

BLESSING

With the final blessing of the celebrant, the Mass is ended. We leave the Church with this mandate: "GO IN PEACE TO LOVE AND SERVE THE LORD." The dismissal reminds us that the only way to serve the Lord is in peace and love and our response is: "Thanks be to God."

Priest: May almighty God bless you,
+ the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen

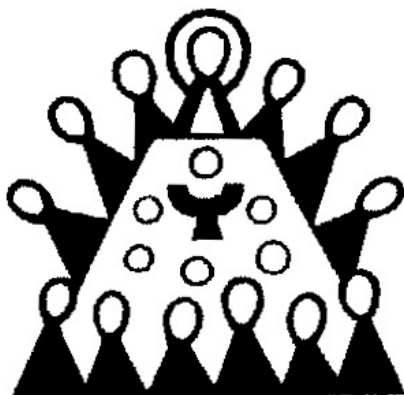
DISMISSAL

All are sent out into the world to do good work, blessing and praising the Lord.

Priest: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

The Priest and Deacon will now reverence the altar once again as they did when the Liturgy began. It is similar to the ritual of love when we visit a friend or relative. The kiss of farewell at the end of the celebration mirrors the kiss whereby the altar is greeted at the beginning of Mass. Both are gestures venerating the table as the symbol of Christ. A hymn is usually sung as the ministers leave the sanctuary.



THE MASS EXPLAINED

WHY DO WE DO WHAT WE DO AT MASS?

It is comforting to know that when we gather to celebrate Sunday liturgy, we are part of a tradition that is nearly 2000 years old. Many of us do not, however, know how that tradition shapes the way we celebrate today. We take you through the Eucharistic ritual, appending to it a commentary that tells you about this tradition - or, why we do what we do at mass.

INTRODUCTION, GATHERING RITE AND PROCESSION

"Liturgy" is the participation of the people of God in the work of God. Through the liturgy Christ, our Redeemer and High Priest, continues the work of our redemption in, with, and through the Church. (CCC no. 1069) Since the Mass, the Church's highest form of prayer, is a gathering of the community, it stands to reason that ceremonies/rituals have developed over the years to set our Sunday gatherings apart from other kinds of assemblies.

In the earliest days of the Church, when the Eucharist was celebrated in homes as part of a meal, there was no special ceremony to mark the beginning of Mass. But after the persecution of the Church ended, when Christians began to build churches for worship, it was the custom for the community to gather in the church before Mass to pray and prepare themselves. The signal for Mass to begin was the entrance of the ministers.

The celebration begins by singing the entrance hymn that reflects the theme of the day, as the priest and other ministers process to the altar. Everybody stands.

The "altar" is by its very nature a table of sacrifice and at the same time a table of the paschal banquet. It is a symbol of Christ as well as of the whole Christian Community. The veneration of the altar at the beginning of the celebration is an act of greeting, which recalls that the common table is holy and sacred to the action of the assembly. It is the place from which prayer ascends like incense before God.

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS AND THE GREETING

We begin the Mass with the sign of the Cross - the oldest gesture of our faith - and a greeting. In this way we go back to the earliest traditions of the Eucharist.

The sign of the cross, a traditional prelude to prayer, is a form of self-blessing with strong baptismal overtones. Every Christian has been baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Community at worship is first and foremost a baptismal community.

Priest: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Priest: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

All: And also with you.

THE PENITENTIAL RITE

Recalling our faults and sins, in preparation for the unity of the Eucharist, is an ancient tradition in the Church. We recall our common need for salvation and God's merciful compassion.

Priest: My brothers and sisters, to prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries, let us call to mind our sins. (or similar)

A pause for silent reflection.

All: I confess to almighty God, and to you my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned through my own fault (all strike their breast) in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done, and in what I have failed to do; and I ask blessed Mary, ever Virgin, all the angels and saints, and you my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

Priest: May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen.

THE KYRIE

The triple invocation which concludes our penitential rite is one of the oldest known prayers of the Mass. In Greek, the Church's first official language, "Lord, have mercy" is "Kyrie eleison" - and even throughout all the centuries when Latin became the Church's

our past. Our current practice corresponds to a description given by the early Church Father, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, in the fourth century.

As the Minister of the Eucharist says "THE BODY OF CHRIST" and we respond "AMEN", each of us is agreeing to the giving over of ourselves to the truth declared. We are declaring and agreeing to become one with Christ, who is the HEAD, and with all Christians, who are members. We say that we are willing to give, act and love as Christ did.

