

Abolition of the Offertory and introduction of the Presentation of the Gifts through liturgical reform

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The disappearance of the traditional Offertory and its replacement by a presentation of the gifts is undoubtedly one of the most striking features of Paul VI's reform of the Mass. It is a whole series of prayers with a strongly sacrificial tone, framing the offering of the oblates, which has thus disappeared from the celebration of Mass. Of course, the fact that the Roman Canon—the cornerstone of the Roman Eucharistic liturgy since the 4th century—has become one of several optional Eucharistic prayers constituted a more significant innovation. The removal of the Offertory has led to a notable weakening of the explication of the meaning of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

Two fundamental concerns on the part of the reformers led to this:

- Their desire to return to a late-antique form of the Roman liturgy, predating the proliferation of private prayers of an *apologetic* or other nature that flourished from the 8th to the 11th century and were added to the major priestly prayers (collects, preface, canon)—private prayers of which the Offertory was precisely a part.
- Furthermore, their concern to restore a doctrinal expression, also predating that of the Middle Ages—the latter being regarded as having been hardened by Tridentine theology. In this instance, the aim was to reverse a supposed sacrificial shift in the Eucharistic celebration that had occurred after Antiquity, of which the Offertory was the most prominent feature.

This mindset of the reformers corresponded, all things being equal, in the realm of the *lex orandi*, to what Pius XII criticised in the encyclical **Humani generis** in 1950: a systematic 'return to the sources' by reverting to a state of theology prior to Scholasticism and dogmatic systematisation. But this step backwards was taken with the aim of abandoning overly rigorous precisions in favour of formulations that appeared more flexible. Certain theologians, said Pius XII, neglect traditional magisterial definitions 'with the very specific aim of promoting a vague notion'. 'The aim of some is [...] to free dogma from the formulation that has been in use in the Church for so long and from the philosophical concepts held by the Catholic Doctors, in order to...'

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a return, in the exposition of Catholic doctrine, to the manner of expression found in Holy Scripture and the Fathers'. Similarly, in the realm of divine worship, there was a desire to return to a less rigorously explicit state of 'hard' dogmas—the Mass as a sacramental sacrifice, baptism as a deliverance from the power of the devil.

1. The Offertory regarded as a superfluous 'duplicate' or 'duplicate' of the Canon

A view common amongst liturgists of the Liturgical Movement and the Reform was that expressed by the Benedictine monk of Saint-André-les-Bruges, Dom Jean-Thierry Mærtens (who had published the famous *Missal of the Christian Assembly* in 1964): the Offertory “was simply a duplicate of the true Offertory, which is the offering of the Canon of the Eucharist ^{que que2.}”

This theme had been introduced by the leading figure of the Liturgical Movement in the German-speaking world, the Jesuit Josef Andreas Jungmann (1889–1975), a professor at Innsbruck and author of **Missarum Sollemnia: Explication génétique de la messe romaine* ^{ne 3*}, a compendium of scholarship published in 1948. According to him, the Offertory, which prior to the 8th century consisted simply of a procession of the congregation bringing the offerings, followed by a prayer over the oblations set aside for the sacrifice, had subsequently undergone 'serious alterations' through the addition of a series of private prayers by the priest and the incorporation of allegorical explanations intended to stimulate the piety of the people, who, in his view, were now excluded from the ceremony (water mixed with wine, just as the people are mixed with the humanity of Christ). 'We are faced with a foreshadowing of the ideas of the canon; there is therefore, to a certain extent, a double empl ^{oi4.}'

This theme was subsequently taken up repeatedly, for example by Dom Placide Bruylants (1913–1966), a Benedictine monk of Mont-César Abbey in Leuven and an eminent specialist in the great priestly prayers of the missal, who considered the Offertory to be a superfluous 'duplicate' of the canon. Dom Bruylants had, moreover, not hesitated to compose an Offertory, of a 'Old Roman' type, in his view, which he wished to see replace the 'Carolingian' Offertory of the Tridentine Missal, ^{no. 5.}

2. 'Une liturgie déchantée', interview with Bruno Roy, *Cahiers internationaux de théologie pratique*, Series 'Documents' No. 10, 1999, p. 20.

3. **Missarum Solemnia: eine genetische Erklärung der römischen Messe**, Herder, 1948. French edition: *Missarum Sollemnia. A Genetic Explanation of the Roman Mass*, Aubier, three volumes, 1952–1956.

4. *Missarum sollemnia*, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 378.

5. *The Prayers of the Roman Missal*, Leuven, Mont-César Abbey, 1952.

