

# MASS WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.

## Some Thoughts for the Offertory.

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*“O blessed Light of life You are,  
Fill with Your light the inmost hearts of those that hope in You.”*

— Sequence of Pentecost.

“O blessed Light” is an act of faith in the divinity of the Holy Spirit for God alone is Light. As we hope to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass worthily we need this blessed Light to fill our hearts with love and devotion. The light of the Holy Spirit uncovers the treasures of the Mass and reveals its hidden secrets.

*“O guide our minds with Thy blessed light,  
With love our hearts inflame,  
And with Thy strength which ne'er decays,  
Confirm our mortal frame.”*

— Veni Creator Spiritus.

[The ‘Veni Creator Spiritus’ (‘Come Holy Spirit, Creator Come!’) is one of the Church’s most ancient hymns to the third person of the Holy Trinity. Let us pray this verse in our hearts as we reflect on the grandeur of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, for ‘with Your store, which never decays, confirm our mere mortal endeavours, our mortal frame.’]

[This pamphlet uses the liturgy and rubrics of the Mass of Saint Pius V as its base line. We, who have the self-same Mass restored by the reforms of Pope Paul VI, will find that the beautiful reflections of Monsignor McMahon will under-gird our celebrating the *Novus Ordo* Mass with the aid of the Holy Spirit.]

St. Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that “Christ offered Himself, through the Holy Spirit as a victim unblemished in God’s sight.” (Heb 9:13.)

For sacrifice to have any value in the sight of God, it must come from love, it must be the fruit of love. Sacrifice is the expression of love, the proof of love, and the measure of love. God judges the sacrifice by the love that prompts it. The deeper the love the more acceptable is the sacrifice to God. Again the more one loves the more one gives. The sacrifice is then a gauge, an indicator to show outwardly the amount of love behind it.

When love is perfect the sacrifice is complete. A sacrifice to have infinite value must be the fruit of infinite love. When Christ offered Himself from the Cross to His Eternal Father, He did so through the Holy Spirit, who is infinite love. The Holy Spirit is the sign of Divine Love of the Father and Son. To offer Himself through the Holy Spirit, Christ was perfect in His sacrifice.

**Offer ourselves through the Holy Spirit.**

All of us who wish to share in the sacrifice of Jesus, all of us who wish, like Him, to offer ourselves to the Father, must offer ourselves through the Holy Spirit. It is He who inspires all holy immolations and all fruitful

martyrdoms. He enfolds our poor sorrows in the infinite sorrows of Jesus, mingles our blood with the Divine Blood, nails us to the Cross with the Divine Victim, fuses our hearts with the Divine Heart.

The Holy Spirit teaches us the wisdom of the Cross. He teaches us how to love the Cross. He makes us participate in the sacrifice of Jesus. He convinces us that the Cross is the foundation, the centre, and the summit of the spiritual life and of Christian perfection. In his flight the heavenly Dove always tends towards the Cross. The Cross, the supreme symbol of love and pain, is the perfection and crown of devotion to the Holy Spirit.

The loving dream of Jesus during His mortal life was the Cross. He longed for it as only the heart of the Man-God could long for the culmination of all His infinite aspirations. He revealed His secret in intimate conversations with His apostles, as when He said: "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how distressed I am until it is accomplished." (Luke 12:50).

In his Epistle to the Hebrews, St. Paul makes this splendid revelation to us by taking the words of the Psalms and disclosing their meaning:

"Therefore in coming into the world, he says: 'sacrifice and oblation You would not, but a body You have fitted to me. In holocausts and sin-offerings You have had no pleasure'. Then said I 'Behold I come — in the head of the book it is written of me — to do Your Will O God'." (Heb 10:5-7).

### **In memory of His Passion.**

At the Offertory of the Mass we pray [in the Liturgy of St Pius V]:

"Accept, most holy Trinity, this offering which we present to You, in memory of the passion, resurrection and ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ. . . ."

The Resurrection and Ascension are mentioned to show that the sacrifice which Christ made in His passion, offered through the Holy Spirit, was acceptable to the Father. Christ rose from the dead and ascended to heaven to prove to all that His passion and death fulfilled the will of His Father.

