



NATIONAL
**Eucharistic
Revival**

**Step-by-Step Walk Through the Mass
Do This in Remembrance of Me, Part 36,
Bread and Wine
By FR. LUKE SPANNAGEL**



Continuing our review of the **Offertory** and the gifts of bread and wine, we take time to address a few common questions.

Why do we use bread and wine and not something else?

During my years on campus, I recall meeting a student who had grown up in an Asian country. He said that, early on in his Christian journey, he would think of “daily bread” as a portion of rice, since that is what he was most familiar with. His question was a practical one: Why didn’t the Church adapt what was used for Mass as the Church spread throughout the world? For a short answer, the Church has stayed consistent with what Jesus used at the Last Supper. As Fr. Guy Oury says, bread and wine would have been “daily fare” for the people of the Holy Land and “were particularly suitable to convey [Christ nourishing us with true and everlasting life] because they were typical nourishment. Obviously, Jews at the time of Christ consumed other food and drink besides bread and wine, and indeed, on the table of the Last Supper where the Passover meal was celebrated, lay a lamb... But Christ made a choice of bread and wine, and the Church has scrupulously conformed to what he instituted, using only bread from wheat and wine from grapes. The Church has never felt itself authorized to modify what it has received from the Lord himself” (*The Mass*, p. 78). This has been true as the Church spread to places where different grains as well as other drinks were common. In many places, missionaries brought with them wheat seeds and grape seedlings so that what was needed for the wine and hosts could be grown locally.

Why do we use unleavened bread?

Similar to the use of wheat, Fr. Guy Oury observes that the Church wishes to honor the tradition handed down to us. “At the time of Christ the ancient feast of Azymes had been merged with the feast of Passover. On the eve of Passover unleavened breads were prepared to commemorate what had happened when the Hebrews fled from Egypt: in their haste they could not have their dough leavened... At the Last Supper (according to the Synoptic Gospels, but not John) Jesus observed the Passover ritual, which called for unleavened bread” (*The Mass*, p. 80). We should note that in some places in the early Latin Church, as well as still currently in Eastern Rite and Eastern Orthodox Churches, leavened bread is used for the Eucharist. Each Rite within our Church is able to determine certain details for the celebration of the Mass. However, the core elements of the Mass will always be present and consistent.

What about the wine?

“The symbolism of wine is as rich as that of bread... Among Jews wine conveyed the idea of feasting and rejoicing... Wine has no doubt become less meaningful than it was [for Christians of earlier times. For them, wine was] thought to nourish the body, restore health, prevent sickness, help digestion, maintain bodily temperature, clarify ideas, dilate the arteries, rest the brain, halt congestion of the liver, chase away the ‘blues,’ as well as being useful for washing and cleansing wounds” (*The Mass*, p. 81–82). While the natural elements of wine may do these things for the body, doesn’t the Blood of Christ do so many more powerful things for body and soul?

Lastly, why do we call the bread we use at Mass “hosts?”

Charles Belmonte teaches that “originally, ‘host’ (from Latin *hostire*, to strike) referred to any animal about to be sacrificed” (*Understanding the Mass*, p. 112). Since the bread is the offering made for the sacrifice of the Mass, it is fittingly called by the name *host*. To be proper and reverent, after the bread has been changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus, hosts should be called “Consecrated Hosts” or “Sacred Hosts,” out of honor for Jesus Christ, who is now truly present.

Next time, we will consider the question: Does it seem like sometimes the priest is talking to himself up at the altar? Let’s find out what he is praying!