

penetrated with penitential love and sorrow, a mind bowed down with compunction. "A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit; a contrite and humbled heart He does not despise." (Ps. 50.19)

"During this holy function, we must offer ourselves with compunction of heart as a sacrifice; for when we commemorate the mystery of the passion of our Lord, we must imitate that which we celebrate. The Mass will be a sacrifice for us to God, when we have made an offering of ourselves. But we should, moreover, after retirement from prayer, endeavor as far as we are able with God's assistance, to keep our mind in recollection and renewed strength, so that passing thoughts may not distract it, nor vain joy find its way into the heart, and that thus our soul may not, by carelessness and fickleness, again lose the spirit of compunction it has required." (S. Gregory the Great, *Dialogues* 4.59)

Is it not a great temptation for clergy to emphasize the joyful, with much laughter in worship? But having fun in the Sacrifice of the Mass is utterly foreign to what our ancestors did at the Mass on Calvary. When our Lord breathed His last breath, and darkness fell over Calvary and the whole area, the beholders were seized with such fear and sorrow that they returned to their homes striking their breasts. (cf. Luke 23.48)

Everything that moves and affects the soul in joy or sorrow, prosperity or adversity, distress or death, ought to be placed consciously on the altar at this time; placing it directly upon the Heart of our Redeemer.

The priest then addresses the Holy Ghost directly with the prayer *Veni Sanctificator*, which is a great blessing over the gifts. When God is asked to bless the

sacrifice, know that the Latin *benedicere* means to speak well, to say what is good. This can be done in many ways: if one already possesses the good that is said of him, then to bless means to praise or glorify the possessor. If a person or thing does not as yet possess the good, then by a blessing is meant wishing the person or thing a good. The blessing of God is efficacious, and infallibly imparts good to the creature, though whether the creature accepts it is another matter. The liturgical blessing of the Church is also never without fruit (provided it is done correctly), but it is always a good wish. The faithful can also bless, that is, impart good by desire and prayer.

The proximate reason why the Holy Ghost is invoked here lies in the analogy which the Consecration bears to the Incarnation. The great similarity between the accomplishment of the Eucharist on the altar and the Incarnation in the womb of the Virgin is often commented upon by the Fathers. As these two great mysteries are works of divine love and holiness, so are they manifestations of the Holy Ghost, Who is infinite personal love and sanctity. All three of the Divine Persons accomplish the Consecration, but we ascribe the action particularly to the Sanctifier.

Mary once asked, "How shall this be done, because I know not man?" The archangel replied, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee." If we ask, "How shall the bread become the Body of Christ and the wine, mingled with water become the Blood of Christ?" The answer is, "The Holy Ghost shall overshadow each and shall effect what is beyond language and conception."

We see in the commixture that as the wine receives the water, so Christ receives us and with us our sins. This mixture which is now on the altar ready to be offered, symbolizes the union of the faithful with Christ - a bond so strong it cannot be separated, no more than water can be taken back out of the wine.

Very early in the Church the Gnostics began to doubt and attack the use of wine, and in their Masses they used only water. St. Cyprian summed up the error quite succinctly: "When someone only offers wine, then Christ begins to exist without us. When they offer only water, then we begin to exist without Christ." Much later, it was precisely this symbolism which Martin Luther rejected because he saw in it the perfect work of God (the wine) being mixed with the work of man which was impure and sinful (the water). He thought the separation should be absolute. Now he knows that he was wrong.

St. Peter made it clear long ago. "By Christ He hath given us very great and precious promises, that by these we may be made partakers of the divine nature." (2 Pet. 1.4) Yes! Poor, frail, human nature, by the communication of heavenly gifts and graces, is elevated to a supernatural state, endowed with riches beyond imagination and clothed with incomparable glory. St. Agnes put it beautifully: "With sparkly and glittering gems hath He covered my breast, with golden garments hath He clothed me, with artistic and precious jewels hath He adorned me, and moreover, He hath shown me incomparable treasures, which are to be mine, if I remain true to Him."

For the offering of the chalice, the priest is assisted by the deacon who holds up the chalice with the priest. This is a relic from the times in which the chalice was particularly heavy, but that is not the reason we

still do the practice. Notice that the prayer *Offerimus* is in the plural, as it is said by both priest and deacon, because it is in harmony with the prayer in the commixture, which speaks of the union of Christ and His faithful.

The design of the chalice can be quite varied, but it must be of precious metal. If a gold chalice is used, it signifies the treasures of wisdom which are hidden in Christ. If a silver chalice is used, it signifies purity from sin. The design must have the cup, a node with which to grasp the chalice correctly, a stem which is a few inches long above and below the node (and thin enough so that the priest can use it with the canonical digits held together), and a solid base.

The bread and wine are now on the corporal, blessed, set apart from profane use, and set aside for divine use, which is the very definition of the holy. It is now the time that the priest and the faithful should offer themselves with all they have. This self-offering was done symbolically in the commixture, but now it is to be made expressly for the purpose of awakening in the hearts of the worshippers sentiments of self-sacrifice.

So once the chalice has been offered, the priest bows low for the prayer *In spiritu humilitatis*. It is a perfect expression of the meaning of the whole offertory. It is taken from the book of the prophet Daniel, a reference to the three young men in the fiery furnace, who were unable to offer to God the sacrifices of the Law, and so offered themselves in place of the victims which they lacked. "As gold in the furnace He hath received them." (Wis. 3.6) We too should offer ourselves as a holocaust in the furnace of our sufferings, persecutions and temptations. And the way to offer ourselves is with hearts

