

LITURGY BYTES

The Offertory



Have you ever brought up the gifts of bread and wine at Mass? Sometimes people who have the Mass intention will ask to do it. Most weeks, the ushers seek out people to do this or, on some occasions, will bring up the gifts themselves along with the weekly offerings. You might ask, why is this so important? First of all, next time at Mass, listen to the words of the Priest at the conclusion of the offertory: “Pray brothers and sisters that **my sacrifice and yours** may be acceptable to God the almighty Father.” These words call to mind that what just happened in the offertory is a significant sacrifice of the baptized people gathered for Mass. Naturally, this is distinct from the sacrifice of Jesus about to be represented on the altar through the prayers of the priest.

The reforms from the second Vatican Council allowed this important part of the Mass to have a greater prominence after years of decline. In the early Church, sacrificial references to the Eucharist are present in writings of St. Clement of Rome and St. Justin Martyr. After continued development of the offertory with prayers and processions, it saw a minimization during the medieval period. It was much later that Pope Paul VI insisted upon giving the offertory a new and special prominence. He said this to the synod of Bishops in 1967: *“The offertory should be given a special prominence so that the faithful may exercise their special role as offerers.”*

As the gifts of bread and wine are brought forward in procession by the people and then slightly elevated upon the altar by the priest, we have a key opportunity to participate in the Eucharist by joining our individual spiritual sacrifices to Jesus through this ritual moment of our celebration. Perhaps recalling something from the past week that was difficult or particular intentions that we carry could be part of our own offering. The specific role each person plays in the drama of life is now caught up in the one sacrifice of Jesus in the midst of each Eucharist celebrated throughout the entire world. So, consider how important and significant a reminder the offertory is for all of us to participate as unique offerers each week. May we look to bring up the gifts at Mass more frequently.

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