



Archdiocese of New York + 2011

THE PRAYERS OF DEPOSITION

WHAT are the Prayers of Deposition?? The term *Prayers of Deposition* refers to the prayers prayed over the bread and over the wine as each of these elements is placed on the altar in the Rite of the Preparation of the Gifts. The gifts are, in effect, “deposited” on the altar.

Significance of the Deposition Ritual:

“Deposition” is a practical term for an action which has profound meaning. Our celebration of the Eucharist originated in, the celebration of Passover Meal of the Jews, for the Last Supper took place in the context of the Passover Meal. At that meal, it was the custom for the head of the household to take from among the many foods on the table, the symbolic bread and cup, offering a prayer of praise and raising the elements slightly to direct the attention of those present to these two significant symbols. This very simple action of taking and blessing was the action of Jesus at the Last Supper and throughout the history of the early Church marked the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

As numbers of Christians grew, and ritual developed, the procession with the gifts became a part of this rite. The bread and wine for the Eucharist were brought forth by the faithful, received from them by the priest and were then placed upon the altar with a prayer of blessing. This deliberate action of placing the gifts on the altar in the context of a blessing prayer was the designation of these offerings of the people as the material substance of the Sacrifice to be offered. In a very real sense, these ritual actions highlight the role of the people in the Eucharistic action. The people provide the bread and the wine that will be the substance of the Eucharistic Meal. But their gifts of bread and wine, and food

for the poor (today, more often, money offerings), have a symbolic nature in themselves, for they represent the substance of those who give them. The self-giving that will ultimately be made as they offer themselves with Jesus to the Father in the Eucharistic Prayer, is prepared for and foreshadowed by this simple ritual action. Finally, as the offerings of the people provide the material for the Eucharist, their gifts for the poor point to the further truth that to celebrate the Eucharist worthily, we must live the Eucharist in our daily lives by our care for others.

The Prayers of Deposition: The term “preparation” of the gifts is an accurate description, for this rite truly does prepare for the great action of the Eucharist. It is important that the presentation of the gifts at this moment in the Mass be distinguished from the principle offering of the Mass which is made in the Eucharistic Prayer. The prayers prayed by the priest at the Preparation of the Gifts bless God who is the source of what we have to offer, and at the same time, make clear that these gifts involve the work of human beings.

*Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation,
for through your goodness we have received
the bread we offer you:
fruit of the earth and work of human hands:
it will become for us the bread of life.*

*Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation,
for through your goodness we have received
the wine we offer you:
fruit of the vine and work of human hands:
it will become for us the spiritual drink.*

These theological statements having been made, the community can move on to the Eucharistic Prayer.