Louis Bouyer, commenting like so many others on Jungmann's theme and further elaborating on it in his own polemical manner, spoke, with regard to the Offertory prayers, of nothing less than 'detachment from the traditional liturgy', and even of 'decomposition'. He explained that the priest of the Early Middle Ages believed he could not engage devoutly in the Eucharistic liturgy 'without bringing with him all manner of personal prayers'. And he went on to explain:

Clearly, these were far more in keeping with his own devotion than the official text, which he merely went through the motions of reciting. These were the 'apologies' and related prayers. Having proliferated as a prelude to the Mass as a whole, to the Gospel reading and to the Eucharistic Prayer itself, they would eventually come to encroach upon it, like invasive vegetation. It would leave nothing of the ancient liturgy intact and would regard it as nothing more than a vehicle for private devotion drawing inspiration from other sources , p. 6.

This desire to restore a 'pure' Roman rite seems rather naïve today. Jungmann and those who followed in his footsteps were, moreover, well aware that the equivalent of a sacrificial offertory exists in all Catholic liturgies, whether Mozarabic or Eastern , p. 7. The terms '*offertorium*' and '*sacrificium*' are, moreover, interchangeable: the term '*offertory*', in its strictest sense, is indeed *a sacrifice*, and the Canon is presented as an *offertory*, that is to say, as a sacrificial oblation to the Father through the Son. Within the whole that constitutes the entire Eucharistic celebration, both Latin and Eastern liturgies – the latter in a particularly emphatic manner – have always regarded the oblations brought into the sanctuary and placed on the altar as consecrated and offered in sacrifice in anticipation at the moment of the double consecration , p. 8.

In the Mozarabic liturgy, the chant of *the sacrificium* (which Saint Isidore also calls *the offertorium*) corresponds to the offertory chant in the Roman Mass or the Ambrosian Mass, and to the chant of *the sonus* in the Gallican Mass , no. 9. And in all cases, it was a piece sung whilst the gifts were being carried to the altar. *Tibi sacrificábo sacrificium*

6. Louis Bouyer, **Eucharistie. Théologie de la prière eucharistique**, Desclée, 1966 – reprinted by Cerf, 2009, pp. 364–365.

7. Joseph-André Jungmann: 'Just as the Roman liturgy has its Offertory with the concluding prayer **super oblata**, so other liturgies have their **prothèse** [...] which is extensively developed' ('The Roman Canon and Other Forms of the Great Eucharistic Prayer', in **La Maison Dieu** no. 87, 3rd quarter 1966, p. 67.

8. See Franck Quoëx, 'Historical and doctrinal remarks on the Roman Offertory', in *Historical and Theological Aspects of the Roman Missal*, proceedings of the CIEL symposium, CIEL, Versailles, 1999.

9. Alfred Vacant, Eugène Mangenot, Émile Amann, **Dictionary of Catholic Theology**, 1929, Vol. 10.2, col. 2527–2528.

'laudis, alleluia, I will offer you a sacrifice of praise, *alleluia*', sings the Mozarabic sacrificium of a Mass for a martyr-pontiff. Similarly, the Roman Offertory has always had a tone of propitiatory immolation, as is evident from the content of numerous prayers over the oblates in the *Leonine Sacramentary*, such as this one: 'We beseech you, Lord, that through these gifts of a distinguished sacrifice, you may grant us the remission of our sins and our sanctification.'

2. Paraliturgical rites for offertory processions

During the Liturgical Movement, the return to an ancient Offertory was reflected in the paraliturgical rites, the flourishing of which, especially after the last war, paved the way for a far more flexible conception of ritual, and accustomed priests to exercising personal creativity in this area—specifically, by reinventing offertory processions intended to revive those of late-antique Masses.

The idea was not new. Late Jansenism of the last third of the ^{seventeenth} century and the ^{eighteenth} century, in the name of a return to the supposed practices of the early Church, called for a single altar per church, the recitation of the Canon aloud, a certain introduction of the vernacular, etc., and also the reintroduction of offertory processions. Thus in France, a fairly prominent Jansenist priest, Jacques Jubé, parish priest of Asnières (1674–1745), in addition to maintaining a single altar in his church, removing statues of the saints and reading the *Canon* in a clear voice, organised offertory processions during his Masses with bread and wine, fruit and vegetables , p.¹⁰.

The trend towards a 'return' to the ancient ritual was combined, even before the liturgical reform, with a creative quest to integrate the rite into the modern world. Within German, Belgian and French youth movements, at congresses of the JOC or the JAC, as well as in a number of parishes, paraliturgical offerings were organised not only at the Offertory but also at the beginning of Mass.