God dies to glorify God. Jesus, knowing infinite goodness better than anyone, immolated Himself on the Cross with unfathomable love. Who but God can know the sublime fulness of this supreme glorification? And once the divine mystery is accomplished, there remains but to perpetuate it, to crystallize it, to make it immortal. Jesus has done this by giving us the marvellous miracle of the Eucharist.

If the Cross was for Jesus the centre of devotion to the Father, it should hold the same place for us. The sacrifice of the Cross was the perfect glorification of the Father, the supreme act of love for Him, and the perfect fulfilment of His will. Love is surrender, it is giving. Love is the power to lose all so as to gain all. We read in the Gospel that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who sells all he has in order to buy a precious, flawless pearl. This is a symbol of love. Supreme love is the infinite surrender.

### **Suffering Sanctified by Love.**

The love of the creature, since it is a reflection of eternal love, is also a total surrender. The angels accomplish it in the peace and joy of their spiritual and immaculate nature. On earth, the supreme giving of love cannot be made except in pain and death. "Give me a lover," says St. Augustine, "and he will understand what I am saying." Love without pain is truly insipid and imperfect.

Lacordaire writes: "Once the word of love has been pronounced, the only thing to do is to repeat it." So Jesus perpetuated His sacrifice in two ways on earth: in the Blessed Eucharist and in souls. Therefore, the centre of Catholic worship — which in the Church is the devotion of Jesus to the Father in the Holy Spirit — is the Mass.

And the centre of Christian life is the mystic participation in the sacrifice of Jesus by each soul.

Pope John XXIII in his address to the Lenten preachers of Rome in 1959, said:

“Christianity without the Cross, without suffering, without the assaults of the evil one, is not and could not be comprehensible. But suffering, of what kind so ever, becomes endurable by means of the gift of love given and received. Suffering, when it is sanctified by love, brings souls ever nearer the foretaste of intimate life with Christ.”

*The Breviary of Piety* for clerics issued by All Hallows' College, Dublin, says, “The first and most necessary act of religion is sacrifice; the first and most necessary thing in sacrifice is the devoted mind. The outworks of sacrifice in sign and symbol are but survivors. They help to foster and express, to nourish and exercise, the mind worshipping in spirit and truth. Should the mind of sacrifice be absent, they are a body without a soul, they are the corpse of religion, an abomination before God and a scandal to men.”

### **From Calvary to the Altar.**

Let us approach the altar of God, along the way of the Cross. As Christ was led through His Passion and Death by the Holy Spirit, so let us ask the Holy Spirit to lead us through the Stations as the best preparation for Mass. Meditation is never easy but it is absolutely essential if we would grow in holiness of life. Doing the Stations is the easiest form of meditation. The movement from station to station prevents us from falling asleep. The pictures of the fourteen scenes aid our thinking. We do not need a book or guide, we just look and think. There are no set prayers. It is an exercise that leaves us perfectly free to think and say just what we like. It is a most natural and personal meditation, for we just chat with our Blessed Redeemer as He went from Pilate's court to the sepulchre. Let us make the Stations with the Holy Spirit.

#### **1st Station: Christ before Pilate.**

Christ spoke very little before Pilate and not a word in Herod's palace. The discipline of our tongues is difficult to take as St. James in his Epistle assures us that the person who does not offend in word is a perfect man. Through the merits of the silence of Jesus we ask the Holy Spirit to help us guard our tongues this day and to put upon the Paten this petition and resolution:

*“Let me no wrong or idle word  
Unthinking say  
Set You a seal upon my lips  
Just for today.”*

#### **2nd Station: Christ accepts the Cross.**

At the second Station Christ through the Holy Spirit, Who is Love, accepts the Cross as the Will of His Father. We might think over the bold expression of St. Paul: “I am glad of my sufferings on your behalf, as, in this mortal frame of mine, I help to pay off the debt which the afflictions of Christ still leave to be paid, for the sake of His Body, the Church.” (Col. 1:24).

