

I. THE HOLY MASS

The Holy Mass. Nothing sums up an experience of Catholic faith more completely than Mass. Of course, it can take different shapes throughout the year. There is the quiet hush of Midnight Mass at Christmas; there is the exuberant joy when we proclaim “Glory” and “Alleluia” at the Easter Vigil after a season of fasting; there is the comfortable rhythm of daily Mass; and then there is the familiarity of weekly Sunday Mass.

At the heart of it all, for those who engage Mass interiorly, there is a profound interaction with the Triune God, with Jesus at the Last Supper, with His Cross, with angels and saints surrounding God’s throne in heaven. Indeed, every time we go to Mass we unite our suffering to Jesus’.

Sometimes, it seems like Mass never changes. Of course, those who lived through the challenging times after the Second Vatican Council will recall that that is a myth. At that time, much of the exterior ceremony of Mass changed. Moreover, for the first time in history, the whole Mass was celebrated in English (and Italian, French, German and most other modern languages for that matter). The words of the prayers we use in Mass every day when we celebrate in English are the result of those first efforts in the 1970’s to translate the Latin prayers of the Mass.

Soon, beginning in Advent of this year, we will have something else new in the Mass. Most of the Mass will stay the same. There will not be drastically new ritual elements of the Mass as there were after the council, and we are not going to be celebrating in another new language. What we will experience is a new translation in English. It is indeed an exciting moment for the whole Church!!

While the translation that we currently use at Mass has nourished us for 40 years, honest reflection and comparison of our translation with Latin texts shows

that a new translation will uncover the richness of Biblical and poetic language found in the Latin texts.

I’m sure you’ve heard the rumors: “This will be incomprehensible to the common folk;” “The Church is going backward;” “Some group high jacked the work of Vatican II and is steering us away from where we should be headed;” “They just didn’t do enough consultation in the process of doing this!!” A good examination of the facts

shows that it just ain’t so!

In fact, with this new translation the Church is going forward, putting us all in contact with the richness and beauty of nearly two millennia of prayer and meditation on the Holy Scriptures contained in the prayers of Mass. It is as if the Church, like Mary, “pondered in Her heart” all of the saving power of Christ, expresses it in prayer, and begs for Him to continue to act again

Why a new translation?

1. The official Latin text of the Mass, called the *Roman Missal*, was updated to a 3rd Edition in 2000. Our translation is based on the 1st Edition from 1970. We are, then, two versions of the Missal and 40 years behind!
2. In 2001, a new set of guidelines were given for translating the texts of Mass. These guidelines call for greater fidelity to the Latin originals.

To find out more

- * Visit the USCCB website at <http://www.usccb.org/romanmissal/>
- * Attend one of our sessions for the new translation from 9am-2pm in:
 - Minot [Jan. 29]
 - Dickinson [Feb. 5]
 - Wiliston [Feb. 12]
 - Bismarck [Feb. 19]
- * Stay tuned for more in Diocesan, Parish and national resources coming to you in the coming months!

powerfully. As we'll see when we begin to pray the new texts, the new translation puts us in contact with this power.

Take a look for yourself at the new prayers – they are easy to find on the internet. There may be a word or two here and there that is slightly unfamiliar, but those words are precise and express something that no other word in our language can say. By and large, you'll see that the new texts are easy to understand yet moving in their depth. They do what all great English rhetoric can do: even in the context of formality, they convey a deep sense of intimacy. Think of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a dream speech," or Abraham Lincoln's addresses, or John F. Kennedy's inaugural address. The style of language used in the new translation is unique, used only at Mass. Yet, it has this evocative power that all great proclaimed English has!

The process of translation was highly involved, including Bishops, linguists, liturgical specialists, musicians, and poets from each of the eleven English-language nations the translation will serve. It also took nearly 15 years of careful discussion and input from each of the member nations. Perhaps none of us was involved, but the Church asked many people for a great deal of help before sending the final text to the Vatican for approval.

