

A Sufficient Sacrifice: Acts and Prayers of Oblation

11/24/2019 Andy Figueroa

And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, our selves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto thee; (from prayers of oblation, 1928 Book of Common Prayer, page 81)

Archbishop Nicholas Okoh was quoted in last week's article saying, "the first concept is that your life is **a living sacrifice**." We manifest this in the service of Holy Eucharist when our gifts of money are placed on the altar representing the offering of our selves. When the gifts of bread and wine are brought forward to the altar, they, too, represent the offering of our selves along with the offering of Jesus Christ.



An oblation is a solemn offering to God and our prayers of oblation are the prayers that accompany those gifts. Whatever is placed on the altar is transformed in a mysteriously sacramental way. Just as the bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Christ, "*our selves, our souls and bodies*" are transformed as well.

Liturgically, there are two oblations. The lesser oblation is the offertory, in which the bread and wine and our gifts of money are presented and offered to God. The greater oblation is the Eucharist, in which the body and blood of Christ are offered to God, who in turn gives the oblation back to the people to receive Christ and become united with Him.

We speak at this time of the year about tithes and offerings with a business-like slant towards parish finances and the budget. It's important for us to do that as part of operating in a responsible manner. Yet, our acts of giving in worship are so much more important to our spiritual well-being than this day-to-day church business; more important than we would usually dare to imagine. So, let's get on with the church business by filling out one of those *Estimated Giving* cards, dropping it in the box, and being a participant in these things that we have to do. Then, we can turn our minds fully to the real business of the church on Sunday mornings.

How important is that *Estimated Giving* card? If you don't participate, we don't stand a prayer of estimating next year's income with any confidence. It's also important to you, so you can know that you did that which was requested by your parish, and that you are giving the considerable thought to your offering that an oblation to God deserves. Sure, only one person will ever see your card, and it's just an *estimate*, but we will be deeply grateful for your participation.

Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. (Hebrews 13:15-16)

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