**Liturgy Matters Lesson #23**

**Preface to the Eucharistic Prayer**

**By Bishop Chad Zielinski**

I am Bishop Chad Zielinski serving the Diocese of New Ulm. Thank you for joining me and asking the Holy Spirit to guide us as we continue our lessons on "What Happens at Mass."

Next we come to what is called the “preface.” The preface is not to be misunderstood as a kind of preamble or introduction. On the contrary, in this context, the word preface comes from the Latin word prae-fari, which means “to do in front of” or “proclaim in the presence of.” Therefore, the preface begins what the entire Eucharistic prayer will be: a proclaiming and a performing before God the Father of the Church's prayer.

There are three parts to the Eucharistic prayer. The first part picks up the very words of the last phrase of the preceding dialogue and begins speaking to the Father with the words, “Truly it is right and just to give you thanks, Father…” It is important to notice that the direction of the prayer is toward the Father, as throughout the prayer the Father is named directly, our prayer is from the Church to God the Father.

The second part of the preface always picks up on the phrase “through Christ our Lord” and develops it in a way that is unique to each preface. This is always some succinct expression of what Christ has done for us, phrased to express the particularity of the feast or season. It is also a unique expression of how we as Christians, give thanks for what Christ has done for us. Giving thanks to the Father consists of far more than simply our good manners, something along the lines of our knowledge enough to say thanks to anyone who may have done us a service or kindness. The biblical way of giving thanks consists in a profound recognition of what God has actually done in what we are thanking Him for. The biblical word “confess” is a word that often accompanies the thanksgiving of the Church, and it is a word that swings in two directions at once. Recounting what God has done is called "confessing God", and includes praise of Him, both implicitly and explicitly. The greatness of God in His deeds also brings in its wake an awareness of our own smallness and, worse, our infidelity. Therefore, in the same breath we confess our sins. These are not different movements of prayer but various facets of the one action of giving thanks.

Thank you for joining me today in this lesson on the dialogue of the Preface to the Eucharistic Prayer - “We Lift Them Up to the Lord.” I look forward to sharing Lesson #24 with you next week as we continue our lessons on the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Let us keep one another in prayer. May God bless you and your families.