



Praying the Mass Anew

*The New Translation of The Roman Missal
and Our Actual Participation at Mass*

8. Introducing the Mass.

This article begins our look at the particular prayers of the Mass as found in the new translation of *The Roman Missal*. While we will not explore every single prayer in the Missal, it is important to give attention to the more noteworthy changes and reasons for change. In addition, we will speak of the biblical references for each of these parts of the Mass that we treat, along with other information given in *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM) for further explanation. We note that all of the translations seek to be more faithful to the Latin versions, and are translated to show the clearer connection to the biblical texts from which many of them are drawn. We begin by looking at the introduction of the Mass.

The Sign of the Cross

Every offering of the Mass, as an entrance into an encounter with God himself and His saving work, properly begins by our signing ourselves with the Sign of the Cross. The priest leads us in the words of this prayer: “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.” The names of the three persons of the one, triune God, while they are revealed throughout the Scriptures, are spoken by Jesus himself as he sent out

the apostles in Matthew 28:19 (after his resurrection):

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

These words, with the gesture of the Sign of the Cross, express both our purpose (we make this offering in His name) and our identity (as those who are marked with the sign of His cross, through baptism, we belong to Jesus Christ).

The Greeting and Response

For the greeting, the priest will choose one of the following three options:

- 1. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.**
- 2. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**
- 3. The Lord be with you.**

The first two options are drawn from various letters of St. Paul, who often spoke these or similar greetings at the beginning and the end of his letters. It is noteworthy that these options acknowledge God’s presence in the lives of those who are greeted, while expressing a desire that this

presence be perfected in them. This presence of God is what informs the response that the people will make.

The third option is for the priest to simply greet the people with the words “The Lord be with you.” These words are found in Ruth 2:4, where Boaz speaks these words to the harvesters of grain in his family’s field. This greeting alludes to the name “Emmanuel” (literally, God with us) while giving the sense that we are a pilgrim people on the way to heaven (the Lord be with you on your journey).

“And with your spirit.”

The new English translation of the response of the people to all of these greetings is significantly different from what we have known for all of the years of praying the Mass in English. The words of this response are now given as **“And with your spirit.”** As this response is significant, both in its meaning and its newness, **the subject of “Insert 10” in this series will be an explanation of this new response.**

A Bishop’s Greeting

The greetings given above are typical for use by any priest offering the Mass. In addition to these options, bishops are entrusted with another, alternate greeting that comes from the lips of Jesus himself on that first Easter Sunday evening: “Peace be with you.” A bishop, in his very person as bishop, is the fullest expression of Christ in his diocese, as true shepherd of the flock. These words of greeting that were spoken by the Risen Christ when he appeared to his apostles (John 20:19), convey both the gift of peace, and the connection of the bishop, as High Priest in his diocese, to Jesus himself.

In Summary

The Sign of Cross serves to begin the Mass as a prayer of the Church, in the manner that we properly begin any prayer. The Greeting places us in the awareness of God’s presence, both in this moment, and in the response we make through our offering of the Mass.

Questions of the Week:

➤ *Why does the greeting refer to the “communion” of the Holy Spirit?*

In the previous translation, the word “fellowship” was used in this particular greeting. The word “communion” is both more literal to the Latin word “*communicatio*,” and the original Greek in the Bible. This word speaks more clearly to the life of the Holy Spirit in God’s Trinitarian nature. The Holy Spirit, as the bond of love between the Father and the Son, is the source of unity in the Church herself. This unity in the Holy Spirit is also evident in the various Eucharistic Prayers (the prayer said by the priest that includes the consecration of the Body and Blood of Christ). In these prayers, the Holy Spirit is invoked, as we ask that the Church be united in all her members – which is a fruit both of the Holy Spirit’s work, and of the Holy Eucharist (hence called “Holy Communion.”) Thus, “communion” is a more fitting way to refer to the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in us, where God is uniting us to Himself “in the unity of the Holy Spirit.”

➤ *Is it acceptable for the priest to simply say “good morning” as the greeting?*

No. We are to use one of the given formulas, with the response “And with your spirit,” as the liturgy is an entrance into God’s presence and a participation in his saving work. Participation in the liturgy is not of the nature of a social gathering. Greetings like “Good morning” or “Hello” at the beginning of Mass reduce the liturgy to such a level. In truth, the liturgy is an entrance into a sacramental encounter with God. Thus, our focus is to be upon worshiping him and receiving sanctification from him (not merely on being together).