For something so personal, so bound up with our family and community life, these changes will be slightly uncomfortable at first. We'll have to learn new responses and new music to go along with them. Yet, in the end, this new text will be capable of leading us even more deeply into prayer, of focusing us even more on exactly what we are saying and doing at Mass, and reveal to us the rich treasures of the prayers of Mass. That friends, is a gift worth being excited for

II. VIEWS ON THE NEW ROMAN MISSAL

In recent days, I have been reading a lot of articles and watching a lot of videos regarding the new translation of the Roman Missal. There are a lot of things out there: magazine articles, websites, blogs, newspaper articles, books. The list goes on. In coming months, we will look more at the texts themselves, in ways that these new translations can affect our own prayer. This month, however, I'd like to offer my general impressions of the resources that are currently available.

The overwhelming majority

Most of the new materials that deal with the new Roman Missal are positive and energized. From my study of the liturgy in general, and of this new translation in particular, there is good reason to be positive. Moreover, when I present the new text to people, the general response is one of acceptance, and often even excitement.

The reason for all of this positivity is based on the translation of the text itself. The new texts, as anyone who examines them quickly sees, are an improvement on our current translation. The new prayers are ripe with poetic imagery and biblical citations that simply do not come through in our current translation.

Unfortunate extremes

Although most of the materials out there on the new translation are quite positive, there are some voices, generally speaking minority voices, that can muddy the water. To help you sort through the various materials you will read the coming months, I'd like to offer telltale signs of viewpoints that have an ideological bent, the nuggets of truth found within these ideologies, and the more dangerous aspects of each of these trends.

Negativity toward the new translation

One of the extremes I've encountered is a strong negativity and even a rejection of the new

translation. This negativity focuses, generally speaking, on two points: the language itself of the new translation, and the process by which the church arrived at this new translation.

When speaking of the language of the new translation, those who speak and write negatively will say things like, "The new translation uses words like 'consubstantial,' and 'Godhead,'" to point out that there are some words in the new translation that are difficult. They also often say things like, "The new translation has some sentences that are up to 80 words long."

As with any statement, there is some element of truth in these observations. The language of the new missal is more elevated than the translation we currently use; the sentence structure does more accurately represent the original Latin prayers.

Unfortunately, however, these negative voices rarely, if ever, quote full prayers from the new translation. The simple reason is that as soon as one encounters the prayers themselves, he sees that they are neither awkward, nor difficult, but rich and poetic. If you are discouraged by these negative voices, I encourage you to seek out the new prayers themselves. You will quickly see that the abstract statements made by the negative voices are much ado about nothing.

Negativity toward our current translation

Another camp of negative voices is one that belittles or ridicules our current translation. Now, as I stated above, I'm very excited about our new translation. I believe it is a vast improvement over our current translation. Not only does it more faithfully render our Latin prayers, it is more evocatively scriptural and poetic. What is true in the opinions of those in this camp is precisely this improvement.

Nevertheless, we must also say that our current translation has nourished us over the last 40 years. I grew up in the faith with the current translation. I discovered my vocation to the priesthood in it. I believe that all of you have been nourished by the prayers of mass Sunday in and Sunday out, day in and day out. Indeed, our current translation of the Roman missal effectively and meaningfully helped us make the move to praying in our vernacular language.

A rejection of the vernacular

A final camp believes that translating the Mass is already a waste of time. Those in this camp believes that a translation from Latin is not only impossible, but even inappropriate. They would claim that the mass should simply always be celebrated in Latin. What is true in this opinion is that translation is difficult, and something is always lost in translation. It's also true, we must always be aware, that the mother tongue of Catholics is Latin.

Yet, there is no doubt that celebrating Mass in our own language is here to stay. The fact that the church is serious about producing the translation that is beautiful and accurate should point out for us that she is committed to moving forward in our own language, for us, English.

Conclusion

I pray that this reflection on various extreme positions, the signs of these extremes, and what is true and false in each position will help you to get more out of your reading and study as you prepare to receive the new translation of the Roman missal third edition. God bless you, and we'll see you next month.

III. ET CUM SPIRITU TUO

As promised, beginning this month we will be examining some of the texts of prayers in the new translation of the Roman Missal. For the next few months, we will be going over the common parts we repeat each time we celebrate Mass. Then, if there is time before the introduction of the new Roman Missal, we will look at some of the prayers that change each week.

