



## The Revised *General Instruction of the Roman Missal:*

### Order of Mass

#### Part 2: Liturgy of the Eucharist Preparation of the Altar and Gifts The Eucharistic Prayer

The synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke show us that at the Last Supper, Jesus took bread and wine, blessed them, broke the bread, and gave the bread and wine to his disciples (Mt. 26:26). The Church has followed the example of Jesus ever since. Indeed, these four actions of the Lord happen in the three movements of the Liturgy of the Eucharist: the Preparation of the Altar and Gifts, the Eucharistic Prayer, and the Rite of Communion. The first two movements are the subject of this insert.

#### **Preparation of the Altar and Gifts**

The first Christians brought bread and wine (and other items to support the Church's work) from their homes for the community's Eucharistic celebration. Today, the faithful no longer bring bread and wine to Mass, but they do continue to support the mission of the Church—local and universal—by giving of their financial resources. Many parishes regularly collect food and clothing for the poor at this time also.

If ushers (men and women, adults and youth) take up the collection, they reverence the altar with a profound bow—not a genuflection—before beginning their task. Alternately, the entire assembly can be invited to make the procession with their gifts to baskets placed near the altar.

When more than one collection is taken up at Mass, additional collections should follow immediately after the first one. Clearly, additional baskets and

ushers will be needed so that the second collection overlaps the first collection.

While the gifts are collected, the altar table is prepared. Since the altar cloth is already on the altar (*GIRM*, 117), the deacon (or in his absence, a server) places the corporal, chalice, purificator, and Missal on the altar (*GIRM*, 178, 139). Additional patens and chalices needed for Communion are not placed on the altar at this point but during the Fraction Rite.<sup>1</sup>

“The offerings of the faithful are received by the priest, assisted by the acolyte or other minister. The bread and wine for the Eucharist are carried to the celebrant, who places them upon the altar, while other gifts are put in another appropriate place” (*GIRM*, 140). As this rubric makes clear, the presider, acting on behalf of the assembly, accepts the bread and wine; it is not appropriate that the gifts be placed directly on the altar by the faithful who carry them.

The deacon (or a priest) prepares the chalice by adding a little water to the wine. If incense is used, the gifts, altar, cross, priest, and people are incensed. After the priest washes his hands at the side of the altar, he invites the assembly to pray. The revised *General Instruction* introduces a new directive at this point: the assembly stands and then makes the response, “May the Lord accept this sacrifice at your hands.”

The celebrant concludes the Preparation of the Altar and Gifts by singing or saying the prayer over the gifts.

### The Eucharistic Prayer

The Eucharistic Prayer is “the center and summit of the entire celebration” (*GIRM*, 78). Addressed to the Father through the Son and in the Holy Spirit, it thanks and praises God for the work of our redemption in Jesus the Lord. Through this prayer of the Church, the assembly—united with the angels and saints—remembers Christ’s passion, death, and resurrection, which is made present to the faithful around the altar. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the gifts of bread and wine are changed substantially into the Body and Blood of Christ so that those who receive them in Communion may be changed to be like him (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1353).

“The Eucharistic Prayer demands, by its very nature, that the priest say it in virtue of his ordination. The people, for their part, should associate themselves with the priest in faith and in silence, as well as through their parts as prescribed in the course of the Eucharistic Prayer: namely the responses in the Preface dialogue, the *Sanctus*, the acclamation after the consecration, the acclamatory *Amen* after the final doxology, as well as other acclamations approved by the Conference of Bishops and recognized by the Holy See” (*GIRM*, 147).

The responses made by the assembly are most appropriately sung, even at daily Mass. Because the Eucharistic Prayer is one prayer (though composed of different elements), the musical setting of the responses should likewise manifest unity. To sing a *Holy, Holy* by one composer, the Memorial Acclamation by another, and the Great Amen by a

third does not promote the unity signified in this central prayer of the Church.

The assembly stands from the beginning of the prayer through the singing of the *Holy, Holy, Holy*, after which the faithful kneel. The assembly kneels until *after* the Great Amen concludes. The revised *General Instruction* has added a gesture of reverence for persons who do not kneel during the institution narrative: If it is not possible to kneel “on occasion by reasons of health, lack of space, the large number of people present, or some other good reason, [then] those who do not kneel ought to make a profound bow when the priest genuflects after the consecration” (*GIRM*, 43).



Jesus’ taking and blessing the bread. The last insert in this series will focus on the breaking of the bread and distributing it in the Rite of Communion.

The Preparation of the Altar and Gifts and the Eucharistic Prayer manifest liturgically

#### Note

<sup>1</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Norms for the Celebration and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America*, March 28, 2002, n. 37.

Imprimatur: + Stephen E. Blaire, D.D.  
Bishop of Stockton  
May 17, 2003

© 2003 by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Stockton, 1105 N. Lincoln Street, Stockton, CA 95203. All Rights Reserved.

Artwork by Steve Erspamer, S.M.