



Archdiocese of New York + 2011

THE PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS

Introduction: The Rite of Preparation of the Gifts begins the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and the Presentation of the Gifts is an important part of this Rite. As we move into the Liturgy of the Eucharist, focus shifts from the Word and the ambo to the Eucharist and the altar. First the altar is prepared: the corporal, the folded white cloth on which the chalice and paten will be placed, is unfolded in the center of the altar and the missal and chalice are brought to the altar. Once the altar has been prepared, the bread and wine which will be transformed into the Body and Blood of the Lord are brought to the sanctuary by representatives of the people and received by the priest or deacon.

The Presentation of the Gifts in the History of the Mass: The Presentation of the Gifts was an integral part of the Mass from its early stages. In the Church of the first centuries at the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, those who were present at Mass brought forth bread and wine, and other gifts to be used for the care of the poor. These offerings were an integral part of the lives of the people who gave them, and often involved genuine sacrifice: the poor giving what they needed to help those who needed it more. Saint Augustine observed that *mixed with the bread and wine, were the hopes and joys of the people of God.*

From the early days of the Church, the Procession with the Gifts was also seen as a rite that would be fulfilled in the Communion Procession. It is at Communion that the gifts which were given to God in the Presentation Rite would be returned, now transformed into the Body and Blood of the Lord, spiritual food to nourish God's people on the journey of life.

Following the Procession with the Gifts, the deacon would choose the bread and wine for the Mass from among the gifts presented. In this way, that which was given by the faithful became the substance of the body and blood of the Lord, a gift that was returned to them in Holy Communion. Later, in some places, the Procession became very elaborate, involving

extravagant symbolic gifts and large numbers of people, even, on one occasion at least, knights on horseback. This form of the Procession however was an exception to what was essentially a simple rite. In the later Middle Ages, the Procession with the Gifts fell out of use, in part, at least, because few people received Communion and there was no longer need for quantities of bread and wine to be donated.

The Presentation of the Gifts at Mass Today:

Following the Second Vatican Council, the Presentation of the Gifts was restored to the Mass. Today, presentation of the bread and wine to be used in the Eucharistic Liturgy is encouraged. While the entire congregation does not engage in this action, those who do bring the gifts to the sanctuary represent all those present. In addition to the bread and wine, it is also appropriate that the money gifts collected at Mass be presented. Like the gifts offered in the early Church, these represent the sacrifice of many who have given to the Church's poor what they might have spent on themselves and their families. It is fitting that, like the gifts of bread and wine, the monetary offerings be received graciously by the priest or deacon. The monies which have been collected should then be put in a suitable place in the sanctuary, although not near the altar. On certain occasions, for example on Thanksgiving Day in the United States, it is appropriate that food for the poor be brought forward in the Procession with the Gifts so that following Mass it may be distributed to those in need.

The restoration of the Presentation of the Gifts also restores to the Liturgy the twofold processional action by which God, at Communion, responds to the people's Presentation of the Gifts, returning their gifts to them, blessed and transformed into the body and blood of Christ.

Finally, It is fitting that song accompany the Procession with the Gifts. The music might be the Offertory chant or another suitable song related to the Eucharist or the Liturgical Season, and should continue at least until the gifts of bread and wine have been placed on the altar.