

## “Year of the Eucharist”—“What does THAT word mean?” (Pt. 1)—Fr. Steve Lape

Many people may “scratch their heads” during the Mass, as they wonder what certain words in the Mass mean. For example, what does “oblation” or “supplication” mean in a prayer? Or “consubstantial” in the Nicene Creed (the Profession of Faith we usually say together after the homily on Sundays)? Some may not even know what “catholic” or “apostolic” means in the Creed. They’re certainly not your everyday conversation words!

First off, let’s look at the word “oblation.” Here’s an example of its use, from a section in Eucharistic Prayer #3 that the presiding priest says: “Look, we pray, upon the oblation of your Church...” In a general sense, it can mean anything offered up to God—burning incense, singing a hymn of praise, lifting up words in prayer, donating money to the poor or to a parish or for a church-related cause, or even offering a sign of peace. In another sense, we at Mass are to actually offer up our whole lives to God as a prayer offering, since we come together not only to praise and worship our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, but to ask our Lord to transform our lives more into being like Him, in a spirit of sacrificial love, patience, kindness, faith, peace, generosity, selflessness, etc. Yet, more specifically, oblation in the Catholic sense often focuses more on the offering of bread and wine at Mass, which, according to our Catholic faith, becomes fully and actually Jesus’ Body and Blood. Whenever any of these actions are done in the Mass, they all symbolically point to our presenting all of these as gifts to God, in gratitude for what God has lavishly and freely bestowed on all of us as God’s children.

The second word that we’ll examine is “supplication.” On the weekend of September 16-17, the Prayer over the Offerings for the 24<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time read as follows: “Look with favor on our supplications, O Lord, and in your kindness accept these, your servants’ offerings...” Some may quickly suggest that “supplication” is just another word for “prayer.” So, why not just use “prayers” in place of “supplications,” which may not sound familiar to most ears? Well, “supplications” mean a bit more than just being a substitute for “prayers.” When someone offers a supplication, it is a more intensely sincere or serious kind of prayer, with a greater spirit of humility in the asking. Thus, when we make supplications to God in the Mass, we’re aware that we, as lowly human beings in God’s grand scheme of things, are really nothing without God, and that none of us is ultimately worthy of such generous gifting from God, due to our sins and our total



dependence on God for sustaining our life. Yet, we beg and plead for God to hear our humble requests, not in a sense of a spoiled child demanding that we get what we want, but always humbly hopeful that God will provide for us in what we sincerely need and request. Thus, the word supplication actually should get us thinking about how sincere we are in turning to God in prayer. For example, are we truly thankful for all the good that God has given us? Are we making a sincere effort to do what Jesus asks of us in obeying His Commandments, especially loving others as Jesus loves us? Are we living out our convictions strongly in our public life, doing all we can to promote what we believe God wants all humankind to have and enjoy—life, faith & high moral standards?