgy, and the Creeds, conclude with ‘amen.’ Jesus used the word to introduce solemn assertions, to emphasize their trustworthiness and authority” (CCC, p. 865). As Edward Sri writes, “‘Amen’ transliterates a Hebrew word that affirms the validity of what has been said and was often used in liturgical settings. For example, when the Levites sang, ‘Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting,’ the people joined in this blessing of God by exclaiming, ‘Amen!’ (1 Chr 16:36).” Sri goes on to say, “Most notable is how the angels and saints in heaven cry out ‘Amen’ as they sing their part in the chorus praising God in the heavenly liturgy. In the book of Revelation, every living creature in heaven and earth and under the earth says, ‘To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might for ever and ever!’ And in response, the angelic creatures say ‘Amen!’ as if to shout out, ‘Yes! May the Lord be blessed and honored forever!’” (*A Biblical Walk Through the Mass*, p. 120).

What is the “Great Amen” in the Mass?

Ok, so why is the “Amen” of this part of the Mass called the “Great Amen”? Fr. Oury teaches, “The Amen of the people has special importance at this moment of the celebration. It is more than ever a response and assent. Concerning it Bossuet wrote: ‘In the Book of Revelation the elect are represented to us as ever singing Amen to God. Amen in sacred parlance is Yes, a firm and definite Yes that conquers assent, or rather, the whole heart. That is how they love in heaven. Ought we not do so on earth?’” (*The Mass*, p. 103). Similarly, Charles Belmonte instructs, “This is the most important Amen in the Mass. It is for us both a resolution and a prayer. A resolution upon which our love for God blooms; a prayer based on the future hope of resurrection” (*Understanding the Mass*, p. 163).

How Should We Say the “Great Amen”?

If we think about our journey through the Mass, it makes sense to say this *Amen* is the most important. Take a moment to think about what has recently happened in the Mass: bread and wine were brought forward, along with all our prayers and sacrifices offered in union with Jesus. Through the words and actions of Jesus, the priest prayed the Eucharistic Prayer, and the bread and wine have been changed into the very Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity on the altar: Jesus himself is truly present with us! This is Almighty God with us! This is Jesus who loved us so perfectly that he gave everything for us! This is the moment of Jesus being offered to the Father in perfect praise, and we have been invited to join with Jesus!

Hopefully, we are so excited about what has just taken place that we want to belt out our *Amen* with great joy and fervor! With this mentality of joy and celebration, Belmonte quotes St. Jerome: “Let us sing or say the Great Amen with all our hearts united to all our brothers. Let it resound the whole world over, as the Amen of our early brothers in the faith ‘resounded in heaven, as a celestial thunderclap in the Roman basilicas’” (*Understanding the Mass*, p. 163). Wouldn’t that kind of “Amen” get the attention of our neighbors? “What was that loud sound that shook the ground? Oh, it was the Catholics at Mass singing Amen!”