The Communion song expresses "the spiritual union of the communicants, who join their voices in a single song, shows the joy of all, and make the Communion procession an act of unity."

Communion is distributed to the people.

Following communion, a period of silence for reflection is observed, during which we pray and ask God that what He is doing to transform and renew each of us as we presented ourselves to Him in the Eucharist. While we pray silently in our hearts - thanking and praising God - we ask God for all that this sacrament promises.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

The prayer after Communion is not one of thanksgiving. The Priest prays that the reception of Holy Communion will result in certain and definite spiritual benefits for those who have shared the Eucharist - that the spiritual effects of the Eucharist will be carried out in our everyday lives.

Priest: Let us pray...

All: Amen

THE CONCLUDING RITE

The Priest says again "The Lord be with you." The ritual phrase now serves as a farewell, followed by a blessing. The blessing prays that the grace God has given us in this part of our lives will benefit us because this is what we sacrificed with Christ in the Eucharist to the Father through the Holy Spirit.

Priest: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

The Lamb of God, a litany-type acclamation accompanies the breaking of the bread. This rite of the breaking of the bread emphasizes how the Eucharist is a sharing event. Those who break bread are expected to offer their lives for others in the same way Jesus did throughout His life and especially in the passion.

(The Priest breaks the host)

All: Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world:
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world:
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world:
grant us peace.

A small portion of the large host is now placed into the chalice signifying the union of the Body and the Blood of Christ. Just as the double consecration, that is, OF the bread and OF the wine, represented the death of Christ, so it was deemed necessary to symbolize the reuniting of the Body and Blood of Christ before communion - a symbolic re-enactment of the Lord's resurrection.

Priest: May this mingling of the Body and Blood
of our Lord Jesus Christ bring eternal life to us who receive it.

As we prepare ourselves to receive the Eucharist, the priest now says a private and silent prayer to himself to receive Communion. Today he prays this prayer aloud.

Priest: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, by the will of the Father and the work of the Holy Spirit, Your death brought life to the world. By Your Body and Blood free me from all my sins, and from every evil. Keep me faithful to Your teaching, and never let me be parted from You.

HOLY COMMUNION

Priest: This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are those who are called to His Supper.

All: Lord, I am not worthy to receive You, but only say the word and I shall be healed.

The priest and ministers receive communion.

The practice of receiving, both the Consecrated Host - in the hand - and the Precious Blood from a common cup, forges a real link with

language, the "Kyrie" was prayed in Greek, as a sign of our unity with the past.

Priest: Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: Christ, have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Priest: Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

THE GLORIA

This joyful prayer - The Gloria - is really a song of praise, a "canticle". The earliest Christians copied the Jewish practice of singing canticles based on Scripture during their liturgy. Examples of these canticles "The Magnificat" and "The Canticle of Zechariah" are two canticles still used in the Morning and Evening prayer of the Church.

In this tradition, early Christian Communities created their own songs of praise. The Gloria - in the very same words we use today - is found in Christian prayerbooks as early as the year 380!! At first, it was sung only on special feasts, but later it was included in every Sunday celebration.

All: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth. Lord God, heavenly king, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. Lord Jesus Christ, only son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

THE OPENING PRAYER - THE COLLECT

The following prayer, which concludes the introductory rites, has been given the name "Collect" from the Latin word "collecta", which means "to gather up". Even in the early days of the Church, it was a tradition for the leader of the assembly to gather up the needs of the people and offer them to God in prayer.

Priest: Let us pray: *(The priest says the opening prayer)*

All: Amen

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The reading of Scripture has always been an integral part of the Liturgy. When the first Christians gathered to "break bread", they kept the Jewish custom of the "breaking open the Word", as well. From the Hebrew Scriptures, they read the Books of the Law and the Prophets; they shared letters written by early missionaries like Peter and Paul; and they shared, of course, their own story - the Gospels.

THE FIRST READING

The presence of the Old Testament in the first reading manifests the Church's firm conviction that all Scripture is the Word of God. God is speaking to His chosen people in the words of love through the whole Liturgy of the Word. The reading prepares the table of God's Word for the faithful and open up the riches of the Bible for them.

There is continuity between the two Testaments: both lead us to Jesus Christ. The first reading and the Gospel reading are usually connected by a theme. Each time we listen to the readings of the Mass we are like the Disciples walking with the Risen Christ on the road to Emmaus. "Jesus explained to them what was said about Himself in all of the Scriptures, beginning with the books of Moses and the writings of all the prophets" (Luke 24:27). After the first reading we pause in order to reflect and pray about what we have just heard.