St. Paul's sufferings were many and bitter. Like a poor man contributing to pay off a sum which a richer man has paid in advance, St. Paul offers his pains back to Christ for the Church. Although Christ's suffering were completely satisfactory on behalf of our sins, still we have a debt of honour, as it were, to repay them by sufferings of our own. We ask the Holy Spirit to send us this day a little splinter of the Cross which we will put into the chalice in advance.

#### **3rd Station: Christ falls the first time.**

At the third Station Christ falls and re-opens His wounds. Physical pain is never easy to bear. Love and love alone can help us to see the finger of God pressing upon us to make us more like unto Himself. Without the Holy Spirit we rebel against pain and fail to see its wisdom.

#### **4th Station: Christ meets His Mother.**

At the fourth Station the Holy Spirit has much to teach us. The Body of Christ was formed as a temple of God by the Holy Spirit. Jesus is His masterpiece. Jesus was conceived by the operation of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit filled Him with His gifts, guided Him in all the steps of His mortal life, to His offering of Himself on the Cross and His immolation on Calvary.

The masterpiece of the Holy Spirit is Jesus. But is not the sanctification of our souls merely the extension and complement of the Holy Spirit's work in Jesus? To the Apostle Paul the mystery of Christ is the immense multitude of souls that are members of the Mystical Body. The complete Jesus embraces us all. To sanctify souls is to complete Jesus: it is to consummate the mystery of Christ. To sanctify us is for the Holy Spirit to complete His work accomplished in Jesus Christ.

Mary, His immaculate Spouse, comes next to the Spirit's masterpiece, Jesus. So inspired by the Holy Spirit let us link in our thoughts the Annunciation, the Incarnation, the Passion and the Mass as we meditate on the Fourth Station.

The Angelus might be said, omitting the Aves, (the 'Hail Mary's') to prepare us for the continuation of the Incarnation in the Mystery of Transubstantiation. Five words (in the Latin) accomplished the work of the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb: "Be it done unto me according to your Will" ('Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum'.) Five words spoken by the priest "For this is My Body", ('Hoc est enim corpus meum',) and the Holy Spirit operates a new birth of Christ upon the altar.

#### **5th Station: Christ is helped by Simon of Cyrene.**

At the fifth Station Simon hesitates but eventually shoulders the Cross to his joy and salvation. How reluctantly we all carry the Cross behind Our Lord! But when we do accept the crosses He sends, we share the joy and satisfaction of Simon. The Holy Spirit is the master of prayer and He will strengthen us to learn to practise daily the prayer of self-denial.

#### **6th Station: Christ is helped by Veronica, who wipes His Face.**

At the sixth Station Veronica, guided by the Holy Spirit, showed heroic courage in facing that howling mob. The Face of Christ is disfigured by the filth and spittle of sin.

Surely, it is easy for us to recall our share in this sad scene. Let us offer back our sorrow through the Holy Spirit and in the Mass pay our debt of reparation and so cleanse the Face of Christ.

#### **7th Station: Christ falls the second time.**

The seventh Station re-opens His wounds and increases His suffering because of sin. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to keep us mindful of our past sins, to excite us to true sorrow, and by prayer and penance to make up to God for our share in Christ's Calvary. Within the Mass the Holy Spirit can renew us and set our feet on the path to holiness which is the way of the Cross.

#### **8th Station: Christ meets the Holy women.**

What an extraordinary scene is the eighth station! Our Blessed Lord is a pitiable sight. The holy women are moved and sympathetic. But Christ forgets His own terrible condition to console them. How differently we act as we parade our own ills and grievances! The Holy Spirit will strengthen us to bring all that happens to us as gifts for the chalice.

#### **9th Station: Christ falls again.**

The ninth Station shows Christ almost finished as He falls the third time. But He gathers His failing strength that He may finish the work God gave Him to accomplish. Through the Holy Spirit we also can arise and fight ourselves and build ourselves into better men and women within the Mass.

#### **10th Station: Christ is stripped.**

The tenth Station asks us to meditate on the extreme torture Christ endured when they dragged His garments off His torn body. The embarrassment of the Immaculate Son of God exposed to that rabble was intense. To strip ourselves of fleshy desires and worldly ties is a constant struggle which depends for success upon the Holy Spirit.

