

# Year of the Eucharist

October 2004 to October 2005

Part 26 in a series on  
**The Year of the Eucharist**  
from  
The Office of Rites and Sacraments  
Department of Worship & Spiritual Life  
Catholic Diocese of Memphis  
in Tennessee

## The Structure of the Mass The Liturgy of the Eucharist Preparation of the Altar and Gifts

**Question:** Recently, my family carried the gifts to the priest. We were asked to bring them to Father at the chair. Should we have genuflected or bowed as we approached the altar?

**Answer:** When we are in procession, and especially when we are carrying items used for the liturgy – bread, wine, the collection, cross, candles – we do not genuflect or even bow from the waist (called a “profound bow”). A bow of the head toward the altar is most appropriate when carrying gifts to the presider at his chair.

**Question:** I heard recently that it is inappropriate to choose hymns containing text about offering the body and blood of Christ when the gifts of bread and wine are brought forward. Wouldn't that be a good connection to make?

**Answer:** The appropriate time to use music that speaks of the body and blood of Christ is the Communion song. According to *Music in Catholic Worship*, a document published by the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, “*The proper function of this song [during the procession with gifts] is to accompany and celebrate the communal aspects of the procession. The text, therefore, can be any appropriate song of praise or of rejoicing in keeping with the season*” (#71).

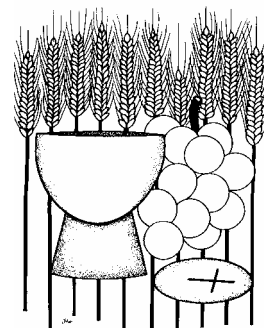
**Question:** The wine used to be poured into all the chalices during the singing of the Lamb of God, during the breaking of the bread. Why has that been changed?

**Answer:** The deacon or priest formerly poured the wine during the fraction rite. In April 2004, Rome published an official Instruction called, *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (the *Sacrament of Redemption*). According to this Instruction, the wine is now to be poured into the extra chalices during the Preparation of the Gifts, or even before Mass begins, in the sacristy. The point is that the wine is to be poured BEFORE that time in the Eucharistic Prayer when the Holy Spirit is invoked to change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. The new Instruction states: “*The pouring of the Blood of Christ after the consecration from one vessel to another is completely to be avoided, lest anything should happen that would be to the detriment of so great a mystery*” (#106). The reasons for this sudden precaution about spilling the Precious Blood are not clear, but those responsible for the celebration of the liturgy are required to follow the official Instructions of the Church, therefore the change.

The point of *Redemptionis Sacramentum* is to protect the sacred mystery from any practice that would diminish its value. It is concerned with reinforcing a sense of the sacred in a millennium whose culture some consider to be, at times, removed from reverence and respect for sacred items, events and practices.

**Question:** Sometimes at Sunday liturgy in our parish, after the bread and wine are prepared and the priest incenses the altar, he gives the incense to the deacon or an altar server and that person incenses the priest and the assembly. Why do they do this?

**Answer:** The revised *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, which is the Instruction that tells us how to “do” liturgy, states: “*The priest may incense the gifts placed upon the altar and then incense the cross and the altar itself, so as to signify the Church's offering and prayer rising like incense in the sight of God. Next, the priest, because of his sacred ministry, and the people, by reason of their baptismal dignity, may be incensed by the deacon or another minister.*” (#75).



### FROM THE GENERAL INSTRUCTION ON THE ROMAN MISSAL...

**#72.** “...For Christ took the bread and the chalice and gave thanks he broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take, eat, and drink: this is my Body; this is the cup of my Blood. Do this in memory of me.’ Accordingly, the Church has arranged the entire celebration of the Liturgy of the Eucharist in parts corresponding to precisely these words and actions of Christ:  
**1. At the Preparation of the Gifts, the bread and the wine with water are brought to the altar, the same elements that Christ took into his hands.**

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