**Liturgy Matters Lesson #20**

**Washing of the Hands**

**By Bishop Chad Zielinski**

I am Bishop Chad Zielinski serving the Diocese of New Ulm. Thank you for joining me and asking the Holy Spirit to guide us as we continue our lessons on "What Happens at Mass."

Once the cleansing has been completed, in the incensing of the altar and the people, the priest then stands at the side of the altar and washes his hands, saying a verse from a psalm: "Lord, wash away my iniquity; cleanse me from my sins ."As the people see him washing his hands, they, too, should be reminded that the direction of the Mass is about to shift. Our gifts have been brought forward and arranged on the altar. We have moved towards God, and now the priest, acting as Christ, will move towards us. Now Christ will make the hands of the priest his own hands, for there is only one priest, and the hands that will take up these gifts, transform them, and offer them to the Father, are the hands of Christ. We have brought our lives in sacrifice to be joined to the sacrifice of Christ, and so the priest urges, "Pray that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father ."The people rise to their feet and respond with a short prayer that refers to the priest's hands, naming what is about to happen as "sacrifice at your hands." Our sacrifice is offered only through Christ.

The final prayer is called the Prayer over the Gifts. This prayer varies from Sunday to Sunday, but it always mentions in some form the gifts we have brought and prays for their transformation and ours. When we say Amen to this prayer, we are saying Amen to all that has happened from the collecting of the gifts to this moment. Now we stand poised and ready to participate in the most significant prayer of all.

Thank you for joining me today in this lesson on the Washing of the Hands. I look forward to sharing Lesson #21 with you next week as we continue our lessons on the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Let us keep one another in prayer. May God bless you and your families.