#### **11th Station: Christ is nailed to the Cross.**

The eleventh Station puts before us the pierced hands and feet of Christ for our meditation. The illumination of the Holy Spirit must guide our feet each day and save our hands from sin. Newman's prayer [the prayer of Blessed John Henry Newman,] is most appropriate at the opening of each day. He asks the Holy Spirit, who is the Light, to guide his steps.

*“Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,  
Lead Thou me on;  
The night is dark, and I am far from home,  
Lead Thou me on;  
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see  
The distant scene; one step enough for me.”*

What wisdom lies beneath the words — “I do not ask to see the distant scene — one step enough for me.”

### **12th Station: Christ dies on the Cross.**

At the twelfth Station Christ dies on the Cross and the masterpiece of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, has finished the work His Father gave Him to do. That work of redemption He continues in the Mass. A verse from the ‘Adore Te Devote’ (‘I Adore You, Devoutly, O Godhead here in hiding!’) summarizes this.

O memorial of my Saviour dying,  
Living Bread that gives life to man;  
May my soul, its life from You supplying,  
Taste Your sweetness, as on earth it can.”

To love the Cross, we must see Jesus on it and understand the personal and indestructible ties that bind Him to it. To love the Cross, we must experience the sweet and strong attractions which Jesus Crucified exercises over souls, as He Himself promised:

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself.” (John 12:32).

It is the Holy Spirit, through Whom Christ offered Himself on the Cross, Who can help us to taste the sweetness of suffering here on earth. There is no place, no time, no occasion more pleasing to God than the celebration of the Mass. Let us implore the Holy Spirit to constantly remind us of this and help us to link Calvary with the Consecration and to offer ourselves within it.

### **13th Station: Christ is taken down from the Cross.**

At the thirteenth Station we beseech the Holy Spirit to convince us of sin, what a real and terrible thing it is in the eyes of God! The broken Body of Christ lies in the arms of his Blessed Mother, a victim for sin. Illuminated by the Holy Spirit let that scene come alive for us and fill us with a fear of sin which cost so much to repair.

Keeping this scene in mind we will say the many prayers in the Ordinary of the Mass which plead for forgiveness of sin. For example, the ‘Confiteor’, [the ‘I Confess,’] the prayer ascending the altar, the prayer on kissing the altar, the ‘Kyrie Eleison’, [the ‘Lord Have Mercy,] the offering of the bread, the ‘Agnus Dei’, [the ‘Lamb of God, have mercy’] and the ‘Domine non sum dignus’, [the ‘Lord, I am not worthy’ prayer.]

Calvary was a sin offering and the Mass continues that sacrifice of redemption and reparation. We must never forget our sins in praying the Mass. The modern man has lost his sense of guilt in sin. For our own sins and those of the world we must, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, constantly make amends by prayer and penance, and the best way to do that is to come to the altar of sacrifice over the hill of Calvary.

### **14th Station: Christ is laid in the tomb.**

The fourteenth Station brings us very close to Mary, the Mother of Sorrows, as she lays the body of her Son in the tomb. As the immaculate Spouse of the Holy Spirit she was guided and strengthened by Him throughout that sorrowful journey which ended at the sepulchre. She answered in her heart a fervent “Amen” at each stage of the Passion because it was the will of His Father. *Without the Holy Spirit she could never have done it.* She stood by her Son to the bitter end and learned more about the sacrifice of the Mass in those hours than all the saints and doctors have written. She will stand by us throughout the Mass and help us to pray it better. When we call Mary to our side at Mass we are certain that the Holy Spirit comes also to help us for wherever Mary is He is sure to be. That is a most fruitful thought for co-operating in the Mass — the Holy Spirit and Mary at our side.

### **Above all in the heart.**

Pope Pius XII advises us that “religion must not be in the head alone but above all in the heart.” The Liturgy [of St Pius V] recommends to priests certain prayers before Mass. These prayers call on the Holy Spirit to prepare the hearts of priests about to celebrate Mass. All of us could with profit to our souls say those prayers.

Let us pray:

Incline, O most gracious Lord, Your ears of mercy to our prayers, and enlighten our hearts by the grace of the Holy Spirit, so that we may merit worthily to administer Your mysteries and to love You with an everlasting love.

