

The Preparation of the Gifts (part 2 of 3)

BLESSING OF THE BREAD AND WINE

OFFERING OF BREAD

The priest, standing at the altar, takes the paten with the bread and, holding it slightly raised above the altar, says,

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this bread to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made. It will become for us the bread of life.

We may respond, "Blessed be God forever."

The first Christians used ordinary bread at Mass, but it was of the best available, marked with a cross or some other symbol of Christ. From about the ninth century, *azyme* bread began to be used, recalling the unleavened bread Jesus used at the Last Supper.

The more we think about it, the clearer it becomes: God could not have chosen anything simpler to symbolize our personal surrender to him. Bread is the most eloquent symbol of human existence. To earn your bread means to make a living. Are we mistaken in discovering in this sacramental medium our Lord's intention of linking the Holy Eucharist to the most humble of our life's activities?

OFFERING OF WINE

After he has offered the bread, the celebrant, standing to one side of the altar, pours wine into the chalice, and adds to it a little water, saying,

By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity.

We ratify this supplication with a movement of our heart.

The priest goes again to the center of the altar, takes the chalice, and, holding it slightly raised above the altar, says,

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this wine to offer, fruit of the vine and work of human hands. It will become for us our spiritual drink.

We may respond, "Blessed be God forever."

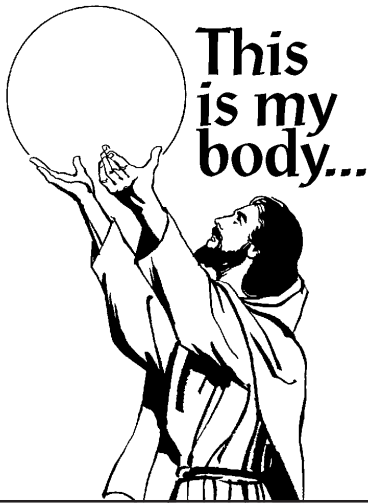
Then he places the chalice on the corporal. Bowing in an attitude of profound humility, offering not only these gifts but also our self-oblation, he says,

Lord God, we ask you to receive us and be pleased with the sacrifice we offer you with humble and contrite hearts.

This prayer is taken from the song of the three companions of Daniel who were thrown into the furnace (Dan 3:39-40). The priest speaks in his own name and in those of the faithful, and asks God to accept the sacrifice about to be offered. God should find in us a true humility and sincere repentance for our sins.

Have you stopped to think what happens to the drops of water mixed with the wine? They are absorbed by it and then become inseparable from it. So does Jesus absorb us. The drops of water are of negligible worth; they are not even enough to quench anyone's thirst. Yet they will end up being divine blood! And all that because they let themselves be mixed with the wine and be dissolved in it, thus manifesting self-denial, personal renunciation.

At this moment, we grow in our desire to offer ourselves in total self-surrender, as the few drops of water in the chalice have reminded us. So we will be able to become one with Jesus Christ after the Consecration.



THE MASS

I. INTRODUCTORY RITES

- Entrance
- Veneration of the Altar
- Greeting
- Penitential Rite
- "Lord, Have Mercy"
- "Glory to God in the Highest"
- Opening Prayer

II. THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

- Scripture Readings
- Homily
- Profession of Faith
- Prayers of the Faithful

III. THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS<

- Eucharistic Prayer
 - 1. Preface
 - 2. Acclamation Sanctus
 - 3. Epiclesis
 - 4. Consecration
 - 5. The Mystery of Faith
 - 6. Anamnesis
 - 7. Offering
 - 8. Intercessions
 - 9. Final Doxology & Amen
- Communion Rite
 - 1. Lord's Prayer
 - 2. Rite of Peace
 - 3. Breaking of Bread
 - 4. Communion
 - 5. Prayer After Communion

IV. CONCLUDING RITES

- Announcements
- Blessing
- Dismissal
- Veneration of the Altar
- Personal Thanksgiving