

## THE MASS AS YOU KNOW IT IS ABOUT TO CHANGE

When we reach the liturgical season of Advent in 2011, there will be very noticeable differences at Mass. The parts of the Mass are not changing, but the wording of many of the prayers at Mass will be different. Why is this happening? Before answering this question, we must remember that the "mother tongue" (official language) of the Catholic Church is still Latin. Therefore, any official document from the Pope or the Vatican is written in Latin and then translated into various languages so that everyone can read the document.

This applies also to the Mass. The prayers and all of the wording of the Mass is first written in Latin and then translated into common languages. Those responsible for translating the Latin into English are part of what is called the International Committee on English in the Liturgy (ICEL). The English translation we now use at Mass was first formulated in 1973. For the past ten years, ICEL has been working on formulating a new and improved English translation.

There are a few reasons for this new English translation. First of all, many of the words in the Mass refer to various passages from the Bible; the new translation aims at making these references to Scripture clearer. A second reason for the translation is to provide a stricter translation of the Latin. In 1973, ICEL took more liberties in translating the Latin into English; today, ICEL has worked to make sure the English more closely matches the Latin. A third reason for this new English translation was to give the words and prayers of the Mass a higher level of dignity. Many believe that the English translation we now use is filled with too many common, everyday expressions. However, we know that the Mass is anything but common—it is extraordinary! The new English translation aims to reflect this extraordinary character of the Mass.

For the weeks to follow, I will list and explain exactly what parts of the Mass will have a new translation. As I mentioned, there will be clear differences in the new translation, but much of the wording will still be the same. At the beginning, there will be some difficulty in getting used to the new translation, but that is to be expected. Ultimately, the new translation is meant to draw us into a deeper encounter with the Trinity and to enter into the amazing mysteries of the Mass and the Eucharist. Let us pray for the grace to harbor a greater devotion to the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist and for the grace to more intimately encounter Jesus at the Mass.

It needs to be emphasized that the order of the Mass is not affected: the only thing changing about the Mass will be the text. This week, I will focus on the changes in the Introductory Rites.

You will notice the change of the new translations near the very beginning of Mass. The Sign of the Cross will remain the same. After the Sign of the Cross, the priest greets the congregation. He has three different formulas from which to pick. The most used formula is "The Lord be with you." Another formula will have a new translation: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the *communion* of the Holy Spirit be with you all." Right now, the celebrant says fellowship instead of the communion. The last formula is, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Right now, we respond to this by saying, "And also with you." However, with the new translation, we will no longer say that. We will respond, "*And with your spirit.*"

For us, this seems like a very strange response. First, it is important to know that "*And with your spirit*" is a closer translation of the Latin ("*et cum spiritu tuo*"), and it also more closely matches the Spanish, French, Italian, and German translations.

Here is another reason for this change: the new text aims to help us realize that we are about to enter into a sacred mystery. The response, "And also with you," is very common; we can use it in everyday conversation. It even seems as if we are saying, "Back at ya," or "Same to you." In fact, I'm sure many of us say it at Mass without even realizing what we are saying because it is such a commonplace phrase. Responding with "*And with your spirit*" helps us understand that we are at no ordinary event.

Also, the phrase, "*And with your spirit,*" has Biblical roots. This phrase can be found in 2 Timothy 4:22, Galatians 6:18, Philippians 4:23, and Philemon 25, which are all epistles (letters) written by St. Paul. In these instances, St. Paul addresses the words, "and with your spirit" to the entire community to which he is writing; he does not address the phrase to a single person.

This phrase also applies for other parts of the Mass. Anytime the priest says, "The Lord be with you," our response will always be "*And with your spirit.*" This also applies when the deacon proclaims the Gospel; before proclaiming the Gospel, he will say, "The Lord be with you." Again, our response is "*And with your spirit.*" At first, this will take time, effort, and patience to get used to it, but hopefully, it will enhance our ability to pray at Mass and enable to better encounter and worship our Lord. By: Matthew Frisbee