O God, before Whom every heart lies open and to Whom every desire speaks, and from Whom no secret lies hid, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the pouring forth of Your Holy Spirit, so that we may merit perfectly to love You and worthily to praise You.

Inflame, O Lord, our minds and our hearts, and all our being, with the fire of the Holy Spirit, so that we may serve You with a chaste body and please You with a clean heart.

We beseech You, O Lord, that the Comforter, Who proceeds from You, may enlighten our minds, and lead us, as Your Son has promised, into all truth.

May the power of Your Holy Spirit, we beseech You, O Lord, be present unto us, mercifully to cleanse our hearts and to defend them from all harm.

O God, who did teach the hearts of the faithful by the light of Your Holy Spirit, grant that in the same Spirit we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in His consolation.

Cleanse, we beseech You, O Lord, our consciences by Your visitation, so that when Our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, shall come He may find in us a mansion prepared for Him: who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, world without end. Amen.

### **Come, O Sanctifier.**

The Holy Spirit through Whom Mary conceived and brought forth her Son continues the Mystery of the Incarnation to this very hour in the consecration of the Mass. At the Offertory our thoughts are on the Incarnation thinking of the fruit of Mary’s womb.

The one great word Our Lord speaks in the Gospel is the word of the Cross. In the Mass He gathers us into His sacrifice. In simplicity and humility of heart we come bringing our gifts in token of our sacrificial mind. These gifts are borne reverently from the credence table to the table of the altar where the priest lays them in order carefully upon the sacred stone where already lie the ashes of sacrifice as relics of the saints. We invoke the Holy Spirit to bless these sacrificial gifts of bread and wine and we who offer them that the spirit of the Cross, the gift of self-sacrifice may be ours. To have joy in self-offering we must have the blessing of the Holy Spirit. A humble, contrite heart alone may hope to be lifted up by the Holy Spirit and be changed by Him into the image of Jesus Christ.

This prayer reveals the part played by the Holy Spirit in the work of our redemption. He prepared the Victim in the mystery of the Incarnation. He inspired the mission of Christ. He also is responsible for the final act of the Saviour, His passion and death on the Cross. This mission of love is continued in the Holy Eucharist. The powerful, infinite Love which brought all this about is the Holy Spirit. It is fitting, therefore, that the Holy Spirit should be invoked to sanctify the sacrificial elements as He has blessed and prepared the Divine Victim.

Through the sacraments of the Holy Ghost, Baptism and Confirmation, we have been incorporated into Jesus Christ and thus have a share in the Saviour’s sacrifice on the cross and on the altar. The Holy Spirit is active within our souls through grace so that we can add to the sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ the sacrifice of our own body and blood so that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass may be our sacrifice.

At every Mass the Church invokes in a special prayer the blessing of the Holy Spirit. This is what the celebrant does and says at the Offertory [in the liturgy of St Pius V]. He separates his hands, elevates them, looks up at the crucifix, joins his hands, lowers his eyes and says:

“Come, You Sanctifier, Almighty, Everlasting God, and bless these sacrificial gifts, prepared for the glory of Your Holy Name.”

He makes the sign of the cross over the bread on the paten and the wine in the chalice. What a solemn, impressive blessing! Raising his eyes to heaven the priest invokes the Holy Spirit to bless the bread and wine soon to be changed into the Body and Blood of Christ through the mystery of Transubstantiation.

### **Plant and fructify the seed of goodness.**

“O Sanctifier, all-powerful, You Whom nothing can resist, come. You Who completes masterpieces and Who does inaugurate them, plant in us the seed of goodness and make it fructify!”

We have no perseverance, no spirit, no fervour in offering ourselves with the Son of God. We would like to leave Him and we, too, sleep while He is in His agony. What a big thing for us is an hour’s prayer, a half hour, even ten minutes!

“O Spirit of Initiative and of Great Persuasion, arouse us all from lethargy. Shake us out of our sloth and sweep us along. Quicken our souls to prayer and love, and grant that through You, we, like St. Andrew, may run daily to our sacrifice, our beloved immolation, and that like Peter and John, we shall find delight in having being judged worthy of being humiliated for the name of Jesus.”

