**Liturgy Matters Lesson #18**

**Presentation of the Gifts**

**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.”

The procession of the gifts offers us one of the strongest opportunities for understanding the relationship between the sacrifice of the Christian people and the sacrifice of Christ. It is true that bread and wine have their precise meaning in the context of the Passover and in the Lord's Last Supper and that bread and wine are involved here in obedience to His command to do this in memory of Him. However, we can also reflect on the fittingness of the Lord's choice and what the Spirit had prepared. Bread and wine are extremely strong symbols, powerful and rich in what they express. We are not animals that snatch food from the ground or trees with our mouths, roaming alone until our stomachs are full enough to get us through the next round. We produce our food together, consume it together, and share it with one another. It is an expression of love and desire. It aims at communion. Food is both a substance needed to stay alive and a symbol needed to remain human.

As these gifts are collected from outside the church and brought into the church, finally brought down the aisle to the hands of the bishop or priest, there is articulated in this ritual action the relation between the order of the ordained priesthood and the order of the baptized. In seeing this, we see articulated also the global relationship between Church and world, between Church and all creation, between Church and all history. Through the work of the baptized in the world, the Church brings to the hands of Christ the fruits of creation and the work of human hands. This is an exercise of the priesthood and the faithful. We bring our lives - with all our efforts to produce and to be together in love, with all our desire and our willingness to share - and we place them in the hands of Christ by placing them in the hands of the bishop or priest. Basically, the action is our saying to Christ, “Do something with this. Make our lives be what your life was and is.”

Thank you for joining me today in this lesson on the Presentation of the Gifts. I look forward to sharing Lesson #19 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.