

The Liturgy of the Eucharis, Part Two

Following the Liturgy of the Word, the first main part of the celebration of the Mass (Eucharist), the Liturgy of the Eucharist (in the narrow sense of the term) unfolds.

The Preparation Rites

A. Preparation of the Gifts

At the beginning of the liturgy of the Eucharist, the altar (the table of the Lord/ the table of the Eucharist) is prepared as the center of the Eucharistic liturgy.

Candlesticks on the altar are lit. The sacramentary, the corporal, the purificators, the chalices are set on the altar while waiting for the gifts (bread and wine) to be brought over.

While the altar is being prepared, monetary offerings are collected from the assembly for the needs of the parish and the needs of the poor. "The procession (by individual parish members as well as families) bringing the gifts (bread and wine) is accompanied by the presentation songs until the gifts have been placed on the altar" (GIRM 50).

B. Prayers over the Bread and Wine

These prayers are very similar to the blessing formulas characteristic of Judaism and used by Christ during the Last Supper. These prayers praise God's holiness and goodness. It is God, not the bread and wine that is blessed (Johnson 81).

C. Mingling of water and Wine

This rite has its roots, first of all, in custom of the classical world where the strong wine was often diluted before use so that it would be less potent. The custom continued in Christian liturgical practice. In the East, this action came to represent the two natures united in Christ; in the West, it was the union of Christ with his people or in some areas, the water and blood flowing from the side of the crucified Christ.

D. Prayer of the Priest

This is a prayer for the acceptance of our offering of ourselves. The priest, on behalf of all the faithful, prays it with bowed head: "Lord God, we ask you to receive us with humble and contrite hearts."

E. Washing of Hands

"The priest washes his hands as an expression of his desire to be cleansed within." (GIRM 52)

F. Prayer over the Gifts and Its Invitation

The preparation of the gifts concludes with the invitation to pray with the priest and the prayer over the gifts (GIRM 53).

Looking forward to the Eucharistic Prayer, the priest, often in very terse form, requests that the gifts may be accepted by the Father and may bring forth spiritual fruits for the people who have united themselves to them (Johnson 86).

References:

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