For example, those preparing to receive Communion would bring their host in procession to the priest, who would receive it in the ciborium, whilst singing graduals in the vernacular or hymns composed *specifically for the occasion*. Alternatively, incense, wheat, wine or the collection would be offered. It was in Germany that the practice of placing the host in the ciborium by those who

¹⁰. See Nicole Lemaitre, 'Jansenist Seductions', in **Histoire des curés**, edited by Nicole Lemaitre, Fayard, 2002, pp. 203–225.

were to receive Holy Communion, as well as the solemn offerings of bread and wine. In France, for example at the Church of Saint-Séverin in Paris, processions of donations for the poor took place alongside those of the hosts and wine. In ‘missionary parishes’, where worker priests celebrated Mass, tools of the trade were also brought forward. At the Scout camps or summer camps run by Fr Doncœur, SJ – the very opposite of a ‘progressive’ – the processions were highly inventive: ‘The children entered in procession carrying flowers, their little sand sculptures, and their handicrafts; on one occasion, they brought everything needed to set the altar table: altar cloths, candles, the missal; they offered the altar breads and the cruets, etc .11’

The ideas of ‘recapitulation’ of creation, conveyed by the hymns and commentaries accompanying these ceremonies, may in some cases have referred to Teilhard de Chardin’s **Mass on the World** (1928), but they were generally an expression of a vision to reconsecrate a world estranged from God, which one sought to ‘reconquer’—an aim expressed through a whole spectrum of movements ranging from *integral-oriented* Scouting to Catholic Workers’ Action.

The preparatory draft for the conciliar constitution on the liturgy, drawn up by the Liturgical Commission which began meeting in 1959, referred to these offertory processions. However, they were not incorporated as such into the new missal, which makes no provision for the participation of the faithful at this point—¹². Yet it did not prohibit them, and numerous processions for the presentation of the gifts were organised, particularly during papal Masses. These often took on folkloric, even comical, characteristics. I once attended a procession in the church of Borgo Santo Spirito, near St Peter’s Square, where the participants cheerfully carried household baskets to the presiding cardinal to the sound of a guitar; these contained bread and wine, but also oil, salad, and even some good, sturdy shoes.

3. The Offertory in the Constitution **Sacrosanctum Concilium**

When preparatory work for the Second Vatican Council began, the Liturgical Commission was chaired by the Prefect of the Congregation for Rites, Cardinal Gaetano

¹¹. Anne-Marie Petitjean, **From the Offertory to the Preparation of the Gifts: Genesis and History of a Reform**, Aschendorff Verlag, Münster, 2016, p. 87.

¹². The rubric opening the presentation of the gifts simply states: ‘*The minister places the corporal, purificator and chalice on the altar, unless they have already been placed there at the beginning of Mass*’, without mentioning any involvement on the part of the faithful.

Cicognani. The secretary was Annibale Bugnini. Its members included some of the most prominent figures of the Liturgical Movement: Cipriano Vagaggini, Bernard Capelle, Bernard Botte, Antoine Chavasse, Pierre Jounel, Aimé-Georges Martimort, Josef Jungmann, Pierre-Marie Gy, op.

The preparatory text drawn up by the Preparatory Liturgical Commission—the only one not to be rejected by the Council assembly—comprised a preface and eight chapters, the second of which, **De Sacrosancto eucharistiae mysterio**, is devoted to the Mass.¹³ It is quite remarkable that the final constitution, **Sacrosanctum Concilium**, following discussions in the conciliar hall, adopted the outline of the draft in its entirety (by merging two chapters), with the same chapter headings. The draft recommended that the Council Fathers make a clear distinction between the Liturgy of the Word and the Eucharistic Liturgy, which could be achieved by clearly separating the locations for each: one at the presbytery or the ambo, the other at the altar. For the Eucharistic liturgy, in addition to the removal of too many signs of the cross, a new wording was desired for the prayers of the Offertory and Communion—otherwise known, commonly—and in some cases incorrectly—as

‘apologies’, added, as the schema put it, ‘when the Roman rite was introduced into Gaul.’¹⁴ The schema also provided, as I have said, for the participation of the people in the Offertory through a procession of offerings.

