THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
November 3, 2013

Collect:

Almighty and merciful God,
by whose gift your faithful offer you
right and praiseworthy service,
grant, we pray,
that we may hasten without stumbling
to receive the things you have promised.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

This prayer is first found in the *Verona Sacramentary* from the 6th century. The gift, *munere*, that is offered here is nothing less than the gift of God first given to us. *Munere* also means duty, function, and service. To offer the Eucharist is all those things. It is a duty: we do this in memory of Christ. It is a function or action: we offer bread and wine. And it is a service: we offer the Eucharist in order that we might be transformed and sent to be Church in the world. Finally, because it is nothing less than the gift of God, our service can be right and praiseworthy. The Latin verb here is *serviatur*, an impersonal passive, which helps remind us that the emphasis is not on what we do but on what God does. It is his saving action.

Then we pray that we may hasten, yes run, without stumbling, to the promises of God. These promises are not so much things, as our translation states, but the very promises of life and grace from Jesus Christ, the gift we offer. Our prayer reminds us of the eschatological tension that we know neither the day nor the hour. Therefore we must pray and offer as a people prepared.

Prayer:

May what we offer become in us the very life of Jesus Christ. Let us not only become him whom we have received but also offer what he has first given to us: the gifts of bread and wine which will become our heavenly food.

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