



**Step-by-Step Walk Through the Mass
Do This in Remembrance of Me, Part 49,
Consecration
by FR. LUKE SPANNAGEL**



After the calling down of the Holy Spirit, we are now ready for the Consecration. As Charles Belmonte reminds us, “What mankind has been waiting for through centuries is now going to take place among us” (Understanding the Mass, p. 138). At this moment of the Mass, the priest takes the bread and chalice of wine that will become the Body and Blood of Jesus. We hear the words of Jesus: “Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my Body, which will be given up for you.” And soon after, “Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my Blood, the Blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in memory of me.” Let’s pause for a moment and think about what just happened in the Mass: Jesus himself, Almighty God, Second Person of the Trinity, through the hands and voice of the priest, is now truly, really, and substantially present on the altar!

Jesus Becomes Truly Present to Us

After the Consecration, the priest raises the host and chalice above the altar in a moment of silence. This elevation is a wonderful moment of prayer and adoration. We are gazing upon Jesus truly with us, and in that moment, we can adore him for all he has done for us: that he would be willing to come and dwell among us. That he would be willing to bear the burden of our sins on the cross so we could be forgiven. That he loves us so much that he remains with us in the Blessed Sacrament. Praise him!

Following the elevation, the priest places the host and the chalice on the altar, and then he genuflects in adoration to the Lord Jesus present on the altar. In this moment during the Mass, I often recall a very influential priest in my life. He shared that anytime he would make a genuflection, he would pray the words of St. Thomas from Divine Mercy Sunday, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28). He said that praying these words always reminds him of who is truly present in front of him, that Jesus is truly in our midst!

The Difference between Adoration and the Mass

Going even deeper on the moment of elevation, Charles Belmonte explains, “Three things are intended by the elevation of the sacred host: [1] To expose Jesus Christ, now present on the altar, to the adoration of the faithful. [2] To re-present the elevation of Jesus Christ’s body on the cross... [3] To offer to God in silence this only one Victim of our salvation.” Belmonte continues, “During the elevation, we should glance at the Eucharistic species in adoration. But we should also remember that we have come to Mass not only to worship Jesus Christ present in the sacrament of the altar. That could be done equally well in the Exposition and Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament. We come to Mass also to offer Jesus Christ on the cross with the priest and the entire Church, and to offer ourselves to God with Jesus Christ and as part of the Mystical Body. In other words, we come mainly to share in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. As part of the Church, we are united to Christ in the act wherein he himself offers his sacrifice to his Father” (Understanding the Mass, pp. 142–143). As we have said before during the Offertory, the Mass truly is an invitation for us to share in the sacrifice of Jesus. We will come back to that as we continue through the Eucharistic Prayer.

In Persona Christi during the Consecration

One more thing on the Consecration: did you notice anything different about how the priest says those words of Jesus during the Consecration? As the Diocese of Peoria teaches, “The priest speaks in the first person because he is acting in the person of Christ [this is called in persona Christi]. At his ordination, the priest is configured to Christ the High Priest in such a way that he acts in his person as he continues the priestly work of Christ here on earth. It was Christ himself at the Last Supper who commanded his apostles to continue this great mystery and sacrifice of love throughout the ages. The same Word that created the heavens and the earth in the beginning, and the same Word that became flesh in the womb of Mary, is the same Word that commands the bread and wine to be the very Body and Blood of Christ” (A Study of the Mass, p. 15). For me as a priest, this is always one of the most humbling and awe-inspiring moments. I’ll never forget nearly 20 years ago at my first Mass of Thanksgiving, holding the Sacred Host—truly Jesus—and marveling in wonder: “Lord, how did you just do that... with these hands... with this voice... amazing!”