On 1 February 1962, Cardinal Gaetano Cicognani, after much hesitation and with great qualms of conscience, had resigned himself to approving a draft which he considered profoundly reformist. He died four days later, on 5 February. John XXIII, who, in liturgical matters, was anything but a progressive, appointed on 22 February—the very day of the publication of the constitution **Veterum sapientia**, which extolled Latin studies—the Spanish Cardinal Arcadio Larraona, a conservative jurist, as Prefect of the Congregation for Rites; he would, as a result, become President of the Conciliar Commission for the Liturgy. He did everything in his power to have the preparatory schema amended (notably by removing communion from the chalice for the laity and restricting concelebration). Above all, he removed Fr Bugnini from the secretariat of the Conciliar Liturgical Commission, replacing him with Fr Giuseppe Ferdinando Antonelli, a decidedly more traditional Franciscan (who had been General Rapporteur of the *Piana* Commission, of which Fr Annibale Bugnini was Secretary,

¹³. Angelo Lameri, ‘La “Pontificia Commissio praeparatoria Concilii Vaticani II”’. *Documents, texts, minutes*, Edizioni Liturgiche, 2013 – developments from August 1961 to January 1962, pp. 601–635, and a summary of the final draft, pp. 843–845.

¹⁴. Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy (1948–1975)*, Desclée de Brouwer, 2015, p. 363.

(from 1948 to 1960). He even had Bugnini removed from all teaching posts at Roman universities.

But Larraona's attempt was short-lived due to the prevailing mood of the conciliar assembly from the very first days. As for Bugnini, reduced to the rank of expert, he was all the more influential and effective; before returning to the helm in 1964 as Secretary of the Commission for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Liturgy, he was thoroughly familiar with the draft submitted for the Fathers' consideration.

The Conciliar Commission's main focus was on paragraph 37 of the draft, which stated that *the *Ordo Missæ** was to be revised (**recognoscatur**). In the draft, a lengthy *declaratio* (explanatory note) clarified the meaning of this *recognitio*, which provided, in particular, for an offertory procession and the revision of the prayers 'so that they might better correspond to the meaning of the oblation of the gifts to be consecrated'. During the conciliar discussions, the view that the Offertory prayers—including the verses of the *Lavabo* psalm—should be omitted or made optional in favour of the so-called 'Secret Prayer' alone was widely held^{e 15}.

However, the conciliar text, which had been reworded on several occasions by the Conciliar Commission, as adopted by the final vote, no longer went into such detail regarding the Offertory.

No. 50 of **Sacrosanctum Concilium** spoke generally of the 'revision of the Ordinary of the Mass', leaving considerable freedom to proceed with the reform of the Eucharistic liturgy:

The ritual of the Mass is to be revised in such a way that the specific role and the mutual connection of each of its parts are made clearer, and that the devout and active participation of the faithful is facilitated. Furthermore, whilst faithfully preserving the substance of the rites, they are to be simplified; anything which, over the course of the ages, has been duplicated or added without great benefit is to be omitted; and, in accordance with the ancient practice of the Holy Fathers, certain elements which have been lost through the ravages of time are to be restored, insofar as this appears appropriate or necessary.

It is well known that this constitution was the first conciliar text adopted by the assembly, during the second session on 4 December 1963, by an overwhelming majority: 2,147 votes in favour, against 4. Given the significance today of the rejection of the liturgical reform, the almost complete absence of negative votes is highly surprising. This can be explained by the fact

¹⁵. See Maurizio Barba, **La riforma conciliare del "Ordo Missæ". Il percorso storico-redazionale dei riti d'ingresso, di offertorio e di comunione**, Edizione Liturgiche, new edition 2008; for example, the remarks by Bishop Fleitas, p. 65, and those by Bishop Vielmo, p. 69.

that, during the discussions in the first session, the conciliar minority had not yet organised itself structurally, since the *Cætus internationalis Patrum* was not established until the first intersessional period. Furthermore, at the time of the vote in the second session, the minority was primarily concerned with what was to become the constitution **Lumen Gentium**, and especially with the doctrine of episcopal collegiality. Moreover, the text of **Sacrosanctum Concilium** remained faithful to the draft that the conservative cardinals Larraona and Cicognani had approved, despite their reservations. Finally, and most importantly, the text put to the vote remained general in its wording; the most significant changes that were to follow – the abolition of the Offertory and the introduction of multiple Eucharistic prayers – were not expressly set out in it, even though they were made possible.

4. The status of the offertory prayers abolished by the liturgical reform

The significance of the abolition of the offertory prayers only became apparent later, when criticism of the new 1969 Missal began. The announcement of this abolition in the preparatory outline had not caused much of a stir, unlike the introduction of vernacular languages. The work of the Reform Commission, from 1964 onwards, shows that this removal seemed self-evident, something that nobody questioned. Except for one of these prayers, the celebrant's '*Orate fratres*' and the response '*Suscipiat*', for, owing to the widespread practice of active participation by the faithful through their responses to the priest throughout the Mass, it had become the tangible sign of their participation in the Offertory.