The Lord be with you. R. And also with you.	The Lord be with you. R. And with your spirit.
--	---

The first new text we will pray comes in the very first moments of the Mass. You don't need to be a scholar of Latin to recognize that the response, "Et cum spiritu tuo," has the word "spirit" in it. The new translation, "And with your spirit," is simply more faithful to the Latin text. Those of you who read this article two months ago will recall that one of the guiding principles behind the new translation is this fidelity to the Latin text. Now, we will get closer to the heart of our worship as it is expressed in the official Latin Missal, while having a rich English rendering of the prayers.

There are deep theological reasons for that original text in Latin. First of all, the language expressed in this dialogue is biblical. It is the language of St. Paul in his letters. I list here just two examples taken from among many. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen" (Gal 6:18). "The Lord be with your spirit" (2 Tim 4:22). One of the great things about fidelity to the Latin text is that it helps us realize how much Scripture there really is in the prayers of Mass.

The theological depth of this prayer places this biblical language in a particular context. Think of all the times during Mass when we repeat this dialogue, "The Lord be with you. And with your spirit." It happens at the very beginning of the Mass, before the proclamation of the Gospel, before the great Eucharistic prayer, and before the final blessing. These are all central moments of worship. This dialogue between the priest and the people (or the Deacon and the people at the

Gospel) is, as it were, a preparation for the most important moments of prayer at Mass.

To understand what is going on at a deeper level, it will be important to remember that everything in the liturgy points to something greater than what we see with our human eyes and hear with our human ears. What *really* happens at Mass? Jesus Christ himself feeds his disciples, Jesus Christ himself offers the sacrifice of the cross, and he the head of the body the Church leads his people beyond the threshold of this world into the courts of heaven for a brief moment. We begin and end this worship by recollection of who we are, and we affirm that same reality at the most important moments of Mass: the Gospel, which is the word of about Jesus himself; and the Eucharistic prayer, through which the body and blood of Christ are made present again on the altar for us.

This simple dialogue is first an affirmation of the deepest desire in the heart of the church during the liturgy that her master and her Lord Jesus be present to her. "The Lord be with you." It also affirms something about the nature of the minister. What we say now, "And also with you," has the sense of a colloquial greeting among familiars, even if it is somewhat more formal than what we might say to a friend. It is as if we are saying something like, "Good morning, Father."

To respond, "And with your spirit," is to recognize that the ministry of presiding at the liturgy is not about the personality of the one presiding. It is, rather, about the presence of Jesus Christ in the minister.

The document on the liturgy from the Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, states that Christ is always present to us and especially during the liturgy. The language of chapter 7 of this document makes clear that whenever Jesus is present in the liturgy, it is no longer the minister who performs the action, but that the minister becomes an instrument through whom Jesus himself acts. So, when we say, "And with your spirit," we are expressing our desire that Jesus Christ work from the minister's deepest

inner recesses, through that place in the minister from which Christ's saving actions springs.

This is nothing that the minister can do on his own power, and we know it. Yet, we want Jesus to be among us in the words and actions of the liturgy. That is the reason we pray that the Lord be with the Spirit of the priest and deacon at these intense moments of prayer. May our prayer be earnest, and our ministers disappear in the liturgy so that we no longer see them, but Christ!

As you see, this small change in words reveals a very profound reality in the meaning of the original text. The new translation recovers the profundity of the original, and expresses it deeply. Next month, we will continue with more of the texts from the new translation of the Roman Missal. Until then, God bless you, and may your prayer of the liturgy draw you ever closer to our Divine Lord.

IV. GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST

Last month, we looked at the new translation of the opening dialogue of mass - "The Lord be with you. And with your spirit." This month, we will take a look at the prayer that is changed the most in the new translation: the Gloria.

The new translation

Space restraints will not allow us to set the new translations side-by-side with the current translation. Go ahead, though, and read the new translation of the Gloria out loud.

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world,

have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world,

receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father,

have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

As I've examined this new translation of a very ancient prayer, I'm impressed by two characteristics of the prayer. First, it somehow seems very familiar. I challenge those who claim that the new translation is awkward to read this new translation of the Gloria as you just have. Second, is in spite of this lack of awkwardness how very much has changed in this new translation. If you compare the two translations side-by-side, you'll find that over 50% of the prayer has changed in the new version. I would say that that is a successful translation! Greater accuracy is led to great changes with respect to the old translation, and yet the new translation is not awkward or difficult. In fact, it is evocative and expressive.

