

Preparation of the Gifts

Members of the assembly bring forward the gifts of bread and wine. In this gesture we present to God ‘the fruit of the earth’ and the work of our hands.

The bread began as a small dried-up seed buried in the earth. After a long, hidden work, the stalk of grain has matured. It passed through human hands: it has been planted, grown, harvested, threshed, ground into flour, made into dough, baked into bread and brought to our altar table. Human hands can do no more for the bread; their work is done. But the bread still awaits a transformation that can come only from God: “And so, Father, we bring you these gifts. We ask that you make them holy. So that they may become for us the Body and Blood of your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ.”

The preparation of the chalice invites us into a great mystery of the Eucharist. The priest pours all the wine into the chalice then adds a drop of water. The wine represents Jesus; the water represents us – all our work, prayers, hopes, needs and thankfulness.

In Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, we share this gesture with the children: the mingling of the water and wine. Using a glass chalice so they can see, we pour all of the wine from the cruet, then add the drop of water. Then we pause to wonder and observe what has happened. We ask the children: Why so much wine? What happened to the water? Can we take it back out? If Jesus is the wine, and we are the water, what do you think this could mean? Children respond: “Jesus and us are very close!” “Jesus is with us always.” This is a wonderful symbol of our relationship with Jesus. In this gesture we become inseparable and are changed forever!

The accompanying prayer, which is often said silently by the priest, is:

By the mingling of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbles himself to share in our humanity.

Good Practice Suggestion: Prepare yourself before attending Mass by asking: What are the struggles in your life that you want to give to God? Which places in your heart feel fruitless and empty? What wounds – physical, emotional, or spiritual – do you carry? As you think about these, try to feel them, and imagine putting them into the little pitcher from which the water is poured into the wine during Mass.

The Good Shepherd and the Child: A Joyful Journey, pages 71 & 77
The Hidden Power of Silence in the Mass, pages 134-135

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Preface

The Preface begins the Eucharistic Prayer. The dialogue begins between the Priest and people: *The Lord be with you; And with your spirit. Lift up your hearts; We lift them up to the Lord*” This leads into the Preface, a prayer of thanksgiving which praises God for specific aspects of His nature or His works, such as creation, salvation, or the actions of a particular saint or feast day. The Preface varies depending on the liturgical day being celebrated.

Good practice suggestion: *Set aside all thoughts that distract. Truly “lift up your heart” and give 100% of your attention to the miracle that is about to take place.*

Holy, Holy, Holy – The Sanctus

We sing the Sanctus (Latin for Holy), a hymn of praise that originates from Isaiah 6:3 and Revelation 4:8, where angels proclaim God's holiness. It begins "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts." The threefold repetition emphasizes the fullness of God's holiness, majesty, and glory.

By joining our voices with the saints and angels in heaven, we continue our praise with "Hosanna in the highest," echoing the crowd's joyful acclamation of Jesus during His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:9). "Hosanna," a Hebrew word, is a cry of praise and petition, asking for God's salvation.

Jim Pelant, Liturgy Commission Member