

## ***DO YOU BRING A SACRIFICE TO GIVE AT THE MASS?***

The ministerial priest at Mass leads the assembly, who share in the baptismal priesthood. Together, we all share two priestly responsibilities: We give thanks and we make an offering. Especially during the Eucharistic Prayer, “*the whole congregation of the faithful joins with Christ in confessing the great deeds of God and in the offering of Sacrifice*” (General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), #78).

The word *eucharist* means “thanksgiving.” Throughout the celebration and especially in the Eucharistic Prayer, we give thanks for all that God has done. The priest specifically invites us, “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.” This is the time for all to recall the particular reasons we are giving thanks to God at the Mass.

Our second [baptismal] priestly responsibility is to join in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. On the cross, he offered himself to the Father. At each Mass—unlike those present in the Temple for repeated animal sacrifices for the expiation (forgiveness) of sins—we are present again for this one sacrifice of Jesus Christ for all time.

When we come to the Eucharist, we are bringing a sacrifice—the sacrifice of our very self. We are not only giving thanks, not only making petitions. We are offering to God, all that we are. We are putting our life in God’s hands. Some people find this easy. Some people, though, find it hard to do what God desires. No matter how it feels, offering ourselves is a sacrifice.

Just showing up at church means we have sacrificed the comfort of our home; the lures of other distractions; and the taunts of non-believers. Present with other worshippers, we join together and enjoy their company.

Also, we are called to bring a monetary gift to put into the offertory basket. [After all, the Church relies heavily on these donated gifts to support the many activities of the parish, its staff, and its ministries.] Our gifts do play a direct and practical role. But, they have a Eucharistic meaning, also. It is a part of the sacrifice, that we bring to this celebration of thanksgiving to God; a symbol of our desire to offer God our very self.

The bread and wine brought forward in procession are symbols of the gathered community. They represent the work of farmers, bakers, and vintners, truckers and salespeople, engineers, and craftspeople—many of whose skills are represented among the priesthood of the baptized. We each find ourselves in the story of the sacrificial gifts of the bread and wine—many grains and grapes gathered into one, ground and crushed by the sorrows and burdens we carry, baked and fermented by the warmth of patient love: then presented, blessed, broken, and shared by all.

During the Mass, when the priest receives the gifts from the faithful, he praises God for the bread and wine “we offer.” Even before these elements become the very Sacred Body and Precious Blood of Christ, they are signs of what we offer—gifts already received from God, and the gift of ourselves [—the very essence and spirit of Christian stewardship].

(SR: **My Sacrifice and Yours: Our Participation in the Eucharist**, by Paul Turner, © 2013, Liturgy Training Publications (LTP), Chicago, IL)