

## MYSTAGOGY

*Presenting the Gifts of Bread and Wine*

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the OCIA

*Almighty God,  
through your goodness  
we have bread and wine  
to offer.*

*They become life-giving food  
for us,  
the Body and Blood of  
Jesus Christ.*

*May we ever be  
nourished at his altar,  
the Table of Life.*

**Recall the Easter Vigil**

After the Prayer of the Faithful, the gifts of bread and wine were presented to the priest celebrant and prepared at the altar by him.

It is a relatively simple gesture. Gifts are offered and then placed on the altar.

**Probe the Mystery**

How often do we offer another a gift? And how does that gift represent us, or one aspect of us, to the other, such as the desire for reconciliation or the sheer joy that is found in the relationship?

Walking forward to present the gifts of bread and wine to the priest celebrant, we offer our own lives in union with Christ. Our lives—our selves—are placed upon

the altar. We pray that we ourselves are transformed through the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Each time we approach the altar through representatives of the assembly and offer the gifts and bread and wine, we each walk with awe and humility. “Here, O God, am I. Take me as I am and by your grace transform me!”

**Savor the Sweetness of Salvation**

The gifts of bread and wine are “ordinary” in the sense that they are actual bread and wine. The bread itself is unleavened. The wine does not have a high alcohol content. Yet both are—by all accounts—perceptible bread and wine. They become, however, by the power of God, so much more than ordinary bread and wine. They are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ.

We are “ordinary” too, in the sense that we are much like the rest of humanity. We are men, women, and children. We have many of the same concerns, the same types of joy and hope, grief and anguish, as anyone else, except that we are baptized into Christ—into his saving sacrifice. His self-offering has the power to transform us.

The altar where the gifts of bread and wine are placed is described as the “Table of the Lord.” And yet, because we have been baptized into his mystery, that same altar is the place where we offer ourselves as gifts, united to him by his own sacrifice.

*After the typical Passover meal was over and he had eaten the flesh of the lamb with his apostles, he took the bread that strengthens human hearts and moved on to the true sacrament of the Passover. Thus even as Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God, had prefigured Christ by offering bread and wine, so Jesus would exemplify this with his real body and blood.*

Saint Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew* 4.26.27: PG 58:738; NPNF  
1 10:491

**Inspire Others**

Whom do you need to thank for the sacrifices they made so that your own life could be better? Who helped you along the way in the initiation process? Can you, once again, express your appreciation for their help and guidance?