Although over 50% of this prayer has changed, there are two features of the new translation that seem to me to be important to comment on - the first phrase, and the series of words of adoration in the second phrase.

"And on earth peace to people of goodwill"

You'll recognize that this line has been retranslated. We currently pray, "Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth." The change from, "Peace to his people on earth," to, "And on earth peace to people of goodwill," now reveals more clearly the biblical character of this prayer.

The phrase in the Latin text of the Gloria, "Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis" is a direct quote of Luke's gospel - Luke 2:14, to be precise. This is what the Angels say to the shepherds is there proclaiming to them wonderful mystery of the birth of Christ. The phrase should recall for us at once the tender intimacy of Jesus's birth, of Christmas, of the incarnation of God's own son as well as the immense glory of the God whom we worship in the mass. God's transcendence and his tender closeness to us are both expressed in this phrase.

Think about when during the mass we sing the Gloria. We have just confessed our sinfulness to God in the penitential rite. We have said Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy. But immediately after we recognize our sinfulness before God we turn our gaze to the Almighty and see that this glorious God, despite our sinfulness, comes to us and allows us to witness and participate in his own glory. A small change of these few words should help us recover the biblical sense of this prayer. May our hearts be stirred with awe, wonder, and gratitude before the mystery of God revealing himself to us in his glory during the mass.

“We praise you, we bless you...”

Briefly compare the new translation of this second phrase of the Gloria to the translation we currently use. The new translation accurately and faithfully reproduces the Latin petitions, “Laudamus te, benedicimus te, adoramus te, glorificamus te...” The translation we currently use reorders the petitions, placing the last one first, and even eliminating one of the phrases.

This is a fruit of that theory of translation I mentioned several articles ago – “Dynamic Equivalence.” See, the basic meaning is the same.

New Translation	Current Translation
<i>We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.</i>	<i>Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.</i>

How much difference is there between “praising,” “blessing,” “adoring,” glorifying,” and so on? A good philosopher or theologian might make minor distinctions between each of these actions, but they are generally speaking all actions of great respect shown to God – our offering Him the Glory we sing. So, given the theory of dynamic equivalence, “idea for idea” rather than “word for word,” a slight change like this is not so important.

Nevertheless, there is more to a prayer than just the dictionary meanings of the words. That string of verbs “praise, bless, adore, glorify, give you thanks,” reads like a crescendo of praise. It is as if we are speechless before God’s Glory and are seeking for words to express just how great He is. The new translation captures this sense of awe from the stacking of verbs, and even in the rhythms from one (praise, bless), to two (adore), to three (glo-ri-fy) syllables in the verbs.

I truly believe that this sense of breathless wonder before God is recaptured in the new translation of the Glory. While the translation we currently use has served us well in Glorifying

God for the past 40 years, we can gain new insight into the amazing adventure of interplay between God and humankind from this new translation. My hope that our prayer and singing of this new translation, the fruit of collaboration between liturgists, theologians, linguists, poets and musicians, will draw us ever more deeply into that great adventure. Until next month, may God bless you richly.

V. DISCUSSION ON THE NEW TRANSLATION

Welcome again to our discussion of the new translation of the Roman missal. Over the course of the last several months, we have examined the reasons for the new translation as well as some of the prayers themselves. In the next two installments, we will make a last look at some of the people's parts of the mass, also known as the "Ordinary of the Mass." After this, we will take the last couple of months before the new missal is released to look at some of the prayers that change at every mass. When we get a chance to look at those, I want to show how much more rich this new translation is going to be. As I do that, I will make some suggestions for just how you might use the prayers of the mass themselves as a booster shot for your own prayer life!

We'll get to that in two months. For now, I want to look at a few last pieces of the people's prayers for mass. Unfortunately there isn't time to look at every prayer. Rather, in the next two months, we shall look at the two most controversial words of the new translation. This month, we will look at "consubstantial." I warn you – this one is necessarily a little more philosophical than the last two. I'll try to hold back my desire to get abstract!! Sometimes, it can't be helped.