“O You, the Specialist of Love, and of the fresh bursting forth of beauty in souls, come and give to this Sacrifice prepared for Your glory, a luxuriant benediction!” (These prayers are from *Living the Mass* — by F. Desplanques, S.J. Pages 57-58.)

### **Love demands more than words.**

Love feels that words can never do it justice. As children we realized how inadequate they were to express our love for our parents on any special occasion, such as Christmas or a birthday. Having no money we unashamedly asked our parents for some and gladly did we spend it on gifts to celebrate the day. And our parents were so delighted at this expression of our love for them that they quite forgot that it was their money which purchased the gift. And so it goes on the world over, human love calls to human love in the language of giving, for gifts are more eloquent than words.

Sacrifice is the highest form of giving. Sacrifice expresses our love for God by offering Him a gift. Whatever gift we make to God is made sacred by its contact with the altar. In sacrifice our gift is dedicated, consecrated, set apart irrevocably to honour God.

In the Old Law a gift offered in sacrifice to God was called a host (Latin for victim), a holocaust, an immolation, words which bring vividly before us the altar of holocausts, with the smoke of sacrifice rising up to God before the Temple at Jerusalem.

Christ in His own supreme sacrifice on Calvary obeys this natural instinct of showing one’s love by gifts. For we can say that Christ on the Cross spoke His love for the Eternal Father with His Body broken for men, with His Blood shed for men.

After Calvary, St. John assured the disciples that Christ’s gift of Himself on the Cross was the proof of His love for us: St. John writes: “Hereby we have come to know His love for us.” (1 John 4:9.)

### **The inner gift comes first.**

Sacrifice is a giving, but whatever is offered must bespeak the inner gift of love.

Were our parents to learn from our conversation as children that we no longer loved them, neither father nor mother would welcome a gift from us. To send a gift to anyone and not to have any real friendship behind it is just hollow pretence. Such make belief may deceive our fellows for a while, but it cannot deceive God for the Bible assures us: “Man sees the things that appear but the Lord sees the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7.)

In the opening chapter of the history of man we read that Cain and Abel offered sacrifice to God. God accepted the gift of Abel because the gift spoke the love of the giver. The gift of Cain He rejected because in the heart of Cain lurked a hatred for his brother Abel.

From the time of Moses the Jews fulfilled the instructions presented in the Book of Leviticus for offering sacrifice. The priests wore vestments rich and becoming, the victims were selected with care. There was dignity and decorum in the rite of sacrifice, the temple setting left nothing to be desired. And yet God spoke through the mouth of the prophet, Malachi, saying: “I have no pleasure in you and will not receive a gift from your hands.” (Malachi 1:10.)

Why these words of rejection? Because priests and people concentrated on external ceremony, a cold, correct, official duty with no self-offering or turning of the inner man back to God.

### **A warning for us.**

But have these words of Malachi’s: “I have no pleasure in you” — no message for us? Yes, indeed, they are addressed to us in warning lest our official act of sacrifice, the Holy Mass, may be just another cold external act of duty with no inner gift of love.

St. Thomas Aquinas leaves no doubt on the point, for he writes: “Sacrifice is twofold. The first and principal is the inward sacrifice. The other is the outward sacrifice.”

One may say, with all due reverence, that Christ’s inner gift of Himself in the Garden of Olives was more pleasing to His Eternal Father than the physical gift of His Body to the scourges, of His Head to the crown of thorns, and of His Life to the Cross.

St. Paul meditating on this inner gift of Christ uses these beautiful words: “He emptied Himself.” (Philippians 2:7.)

That self-offering of Christ in His Passion was the only perfect act of worship since time began. Nothing of self remained in the Heart of Christ. Everything was emptied out of Him except the love of His Eternal Father and His love for us.

For us, such perfection is not possible. Yet, when we come to Mass with the inner gift of self, our giving grows by being associated with Christ.

