

The Bread Offering & Stewardship

**THE EUCHARIST
INSPIRED FROM**

Sacrifice & Love

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“Where there is no sacrifice there is no life. Sacrifice is rooted in the recognition of life as love: as giving up, not because I want more for myself...but because it is the only way of reaching the fullness that is possible for me...we speak of the sacrifice of praise, and of salvation as a return to the sacrificial way of life... a communion (with God) as giving and sharing....Whenever man turns to God, he necessarily senses the need of offering Him the most precious things he has, what is most vital for his life, as a gift and sacrifice. (Schmemmann).”

Bread Offering is Offering Life

John Chrysostom preached a homily on the ninth chapter of first Corinthians (Homily 20) that there are **two altars**. The first altar is found in our beautiful churches adorned with the *finest materials possible* and built by human hands. The second altar, is the **person of Christ** himself **living in others** who are the *least of these, the poorest of the poor*. Our understanding of *poverty* should not be limited as a *physical condition* but extended to the *poor in spirit*, the humbling effects of having emotional, psychological or even spiritual conditions that are debilitating.

- ❖ When we are participating in outreach (in its many forms) as children born of God, the service is an offering of the love of Christ to another human being and is therefore *sacramental* – it is a form of entering into communion with Christ Himself and a sharing of His Kingdom of love.

“If we be loving one another, God abides in us, and His love is made perfect in us (1 Jn. 4:12).”

Bread Offering is Offering Life

“For the merciful is wrapped in the robe of loving-kindness, holier than the sacred vestments; and is anointed with oil...produced by the Spirit...Can you see His altar built by God Himself; of a material brighter than heaven, a living human being ... This *altar* is composed of the very members of Christ, and the body of the Lord is made your altar... And as the priest stands invoking the Spirit, so do you too invoke the Spirit, not verbally but by deeds. For nothing does so sustain and kindle the fire of the Spirit, as this *oil* abundantly poured out...*For, your prayers and your alms have come up before God.* (Acts 10:4)...And you indeed are silent, but your works speak: and *a sacrifice of praise* is made...a spiritual soul presenting her proper offering. When then you see a poor person, think that you behold an *altar*: when you see such a beggar... reverence him! (Chrysostom: Homily 20, Second Corinthians).”

Sunday was a Day of Good Works

1. Historical factors which shaped this service:

The Eucharist was first and foremost an offering and sacrifice made by everyone- they brought with themselves everything that they could spare for the needs of the Church i.e. for the clergy, widows, orphans, helping the poor, for all the good works in which the Church realizes herself as the love of Christ. No one came without making an offering, even orphans who were being taken care of by the Church brought water.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well-pleasing to God, your rational worship. [Rom. 12:1]

Nothing to offer to God but a life in Him, and sharing the merciful love of our Father with others in need of His mercy

“In offering our life to God, we know that we are offering Christ – for He is our life, the life of the world and the life of life, and we have nothing to bring to God except (us in) Him. (Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, pg. 105).”

“To *give alms* means literally *to do* or *to make merciful deeds* or *acts of mercy*. According to the Scriptures the Lord is compassionate and merciful, longsuffering, full of mercy, faithful and true. He is the one who does merciful deeds (see Psalm 103). Acts of mercy are an “imitation of God” who ceaselessly executes mercy for all, without exception, condition or qualification. He is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. To “do mercy” means to do good to others in concrete acts of charity...A merciful person is one who is kind, gracious, generous and giving; a helper and servant of the poor and needy (Fr Hopko).”

The Ungrateful (Ten Lepers) Zizioulas, homily

- ❖ When we do not recognize that our existence is a gift from someone else, God
- ❖ A failure to realize that we would not have anything if it wasn't for others working and offering to us.
- ❖ The individualist subjugates and sees others as objects, a means to an end, to be utilized for my self-gratification
- ❖ Self-love makes us forget everything I am gifted with, my talents, my position are my own doing. Selfishness is the cause of ingratitude
- ❖ *Entitlement mentality (more is better, leads to unhappiness) – a person 100 years ago would be grateful to have just 1/100th of what we have today*

“When our hearts are filled with gratitude, then we will truly become what the Church wants: Eucharistic people...we gather together and, instead of demanding, we give thanks, instead of complaining, we express heartfelt gratitude towards God...He even gave us difficulties and illnesses and sorrows, for our good. So let us say...Glory to God for all things! ”

The act of gathering to worship is inseparable from acts of mercy

The Deacons were the ones who received the gifts, prepared them and distributed them as a loving service of the Church. Up to the 14th C, it was the deacon alone who performed this rite and brought the prepared gifts to the presbyter at the appropriate time of "Offering" from a separate building designated as the place to leave ones' gift with the deacons.

As the Church grew and became recognized by the empire (under Constantine), the work of charity for the entire empire became the obligation of the Church.

As this happened, "good works" became an activity separate from the Eucharistic Offering.

When we come to worship God, we come to make a *Sacrifice of Love*

- ❖ Let us commit ourselves and one another and our entire life to Christ our God -
- ❖ Our financial offerings “Stewardship” represent our relationship towards creation – either it is for our consumption or it is for me to exercise my *priestly* function and to give thanks and glory to God and to *make a sacrifice of love*
- ❖ *If we cannot physically serve the poor we can make offerings that make that possible*

Deacons Ministers of Charity

"For so obvious was the inner link between the Eucharist and the "sacrifice of love," the inner dependency of one on the other in the consciousness of the Church, that the preparation of the gifts, on ceasing to be an expression of practical needs, remained as a rite, expressing this inner dependency, realizing this inner link. (Schmemmann, The Eucharist, p. 109)."

The Preparation of the Offering

I. Key Terms: Liturgy = work of the people

" Eucharist = "thanksgiving"

Offering Bread (Prosforo) = to make an offering

The "seal"

ΙΣ = JesuS

ΧΣ = ChristoS

NIKA = Conquers



I. The Service of Preparing the Gifts (Proskomide = the carrying or conveying of something to a certain place.)

This service takes place prior to the beginning of the Liturgy by the priest alone.

The Proskomide (Table of Sacrifice)

The preparation of the Eucharist bread is likened to an immolation of the lamb, and the pouring of wine and water into the cup recalls the effusion of blood and water from the ribs of the crucified Christ (Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, pg. 106).”

The Offering is brought from the Assembly and placed on the Altar Table which expresses the offering of the Church herself in Christ and to Christ

The Priest or Bishop takes the Offering: “is now manifested as being offered by Christ and being taken up by Him into the Heavenly sanctuary...the raising up of our life to the Kingdom of God. (*The Eucharist*, p. 121)

CHRIST IS THE BREAD OF LIFE

“In Christ our earthly food, which is converted into our flesh and blood, into our very selves and our lives, becomes that for which it was created – participation in the Divine Life, through which the mortal is clothed in immortality and death is swallowed up in victory (Schmemmann, *The Eucharist* p. 110).”

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