

## ***What Are We Doing and Why?***

### ***Ask and You Shall Receive!***

My request for further topics to study here worked! A number of people offered a number of ideas, which I will begin addressing, at the same time I repeat my invitation and request for yet other ideas of interest. Several requests asked about some of the sacraments, which leads me to take up *all* the sacraments for the next series of installments here. Over my 60 years as a Catholic, 26 years as a student in Catholic schools, I have seen and heard innumerable basic definitions and descriptions of what a sacrament is and what it does, as well as what each particular sacrament is and what it does. But to really simplify the matter, I would simply point to the familiar phrase given above, *Ask and You Shall Receive!* In our celebration of the sacraments, we ask of God the blessings God has in mind and heart for us, and in our asking we receive an ever greater share of those blessings. The specific or particular blessing we ask and receive varies somewhat from sacrament to sacrament, but the basic dynamic is the same: God takes the initiative sharing his life and love with us, and we respond to that initiative by saying *Yes! I accept*. The sacraments are special, ritual words and actions we use to express our response. God's gifts are held out to us and arrayed around us all the time, but they don't "come to life" for and in us until we express our openness to them, and this is what we do in the sacraments. We simply ask for what God has already offered, and in doing so we receive it. One explanation of the origin and meaning of the word sacrament breaks it into the two Latin root words *sacra* and *mentem*. The word *sacra* refers to what is sacred, *mentem* refers to the mind. As such, *sacramentem* would have to do with a "sacred mind", or sacred thought, intention, or idea. And indeed, when we celebrate a sacrament we do have a sacred intention in mind, and we do experience and receive what is sacred, the very life and love of God.