

# **Liturgy of the Eucharist**

## **The Offertory**

The Christian altar is by its very nature a table of sacrifice and at the same time a table for the Pascal banquet: a unique altar on which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated and a table at which the Church's people assemble to give thanks to God and receive the body and blood of Christ. Its preparation at this time makes clear that something new is beginning. Just as the ambo was the focal point of the Liturgy of the Word, the altar-table is the focal point of the Eucharistic Liturgy. The altar is prepared by placing on it the corporal, purificator, Missal, and chalice. The deacon or someone other than the presiding priest may prepare the gifts.

At the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist representative members of the assembly bring to the altar the bread and wine together with other gifts for the poor or for the Church. The offerings of the faithful are received by the priest, assisted by the deacon or acolytes. The bread and wine for the Eucharist are placed on the altar while the other gifts are placed in another appropriate place.

The priest raises the bread a little above the altar and in a short prayer praises God as the creator of the world and gives thanks for the gift of the bread, to which the assembly responds, "Blessed be God forever". After the cup has been prepared by the deacon who says while pouring the water into the wine, "By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbles himself to share our humanity." The priest says a similar prayer thanking the Father for the gift of wine, to which the assembly repeats, "Blessed be God forever". Praying over the gifts, the priest asks that the sacrifice may be acceptable to God and the assembly responds, "May the Lord accept the sacrifice..."