Divine Service: The Offering and Offertory

1. **The Offering**

The Church has always received offerings for a number of reasons. One of them is for the support of the ministry of the Gospel:

*Luke 8:2-3 – “Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for themout of their means.”*

*Romans 16:25-29 – “At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you. I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessingof Christ.”*

We also receive offerings to help the poor or downtrodden:

*2 Corinthians 8:1-5 – “We want you to know, brothers,about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favorof taking part in the relief of the saints—and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.”*

Because God has richly given us everything in Jesus Christ, so too do we give out of the abundance we have received.

*2 Corinthians 8:9 – “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.”*

Christians are blessed to be a blessing!

*Proverbs 11:25 – “Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered.”*

1. **The Offering Box**

To emphasize that the Divine Service is all about God’s gifts to us, we receive the offerings of God’s people through offering boxes. God’s people can drop their offering into one of these boxes before or after the service.



*1 Corinthians 16:1-2 – “Now concerning the collection 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 there will be no collecting when I come.”*

1. **The Offertory**

To prepare our minds and hearts for the Liturgy of the Sacrament, the offeratory (sung or chanted) calls to mind the generosity of the Lord. A common psalm sung during the offertory is a portion of the 51st Psalm:

*Create in me a clean heart, O God,
    and renew a rightspirit within me.
Cast me not away from your presence,
    and take not your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
    and uphold me with a willing spirit.*

Another common canticle (Latin for “small song”) sung as the offertory is “Let the Vineyards be Fruitful.” This canticle is relatively new (1978) yet widely well received. It combines the following Scriptures:

*1 Corinthians 10:16 –“The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?”*

*John 6:35 - Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”*

Other suitable Psalms for the offertory are what are known as the “Hallel Psalms “– Psalms 113-118 – psalms expressing joy and gratitude to God. These are psalms Jesus and the disciples would have sung on their way to the mount of Olives after the Last Supper.

1. **The Tithe**

What is the tithe? The tithe is a percentage of what the people of Israel were to give to support the work priests and the ministry carried out at the temple in Jerusalem. It was commonly called “first fruits.” God provides all you need and so God gets the best you have for His glory. God gets the best of what you have because God has given it to you as a blessing.

*Deuteronomy 26:1-2 – ““When you come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance and have taken possession of it and live in it,* *you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from your land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket, and you shall go to the place that the Lord your God will choose, to make his name to dwell there.*

*Psalm 37:25-26 – “I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread. He is ever lending generously, and his children become a blessing.”*

Percentage-wise, the tithe is 10%. Most American church-goers give about 2-3% of their income to the church.

It’s never too early to practice generosity!



1. **The Preparation of the Table**

During the offertory, the assisting minister and acolyte will prepare the Great Altar for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. The presiding pastor goes into the sacristy during this time and puts on the communion vestment, the chasuble. Once the table is set, the assisting minister will also go into the sacristy to put on the servant vestment, the dalmatic.

Some churches will have the elements (bread and wine), along with financial contributions, brought up as the Great Altar is prepared for the Lord’s Supper. At Zion, we do this on Saturday nights. The acolyte helps prepare the Great Altar along with the assisting minister.

This Summer (2020) Zion has returned to the traditional Lutheran practice of having the offertory be a time of preparing more intently for the Holy Supper while the financial contributions of the people of God will be placed in the offering boxes, either before or after the Divine Service. This practice emphasizes that the Divine Service is God bestowing His gifts to us, beginning to end.

Giving thanks to God for His word, expressing our gratitude to God through financial (or other: chickens!) contributions, we now prepare to receive a “visible Word” – the Lord’s Supper.

*Psalm 34:8-10 – “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack! The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.”*