

The Offertory – Setting the Altar & Offering our Lives

As we begin the *Liturgy of the Eucharist*, the first part is called **THE OFFERTORY** where everyone is seated, the altar is prepared, and the gifts of bread and wine are brought up to be presented to the priest or the bishop (whoever may be the main celebrant at a Catholic Mass). This ancient ritual has lost quite a bit of its meaning over time simply because in our modern world, we are so disconnected from the growing of grapes and wheat as well as from the production of wine and the unleavened bread, that we lose the grand symbolism in what *bringing up the gifts* is supposed to be for us spiritually during each Mass. We should try our best to imagine the hard work and toil of farmers, who go through the ups and downs of changing weather patterns, of floods and droughts, of fending off the crops from animals, to the true labor it took to plant, grow, maintain, and harvest these things properly throughout history. Spiritually, of course we are not just offering God gifts of bread and wine, we are actually supposed to be thinking about our entire week and all of our joys, sorrows, efforts, sufferings, and successes. Overall, we are not just offering God physical gifts, but we are offering him in a spiritual sense, the gift of our entire selves during each Mass.

When we see the gifts being brought up the aisle, we should stop and think, how can I reflect on my past week, and then offer to God my entire life as a prayer, as a sacrificial offering, as a petition of mercy, and as an act of faith and trust in God as well? Just like the farmer who would have easily connected all of his efforts to the physical gifts that are brought up the aisle and handed to the priest, so to, now our goal is to connect the efforts of our minds, thoughts, words, and actions and offer them at one time to God the Father during each Mass. May we ask God today to help us understand the beauty and importance of the offertory during each and every Catholic Mass, and may we learn how to reflect on our past week and offer our entire selves to God as a prayer. The bread and wine are mere symbols of work/effort/sacrifice/love at this point, but they will be transformed into the very Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ as we move through the rest of the Liturgy of the Eucharist and the fullness of the Catholic Mass.