



A Walk through the Mass

This month's newsletter picks up where we left off in the April newsletter as we take a closer look at each of the elements of the Mass. Over the course of this year, the Office for Worship Newsletter will focus on the various elements of the Eucharistic liturgy as a means of providing an opportunity for you to stop and reflect on why we do what we do at Mass.

This newsletter is designed to be a resource for parish music ministers, liturgists, liturgy committees, as well as priests and deacons, and anyone who wants to know more about the Order of Mass and why we do what we do! Please feel free to reproduce and share these materials with your parish community; just be sure to cite the Office for Worship, Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST – Part One

From the Roman Missal:

21. When all this has been done, the Offertory Chant begins. Meanwhile, the ministers place the corporal, the purificator, the chalice, the pall, and the Missal on the altar.

22. It is desirable that the faithful express their participation by making an offering, bringing forward bread and wine for the celebration of the Eucharist and perhaps other gifts to relieve the needs of the Church and of the poor.

In the Introductory Rites and the Liturgy of the Word we were on the receiving end of some pretty awesome and amazing things: grace, forgiveness, reconciliation, salvation, fullness of life, and an intimate relationship with God who always loves us – to name a few! Up to this point in the liturgy, we have responded in word. Now it's time for us to respond in action.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist begins with a short transitional rite called the *Preparation of the Gifts*. During this rite, members of the assembly bring forward the gifts of bread and wine that will become for us the body and blood of Jesus. In the early days of the Church, when Christians gathered in homes to celebrate Eucharist, it was customary for them to bring bread and wine for the shared meal. As the church grew in size, however, this practice began to become impractical. Bread and wine are acquired by the parish ahead of time and placed within the assembly to be brought forward in procession.

At this point in the Mass, a collection is taken. Unfortunately, too many people assume that the collection is used solely and exclusively as a way for the parish to pay their bills; however, there is a much deeper symbolism behind it. In fact, the collection is a deeply spiritual act of stewardship. It's an expression of the way we hope to live the other six days of the week. We also give our money as a sign of our gratitude to God for everything that has been given us.

And we give our money to the Church so that the good work of ministry – the spreading of the Gospel and the comforting of those who are poor, hungry or homeless – can continue. The collection is more than putting our money in the basket so the electric bill can be paid; rather, it is a symbolic placing of our work on the altar of God and *it is our participation in the sacrifice on the altar.*

During this time in the Mass, we also offer food and drink – simple, unleavened bread, a sign of all our sufferings; and wine, a sign of all our joys. When the Holy Spirit makes them Jesus' body and blood during the Eucharistic Prayer, this food and drink has the ability to transform us and make us one – one with God and one with each other – the very intention Jesus spoke at the Last Supper.

If we have entered into the Introductory Rites and the Liturgy of the Word with the proper disposition, we arrive at this point in the Mass aware that God has been giving, giving, and giving – and that without the grace of God, we can do nothing. The Introductory Rites and the Liturgy of the Word have served us this reminder; it is now time to respond with gratitude for the recognition of giftedness.

Corporal, Purificator, Chalice, Pall, and Missal

The rubric on the previous page states that ministers place the corporal, purificator, chalice, pall and Missal on the altar (IOM 21). What important is what's not said – that prior to this time, the altar is clear of these items. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal says that it is “the Deacon's place to take care of the sacred vessels himself. He also assists the Priest in receiving the people's gifts” (GIRM 178).

Of course there are exceptions. More than one corporal may be used if there are several chalices and ciboria. Additional chalices for the communion of the faithful are set upon the corporals. Likewise, nowhere does it say that the presider must have a chalice that is used for him and him alone, nor does it say that that chalice cannot be used for communion of the faithful. Throughout the General Instruction of the Roman Missal and the Order of Mass, we simply read “the chalice.” We must focus our attention and efforts on the proper *quantity* of ciboria and chalices to hold enough bread and wine for everyone present to receive from the altar of celebration.

The use of the pall is *optional* as well. In fact, the GIRM uses the words “if appropriate” in two different places (GIRM 118C, 142). The origin of the pall was to keep flies and insects away from the Precious Blood during the prayer of consecration. In most churches in the United States today there is not typically an over-abundance of insects swarming the altar and the priest so that a pall would not be needed.

Traditionally, the Missal was placed to the left of the center of the altar, off the corporal and angled toward the priest, so he could read it from his left while offering the sacrifice. This was necessary when altars were narrow and up against the wall. Now that altars are freestanding and deeper, the placement of the book is not important though it should allow for the priest to read the text.

