

At Mass, We Give Thanks

Greetings!

During the Mass, we express our thanks to God for all that has been given us. Everything we have and everything we are is a gift from God. As we look at the world around us, we are struck by the abundance of gifts God provides and the interdependence of all creation. Having given us all we need, God continued to pour out gifts upon us, indeed giving the gift of God's own self in the person of Jesus. Jesus' life reveals to us who God is and who we are, where we are from and where we are going.

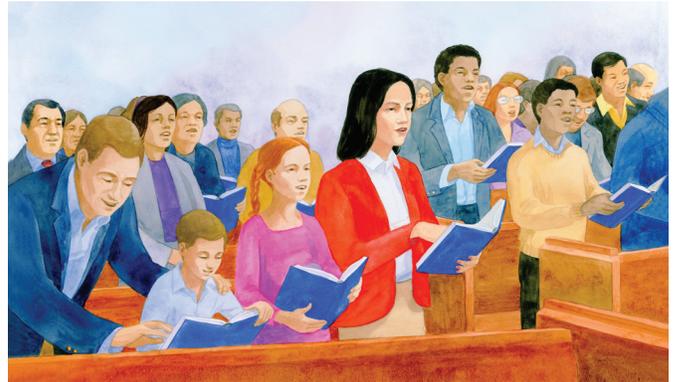
When you talk to children about the Mass, you will want to point out that we offer prayers of thanksgiving during the liturgy.

While the entirety of Jesus' life, death, and Resurrection is revelatory, we consider the end of his earthly life and the beginning of his risen life to be a privileged place of revelation. At the Last Supper, Jesus spoke words that are familiar to us but which were completely new to those present there with him: this is my body, this is my blood. He told those gathered to do this in memory of him.

All comes from God, who is the giver of gifts.

Let us look carefully at what he was asking them to do. He took bread, he gave thanks, he broke it, he told them it was his body, and he gave it to them to eat. Then again with the cup, to be blessed and shared, he thanked God.

If we offered our thanks to God during the Mass only because Jesus asked that we do so, it would be reason enough. Jesus' life reveals to us how we are to live, and he tells us that this moment is one we are to live again and again. Indeed, it is in another celebration of this moment that he becomes recog-



Gratitude is the only response to receiving the greatest of gifts.

nizable to those who loved him, even though he is different in appearance after the Resurrection.

In addition to the mandate from Jesus, offering God our thanks during the Mass is "right and just" as we say during the Preface to the Eucharistic Prayer. Indeed, the only just response to receiving this greatest of gifts, the very life of God within us, is an outpouring of gratitude.

When the priest elevates the gifts to offer them back to God, he is saying words of gratitude on our behalf, words of gratitude that we affirm with our *amen*. But our gratitude is also contained in the priest's gesture itself. Within the chalice is an abundance of wine, representing God, and a tiny bit of water, representing us. Thus, in our gratitude, we are offering our whole lives back to God in recognition that our lives—pure gift—are no longer ours, because we are united with the Risen Christ.

As we look around, in the midst of our struggles and triumphs, our sorrows and joys, we see that all comes from God, who is the giver of gifts. The greatest of these gifts is God's own self, given to and for us. There can be no response but gratitude. The Mass is the place where we can express that gratitude fully, as we respond to the call of Jesus to "Do this in memory of me."