The Mass is our sacrifice, offered by us living men through the power won for us by Christ. At Mass Christ takes our gifts, small though they are, and offers them the priceless gift of Himself, and our little offerings catch the reflection of the gift of gifts, once offered on Calvary, and continued to be offered in every Mass.

### **Why do we go to Mass?**

Why do we go to Mass? What brings us to Mass? We go to Mass because God has rejected all other forms of sacrifice, which of old satisfied the natural instinct of the human heart, and instituted this “clean oblation” as the only one acceptable to Him. (See Malachi 1:11.)

We go to Mass to give back to God the Father, through the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son for the same intentions for which Christ offered Himself on the Cross, namely, the redemption and sanctification of man.

We go to Mass to speak to God in the sign-language of giving. In offering the Mass through the Holy Spirit, we fulfil the four ends of sacrifice, namely, adoration, reparation, thanksgiving, and petition.

When we attend Mass we are not just an audience, like mute spectators in a theatre. No, at Mass we are co-offerers, co-operators, participants, actors in a drama with a part to play and lines to speak. [This is what full, active, and conscious participation in the Liturgy means.]

The early Christians were more conscious of their share in the Mass because they baked the unleavened bread in their own homes and brought it with them to Mass. The whole family, sometimes groups of families, just like our modern busy-bee, pressed the grapes for wine.

At the Offertory the people came in procession bearing their gifts in their hands, which the priests accepted at the altar, selecting what was needed for the sacrifice and reserving the rest for the poor. As the people sang the processional hymn each one felt he was an actor in the drama of the Mass. Bearing a gift in his hand he knew that the gift stood for the love of the giver, and the more loving the heart the more precious the gift.

### **What gifts shall I bring to Mass?**

Today at Mass we do not go in procession with our gifts at the Offertory. [However, we symbolically do this in one of the options available in the revised liturgy of Paul VI.] We have not the same reminder to bring a gift as the early Christians had. All the more reason is there that we stir ourselves to prepare gifts of self to place upon the paten and to pour into the chalice at the Offertory.

*The Paten to pray: the Chalice to pay,  
United to Jesus in this holy way,  
We will have something to offer,  
In each Mass we pray.*

As the priest raises up the paten with the host at the Offertory let us put ourselves upon it, our intentions, our needs, and our special wants for this day, this week. Before Mass begins we should make a list of petitions, of requests, of intentions so that we have something definite to pray for at Mass.

The chalice challenged Christ in the Garden of Olives. The chalice challenges us in the Mass. The chalice stands on the altar, its mouth open wide to receive our gifts of self, acts of self-discipline, and small victories over self. The chalice eagerly awaits each day's weary round of worries, vexations, set-backs, humiliations and pains of mind and body. These are the common threads in the tapestry of daily living. We accept them with a bad grace and put up with them unwillingly. What a pity we do not spiritualize all these pin-pricks and petty annoyances? If we could only say to whatever hurts or displeases us:

“I'll put you in my pocket and keep you as a gift to pour into the chalice next time I go to Mass.”

To look upon human ills as gifts for the chalice would alter the whole pattern of our living and advance us on the way to holiness. During the day we could train ourselves to pause before each task to ask: “Do I look upon this duty as a gift for the chalice? If it is intended for the chalice then I should do it much better.”

When temptation comes with smiling, inviting eye, I will resist it if the thought of the chalice comes to mind, and I ask myself — “Can I keep this for the chalice? If I cannot offer this back to God from the altar then I cannot do it, or entertain it.”

The heroic soul will ask the Lord at the opening of each day to send him a splinter of the Cross to carry as a worthwhile gift for the chalice. We shall grow spiritually in proportion as we share in the Cross. The ideal of “the Paten to pray: the Chalice to pay” urges us and helps us daily.

### **Mass is the time and place to give.**

There is no place where giving is more acceptable to God than at Mass. The gifts we can give are not of much value to God. They are but brass offerings. But by uniting them with Christ's great gift in the Mass, they are goldenized offerings.

During Mass Christ gives us so much. Surely, we should feel embarrassed unless we have offerings in our hearts to give in return.

*“The all-wise God,” says St. Augustine, “knew nothing better: the all-powerful God could make nothing better: the all-possessing God could give no more than the Mass.”*

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