



NATIONAL Eucharistic Revival

Step-by-Step Walk Through the Mass Do This in Remembrance of Me, Part 35, Offertory Water and Wine By FR. LUKE SPANNAGEL



As we continue through the **Offertory**, this time we take a closer look at some of the prayers at the altar as the bread and wine are placed there. After the bread and wine are brought forward, they are placed on the altar by the priest (or a deacon if there is one present). Then the priest, speaking either silently or aloud, says the prayers over the bread and wine. These are the prayers that begin, “Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the bread we offer you: fruit of the earth and work of human hands, it will become for us the bread of life.”

You may also recognize the prayer as the priest holds the chalice: “Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the wine we offer you: fruit of the vine and work of human hands, it will become our spiritual drink.” As the Diocese of Peoria reminds us, “If there is no music playing, [the priest] may do this out loud. In this case, we would respond to these prayers by saying, ‘Blessed be God forever!’ These prayers are ancient and have profound meaning. We place before him in our procession ‘our’ gifts, yet in these formulas we immediately admit that while they are ‘work of human hands’ they are still ultimately from God. For this reason, we bless God for his goodness and ask him to accept and transform the gifts into ‘bread of life’ and ‘spiritual drink’” (*A Study of the Mass*, p. 11).

The Mystery of the Water and Wine

As the priest is preparing the wine, the Diocese of Peoria continues, “notice that he places a small amount of water into the chalice with the wine. As he does this he says: ‘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 Church maintains this very ancient custom of mixing water and wine as it uniquely symbolizes what we pray for. At the Mass, we offer our lives in union with Christ. In all our weakness, in all our smallness, we pray to be inseparably united to the divine. The small drops of water symbolize us. As the water becomes inseparably united to the wine, we pray we may become inseparably united to Jesus Christ” (“A Study of the Mass,” p. 11–12).

Along these lines, Charles Belmonte teaches, “It was ancient custom to take the wine mixed with water, which the chalice of Jesus in the Last Supper contained. The Church retained this gesture to symbolize the sanctification of the Christian which is accomplished through his union with Jesus Christ. The water becomes the symbol of ourselves: our lives, with our weaknesses. Have you stopped to think what happens to the drops of water mixed with the wine? They are absorbed by it and then become inseparable from it. So does Jesus absorb us. The drops of water are of negligible worth; they are not even enough to quench anyone’s thirst. Yet they will end up being divine blood! And all that because they let themselves be mixed with the wine and be dissolved in it, thus manifesting self-denial, personal renunciation. At this moment, we grow in our desire to offer ourselves in total self-surrender, as the few drops of water in the chalice have reminded us. So, we will be able to become one with Jesus Christ after the Consecration” (*Understanding the Mass*, p. 114).

An Opportunity for Personal Prayer

What a meaningful moment in this part of the Mass! A transition time in the Mass that could be easily missed, these brief prayers sometimes said silently provide a great invitation for prayer:

Jesus, help my heart to unite more perfectly with yours. I feel at times so far from you, but you give of yourself so that I have this opportunity to be more closely united with you. Help me to be attentive in this moment and bring my heart joy from knowing you will soon be truly present on the altar, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity, in the Eucharist!