

# CATHEDRAL FAMILY LETTER

JANUARY 29, 2012

Cathedral of the Risen Christ

## A LETTER FROM FATHER RAYER

I would like to continue on the theme that I talked about in my last letter, that is, the offertory prayers remind us that when we offer the simple gifts of bread and wine at Mass, we re-gift back to God what he has already given to us. They are signs of the offering of our lives, which we have received from God.

Of course, God does not need our gifts of bread and wine. All the world is his and our gifts add nothing to his majesty. God is God even if we don't offer Him anything. But God wants us to bring offerings to Him because we need to grow in self-giving love. Our offerings help us grow in sacrificial love, which forms us into the persons God has created us to be.

The offerings of the bread and wine at Mass are exterior signs that are part of a ritual action. But, true worship of God is much more than performing liturgical rituals. Liturgical acts, in order to be true acts of worship, must show forth a deeper inner reality, that is, the offering of the whole of our lives to God.

But an offering of ourselves is not worth much unless there are true actions, both interior and exterior, of faith and charity behind them. As the apostle James says in his epistle, (James 1:22) "*Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding your-*

*selves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his own face in a mirror. He sees himself, then goes off and promptly forgets what he looked like.*"

The offering of the bread and wine is a sign of all our good and virtuous acts. Both before and during Mass we should all recollect ourselves to think of all the aspects of our lives where we have been "*doers of the word*" that we are offering to God in the Mass.

St. James further expresses this concept, saying, (James 1:27) "*Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world.*" Of course, caring for widows and orphans is not the totality of religion, but it is one of the signs of our worship of God by being "*doers of the word.*"

Therefore, I urge all of you to think of the many spiritual acts of faith, charity, and prayer that you have done since you last attended Mass and place them on the altar.

Think of all the ways you have offered your time and talent to God. Those who teach the faith to our children, those who sing in the choir, those who serve at Mass either as servers, acolytes, or readers, all the vol-

unteer work done in our parish or elsewhere in the community, all of these things we should spiritually place on the altar.

The offering of our treasure is also an expression of the giving of our lives to God. Our money is an expression of the many hours of hard work we have put in to earn it. Our offerings in the Sunday offertory collection to keep our parish running is an important sign of our giving back to God what he has blessed us with and should be seen as an act of our worship of God.

This also includes other offerings of our treasure such as the many of you who take the grocery sacks in the back of church to buy food for the Catholic Social Services food pantry, the offerings placed in the St. Vincent de Paul Society boxes in Church for assistance to the poor, the Rice Bowl offerings in Lent, your support for the Renewal in the Risen Christ Campaign, your offerings to the large number of other charities throughout our city, state, and country, as well as support for the missionary efforts of the Church. In all of these, spiritually place your gifts on the altar at Mass as an offering to God.

In addition to our financial gifts, let us place on the altar the offering of our spiritual lives. When we choose so-



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briety and moderation over excessive indulgence in alcohol, choose purity over sexual immorality, choose self-motivation over laziness, choose moderation in food over gluttony, choose simplicity over spending on things we don't need or can't afford, choosing to practice the virtues of patience, forgiveness, honesty, etc.; place all of these acts on the altar at Mass as an offering to God.

May we all learn to place on the altar at Mass, all of the ways that we have been "*doers of the word.*"