

## *Third Sunday of Easter*

Last week we had to note the distinctions and similarities between the many offerings that are made as gifts. We named three: Mass Offerings, Offertory, and Votive Offerings. Our focus turns to Mass Offerings. Why? The Mass Offering involves our most beautiful prayer of the Mass. This type of offering enjoys a long tradition in the Church, beginning with the Scriptures. All things concerning the life of prayer suffer from misunderstandings. Unfortunately, Mass Offerings have several serious misunderstandings. However, we cannot allow these errors to cause us to deny the goodness of Mass Offerings. This denial would happen if the Church eliminated the practice of Mass Offerings in order to prevent the misunderstandings from arising. For the purpose of preserving the goodness of individual Mass Offerings, Pope Paul VI wrote his Apostolic Letter, *Firma in Traditione*. A few years later the Church issued the 1983 Code of Canon Law. Finally the Church issued in 1991 a Decree on Mass Stipends from the Congregation for the Clergy. These three documents directly address the misunderstandings! Documents alone can never put an end to wrong practices. Today in many places, including Saint Margaret of Scotland Parish, misunderstandings concerning Mass Offerings occur. The result leads to hurt feelings and strong emotions. More importantly, the beauty and sacredness of the Mass disappears. I feel that bishops, priests and deacons have the responsibility to make sure that our recent documents are set before the people. The administration of the sacraments belongs to their gift of ordination. Therefore, I feel obliged both by the gift of ordination and by the urgency of ensuring proper practice to put forth the teachings of the Church related to Mass Offerings. The Offertory and Votive offerings bring to mind the pictures of collection baskets, ushers, a singing choir, burning candles, statues, kneelers, and the like. Mass Offerings happen behind the scene. Usually a Mass offering comes from an individual or a family who has made a request of the priest to bring a special intention to the altar of sacrifice when he celebrates the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. This request sometimes will include an offering. The offering will serve the needs of the Church. When someone believes that the offering that accompanies the request means that the Mass has been purchased or that the priest must exclude all other intentions then a serious misunderstanding has occurred! When someone believes that the offering adds to their participation in the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass then a proper understanding has occurred. This explanation brings us back to where we left off just prior to Easter Sunday. Next week we will continue to look at the beauty of Mass Offerings.