



NATIONAL  
**Eucharistic  
Revival**

**Step-by-Step Walk Through the Mass  
Do This in Remembrance of Me, Part 37,  
Silent, Humble, Contrite  
By FR. LUKE SPANNAGEL**



As we continue our walk through the **Offertory** of the Mass, have you ever noticed that sometimes the priest is saying something you can't hear (or can barely hear)? As we have reflected on previously, there are moments in the Mass—such as before proclaiming the Gospel—where the priest prays a prayer silently or quietly. These prayers are to prepare the priests (or deacons) for what comes next; they provide a moment of reflection for the priest and open his heart. Another one of these quiet prayers happens after the offering of bread and wine during the Offertory.

**We offer ourselves...**

After placing the bread and wine on the altar, the priest bows and says quietly, “With humble spirit and contrite heart may we be accepted by you, O Lord, and may our sacrifice in your sight this day be pleasing to you, Lord God.” As the Diocese of Peoria explains, “In this prayer, the priest silently speaks in his own name and on behalf of all the faithful, asking that God accept the sacrifice and find us in humility and contrition” (*A Study of the Mass*, p. 12). The priest acknowledges the truth about how much we need God and that we at times fall short of living up to his standards. With that mindset, the priest is asking God to accept us and the sacrifice as we are, not faulty Christians who have given up and thrown in the towel, but honest Christians who admit our shortcomings and yet strive toward that perfection to which God calls us.

Reflecting on this prayer, Edward Sri invites us: “Notice how the sacrifice envisioned in this prayer is not some *thing* being offered to God, like bread and wine, but the people assembled: ‘May *we* be accepted by you...’ This theme, as well as the mention of a humble spirit and contrite heart, recalls the petition of the three Hebrew men thrown in the fiery furnace in Daniel [Chapter 3]” (*A Biblical Walk Through the Mass*, p. 90). If you have read this interesting story, you know that these three faithful men would not worship a false image made of gold by King Nebuchadnezzar. As punishment, they were thrown into a burning furnace, heated seven times more than normal. Instead of burning, the three men walked around unharmed and began singing a long hymn of praise to God. This hymn praises God for his goodness, recalls the many blessings he has given to his people, and then asks every part of creation to sing praise to God. Just before this last part, the three men say to God that they offer all they have (which is themselves) and ask him to accept them as if they were providing the best offering one could imagine (tens of thousands of rams, bulls, and fat lambs).

**... and receive God himself.**

Our prayer in the Mass, which echoes the prayer of the three faithful men, works in a very similar way. We have just said to God that we offer him the gifts of bread and wine, which are not much even by human standards. Along with the bread and wine, we have ourselves to offer, and we all know that sometimes we are not very worthy offerings to God either. Yet, we ask God to accept what we offer as if it were good and pleasing to him. And what is God's response? For the last 2000 years of Masses, no matter how big or small the congregation, no matter how strong or how weak their faith, no matter how worthy (or unworthy) we think our offerings are, God accepts them. As if that weren't enough, God in his love and generosity does something unbelievable with our meager offerings. He changes them into the very Body and Blood of Jesus Christ! God accepts the bread and wine from us and gives us back the gift of himself! What a generous exchange! What a great God we have!