

Dear Friends,

**Today I am continuing my series of columns on the Mass.** Last week the focus was on the bread and wine that are presented at the altar at the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Today I am reflecting on the prayers that the priest says at this time.

**Usually, we see but do not hear the priest offering prayers as he holds first the bread and then the wine before placing these gifts on the altar.** On most Sundays, we are singing a hymn at this time and the priest offers these prayers quietly. As he holds the paten or ciborium filled with altar bread, the priest prays: *“Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the bread we offer you: fruit of the earth and work of human hands, it will become for us the bread of life.”*

And then, as he holds the chalice filled with wine, the priest prays:

*“Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the wine we offer you: fruit of the vine and work of human hands, it will become our spiritual drink.”*

If there were no hymn being sung or instrumental music being played, to each of the prayers all would respond:

*“Blessed be God forever.”*

**These beautiful prayers are based on the ancient Hebrew *Berakha* blessing for food and drink.** In all likelihood, Jesus used blessings like these at the Last Supper before the unique words that he added, what we call the words of consecration. So, these prayers of praise and thanks are blessings. Used at this point in the Mass, they proclaim that we set aside this bread and wine for a singular purpose, namely, that they *“will become for us the bread of life”* and *“our spiritual drink.”*

**We hear these prayers with the *“Blessed be God forever”* response at weekday Mass since there is no music.** I am thinking that it would be good for us to do this at times for Sunday Masses also, perhaps ending the hymn or music after the bread and wine are presented to the priest.

**You can find this and all 18 columns that I have written on the Mass** on the parish website at [www.stmargaret.org](http://www.stmargaret.org), clicking on the Information tab and then clicking on Bulletins. They are listed at the top of that page.

May the peace of the Lord be with you.

Father Mike