

The Liturgy of the Eucharist: Preparation of the Gifts

The first action of the second part of the Mass, the *Liturgy of the Eucharist*, is called the *Preparation of the Gifts*. Prior to the revisions in the Mass in 1969 following the Second Vatican Council this was called the *Offertory*, and sometimes this term is still mistakenly used here. But the real offertory, the real offering at Mass occurs later in the *Eucharistic Prayer* when the sacrifice of Christ is offered. Christ offers himself to us and for us, and we join in that offering when we proclaim the *Eucharistic Prayer*. During the *Preparation of the Gifts* we are preparing for this offering of Christ, symbolized by our preparing the gifts of bread and wine that will become Christ's body and blood. The key action during the time of the *Preparation of the Gifts* is the procession to bring the gifts to the altar. Though taking up the collection actually comes before this procession, which is typically rather brief and simple, the procession itself has priority of place and the greater importance. It is more than merely a means of getting the bread and wine (and collection) from the back to the front of the church. It is an expression of our own personal preparation for entering into Christ's sacrifice, and even when only a few members of the congregation form the procession, they represent all of us. Their movement toward the altar and presentation of the gifts to the priest or deacon symbolizes the movement of our hearts toward the Lord, and our willingness to share in the sacrifice soon to be offered on the altar. As the bread and wine are prepared and placed on the altar, we can mentally place ourselves there too, prepared to give ourselves as gifts to others as Christ did, ready to share in his sacrificial self offering.

Please let us know what else about our faith tradition you'd like to find out more about.
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