

LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



A Column by Fr. Tom

The Mass, Part 10 – The Sacrament of Sacraments

So far, we have made our way approximately halfway through the Mass as banquet. We have covered the “Welcome,” or Introductory Rites, and the “Getting to Know You,” or Liturgy of the Word. We now continue with “The Meal Proper,” which takes place during the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Approximately 10 days ago, many of you experienced a Thanksgiving meal. During that feast, you may remember that the food was brought to the table, a blessing was said, and then the turkey and “all the fixin’s” were distributed to everyone. In the same way, during our Eucharistic feast, the food is presented to the table, a “blessing” is said (actually multiple blessings), and then the meal is distributed to those in attendance. (By the way, you may recall from a previous column that the word Eucharist comes from the Greek word for “thanksgiving.” [cf. *Looking Through Stained Glass*, “The Mass, Part 2 – A Mass by any Other Name Would Be as Sweet,” Sept. 23, 2018])

We begin the “meal proper,” or Liturgy of the Eucharist, with the Preparation of the Altar and the Presentation of the Gifts. These actions would be similar to setting the table and to bringing in the various dishes for the feast, respectively. When we invite guests to a banquet, our guests will often, from their generosity, offer some dish for the feast or a

gift for the host. In the same way, the Presentation of the Gifts allows for the faithful to bring forward the Eucharistic elements of bread and wine, as well as an offering for the poor or for the Church. Jesus is the Host of the Mass, and all of us, are guests at this “banquet.” “Even though the faithful no longer bring from their own possessions the bread and wine intended for the liturgy as was once the case, nevertheless the rite of carrying up the offerings still keeps its spiritual efficacy and significance. [...] Money or other gifts for the poor or for the Church, brought by the faithful or collected in the church, are [also] acceptable.” [*General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)*, No. 73]

After the Altar, the Table of Sacrifice, is prepared and the gifts of bread and wine have been presented to the Priest (and Deacon), the final preparations of the bread and wine are made. These preparations include a short prayer of blessing said over each element – the bread and the wine. The priest then calls us to prayer as we prepare ourselves for the most important prayer of the Mass, the Eucharistic Prayer, which consecrates the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.

Next week, we will continue our discussion with the Eucharistic Prayer as we make our way through the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

