

If all goes as currently planned, Roman Catholics in the United States are scheduled to begin using the newly-translated third edition of the Roman Missal on November 27, 2011—the First Sunday of Advent. While the structure of the Mass is not changing, there have been additions to the Missal (e.g., new Saints, new prayers) as well as minor adjustments to the rubrics. In addition, our approach to translation has shifted. Therefore, while the Mass will *look* the same—it will *sound* different: more formal, varied, poetic, inclusive, and concrete—and more clearly reflective of its scriptural origins. In this article, we briefly look at only one part of the Mass: the Eucharistic Prayer.

The Preface

The Preface begins with the greeting between the priest and the people; but in response to, “The Lord be with you,” we will now say, “And with your spirit.” Most language groups already use this response, which might help build a deeper sense of unity in multicultural parishes.

This dialogue is used whenever an ordained minister is about to do something significant in the Mass—begin the liturgy, proclaim the gospel, pray the Eucharistic Prayer, bless and dismiss the assembly. The priest prays that God’s spirit be with us to do what we are called to do: celebrate the liturgy. In response, we acknowledge that this person has been ordained to lead us in sacramental worship, praying that the particular spiritual gift given to him at ordination would enable him to fulfill his vocation in the Church.

In response to “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God,” we will now respond, “It is right and just.” We are reminded that it is not only good to give thanks to God, but that it is our baptismal duty as well. In addition to being more inclusive, this phrase will lead directly into the prefaces themselves, which will now begin, “It is truly right and just....” In a sense, the people will hand the priest the words with which to open the Eucharistic Prayer, the prayer he will pray out loud on their behalf, and to which the people (not the priest) at its conclusion will respond, “Amen!”

The only change in the *Sanctus* (Holy, Holy) is in the opening line, which now more accurately reflects the ancient prayer of the Church, based on Isaiah 6:3, by referring to “Lord God of *hosts*” (think “Silent Night” and the angelic beings which surround God, not communion bread).

The Institution Narrative

In reference to the Bread, the priest will say: “Take this, all of you, and eat *of it*...” a reminder that we are *sharing* in something that is beyond us individually and even beyond the community gathered for that particular Mass. Rather than “cup,” we will hear the word “chalice,” not to refer to what Jesus literally used at the Last Supper but in order to reflect a specific vocabulary that says: something is different here!

Currently, we pray that Christ’s blood “will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven.” The new translation will read: “which will be poured out for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins.”

The first change, from “shed” to “poured out,” will make for a more poetic connection between the Blood and the Wine. The second change—the translation of the Latin phrase, *pro multis*—has received particular attention.

This translation does not mean that Christ did not die for everyone—as the Scriptures (Jn 11:52; 2 Cor 5:14-15; Titus 2:11; 1 Jn 2:2), the dogmatic teaching of the Church (*Catechism* §§624, 629), and the Eucharistic Prayers themselves (in their inclusive prayers for the dead) make clear.

Scriptural (Mt 26:28, Mk 14:24), historical, and ecumenical reasons undergird this change, but it is the theological reasoning that is most important pastorally. While salvation is offered to all, not all will accept God's gift. Hopefully, as we hear these words, we will be reminded of our need to respond to that gift as well as the degree to which God will go to respect our freedom.

The Mystery of Faith

By translating the Latin more faithfully, the new Missal clarifies the dialogical nature of this exchange: the priest says one thing ("The mystery of faith") and the rest of us respond in one of three ways.¹ The new translations of the acclamations highlight the fact that we are addressing Christ, now sacramentally present (in the rest of the Mass, we address the Father)—and make the scriptural roots (1 Cor 11:26, Jn 4:42) easier to grasp.

One final comment...

The new Missal, while not perfect, is the next step in our Church's long history of seeking how we are to worship God in our particular time and place.

We need to be patient with one another and with the process of implementation; change is difficult, and often engenders strong feelings.

New texts will be clumsy at first; and, while it will take time to get used to them, they will become our prayers—in the depths of our bones—just the way that the prayers we are using now became ours over time. We have the privilege of being the generation to receive the gift of a new Missal. I hope that we can do so with gratitude, charity, and humility.

¹ The familiar "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again" is a U.S. adaptation that was not approved for inclusion in the third edition of the Missal because, unlike the other acclamations, it is not addressed directly to Christ.

SIDEBAR:

To our priests...

You will bear the greatest burden in implementing the new Missal. Prayers and dialogues that you once had memorized are changing. As a result, at least initially, you will need to spend a significant amount of time practicing these texts. Not only are the words going to be different, but the sentence structure, pauses, emphases—the way the texts feel—are all going to be different. Perhaps a good analogy is that in many places the Mass will sound less like reading a story and more like reading poetry. It may be helpful to choose one Eucharistic Prayer (I suggest Prayer III) to learn first, and once you are comfortable with that one add the others.

These new texts are intended to be sung; that is why they have a more poetic (rather than narrative) feel to them. The new Missal will be “pointed” so that chanting the texts will be easier. Introducing new texts with chant may be one way to help our congregations overcome resistance to change and embrace the new Missal.

Resources

You may find it helpful to hear the texts proclaimed and chanted, so here are some possible resources:

- USCCB/ICEL: A comprehensive 2-DVD multi-media resource, including the Eucharistic Prayers in text and audio (including some chant) formats. More information is available at: <http://www.usccb.org/romanmissal/bobosc.shtml>.
- The Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions (<http://www.fdlc.org/>) is planning on producing recordings (CD and mp3 formats) of the Eucharistic Prayers, and eventually the Collects, being proclaimed.
- The National Association of Pastoral Musicians (<http://www.npm.org/>) is planning on producing mp3 files for download of all the chanted texts.