

Roman Missal, 3rd Edition

Looking at the text 4

name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.' Inserting the word 'holy' makes it closer to the Latin original and reminds us of who we are and of our call to be holy. Jesus unites us to himself in his Body, the Church, the family of God – it is holy because it is his Body, his Church, his family.

This is not to pretend that as members of the Church we do not make mistakes or commit sins. As members of this Church we recognize that we must try to be good, to follow the Lord's commandment to love God and our neighbour. We must not become complacent and just assume that we are good. That is why it is so important to examine our consciences and be aware of our need to change.

There is also a promise behind this description of the Church as holy. To be a member of the Body of Christ also means that he undertakes to work on us and bring us to perfection in heaven with all those who have gone before us. We are to be united with all those who are holy, the saints.

Q *Think about this idea of being part of God's holy Church. Do you think we are aware of the great dignity that God gives to us?*

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Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation,
for through your goodness we have received
the bread we offer you:
fruit of the earth and work of human hands,
it will become for us the bread of life.

Blessed be God for ever.

The Procession with the Gifts

How long does the Procession with the Bread and Wine take in your church?

Usually, it is over in a moment. It may take place in the tiniest chapel or in the grandest cathedral; children hanging on to parents may bring the gifts or it might be princes, politicians or power-brokers, but the dignity is the same. Yet this simple procession is full of meaning.

One of the great changes introduced after the Second Vatican Council was to bring back the Procession with the Gifts. We miss the point if we see it as merely something practical - fetching some bread and wine to continue with the next part. There is great meaning in the idea that we make a procession with them.

In this simple walking down the aisle we see humans process and human progress; both are needed to obtain bread and wine. It is a journey that begins with the wonder of creation and God's command that it should be fruitful and multiply. It continues as a pilgrimage from field and vineyard, to baker and vintner. The Procession with the Gifts starts with the



stumblings of our first parents to the measured pace of the human race, past, present and future.

In a way, our Procession with the Gifts has taken thousands of years.

When we bring forward the Gifts we should think of how they came about and how they are signs of our stewardship of the world. They must be an inspiration and a prod to our conscience. So much good has been done. Husbanding the earth and providing for the needs of others is a mark of goodness in humanity and yet there are so many who have their daily bread denied them because of selfishness, muddle and mismanagement. As we see the bread and wine come forward we should sit up, count our blessings and reckon up our responsibilities.

Some feel that the money of the collection is an intrusion into the beauty of these simple signs. But if we look closely a deeper lesson can be drawn. Reality breaks in with hard currency and our daydreams are dispelled. This hard-earned money reminds us that offering the service of our lives is more than an idea. Time is money and God wants our time, for all time belongs to him. Including the collection in the procession reminds me that this is not just about the fruits of the earth which all can enjoy and the work of everyone else but it concerns the garden of my soul, the fruits of justice and the work of my hands.

Q *Think about what the Procession with the Gifts means to you. Are there ways in which you could make this important moment stand out more for others?*

Pray, brethren (brothers and sisters),
that my sacrifice and yours
may be acceptable to God,
the almighty Father.

May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands
for the praise and glory of his name,
for our good
and the good of all his holy Church.

The Preparation of the Gifts

The custom of mixing water with wine is a very ancient one and seems to reflect a regular practice in the time of Jesus and of the early Church.

A meaning has become attached to the mixing that is worth pondering. The silent prayer expresses it most clearly 'By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity'. If we take the wine to represent God, then the drop of water can stand for us. The mixing of the water and wine is such that they will be henceforth always joined together and so the chalice represents the unbreakable bond between God and humankind.

As we witness the drop of water going in to the chalice we should think about the most important things on our minds, our deepest prayers and our very selves are being placed into the chalice. We ask that the Lord may transform our stumbling words, our weak and flawed lives and unite them with his great act of intercession in the offering of his Sacrifice. The contents of the chalice shall be changed into Christ himself and we pray that we shall be changed too and become like him and one with him.

In the new translation of one of our responses we say 'May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his