There were six prayers in total (*Suscipe, sancte Pater; Deus, qui humanæ substantiæ; Offerimus tibi calicem salutaris; In spiritu humilitatis; Veni, sanctificator; Suscipe, sancta Trinitas*), with the '*Orate fratres*' having been retained, at least in Latin; to these must be added the prayers for the incensation: '*Per intercessionem beati Michaelis Archangeli*'; '*Incensum istud*'; '*Dirigatur Domine, oratio mea*'; '*Accendat in nobis*'.

These prayers are among those attested in manuscripts from the 7th century onwards, and which flourished until the 11th century. They may be described as 'private prayers' which supplement the major priestly prayers (collects, preface, fixed prayers of the canon, the Lord's Prayer), and which serve various purposes. A number of these liturgical prayers, which are not unlike the penitential tone of St Augustine's **Confessions**, have been given the names **apologies**, or **apologiæ sacerdotis**, or **excusationes ante altare**, or even

confessiones peccatoris. They often replace the ‘we’ typical of *priestly prayers* with the ‘I’ of the celebrant speaking on his own behalf.

Varying greatly in origin and content, they have sometimes attained the status of major prayers and taken the place of the Collects; conversely, there have been instances where Collects have been used as secondary prayers. Those of interest to us are recited before the Eucharistic Prayer to prepare for the sacred act par excellence, in that part of the celebration which, since the 18th century, has been known as the Offertory.

They are partly part of the phenomenon of gloss: a process of explaining and elaborating on the sacred gestures and the major prayers of the Mass, through prayers that might broadly be described as meditative. Here, they comment on the sacrifice that is about to unfold during the canon. Thus, at the moment of the offering of the bread: *Suscipe sancte Pater...*, ‘Receive, Holy Father...’, with hints of *excusatio* (‘I, your unworthy servant’). At the offering of the wine: *Offerimus tibi calicem...*, ‘We offer you the chalice...’.

The ‘*Deus qui humanæ substantiæ...*’, which serves to explain the pouring of water into the chalice, was originally a collect from the *Leonine* Christmas celebrations, to which the phrase ‘through the mystery of water and wine’ was added so that the prayer would correspond to the gesture. The ‘*Suscipe sancta Trinitas*’, which concludes the Offertory, is regarded as a typical *apologia*.

Robert Cabié has arranged the Offertory prayers in a four-column synopsis, as they appeared in the four Roman-type missals preserved by the 16th-century reform, namely: the Roman Missal proper and the Lyon, Carthusian and Dominican missals, ^{no. 16}. Varying in length, they share the same inspiration, clearly deriving from identical or overlapping sources. In another missal, the Milanese, the prayer ‘*Suscipe sancta Trinitas*’ is more extensive, with variations according to the liturgical season and feasts, and is followed by *the Creed*, as in the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom.

One might draw certain parallels between the phenomenon of prayers accompanying gestures or elaborating on certain parts of the Mass and that of poetic and musical compositions, inserted (the tropes) between the *Kyrie* and the phrases of *the Gloria* and the *Sanctus*. What, then, was the purpose of these ‘private’ prayers of the Offertory, if not to elaborate upon the prayers and ritual acts—particularly those marking the entry into the *Sacrificium*—by explaining them?

It is, however, difficult to say when the sequence of prayers for the Roman Offertory became fixed in the form found in the Tridentine Missal. It appears in *the 1474 editio princeps* of *the *Ordo Missalis secundum consuetudinem Romanæ curiæ**, the first Roman Missal

¹⁶. ‘*L’Église en prières*’, new edition edited by Robert Cabié, Desclée, 1983, vol. 2, pp. 176–179.

printed by the printer Zarott o. ¹⁷. By contrast, the **Vetus Missale Romanum monasticum lateranens o. ¹⁸**, edited by Azevedo in the 18th century, probably originating from central Italy and dating from around 1230, omits them – or rather, the surviving text does not contain the offertory prayers (whilst it does contain the priest’s prayers before Communion, the **Placeat**, but not the preparatory prayers at the foot of the altar, nor the **munda cor meum**). Yet, at the same time, Innocent III and Durand of Mende were familiar with them in their allegorical commentaries, though they refer to them only implicitly, focusing instead on lengthy commentary on the gestures of the Offertory that they accompany (whereas they do not comment at length on the prayers of the Ca)¹⁹.

It may be hypothesised that these prayers, most of which date from the Early Middle Ages and which celebrate, in a highly sacrificial tone, the oblates who are to be consecrated, attained their full status during the pre-Tridentine period.

