

The Collection

The Roman Missal (2011)

The Collection: “*Even money or other gifts for the poor or for the Church, brought by the faithful or collected in the church, are acceptable; given their purpose, they are to be put in a suitable place away from the Eucharistic table.*” (GIRM 73)

Scripture

Melchizedek’s Offering and Abraham’s Tithe

And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!” And Abram gave him a tenth of everything. (Genesis 14:18-20)

The Offering of Tithes

At the end of every three years *you shall bring forth all the tithe of your produce* in the same year, and lay it up within your towns; and *the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled*; that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do. (Deuteronomy 14:28)

Almsgiving in the Sermon on the Mount

Thus, *when you give alms*, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. *But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing*, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. (Matthew 6:2-4)

St. Paul: The Sunday Collection

Now concerning the contribution (Greek *logeia*; Latin *collecta*) *for the saints*: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. *On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper*, so that contributions need not be made when I come. And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. (1 Corinthians 16:1-3; cf. 2 Cor 9:7: “God loves a cheerful giver...”)

Tradition

The Gifts and Collection in the Roman Liturgy (2nd Century)

St. Justin Martyr: Those who are well off, and who are also willing, give as each chooses. *What is gathered is given to him who presides to assist orphans and widows, those whom*

*illness or any other cause has deprived of resources, prisoners, immigrants and, in a word, all who are in need.*¹

St. John Chrysostom and the Power of Almsgiving

St. John Chrysostom: “Therefore, ...let us collect money in the home for the explicit purpose of almsgiving. *In this manner, therefore, let everyone’s house become a church that will have sacred money stored up within it.* Wherever money is stored up for the poor, that place is inaccessible to demons; and the money that is collected together for almsgiving fortifies Christian homes more than a shield, spear, weapons, physical power, and multitudes of soldiers.”²

The 5th Precept of the Church

Catechism: The fifth precept (“*You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church*”) means that the faithful are obliged to assist with the material needs of the Church, each according to his own ability. (CCC 2043)

The Collection and the Sacrifice of Christ (20th Century)

Catechism: *From the very beginning Christians have brought, along with the bread and wine for the Eucharist, gifts to share with those in need.* This custom of the *collection*, ever appropriate, is inspired by the example of Christ who became poor to make us rich [cf. 1 Cor 16:1; 2 Cor 8:9]. (CCC 1351)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. What prayers did Jesus say over the bread and wine at the Last Supper? How are these similar to and different from the prayers over the bread and wine in the Offertory?

2. Why does the Priest say “my sacrifice *and yours*” in the invitation to pray? In what way do the laity offer a sacrifice during the Offertory?

¹ Justin Martyr, *1 Apology* 65, 67. In Johnson, *Worship in the Early Church*, 1:67-68; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* §1351.

² John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Repentance and Almsgiving*, 10.4.15.

For Further Reading

- Jungmann, Joseph, S.J. *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development*. 2 Volumes. Translated by Francis A. Brunner, C.S.S.R. Reprint. Notre Dame, Ind.: Christian Classics, 2012. Volume 2, pp. 1-40. [An in-depth study of the history of the offertory procession.]
- Amalar of Metz, *On the Liturgy*. 2 vols.; trans. Eric Knibbs; Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 36; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2014. Volume 2, pp. 109-133 [An in-depth examination of the spiritual meaning of the Offertory in the Medieval Church.]