

Celebrant's Guides: Mass



Which Eucharistic Prayer?

There are fourteen Eucharistic Prayers authorised for use in England & Wales, but some of these can only be used under restricted circumstances. Those for a [congregation consisting mainly of preadolescent children](#) and for a [congregation of sign language users](#) can only be used with such congregations.

Of the remaining ten prayers, all but three must be used with their own preface (in the case of the prayers for Reconciliation, a preface of penitential character may be substituted: [CTM](#) 188). The other seven may not be used on days when a Proper Preface exists for that *particular day* (e.g. Trinity Sunday, Triumph of the Cross, Christ the King, Immaculate Conception, Assumption, John the Baptist). But they [may be used](#) during ferial days of Lent, Easter, Advent and Christmas when a *seasonal* preface would otherwise be used.

The table below gives the rules for each of the Eucharistic Prayers. Until the new edition is published, only prayers [I to IV](#) may be found in the English translation of the Roman Missal; the prayers for [Children](#) and for [Reconciliation](#) (“Rec”) are published by [McCrimmons](#), while those for [Various Needs and Occasions](#) (“VNO”), which are also available from the [Liturgy Office](#); McCrimmon also sell an [omnibus edition](#) of Eucharistic Prayer for Concelebration. That for the [Deaf](#) is available on-line. A brief description of each individual prayer follows; see also the notes at n365 of the [General Instruction of the Roman Missal](#) and n188 of [Celebrating the Mass](#).

The individual Eucharistic Prayers:

EP I, commonly known as “**The Roman Canon**”, is an updated version of the only Eucharistic Prayer used widely in the Latin Church prior to Vatican II. It is the only prayer for a general congregation which includes an option to name a living person. There are optional fixed lists of apostles and martyrs which make EP I particularly appropriate on their feast days; EP I thus emphasises horizontal and vertical communion throughout. The Roman Canon also has embolisms (blocks of text to be inserted) for use on Epiphany, Ascension, Pentecost, and during the octaves (eight day periods) of Christmas and Easter.

EP II, with its optional preface, summarises **Christ’s work of redemption**; it is based on a 2nd/3rd Century text attributed to Hippolytus. Because of its brevity, it is recommended for weekdays. A dead person may be named via a short embolism. It briefly prays for all the dead and our unity with the saints.

EP III is a modern composition, somewhat influenced by Gallican liturgies. Its message is loosely that **We are Christ’s gift to the Father**. The saint of the day may be named; a dead person may also be named, but in a long embolism more appropriate to funerals than daily Mass intentions.

EP IV, with its fixed preface, is based on Eastern liturgies and is rich in Johannine content. It recalls at length **salvation history**. There are no points to insert any names. The text frequently refers to the human race as ‘man’, which may be a sensitive point for some congregations. Be aware of the problematic reference to the consecrated elements as ‘bread and wine’, which a footnote allows you to render as ‘one bread and one cup’.

VNO-A – **The Church on the Way to Unity** proclaims that God calls Christians together into unity; its footnotes suggest it is appropriate for special-occasion Masses on behalf of the bishop, clergy, and pastoral meetings.

VNO-B – **God Guides the Church on the Way of Salvation** comes recommended for occasions interceding or thanking God for vocations, family life and good relationships. It speaks of God’s saving work for Creation, Israel and the Church.

VNO-C – **Jesus, Way to the Father** stresses that Jesus is our mediator and example; rubrics indicate it is well-suited to prayers for evangelisation and civic society.

VNO-D – **Jesus, the Compassion of God** asks that we may be like Jesus who is compassionate to the needy, and is best used with those Masses connected with various basic human needs.

Rec I stresses that God offers **forgiveness** when we break covenant, finds us when we are lost, and makes it possible for us to enter heaven, and is best suited to celebrations emphasising personal penance, conversion, and our relationship with God. It is recommended for Lent.

Rec II proclaims that **God overcomes divisions** and strife; thus it is well-suited to occasions focussing on reconciliation between individuals, families, peoples and nations. It is also recommended for Lent.

Children I is recommended for children who have little familiarity with the Eucharist. It uses the *Sanctus* as the basis of repeated responses made before the consecration, and allows the use of any familiar memorial acclamation as would be said or sung in a Mass for adults.

Children II requires the congregation to make four different kinds of response, of which only one is used in adult Masses (the *Sanctus*). It requires a congregation to be well-prepared and well led in making its response. This prayer is recommended for children who are more familiar with the Eucharist.

Children III comes in two forms: general use and Eastertide. Apart from the *Sanctus*, the congregation has only one response, the words “Glory to God in the Highest” used several times after the consecration. This prayer is also recommended for children who are more familiar with the Eucharist.

Deaf EP: The *Eucharistic Prayer for the Deaf* caters for both children and adults, and accommodates a celebrant whose fluency in sign language is limited. It may not be used except by a celebrant capable of signing it, and only then with a congregation of deaf worshippers.

Beginners may find the accompanying notes on [setting up the Roman Missal](#) to be useful.

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|----------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Eucharistic Prayer | I | II | III | IV | VNO A | VNO B | VNO C | VNO D |
| Proper Preface? | No | Optional | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Slot to name a dead person? | Yes | Use short embolism | Use long embolism | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Slot to name a living person? | Yes | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Slot to name a particular saint? | Fixed optional lists of apostles and martyrs. | No | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Concelebrants' Parts | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Notes | Special embolisms for Baptism. | | | | These are particularly appropriate for use in Masses 'for various needs and occasions'. | | | |
| | Recommended for Sundays. Special embolisms for certain High Days and Ritual Masses. | Short. Recommended for weekdays. | Recommended for Sundays and Feasts. | Recommended for Ordinary Time Sundays. | | | | |

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|---|---------------|--|---|---|--|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Rec I | Rec II | Children I | Children II | Children III | Deaf | Eucharistic Prayer | |
| Yes * | Yes * | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Proper <u>Preface</u>? | |
| No | No | No | No | No | Yes | Slot to name a dead person? | |
| No | No | Yes | No | No | Yes | Slot to name a living person? | |
| No | No | No | No | No | No | Slot to name a particular saint? | |
| 1 | 2 | Concelebration is not recommended for children's Masses, but the new <i>Missale Romanum</i> permits it. | | | | Not specified | Concelebrants' Parts |
| Recommended for Lent. | | Emphasises the Sanctus, using responses made before the consecration. Also (unlike II & III) uses standard memorial acclamation. Best for those newest to the Eucharist? | Many and varied responses for the children throughout. Best for those more familiar with the Eucharist? | Apart from <i>Sanctus</i> , only one (repeated) response, after the consecration. Best for those more familiar with the Eucharist? Special form for Easter. | Only for use in an assembly of the deaf. | Notes | |
| * Any preface 'of penitential character' may be used. (CTM 188) | | | | | | | |