5. The transformation of the Offertory into the Preparation of the Gifts by the Reform Commission

The Commission for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Liturgy was established by Paul VI on 25 January 1964, with Cardinal Lercaro, Archbishop of Bologna, as president and Monsignor Annibale Bugnini as secretary, who thus returned to the helm of the reform. It was Group 10 of the Consilium that was responsible for the new **Ordo Missæ** and which, as a result, assumed a leading role within the Commission.

In the first draft of the ‘normative Mass’ (‘normative’ because it was intended to serve as a rule for the various celebrations), the Offertory began with the celebrant washing his hands (supposed to have received the gifts from the faithful as in ancient times). Then, the gifts were placed on the altar with a brief formula: ‘Just as this scattered bread, when gathered together, becomes one loaf, so too is your Church gathered into your Kingdom’²⁰.

¹⁷. *Missalis Romanis Editio Princeps, Reimpressio vaticani exemplaris*, reprinted by Edizioni Liturgiche, Rome, 1996.

¹⁸. *Vetus missale romanum monasticum lateranense. Archivii Basilicae Lateranensis, Codex A65* (formerly 65), Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2002.

¹⁹. Lothair of Segni (Innocent III), **De sacro Altaris Mysterio** PL 217, 775–916 – Italian translation: **Il sacrosanto Misterio dell’Altare**, edited by Stanislao Fioramonti, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2002; Durand of Mende, translation of Book IV, ‘On the Mass’, in: *The Spiritual Meaning of the Liturgy*, introduced by Claude Barthe, translated by Dominique Millet-Gérard, Ad Solem, 2003.

²⁰. Annibale Bugnini, **The Reform of the Liturgy**, op. cit., p. 368.

A rehearsal of a ‘normative Mass’ was held on 24 October 1967 in the Sistine Chapel, in the presence of the bishops of the Synod assembly. Annibale Bugnini celebrated a Mass in Italian, intended to represent a Sunday Mass in a parish, with seminarians forming the schola and serving at the altar. A. Bugnini admits that the response among the Synod Fathers was very mixed. Among the comments gathered through a ballot were: ‘the Offertory seems lacking: let the prayers and rites already in use be retained, especially the pouring of water into the wine with the accompanying prayer’²¹.

There was no longer any mention of the ‘Offertory’, but rather of the ‘preparation of the gifts’. We owe to Paul VI the reintroduction of the word **offerimus** in the presentation of the bread and that of the wine (the French translation corrected Paul VI by rendering it as ‘we present’), as well as the prayer **Orate fratres** and the responsory **Suscipiat**, which he was very fond of, but which the French translation omitted until a recent correction. Furthermore, he would have preferred the words to be spoken aloud, something to which the majority of experts were averse in their aim to restore a silent presentation, believed to be that of the anti-ⁿ Mass²²: a compromise was reached whereby the words would be spoken in a low voice if there was an Offertory chant, and aloud otherwise. To encourage the participation of the faithful—something Paul VI considered very important in this context (he was a proponent of offertory processions)—acclamations by the congregation were also introduced whenever the words of the presentation were spoken aloud.

The precise history of how the words of the presentation of the gifts were developed remains difficult to trace. One would need to mention not only Louis Bouyer, but also Dom Gregory Dix and Louis Ligier. The focus was on prayers inspired by Judaism. Louis Bouyer, whose ideas carried great weight with Paul VI, subscribed to the prevailing view of the time that the Christian liturgy was largely derived from the liturgy of the Synagogue (in the broad sense: worship in the synagogue and in homes) attended by the early Christians, the synagogue liturgy as it was then imagined, namely a liturgy that was supposedly practised identically by all Jewish communities, from the time of Christ until the Early Middle Ages. These theories, which naively assumed a universal and unchanging Jewish prayer tradition spanning eight to nine centuries, have since been seriously challenged. In fact, we have no knowledge of Jewish liturgies from the first three centuries, which were undoubtedly as diverse and evolving as Christian liturgies. According to Louis Bouyer, however, there was no doubt that the

²¹. Annibale Bugnini, **The Reform of the Liturgy**, *op. cit.*, p. 379.

²². Cf. Niels Krogh Rasmussen, ‘The Presentation of the Bread and Wine’, in **La Maison Dieu** no. 100, p. 52: ‘In the normative Mass presented [...] on 24 October 1967, the *Consilium* had proposed that the formulas accompanying the *depositio donorum* should not be obligatory but merely *pro opportunitate dicendae*.’

