

# *The Year of Faith*

## *Catechesis on the Mass*

### **The Liturgy of the Eucharist**

This week in our catechesis on the Mass, we begin the second part of the Mass: the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

It is tempting to think that when we sit down after the intercessions and pull out our envelopes for the collection that we have reached a sort of intermission. The opposite is true. This is the time where both the priest AND the people prepare to offer sacrifice. The procession of the gifts of bread and wine (and by connection the collection basket) symbolizes the fact that each and every person in the pew is expected to bring with them some sacrifice which they unite with what happens on the altar. It makes little sense to receive Holy Communion without first being actively involved in the sacrifice of worship, which precedes it.

While the people are offering their sacrifice, the priest prepares the altar and offers the bread and wine, thereby setting them aside for the miracle of transubstantiation, which will soon follow. The offerings may be incensed. Having washed his hands, the priest invites the people to pray that the two distinct sacrifices, that of the priest and that of the people, may be acceptable to God. The people give the response and then, just like at the Collect at the beginning of Mass, a prayer is said which places our prayers and sacrifices in the context of the mystery, which we are celebrating. For example, on Epiphany we prayed: "Look with favor, Lord, we pray, on these gifts of your Church, in which are offered now not gold or frankincense or myrrh, but he who by them is proclaimed, sacrificed and received, Jesus Christ."

In summary: At the altar, the sacrifices of the people in the pews and the priest in the sanctuary are united to the single sacrifice of Christ on the altar. If we do not offer sacrifice, we do not actually participate in the Mass and are not open to receive the gifts and graces, which come from the Mass and Holy Communion.

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