It is important that the faithful be able to see the vessels and make eye contact with the priest during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. If a large book stand is needed for the priest to be able to read the Roman Missal, care should be taken that it does not obstruct the view of the priest and people.

From the Roman Missal:

23. The Priest, standing at the altar, takes the paten with the bread and holds it slightly raised above the altar with both hands, saying in a low voice:

**Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation,
for through your goodness we have received
the bread we offer you:
fruit of the earth and work of human hands,
it will become for us the bread of life.**

Then he places the paten with the bread on the corporal.

If, however, the Offertory Chant is not sung, the Priest may speak these words aloud; at the end, the people may acclaim:

Blessed be God for ever.

Bread

A lot of discussion has occurred over the years about the Eucharistic bread and wine. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal states the bread should look like food. “By reason of the sign, it is required that the material for the Eucharistic Celebration truly have the appearance of food” (GIRM 321). Additionally, the ingredients for Eucharistic bread are wheat and water (GIRM 320).

Low-gluten hosts may be used for the Eucharist, but not hosts that are completely gluten-free. With permission of the local ordinary, low-gluten hosts may be made available for those who can tolerate only the smallest amount of gluten (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Prot. 89), but to preserve their quality, they must be prepared in a vessel completely separate from the regular hosts. Those who cannot tolerate any gluten at all may receive from the cup instead; however, this *must be done before others have done so* to avoid gluten contamination.

Some parishes have taken to heart the desire that Eucharistic bread be “recently made” (GIRM 320) and members are then recruited from the parish for this task. The processed wheat flour should not include other grains and other substances like leaven, fruit, sugar, or honey may not be introduced to add flavor. Those who make the bread should be distinguished by their integrity, skilled in baking, and furnished with suitable tools to ensure validity of substance.

From the Roman Missal:

24. The Deacon, or the Priest, pours wine and a little water into the chalice, saying quietly:

**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.**

25. The Priest then takes the chalice and holds it slightly raised above the altar with both hands, saying in a low voice:

**Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation,
for through your goodness we have received
the wine we offer you:
fruit of the vine and work of human hands,
it will become for us the bread of life.**

Then he places the chalice on the corporal.

If, however, the Offertory Chant is not sung, the Priest may speak these words aloud; at the end, the people may acclaim:

Blessed be God for ever.

Wine

The wine must come from grapes. In the General Instruction of the Roman Missal we read the “The wine for the celebration of the Eucharist must be from the fruit of the vine (cf. Luke 22:18), natural, and unadulterated, that is, without admixture of extraneous substances” (GIRM 322). This is quite possibly one of the things I most often observe in parishes, especially if purchasing wine from a store. Without reading labels, parishes sometimes unknowingly purchase an inexpensive wine, which sometimes contains things like the juice of elderberry or a mixture of blackberries. This is invalid matter and cannot be used for the Eucharist. Likewise, wine that is aged in bourbon barrels picks up traces of bourbon and is invalid matter.

The document *Redemptionis Sacramentum* by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacrament, states:

The wine that is used in the most sacred celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice must be natural, from the fruit of the grape, pure and incorrupt, not mixed with other substances. During the celebration itself, a small quantity of water is to be mixed with it. Great care should be taken so that the wine intended for the celebration of the Eucharist is well conserved and has not soured. It is altogether forbidden to use wine of doubtful authenticity or provenance, for the Church requires certainty regarding the conditions necessary for the validity of the sacraments. Nor are other drinks of any kind to be admitted for any reason, as they do not constitute valid matter (RS 50).

With that said, nearly any commercially produced wine (red, white, or blush) may be used for sacramental wine as long as it falls within the parameters of it being naturally made of grapes. I usually recommend that it have an alcohol content between 9% and 13.5%. This ensures validity, freshness and that it is not too strong for those with sensitive tastes. The higher the alcohol content, the more it will kill any trace of bacteria or viruses that may be passed from communicant to the cup.

From the Roman Missal:

26. After this, the Priest, bowing profoundly, says quietly:

**With humble spirit and contrite heart
may we be accepted by you, O Lord,
and may our sacrifice in your sight this day
be pleasing to you, Lord God.**

27. If appropriate, he also incenses the offerings, the cross, and the altar. A Deacon or other minister then incenses the Priest and the people.

28. Then the Priest, standing at the side of the altar, washes his hands, saying quietly:

Wash me, O lord, from my iniquity

and cleanse me of my sin.

29. Standing at the middle of the altar, facing the people, extending and then joining his hands he says:

**Pray brethren (brothers and sisters),
that my sacrifice and yours
may be acceptable to God,
the almighty Father.**

The people rise and reply:

May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands
for the praise and glory of his name,
for our good
and the good of all his holy Church.

