

LITURGY BYTES

The Mass – Part 4

The next part of the Mass is the Liturgy of the Eucharist when we move to the table (altar). Let us examine the similarities of sharing a meal at home with what happens at Mass. At home we set the table, say grace and share food. At Mass these ritual actions are called Preparation of the Gifts, the Eucharistic Prayer and the Communion Rite.



In the early days, Christians would bring bread and wine from their homes to the church to be used for Mass and to be shared with the clergy and poor of the community. We all know that at Mass we make donations that are collected and presented to the priest, along with the bread and wine. The bread and wine are placed on the altar. The priest mixes water with the wine and washes his hands, similar to what happened at the Last Supper (mixing water and wine and washing hands are all things Jews did at meals in Jesus' day). Finally, the priest invites us to pray that the sacrifice be acceptable to God, which we reply Amen.

The long prayer which follows is known as the Eucharistic Prayer. This prayer brings us to the very center of the Mass and the heart of our Faith. There are many Eucharistic Prayers that can be said at this time depending on the priest's choice and the liturgical season. However, the structure of each one remains the same: 1) recall salvation history; 2) recall what Jesus left us the night before he died; and 3) petition God to continue the great deeds of Christ in the present and pray that we become one body, one spirit in Christ.

The Communion Rite follows with the recitation of the Our Father and the Sign of Peace. We are invited to come forward and receive Our Lord responding "Amen" meaning yes, I believe! After Communion, the priest unites our prayers in the Post Communion Prayer.

Lastly, we are commissioned to live the Eucharist in our world with a final blessing and dismissal. In most parishes, announcements will be made prior to this part. We leave the assembly and the church building with the hope that what happens in our lives during the week will remind us of what ritual actions we have celebrated at Mass.

Have a blessed, safe, joyful and healthy week ahead!~~~*Michele Hall*