



"do this in memory of me..."

*The parishes of the Diocese of Helena
prepare to receive the revised Roman Missal*

Three Minute Liturgical Catechesis

Article 15: Preparing the Gifts and Ourselves

What do you call the part of the Mass that includes the collection? Many people still use its old name and talk about the Offertory of the Mass. The current liturgical books, on the other hand, call this part of the Mass the Preparation of the Gifts. This change in terminology was a deliberate one, as was noted by the pope's representative when the new missal was released in 1969. The reason for changing the name of this section of the liturgy is that the real offertory of the Mass occurs in the Eucharistic Prayer. The sacrifice we offer is the sacrifice of Christ. No other sacrifice is acceptable and no other sacrifice is needed, as the Letter to the Hebrews insists. It is Christ who offers himself, and we join in that offering as we proclaim the Eucharistic Prayer. So, then, what are we doing during the Preparation of the Gifts? The key word is preparation. In this part of the Mass, we are preparing for what is to come. This is symbolized by our preparation of the gifts of bread and wine that will become Christ's body and blood. In these few moments between the Liturgy of the Word and the Eucharistic Prayer, we make the preparations for the Eucharistic Meal and the great prayer of thanksgiving over the meal. The key action during the Preparation of the Gifts is the procession to bring the gifts to the altar. This procession, though brief and generally simple, is more than merely a practical matter of getting the bread and wine to the altar. It is an expression of our own preparation for entering into Christ's sacrifice. On Holy Thursday, the rubrics suggest that the whole assembly process to the altar with gifts for the poor. Even when only a few members of the assembly form the procession, they represent all of us. Their movement to the altar suggests the movement of our hearts toward the Lord and our willingness to share in the sacrifice offered on that altar. Senior members among us may remember being taught to place themselves on the paten with the host when it was offered to God during the Offertory. The only problem with that approach is that the bread is not being offered to God. Only after it becomes the body of Christ is the sacrifice offered. Yet the image still has value. As the bread and the wine are prepared and placed on the altar, we can mentally place ourselves there, too, prepared to give of ourselves as Christ did, ready to share in his sacrificial offering. This time to prepare ourselves during Mass can bring to completion our efforts to prepare ourselves all week. We are continually called to give of ourselves as Christ did, in loving service to our neighbors. We might begin each day with a prayer that we will always be ready to link ourselves to Christ's sacrifice, whether in church or wherever we happen to be.

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Reflecting on the Mystery...

Preparing the Gifts and Ourselves

At this Sunday's celebration of the Eucharist what did you see, feel, hear, touch, taste, say and sing? What do you remember of the hospitality, the environment, the art, the color, the assembly, the ministers, the music, the gestures, posture and movement, the words, the homily, the prayers? What moved you, challenged you, reassured you, comforted you?

- ❖ **What struck you most in this article?**
- ❖ **How many processions do we have during Mass? How are they done in our parish?**
- ❖ **How will you prepare better to enter into the sacrifice of Christ this week?**



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Article 16: How Much Does it Cost?

As the ushers came around with the collection basket one Sunday, a small boy leaned over to his father and said, “You don't have to pay for me, Dad. I'm under five.” Another youngster, listening to her mother complaining about the quality of the music and the preaching as they left Mass, said, “You have to admit, Mom. It wasn't a bad show for a nickel!” Both children share the same misconception about the meaning of the collection at Mass. They see it as the price of admission, but there is no admission required here. How might we explain to them what the collection really means? The official books tell us very little. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal, as it describes the procession with the gifts, simply says: “It is well also that money or other gifts for the poor or for the Church, brought by the faithful or collected in the church, should be received” (# 73). Most pastors and parish finance councils, on the other hand, see the collection as absolutely essential to keeping the parish going. Its practical value is obvious. It takes a lot of money to maintain buildings and programs and to keep the light and heat and air conditioning going. The role of the collection during Mass, however, goes beyond the practical goal of meeting the annual budget. Remember that the collection takes place during the Preparation of the Gifts, and the money we give is carried forward as part of the procession with the bread and wine. The point of the collection, then, has something to do with preparing ourselves to enter into the sacrifice of Christ. In our culture, money is a powerful symbol of ourselves. The process of getting it and spending it tends to dominate our lives. So when we give some of it back to God, we express our willingness to give ourselves to God. It is not just a matter of giving God one or two percent of our income or even of tithing ten percent to God. In biblical times, the Jews made an offering of the first fruits of the harvest. It was a sign of gratitude for the harvest but also a symbol that the whole harvest really belonged to God. What we give in the collection should be a symbol of all that we have. It is a reminder that everything we own is a gift from God. Our gift in the collection is both a sign of our gratitude and a symbol that we will use all of God's gifts as God wills. Notice, too, that the General Instruction speaks of gifts for the poor or for the Church. We need to remember that our gifts must do more than ensure our own comfort and our own programs in the parish. At least part of what we give must go to the poor if we are really to imitate our Lord. In this way, too, what we put in the collection prepares us to share in Christ's sacrifice, for it expresses our willingness to care for those in need and to give ourselves to others in love as he did.

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- ❖ **What does it cost you to use all of your gifts as God wants?**
- ❖ **How does our parish share with the poor?**
- ❖ **What is the significance in your life of your financial offering to the parish?**



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