30. Then the Priest, with hands extended, says the Prayer over the Offerings, at the end of which the people acclaim:

Amen.

Mixing of the water and the wine

Once the gifts of bread and wine have been received from the people, water is added to the wine. A text about the Incarnation accompanies this action, which is designed to take place at the side of the altar, or even at the credence table. This preparation appears in some of the earliest records of the Eucharist, including Justin the Martyr's *First Apology*. What many people don't understand is that this practice originated at a time when the wine, in general, was thicker and probably needed to be thinned in order to even be palatable.

Preparation of more than one chalice

A question I get quite often concerns when more than one cup is used at Mass. In most parishes today, there are at least two cups used at Sunday Mass. Some larger parishes use a dozen chalices – or more! If this is the case, all of them are prepared at this time for the pouring of the Blood of Christ after the consecration from one vessel to another is not permitted. In cases where there are a great quantity of chalices, the best practice would be to pour wine into some of them prior to Mass and bring them to the credence table. Then at the Preparation of the Gifts, a flagon of wine can be brought forward and only a few chalices poured at that time.

Private prayer of the priest

After the bread and wine have been prepared, the priest bows “profoundly” and prays a private prayer, humbly asking God to accept the people and the sacrifice that will be offered. This prayer originates from the story of the three young men in the fiery furnace. Azariah offers this prayer from within the flames, asking that the sacrifice of his very life be pleasing to God. The priest, mindful of his sins, offers his suffering together with the gifts of bread and wine.

Incense

At this point in the ritual, on more solemn occasions, incense is used. It is brought forward by a server, the priest puts incense on the charcoal and proceeds to incense the gifts, the

cross, and the altar. Then the priest returns the incense to a server, or a deacon if there is one present, and he is incensed. The server/deacon then proceeds to incense the faithful.

Washing hands

The priest then washes his hands at the side of the altar. This is a symbolic action of washing for very little will be cleansed with mere water. The symbolism here is accompanied by the words of the priest – a text asking God to cleanse him of sin – and the entire action expresses the priest's desire for interior purification.

Invitation and response – when do the people stand?

Once this has taken place, the priest invites the people to pray that God will find their sacrifices acceptable. In many parishes, the assembly stands just before the priest says these words; in other parishes, the people stand after the invitation and as they begin to make their response. Rubric 29 and GIRM 146 both say that the people rise after the invitation, even though GIRM 43 indicates that they stand for the invitation. Logistically and humanly, this exchange makes most sense and is least disruptive if everyone has the same posture throughout. When incense is used, the entire assembly is already on their feet at this point; therefore, practically speaking, it may seem more natural for the people to stand while the priest washes his hands.

Conclusion

In concluding the study of the Preparation of the Gifts, we must ask ourselves: Are we aware of the relationship that exists between our Eucharistic praxis and the praxis of charity offered to the people in need? Do we understand the Eucharist as a source of social transformation?

Every Sunday, we are called to carry out this rite of the presentation of the gifts with ever-greater awareness that the Eucharist is the foundation of all our hope – the communion of all humanity in its social, ethnic, and cultural diversity. I think it is impossible for us as Catholic Christians to truly celebrate the Eucharist without an awareness of being part of a system that is not only economic and political, but is also cultural and religious. It is a system of values and beliefs, choices and behaviors, judgments and decisions that has for centuries created poverty and oppression in the world and robbed people not only of bread, but of justice, integrity and dignity.

We cannot close our eyes to the reality of food waste, the effects our lives have on the environment, and the gap that very much exists between sacramental practice and the practice of justice. When we make our offering by placing our money in the collection basket and uniting our prayers with those of the priest, the liturgy challenges us to become debtors before all humanity. In a society where we are dominated by the richest and the strongest among us, the Eucharist is a threat to that power. In a society where individualistic values seem to rule the land, the Eucharist calls us to share. The Eucharist forges a theology of charity and love – a love that is both sacramental and prophetic, social and ethical.

New Office for Worship Resource Instructions to Help Prepare a Liturgy Planning Guide

The Office for Worship has a new resource available called [Preparing Liturgies for Confirmation](#). This document gives you step-by-step instructions on how to prepare a confirmation liturgy in light of the directions given by the Ordo. This makes the completion of a [confirmation liturgy planning guide](#) more understandable. Please share the document with anyone who could benefit from it. You can always contact Kim Mandelkow, Director of the Office for Worship, if you need more information at either 414-769-3349 or oremus@archmil.org.