The Lord's Supper had begun as a Jewish festive meal preceded by these *berakhot* (blessings recited before carrying out a legal prescription) as recorded around the 10th and 11th centuries: a *berakha* pronounced over the first cup of wine: 'Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the ages, who gives us this fruit of the vine', and a *berakha* over the broken bread: 'Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the ages, who causes the earth to produce this bread' ²³. Nevertheless, like Jungmann, Bouyer would have preferred the presentation of the gifts to take place in silence, concluding with the secret prayer.

It was therefore tempting to have the Eucharist of the twentieth century begin, as it was assumed the Last Supper had begun, thereby giving the Mass a distinctly Jewish flavour. The French experts, members of the CNPL (National Centre for Liturgical Pastoral Care), were at the forefront of this. It was Pierre Jounel who drew up an initial draft: 'Receive, Holy Father, this bread, the fruit of our labour, which we offer to you so that it may become the body of your Son, united' ²⁴. " Paul VI's intervention had carried weight, as he wanted human labour to be mentioned. We owe the wording to Joseph Gelineau: "Blessed are you, God of the universe, who gives us this bread, the fruit of the earth and of human labour; may it become for us the bread of life."

Joseph-André Jungmann, faced with the result, quipped about the amateurishness of the French ²⁵. As for Louis Bouyer, subsequently, as he came to realise the meagre value of the reform and distanced himself from its proponents—much to the displeasure of Paul VI—his criticisms grew ever more scathing. Exasperated by the allusion to 'the labour of men', and attributing the final drafting of the presentation of the gifts to Father Jacques Cellier, director of the CNPL, he wrote furiously in his *Memoirs*: 'The worst was an implausible Offertory, in the sentimental, working-class style of Catholic Action, the work of Father Cellier, who manipulated the despicable Bugnini with arguments within his reach' ²⁶. Whatever the respective responsibilities may have been, this is how the experts of the *Consilium* eliminated the Roman Offertory, a part which had nevertheless become essential in explaining the *sacrificium missæ*.

John Paul II publicly expressed his regret at this: 'In the Roman Missal known as that of Saint Pius V, as in several Eastern liturgies, there are some very beautiful prayers through which the

²³. Louis Bouyer, **Eucharist: Theology and Spirituality of the Eucharistic Prayer**, Desclée, 1966, pp. 82–83.

²⁴. Annibale Bugnini, **The Reform of the Liturgy**, *op. cit.*, p. 390, note 542.

²⁵. Anne-Marie Petitjean, *From the Offertory to the Preparation of the Gifts*, *op. cit.*, p. 376, note 173.

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 199. He had already written in 1970, in the article in **France catholique** of 27 March 1970, cited above: 'What, then, are we to make of the newly introduced formulas, in which a "false antiquity" and a "modernity" that evoke the so-called "Catholic Action" spirituality of the 1930s form an alliance that will soon seem—and indeed already seems—incredibly "dated"!'.

“The priest expresses his deepest sense of humility and respect in the presence of the holy mysteries; they reveal the very substance of all liturgy .²⁷.”

6. The new prayers for the presentation of the gifts

This leads us to the text as it appears in the French missal:

- When the priest raises the paten: ‘Blessed are You, God of the universe, who gives us this bread, the fruit of the earth and of human labour; we offer it to You: it will become the bread of life ’²⁸ (instead of, in the Tridentine Missal: ‘Receive, Holy Father, eternal and almighty God, this immaculate host, which I, Your unworthy servant, offer to you, my living and true God, for my countless sins, offences and omissions, for all those around me and for all the faithful, both living and dead, that it may serve for my salvation and theirs for eternal life’’).
- Whilst pouring a little water into the chalice: ‘Just as this water is mingled with the wine for the sacrament of the Covenant, may we be united with the divinity of Him who took on our humanity ’²⁹ (in place of the prayer from the *Leonine Sacramentary* found in this place in the Tridentine Missal: ‘God, who has marvellously established the dignity of human nature and has reformed it even more marvellously, grant that through this mystery of water mingled with wine we may share in the divinity of Him who deigned to take on our humanity, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord...’).
- When he raises the chalice: ‘Blessed are you, God of the universe, who gives us this wine, the fruit of the vine and of human labour; we offer it to you: it will become the wine of the eternal Kingdom’ .³⁰ (instead of: ‘We offer you, Lord, the cup of salvation, and we ask of your goodness that it may rise as a pleasing fragrance before your divine majesty, for our salvation and that of the whole world’).
- Then, bowing: ‘Humble and poor, we beseech you, Lord, to receive us: may our sacrifice on this day find favour in your sight’ (instead of the former prayer,

²⁷. Address to the *plenary session* of the Congregation for Divine Worship, 21 September 2001.

