

Dear sisters and brothers,

The Second Vatican Council teaches that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life (L.G.11). In our series on the parts of the Mass, we have already walked through the Introductory Rites, and last week we stood at the Liturgy of the Word where Christ speaks to His people.

Today we come to “**the central table,**” the table at the very heart of the Church’s life, **the Eucharist**. Here, the very Body once broken on Calvary and the very Blood once poured out for our salvation become truly present on this altar.

Now, there is so much richness in this part of the Mass that we could spend weeks just dwelling here. But today we will focus on **two main movements:**

- 1. The Preparation of the Gifts** – here we will look at the bread, the wine, our monetary collection, and even the priest’s washing of hands.
- 2. The Eucharistic Prayer** – the very heart of the Mass, where we will reflect on **the Preface, the Sanctus, the Epiclesis** (the calling down of the Holy Spirit), **the Words of Consecration**, and finally, **the Doxology with the Great Amen**.

So let us walk step by step discovering together why this is the heart of our Catholic life and how we can enter it more fully each Sunday.

We begin with the first movement of the Liturgy of the Eucharist: The **Preparation of the Gifts and the Offertory**.

After the Prayers of the Faithful, the altar is prepared and the gifts of bread, wine, and offerings are brought forward. From the beginning of salvation history, **God has taken what His people offered and transformed it**—Abel’s lamb, Abraham’s son, Melchizedek’s bread and wine (Gen 14:18).

At first glance it looks simple: bread, wine, and the collection. Bread and wine—**fruit of the earth and work of human hands**—symbolize creation and human labor.

And why the monetary collection here? Alongside the bread and wine, the baskets are passed. Yes, it helps sustain the parish and its ministries—but more deeply, it is an act of worship.

From Israel's offerings (Ex 35:5) to Jesus' reminder that "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Mt 6:21), "giving" proclaims that we are stewards, not owners. In giving, we declare that money is not our master.

The early Christians brought bread, wine, oil, or money, some for the Mass, some for the priest, much for the poor. The offertory was a sign of solidarity, each one giving according to their means.

Dear parents, this is a teachable moment. Whisper to your children: "We give because everything we have is God's gift."

The priest then blesses the bread and wine: "*Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation,*" echoing Melchizedek and Jesus at the Last Supper.

We respond: "*Blessed be God forever.*"

Then we notice a quiet but profound action: The priest then pours wine into the chalice and adds a single drop of water. The wine symbolizes **Christ's divine nature**, and the drop of water **represents His human nature**—and with it, our own.

Once mingled, they can never be separated. In the same way, we pray that our humanity may be forever united with Christ in the Eucharist.

As this happens, we respond with faith: "*Blessed be God forever.*"

And while he performs this action, the priest prays silently: "*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.*"

The priest then bows, praying words of humility from Daniel, then washes his hands with Psalm 51: "Wash me, O Lord, from my iniquity."

Finally he invites us: *“Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God.”* Notice: my sacrifice and yours. The Eucharist is Christ’s sacrifice, but we participate by offering ourselves. We respond with faith: “May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands, for the praise and glory of His name...”

After the gifts are prepared, **we rise for the most sacred prayer of the Mass: The Eucharistic Prayer.** This is the high point of the entire celebration—the moment when the Church gives thanks, offers sacrifice, and is joined most deeply to Christ.

The Eucharistic Prayer begins with the familiar Preface dialogue:

“The Lord be with you.” — “And with your spirit.”

“Lift up your hearts.” — “We lift them up to the Lord.”

“Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.” — “It is right and just.”

And notice the depth: when the priest invites, **“Lift up your hearts,”** he is calling us to detach from earthly distractions and fix our gaze on God. Jesus Himself said: “Wherever your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Mt 6:21). In this moment, the Church reminds us that our treasure is not money, not possessions, not success—**our treasure is Christ.** And so we lift our hearts to Him.

The Preface that follows is pure thanksgiving—creation, redemption, Christ’s saving work, the saints. That is what **“Eucharist”** means: **thanksgiving.** It leads into the Sanctus—“Holy, Holy, Holy”—a hymn we do not sing alone. Isaiah and John saw heaven filled with this song, and at Mass we join the angels in their endless praise.

Then, filled with awe, we fall to our knees. Kneeling is not just a Catholic gesture, it is the posture of adoration. The Fathers of the Church once said the devil has no knees, because pride keeps him from bowing. But we bend low, humbly honoring the One who has already stooped down to us in love.

Next comes **the epiclesis**—the **calling down of the Holy Spirit**.

The priest extends his hands over the gifts in a downward gesture. This is called the epiclesis—a word that literally means **“calling upon.”**

Here, we are in a **profoundly Trinitarian moment**. We call upon the Father, the Creator, to send the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, so that the simple gifts of bread and wine may become Christ the Son, our Redeemer.

Think of it: What we place on the altar is always returned transformed—just as grain becomes bread, now bread becomes the very Body of Christ.

Bells often ring here, reminding us that heaven is touching earth, as the Spirit descends like at creation and the Annunciation.

Now comes the most solemn moment. The priest speaks Christ’s words in the first person: “This is my Body... This is the chalice of my Blood.”

He does not say, “This represents.” He does not say, “This reminds you of.” He says, “This is.”

St. Thomas Aquinas reminds us: at this moment, by the power of Christ working through the priest’s ordination, the bread and wine are changed in their very substance into the Body and Blood of Christ. **We call this mystery transubstantiation**.

After the consecration, the priest raises the Host and then the Chalice high above the altar. In that silence, we gaze upon Jesus truly with us. This is a moment of pure prayer and adoration. Let your heart whisper: **“Thank You, Lord, for being here—for dying for me, for remaining with us always.”** Even the priest genuflects/bows low before Him, for Christ is truly present on the altar.

Then the priest proclaims: **“The mystery of faith.”** And we answer to the Lord Himself: *“We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.”*

Dear sisters and brothers, the Eucharistic Prayer also includes **three great intercessions**, showing how wide the embrace of the Mass really is:

1. For the Church – We pray for the Pope, our bishop, and all who shepherd God’s people, that they may guide with courage and humility.

2. For the Dead – We commend our loved ones and the forgotten departed to Christ’s redeeming sacrifice. Here is the moment to whisper a name in your heart, placing that soul into the chalice of Christ’s love.

3. With the Saints – We join our voices with Mary, Joseph, the apostles, martyrs, and all the saints. The Mass is never just “us in a room”—the whole Church in heaven prays with us, reminding us that holiness is possible.

These intercessions show the full scope of the Eucharist: for the Church on earth, for the souls in purgatory, and with the saints in glory. Heaven, earth, and eternity are drawn into one act of worship.

The Eucharistic Prayer then reaches **its climax in the Great Doxology**. The priest lifts high the Body and Blood of Christ and proclaims: *“Through Him, and with Him, and in Him, O God, almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is Yours, forever and ever.”*

In that moment, heaven and earth join in pure praise. And then comes your part: **the Great Amen**. It is not a whisper but our covenant word, our liturgical ***“I do.”*** ***With it, we say: Yes, Lord. I believe. I give my life. I await Communion with You, my Lord and my God.***

Brothers and sisters, we have walked through the Liturgy of the Eucharist. And at its heart we find the greatest gift of all: Jesus Himself. This moment is sacred. It is vital. It deserves our full attention. As He becomes truly present to us—on this altar, in this church, in this very moment—let us also be truly present to Him. For here, in the Eucharist, Christ gives everything for us. Let us give ourselves completely to Him. **Amen.**