The Lector proclaims the First Reading. At the end of the first reading:

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

The Responsorial Psalm is primarily the Assembly's response, in word or song, to the reading, which has just been proclaimed. The Christian Community uses God's Word - taken from the Psalms of the Old Testament - as a response to God's Word, thereby making God's Word their own.

The Cantor or Choir sings the Responsorial Psalm, and the congregation sings the response or the refrain.

the main Eucharistic Prayer and on the other, it knocks at the door of the banquet of the kingdom which the Sacramental Communion anticipates.

Priest: Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Savior gave us:

All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

The prayer of the priest develops the last petition of the Our Father, in which we pray that Christ will make us victorious in the present struggle of good over evil. Our response will reflect once again the first part of the "Our Father" giving the Kingship, the Power and the Glory to Our Father.

Priest: Deliver us, Lord, from every evil, and grant us peace in our day in your mercy keep us free from sin and protect us from all anxiety as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

All: For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever.

THE SIGN OF PEACE

The Sign of Peace has been part of the Mass as early as the fourth century. Peace - "SHALOM" - means all possible prosperity. We pray that each person will live in total and complete harmony with nature, self and God. In the sign of peace we make a spiritual pledge to be open to each other as Christ would, both in the celebration of the Liturgy and after it.

Since the Risen Christ is the source of all peace, this gesture expresses faith that Christ is present in the Assembly because of reconciliation and wholeness.

Priest: Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles: I leave you peace, my peace I give you. Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and grant us the peace and unity of your kingdom where you live for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

Priest: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

All: And also with you.

Deacon/Priest: Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

destiny. Namely, all of creation is born in the heart of the Father, fruits of his love. All of creation is established in existence through Christ. All of creation is filled with love of the Holy Spirit. Our "GREAT AMEN" to this prayer acclaims our assent and our participation in the entire Eucharistic Prayer, which has made present Christ's actions, and is the center of our Catholic Faith.

Priest: Through Him, with Him, in Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, for ever and ever.
All: Amen.

COMMUNION RITE

THE LORD'S PRAYER

The Lord's Prayer - part of the Eucharist since the late 400's - "is truly the summary of the whole gospel" (Tertullian, *De Orat.* 1:PL 1, 1155). Its original proclamation is found in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus teaches us His new life by words; and teaches us to ask for it by our prayer. This prayer not only teaches us what things to ask for, but also in what order we should desire them (St. Thomas Aquinas, *STH II-II*, 83,9). This prayer that comes to us from Jesus is truly unique. On the one hand, the only Son gives us the words His Father gave Him (Jn. 17:7). He is the master of our prayer.

On the other hand, Christ, as the Word made flesh, knows in His human heart the needs of His human sisters and brothers, and reveals them to us. He is the model of our prayer. Through this prayer, we place ourselves in the presence of God - "Our Father, Who art in Heaven..." - to adore, to love and to bless Him. This prayer first carries us toward Our Father to help us think of the One whom we love. "Hallowed be Thy name... Thy kingdom come...Thy will be done...". No mention of us only the Loved One.

The second series of petitions unfolds our needs. "Give us...forgive us...lead us not...deliver us...". They ask that our lives be nourished, healed of sin, and made victorious in the struggle of good over evil.

In the Eucharistic Liturgy, the Lord's Prayer appears as the prayer of the whole Church and is situated in a special place to reveal its full meaning and efficacy. Placed between the just completed Eucharistic Prayer and our Communion, the Lord's Prayer sums up on the one hand all the petitions and intercessions just expressed in

THE SECOND READING

In the Second Reading, formerly termed the Epistle, the assembly encounters the early Church living its Christian faith. This witness of the apostolic community provides an example for all times, since Christians of every age are to recall the love of the Father made present in Christ, the good news of redemption and the duty of Christian love. All followers of Jesus are called to live decently and without blemish, to be tolerant of one another and to be steadfast in the faith.

The Lector proclaims the Second Reading. At the end of the reading:

Reader: The word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING

The Gospel acclamation is normally expressive of Paschal joy, recalling the Life, Death, Resurrection and Second Coming of Jesus. This song Alleluia, which accompanies the Gospel procession, comes from a Hebrew word that means "Praise God". The whole assembly praises Christ who comes to proclaim the Good News of salvation.

The Gospel is very sacred, since these are the words and deeds of Christ, we surround it by many distinct acts of respect; one of these is that we stand for the Gospel Reading.