²⁸. In the Latin Missal: ‘*Blessed are You, Lord, God of the universe, for from Your bounty we have received this bread, which we offer to You, the fruit of the earth and the labour of human hands: from which may bread of life be made for us.*

²⁹. *Through this mystery of water and wine, may we become partakers of the divinity of Him who deigned to become a partaker of our humanity.*

³⁰. *Blessed are You, Lord, God of the universe, for from Your bounty we have received this wine, which we offer to You, the fruit of the vine and the labour of human hands, from which spiritual drink shall be made for us.*

(preserved in the New Latin Missal: ‘Behold the humility of our souls and the repentance of our hearts: receive us, Lord, and may our sacrifice be offered before you today in such a way that it may be pleasing to you’)³¹

- The incensing of the offerings is optional: ‘If he deems it appropriate,’ says the rubric, ‘the priest incenses the offerings on the altar; then the deacon or minister may incense the priest and the people’.
- Whilst washing his hands, the celebrant says only: ‘Wash me from my sins, Lord, purify me from my sin ^{h632}.’
- And finally, the **Orate fratre **^{s33}, whose French translation long in use was surprisingly reductive: ‘Let us pray together, as we offer the sacrifice of the whole Church’, with the congregation’s response: ‘For the glory of God and the salvation of the world.’ ” This has been corrected in the new translation of the Roman Missal, the **Missale Romanum editio typica tertia** of 2002 (which came into force on 28 November 2021): “Pray, brothers and sisters: that my sacrifice, which is also yours, may be pleasing to God the Father Almighty”, with the congregation’s response: ‘May the Lord accept this sacrifice from your hands, to the praise and glory of his name, for our good and that of the whole Church.’

In the new liturgy, where there are countless options for almost all the prayers and texts, including the Eucharistic Prayer (no longer a single canon, but a choice of fourteen principal Eucharistic Prayers), the prayers over the presentation of the gifts—which replace those of the Offertory—have the remarkable feature of being obligatory. The only choice left to the celebrant is whether to say them aloud or under his breath.

This rather strange feature may be due to the fact that the reformers had wished for the gifts to be brought forward and placed on the altar without any words being spoken. As I noted earlier, the words ultimately chosen—more or less inspired by Jewish prayers—are in

³¹. *May we be received by you, O Lord, in a spirit of humility and with a contrite heart; and may our sacrifice be offered before you today in such a way that it may be pleasing to you, O Lord God.*

³². *Wash me, O Lord, from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.*

³³. *Pray, brothers, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty – May the Lord accept this sacrifice from your hands, to the praise and glory of his name, and also for our benefit and that of his whole holy Church.*

tolerated to some extent in response to the bishops' comments in 1967 and to Paul's wishes

VI. Paradoxically, this element of the reform was regarded by the reformers themselves as a temporary stopgap. Thus, Louis Bouyer protested:

It is therefore indisputably neither 'progress' nor a return to early practice, but rather a catastrophic regression to the most deviant aspects of late medieval practices, and an exacerbation of their errors, that of permitting the recitation of formulas aloud at this point, vol. 34.

The essential point, however, had been achieved: the abolition of the old prayers. Their replacement with very poor new prayers only served to highlight the lack of meaning caused by the abolition of the old ones.

I shall conclude my presentation with some reformist reflections. Under Pope Benedict XVI, whilst Cardinal Cañizares was Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship, a very discreet study committee met regularly under the chairmanship of Monsignor Malcolm Ranjith, Secretary of the Congregation. It examined, with a view to submitting them to the Congregation, various aspects of the so-called 'reform of the reform'—that is, the implementation of a gradual evolution of Paul VI's liturgical reform to bring it into line with the traditional liturg^e 35—a process which, as is well known, never even got off the ground. In particular, this committee looked favourably upon the possibility, during Masses celebrated according to Paul VI's reform, of reciting the traditional Offertory prayers *ad libitum* in place of the new prayers, especially when the celebrant chose to say the *Prex eucharistica I*, which reproduces the Roman Canon almost in its entirety. This *transitional* solution towards a return to the norm of the traditional Mass may be examined by the future *Consilium ad Liturgiam Tridentinam restituendam*, which I earnestly hope will be established.

³⁴. 'The new *Ordo missæ*: a reform completed or just begun?', **France catholique**, 27 March 1970.

³⁵. See my book: **La Messe à l'endroit**, L'Homme nouveau, Hora Decima series, 2010. Very recently, Bishop Athanasius Schneider took up this theme once more: the new Ordo cannot remain as it is ([Warning from Bishop Schneider: 'The Novus Ordo cannot remain as it is'](#), *Life Site*, programme hosted by John-Henry Westen, 13 January 2026).