



# THE MASS & THE GIFT

LITURGY BYTES *by Michele Hall*



What do you think of when you hear the word "gift"? Do you think of something or someone? For today, let us focus on the Mass and a different sense of gift that operates in the Mass. The Roman Missal says in its instructions for the offertory, "It is desirable that the faithful express their participation by making an offering, bringing forward bread and wine for the celebration of the Eucharist and perhaps other gifts to relieve the needs of the Church and of the poor."

We definitely do bring forth gifts at Mass: bread and wine, money, and food to feed the poor. We also bring forth our very bodies as an offering of love. We certainly are not telling God, we are here, please do something for me! Actually, the proper sense of offering a gift at Mass is revealed in the Old Testament. In the book of Deuteronomy, God through Moses, gives instructions for offering a thanksgiving sacrifice in light of a successful harvest. Read the exact reference in Deuteronomy 26:5-10 to fully understand. The speaker is not trying to butter God up.

The Offertory at Mass is truly not simply about us bringing things forward to God. What God wants is not an economic exchange, but fully our hearts, our minds, and our wills offered at the altar. The Offertory prepares us to give ourselves over as an act of love in response to the love that God has already offered to us. What is important is that we come forth to the altar of God, giving whatever we have, whoever we are. Besides the bread and wine and the collection revenue that is brought forward, you and I and all our imperfections are also placed upon that altar. Those chosen from the congregation to do this at Mass represent each of us, as if each person sitting at Mass comes forward with their own gift. Rejoice in these words from St. Ignatius of Loyola:

**"Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all I have and call my own. You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours; do with it what you will. Give me only your love and your grace, which is enough for me."**

Have a blessed, safe, and prayerful week ahead!