**Liturgy Matters Lesson #33**

**The Great Amen**

**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."

The priest has led this whole prayer, speaking in the name of the Church, acting in the person of Christ. To all that Christ has done, to all that is happening, the assembly cries out a resounding Amen. This is the biggest Amen of the Mass and the biggest Amen in the world. This Amen never ends; it is eternal as it echoes around the globe, echoes throughout the centuries, and echoes in the halls of heaven.

After the Great Amen that closes the Eucharistic prayer, the whole assembly is on its feet because it has been carried by this prayer into the very presence of God and into its future in Christ. Hidden in the image is the assembly standing with Christ in heaven before the throne of God. Now begins another unit of the Mass referred to as the communion rite. It begins with the Lord’s Prayer.

The Lord’s Prayer is an invocation of God by a name that is possible for us to call Him only through our communion in the sacrifice of Christ: the name “Father.” It is important for us to remember that Jesus gave us this prayer as a way of healing with the Father. In a very real sense, the Lord’s Prayer is a formula for healing. Praise + Forgiveness = Healing.

Following the Lord’s Prayer is the Sign of Peace. This is a ritual exchange, not a practical greeting. By means of the set phrase, “Peace be with you,” and a gesture that signifies our love for one another in Christ, we are playing out yet another dimension of communion, namely, our being joined together as one body in Christ. We who have just said together to God, "Our Father," in consequence, now turn to one another and say, "Brother" and "Sister." We who have just prayed, "Forgive us as we forgive," turn to one another with this sign of reconciliation among ourselves.

The third part of the communion rite consists of the "Breaking of the Bread." This is the most ancient term by which Christians called the Mass. Here, we sing "Lamb of God" and are addressing Jesus himself by this title. He is our Passover Lamb whose body has been sacrificed, whose blood has been poured out for the forgiveness of our sins. This hymn is the same song sung eternally in the feast of heaven, which the apostle reported in the book of Revelation: “As my vision continued, I heard the voices of many angels who surrounded the throne and the living creatures and the elders. They were countless in number, thousands and tens of thousands, and they cried out, ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!’”(*Revelation 5:11-12*). Or again, “This is the wedding day of the Lamb…Happy are they who have been invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb!” (*Revelation 19:7, 9*).

Thank you for joining me today in this lesson on “The Great Amen.” I look forward to sharing Lesson #34 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.