

Tomorrow is the Feast
of Christ the King. En-
throned Him in your heart...

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...tomorrow morning by
receiving Holy Communion.
Be on time for Mass!

To Help You At Mass--IV.
(d. Lavabo, Secrets, Preface.)

Catholics used to bring bread, wine, clothes to Mass for distribution to the needy. Naturally, the priest, after handling many loaves and wineskins, needed to wash his hands. Today, in the Mass, he still does so at the right end of the altar, and as he does so he recites Psalm 25, which begins, "Lavabo" or "I will wash my hands among the innocent."

The priest returns to the center of the altar and asks Our Lady and all the saints, especially the saints whose relics are in the altar-stone, to help him in the Sacrifice of the Mass. Turning to the ministers at the altar, he asks their help also: "Pray, brothers, that your and my sacrifice may prove acceptable in the eyes of God the Father Almighty." The server answers: "May the Lord accept the sacrifice at thy hands, to the praise and glory of His Name, and also for your own use and for that of his entire Church."

Certain prayers, known as "Secrets," follow. They are called "Secrets" because they are said secretly or silently--silently, because, no doubt, in the beginning they were said while the Offertory hymn was being sung. Up to this point in the Mass the prayers have usually been said by the priest in a voice intelligible to the congregation, because, as St. Leonard of Port Maurice points out: "All who assist with the priest at Mass unite in offering the Sacrifice and hence when you assist at Mass you perform in a certain manner the office of a priest."

Probably to bring the Offertory hymns to a close the priest raises his voice on the final words of the last secret prayer, "for ever and ever." And the server answers, "Amen." Then in some of the most ancient words of the entire liturgy the priest encourages the faithful in view of the august moments just to follow: "Up with your hearts!" he exhorts them. And the answer comes back: "We are holding them up toward the Lord." "Well, then," he continues, "let us Give Thanks to the Lord our God." "Worthy is that, and just" answers the server on behalf of the faithful. The words "Give Thanks" are capitalized and underlined for this reason: what follows is essentially the "Eucharist" or literally translated "The Thanksgiving." Gratitude, or giving thanks to God was the very essence of early Christian worship and is still the central mood of the Mass.

The priest continues the Preface: (at certain seasons of the year, like Christmas, passion-tide, and Pentecost, the Preface is expanded; consult your missal for variations) "Truly it is fit, just, right, and for our benefit, that we at all times and in all places give thanks, O holy Lord, father almighty, eternal God.....through Christ Our Lord, through Whom the angels praise They majesty, the dominations do adore it, before it the powers do tremble, and in united exultation the heavens and the spirits thereof and the blissful seraphim do join in hymning it. Along with them our voices, do Thou, we implore, command to be admitted, as with suppliant gratitude we sing...." Note especially, "through Christ Our Lord." Only through Him can any prayer of praise or thanksgiving reach God's throne, but through Christ we on earth join in the thrilling song of the saints and angels in heaven. It is to be borne in mind that the "preface" leads up to something, to the irrepressible song of praise known as the sanctus. Ages before Christ, Isaias, in his vision of Heaven, heard the high seraphim acclaim God, "Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus." And St. John in his Apocalypse writes that the same triple cry of "Holy, Holy, Holy" thunders ever around God's throne.

At Mass and in all our prayers we should try to recollect that we place our stained selves in the presence of the All-Holiness, which is God.

PRAYERS: (deceased) Mike Calnon. 4 special intentions. Relative of Sister Mateo C.S.C.