Whereas, any lector could proclaim the other readings, a special minister was appointed to read the Gospel. In the early Church it was the Deacon who was considered the special example of Christ as servant. Only in the absence of a Deacon does the Priest proclaim the Gospel.

The making of small signs of the Cross on the book, forehead, mouth and heart express readiness to open one's mind to the Word, to confess it with the mouth, and to safeguard it in the heart. We are now ready to listen to the Gospel.

Priest/Deacon: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Priest/Deacon: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
(Mark/Luke/John).

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

The Gospel is proclaimed by the Deacon or the Priest. When the reading of the Gospel is finished, the assembly responds with the acclamation.

Priest/Deacon: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

THE HOMILY

The homily, an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word, is a continuation of God's saving message, which nourishes faith and conversion. It is more than just a sermon or talk about how we are to live or what we are to believe. It is a proclamation of God's saving deeds in Christ. Just as a large piece of bread is broken to feed individual persons, the Word of God must be broken open so it can be received and digested by the Assembly.

THE NICENE CREED

And now, as we stand together to proclaim our faith through the Creed, we are responding "Yes" to the message of God's Word. The oldest faith statement in the Church is called the Apostle's Creed. With its roots in the first centuries of the Church, it was highly prized as a summary of all Christian teaching. Catechumens had to memorize it and recite it privately to the Bishop before being baptized. It was considered too secret and special to be committed to paper.

The Creed we use in the Liturgy today is called the Nicene-Constantinople Creed because these two early Ecumenical Church Councils developed it. It is also called the "ecumenical creed" since it forms a part of the liturgy of other Christian denominations. The Creed, therefore, is a confession of faith that unites us with the Church throughout the world.

We bow at the words "By the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary and became man" because the Incarnation is the most sacred moment of all creation.

All: We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he

MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION

The "Mystery of Faith" is the recognition of Christ's three-fold action of Death, Resurrection and Second Coming.

Priest: Let us proclaim the mystery of faith.

All: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

God is ever faithful to His covenant. God's saving deeds in the power of Christ are taking effect here and now! We celebrate all that Christ did and does for us.

Priest: Father, calling to mind the death Your Son endured for our Salvation, His glorious resurrection and ascension into heaven, and ready to greet Him when He comes again, we offer You in thanksgiving this holy and living sacrifice.

Our main prayer at each Eucharist is for unity that comes through reconciliation by the offering of all the faithful themselves to the Father with and through Christ. In prayers of thanks and petition, we pray for the Pope, the bishop, and all the members of the Church, living and deceased. Let us listen to these prayers as if we are hearing them for the first time.

Priest: Look with favor on your Church's offering, and see the Victim whose death has reconciled us to yourself. Grant that we, who are nourished by his body and blood, may be filled with His Holy Spirit, and become one body, one spirit in Christ. May he make us an everlasting gift to you and enable us to share in the inheritance of your saints, with Mary, the virgin Mother of God; with the apostles, and the martyrs. (Saint N. the saint of the day or patron saint) and all your saints, whose constant intercession we rely for help. Lord, may this sacrifice, which has made our peace with you, advance the peace and salvation of all the world. Strengthen in faith and love your pilgrim Church on earth; your servant, Pope N., our bishop N., and all bishops, with the clergy and the entire people your Son has gained for you. Father, hear the prayers of the family you have gathered here before you. In mercy and love unite all your children wherever they may be. Welcome into you kingdom our departed brothers and sisters, and all who have left this world in your friendship. We hope to enjoy forever the vision of your glory, Through Christ our Lord, from whom all good things come.

The final words of praise - the Doxology - summarize the Eucharistic Prayer. The priest lifts up the Body and Blood of Christ in a gesture of offering. This signifies the history of the world and its ultimate

PREFACE

The Preface, which follows, praises God the Father for His gifts of creation and redemption. We will enter the prayer again with Isaiah's song of praise, called Holy, Holy, Holy which was the common Morning Prayer in the synagogues and the praise the crowd offered Jesus as he entered Jerusalem on a donkey's back.

Priest says the Preface.

All: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory, Hosanna in the highest, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

Most of the prayers which follow are prayers of praise. The following is Eucharistic Prayer III.

As a Jewish father would call on God's blessing, in a few moments the priest will place his hands over the bread and wine to be blessed.

Priest: Father, you are holy indeed, and all creation rightly gives you praise. All life, all holiness comes from you through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, by the working of the Holy Spirit. From age to age you gather a people to yourself, so that from east to west a perfect offering may be made to the glory of your name. And so, Father, we bring you these gifts. We ask you to make them holy by the power of your Spirit, that they may become the body and blood of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at whose command we celebrate this Eucharist.

