

Liturgy of the Eucharist

The Eucharistic Prayer (the Canon)

The origin of the Eucharistic prayer is closely connected with a series of table prayers required at every Jewish meal. The Roman rite for centuries knew only one Eucharistic Prayer, the Roman Canon. In the sixth century the varied forms of the prayer in use until that time were standardized and edited by Pope Gregory the Great.

The commission established in 1964 to implement the liturgical decisions of the Second Vatican Council appointed a special committee to study the Eucharistic Prayer. After considerable study it was realized that there could be no substantial modification of this prayer without great damage to prayer itself. Consequently, it was decided to retain the Canon without major modifications and to issue alternative Eucharistic Prayers to be used along with it. In 1968 a slightly revised version of the Canon, now known as the Eucharistic Prayer I, was published together with three other prayers designated as Eucharistic Prayer II, III and IV. In the years since, other versions of the Eucharistic Prayer have been developed for children, for reconciliation and for other Masses for Various Needs and Occasions.