

4 Minute Teaching – 4th Sunday of Lent 2018

Today we continue to reflect on how to best pray at Mass. This week, we begin to look at the Liturgy of the Eucharist, which is the second half of the Mass.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist begins with the Offertory Procession. Gifts of bread and wine are brought forward to be offered to God and transformed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Those bringing the gifts forward, as well as the gifts themselves, represent all of us. Each one of us is here at Mass to offer ourselves, in union with the offering Jesus made of Himself to the Father. The offertory is not just a time to wait for the Priest and Deacon to prepare the offering, it is a time when we ought to be spiritually engaged. During the preparation of the gifts we should commend to Jesus those for whom we wish to pray. We also offer ourselves, all that we have and all that we are to God: we offer all of our prayers, joys, works, and sufferings of the past week. While the Priest offers the little white host on the paten, we should spiritually place on the paten ourselves and all that is in our hearts. We, like the bread and wine offered, come to Mass to be offered to God and transformed by Him. As the Priest holds up the bread and wine, interiorly offer your sacrifice and your intentions to God.

The Mass is the highest act of Worship that can be offered to God. The Priest offers the Sacrifice of the Son to the Father; at the same time it is the offering that we make of ourselves, in union with Christ's Sacrifice. Once the gifts are prepared upon the Altar the Priest invites us to pray by saying: "Pray, brothers and sisters, that my sacrifice and yours, may be acceptable to God the Almighty Father." Note that the Priest here mentions two sacrifices: the Sacrifice of the Son to the Father, which he offers on our behalf, and the sacrifice we make of ourselves to God. We all then pray that the sacrifice might be acceptable to God by the hands of the Priest. The Priest offers our sacrifices, in union with the Sacrifice of Christ to the Father.

The Priest is ordained to stand in the very Person of Jesus Christ at Mass. At his sacred ordination the Priest lends his hands and his voice to Jesus Christ. At Mass Jesus speaks and acts through the Priest. When the Priest says “This is my Body”, “This is my Blood” it is Jesus that you hear speak. Christ, through the Priest, effects a miracle at every Mass—those words, pronounced by Jesus speaking through the Priest, transform the bread and the wine so completely, that there is no bread and wine afterwards: only the appearance of bread and wine. What is on the Altar, after the Consecration, is nothing other than the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ.

At the end of the Eucharistic Prayer the Priest holds up the Body and Blood of Christ and prays “Through *Him*, and with *Him*, and in *Him*, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is Yours Almighty Father forever and ever.” By that prayer and gesture the once-for-all Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross is presented to the Father in Heaven. Heaven touches earth when Jesus, Our Lord and Our God, is made present upon the Altar. It is important that we recognize what has just happened—it is important that we recognize Who has been made Present in our midst.

At that same moment, your sacrifice is presented to God: as mentioned earlier this is the sacrifice of yourself united to Christ. Jesus offered Himself for us. We offer ourselves in union with Him to God. Further, Scripture reminds us that everything we have that is good comes to us from the Hand of God. When we offer everything back to Him, we acknowledge Him as the Giver of every good gift, and our utter dependence upon Him. We should never hold anything back from God or be afraid to offer to Him all that we have and all that we are. God is never outdone in generosity. When we offer ourselves completely to Him, He pours out abundant blessings upon us. Remember to offer yourself to Him at this Mass.

Next weekend we will conclude our Four Minute Teachings by finishing this reflection on the Liturgy of the Eucharist. May God help us to pray at this Mass with attention and devotion; may we receive Our Lord in Holy Communion with reverence and love. May we be open to all that God wants to do in our souls at this Holy Mass.