The words of consecration are taken from the accounts of the Last Supper in Sacred Scripture. The bread and wine are actually changed into Christ's Body and Blood. The priest will then raise each for veneration.

Priest: On the night he was betrayed, He took bread and gave you thanks and praise. He broke the bread, gave it to His disciples, and said: Take this all of you, and eat it: this is my body, which will be given up for you. When supper was ended, he took the cup. Again he gave you thanks and praise, gave the cup to his disciples, and said: Take this, all of you, and drink from it: this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of me.

came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

THE PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Through the Prayer of the Faithful, we pray that our assembly really comes to resemble the Body of Christ - a body at peace: providing shelter for the homeless, healing for the sick and food for the hungry. We know from reading Saint Paul's letters that this custom of offering general intercessions existed in the earliest Christian Communities.

Today, the Prayer of the Faithful is a prayer of petition, remembering our universal concerns, namely for the Church, for the world leaders and public authorities, for the poor and the oppressed, for the local community and parish; and for particular celebrations and special intentions.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

The second major part of the Mass contains elements of two ancient traditions - the meal, or bread breaking, which Jesus left as His memorial; and the Hebrew tradition of sacrifice offered to God. These two elements weave together in the symbolic actions and prayers of the Eucharist.

Please note that up until now, all of the actions have taken place away from the altar (either at the Priest's chair or at the pulpit also known as the ambo). Everything will now center on the altar where the Eucharistic Sacrifice will take place. The altar is prepared; the gifts are "set apart" and presented as a sign of the community's desire to incorporate itself in the sacrifice of Christ.

You will recall that when Jesus was at Supper with His Disciples, He took bread, broke the bread and gave it to His Disciples saying, "Do this in memory of me." The Mass then, is the perpetuation of the Last Supper of Holy Thursday and the Sacrifice on the Cross, of Good Friday.

THE OFFERTORY

As early Christians brought wine and bread to be consumed at the Liturgy, and also money and other gifts to be given to the poor. Bread and wine recall the last supper Jesus shared with His Disciples. They ate bread and drank wine because it was their everyday food. The gifts are food, nourishment necessary for living. So our bread and wine at Mass represent our everyday lives, our everyday selves, the essence of our lives. The Church has revived this procession, and asks us to be reminded that a similar procession will take place later in the Mass when you process up the aisle to receive Communion. These gifts which have been brought to the altar, challenge us to give ourselves in thanksgiving for everything that God has given us.

A hymn may be sung while the bread and wine are brought to the altar. If no song is sung, then the people may make the responses to the prayer of offering given here.

Priest: Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this bread to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made. It will become for us the bread of life.

All: Blessed be God for ever.

The priest mixes a little water with the wine to symbolize the human and the divine natures of Christ joined in the Mystery of the Incarnation - God becoming human as the Priest continues.

Priest: (*quietly*) By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity.

Priest: Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this wine to offer, fruit of the vine and work of human hands. It will become our spiritual drink.

All: Blessed be God for ever.

Priest: (*quietly*) Lord God, we ask you to receive us and be pleased with the sacrifice we offer you with humble and contrite hearts.

The priest washes his hands as a symbol of internal purification to prepare for the most sacred part of the Mass. In former days, it was quite often a real necessity for the Priest to wash his hands after receiving the gifts of the people - which may have included fresh fish and live chickens as well as bread and wine!

Priest: (*quietly*) Lord, wash away my iniquity; cleanse me from my sin.

INVITATION TO PRAYER

Priest: Pray, brethren, that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

All: May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good, and the good of all his Church.

The prayer over the gifts asks for God's acceptance of our gifts, and expresses our desire to be united with these gifts of bread and wine, which will become Jesus, our Lord.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

Now we arrive at the most sacred part, the Eucharistic Prayer, "the center and high point to the entire celebration. It is essentially a statement of praise and thanksgiving for God's works of salvation, making present both the body and blood of the Lord and his great redeeming actions in our lives.

Recall that since the Apostles were Jews, they brought their familiar religious practices to Christianity. The Eucharistic Prayer is based on the Jewish Table Prayers.

The priest prays to God on our behalf, but as a reminder that we are all offering this prayer, we will enter into a dialogue three times. The first will take place at the beginning of the Preface.

Priest: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Priest: Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them up to the Lord.

Priest: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All: It is right to give him thanks and praise.