

LITURGY BYTES

Mass – Gifts



Did you ever stop and think about what this part of Mass means to you? It follows very quickly after the ushers take up the collection and sometimes gets lost in the shuffle. Some might recall it was referred to as the Offertory.

Bringing the gifts in relation to the Eucharist is documented from earliest times. From St. Paul, we know that originally the Eucharist took place during a banquet. Everyone had to bring something for the meal. Because St. Paul also told us that there were some abuses with this custom, a separation of the Eucharist from the banquet took place. Later on, the gifts brought were for the needs of the poor. The bringing of the gifts takes on a ritual form between the 4th and 7th centuries. It is the Roman liturgy that makes it a part of the liturgical action and gives it the importance of a true and proper rite. The rite is made up of two elements: a song accompanying the procession of the faithful who bring their gifts to the altar and a prayer (prayer over the gifts) with which the priest concludes the action of the faithful and the sanctifying of the gifts. It is also interesting to note that the form in some way bears traces of the first part of the blessing of the table in Jewish liturgy, expressing a thanksgiving to God for the gifts of bread and wine. The washing of the hands is also found in the Jewish liturgy of preparation and blessing of the table.

Both the prayer for bread and the prayer for wine look forward to the transformation of these gifts into our spiritual food and drink. “Transformation” is one of the key words for the Eucharist and has received a lot of attention in recent times. The bread and wine now being presented to the Father will be transformed into the body and blood of Christ. But that is not the only transformation that should take place in this mystery. We are to be transformed along with the bread and wine. Perhaps next week at Mass, we will recall this last sentence and offer ourselves to be transformed together with the bread and wine.

Have a blessed, peaceful, and prayerful week ahead! ~ *Michele Hall*