

VISION FOR ACTION – MISSION

Questions about Church you've always wanted answered but don't like to ask!!

These questions are now being answered over time in The Pinnacle. If you have such a question do let me know and we will try to provide answers in subsequent editions. If your question hasn't been answered yet look out for the response in future editions!

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This month there has been a question about the Offertory and the Offertory Procession

The Offertory is the bringing to, or presentation at, the altar of the bread and wine to be consecrated in the Eucharist. The Offertory or Preparation of the Table follows the Peace in the service and is combined in St Swithun's as with most other churches these days with the offering of the collection (our gifts of money).

The Offertory Procession is often overlooked because it takes place during a hymn. It is the time in the service when the bread and wine we give to God are brought to the Altar. They represent our human contribution to the Eucharist because they are, on the one hand, 'the fruit of the earth', which comes as God's gift to us, yet they are also the 'work of human hands', which we return to God for consecration (to be set apart as sacred) in the words of the Eucharistic Prayer

In some Churches these prayers are said at the Preparation of the Table which reflect this symbolism:

Blessed are you Lord God of all creation:
Through your goodness we have this bread to set before you,
Which earth has given and human hands have made.
It will become for us the bread of life.
Blessed be God for ever.

Blessed are you Lord God of all creation:
Through your goodness we have this wine to set before you,
Fruit of the vine and work of human hands.
It will become for us the cup of salvation.
Blessed be God for ever.

(Cited from Common Worship Order 1- Supplementary Texts: Prayers at Preparation of Table)

It is also worth noting that the word collection which is now used to describe the collecting of money during a church service really combines the collecting of what were known as alms and dues. Alms (from the Greek word meaning compassionateness) were the gifts of money collected during public worship from the congregation for the relief of the poor. They were collected separately to distinguish them from "dues" which was the money collected to maintain the services, staff and fabric of a church.