Consubstantial

Everyone has heard, I'm sure, that there is a lot of language in the new missal that is going to be too difficult for most of us to understand. I think from what we've seen in the last few months it's clear that that's just not true. Nevertheless, there are a few words in the new missal that will be unfamiliar to most of us. Perhaps the most unfamiliar of all of these is the word "consubstantial."

We all know the phrase in the Creed that we pray each Sunday at Mass:

"God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
one in Being with the Father."

The new translation is almost identical. Only one phrase changes. Instead of saying "One in being," we will now pray "**consubstantial.**" But what does consubstantial mean, and why are now going to use this word that most of us have never heard of?

There are four things to think about. First is the same issue of *fidelity to the Latin* text that we've been discussing since my very first article here several months ago. The Latin phrase is "Consubstantialem Patris." You can hear in the new translation that they simply took the Latin word and made an English word from it.

Next is a philosophical problem. I won't bore you with all of the intricacies of this problem. It's worth knowing, however, that this word was chosen after nearly a century of debate in the 300's! At the councils of Nicaea and Constantinople, the bishops discussed – over 1600 years ago – the precise relationship between the Father and Son in the Holy Trinity. The Creed that we pray every Sunday at Mass is the fruit of their discussions.

So the second thing to think about is *precision of language*, itself a fruit of prayed dialogue among the bishops and a treasure that we continue to hand on down the ages. You'll notice, for the same reason of precision, another change in the Creed. No more will we pray, "**born of** the Virgin Mary," but "**Incarnate** of the Virgin Mary."

The third thing to consider is *the meaning of the words*. Consubstantial isn't really equal to "one in being." It means something more like "of the very same substance," "of the very same stuff as." The example I like to use, even if it isn't quite perfectly precise, is our own self. Because my hand and my eye are both part of me, they are one in being. Their being comes from me. Yet we would never say that my hand and my eye are of the same stuff – that they are "consubstantial." A doctor or an optometrist could teach me all about the difference between the "aqueous humor" in my eye and the tendons in my hand. In any case, they are not the same kind of stuff!

This one small word change gets us closer to the real relationship between the Father and Son. They are not one in being as if they are two parts of something. No, they are completely and wholly of the same stuff – they're both perfectly and completely God.

This reason of meaning is the same reason why we will change from “born of” to “incarnate of” in the Creed. Mary was not some container through which Christ passed. He was not simply born of her. Rather, he was incarnate of her. That is, he took his flesh from her. When people looked into his eyes, they would've seen a reflection of Mary's eyes. When they heard his voice, they would've heard hints of her own accent and the way she said things just as people hear your parent's phrases in the way you speak – like it or not! To be incarnate of another is much more profound, much more tender and intimate than simply to be born of another.

The last thing to think on with this new difficult word is that sometimes *unfamiliarity can be helpful*. In the liturgy, we are dealing with holy things. There, we touch heaven, and receive God. These are not ordinary things, and at times, the language we use should reflect the uniqueness of what we do at liturgy.

Next month, we will look at the even more controversial change from "poured out for all" to "poured out for many," so stay tuned!

VI. PRAYING THE NEW TRANSLATION

Over the past several months, we have been examining the 3rd Edition of the Roman Missal in its new translation. Most recently, we have seen some of the responses at Mass. As I mentioned in the last installment, I want to take a short detour from these prayers of the “Ordinary” of the Mass (the parts that are the same at every Mass) and look at a way to pray with the “Proper” prayers of Mass (the priest’s prayers that change each week).

Truly, one of the things I am most excited about with the coming of this translation is its capacity as a source of spiritual nourishment for our personal prayer lives. I believe the prayers of Mass themselves can become a cornerstone of our private prayer - linking our personal prayer and the public worship of the church. The following is first a set of reasons why I think this is the case and second, some thoughts for how to use the new prayers as a source for your own prayer.

Why?

Rich Language:

My doctoral work is on the Latin of the prayers, and I have over and over again been moved by the language of the prayers. They are filled with Biblical and poetic imagery. This recollection of the scriptures and the rich imagery that comes to the fore can stir our imaginations in prayer. In our current translation, for all of its merits, this lively and rich scriptural and poetic language often does not come through. The new translation unlocks this treasure chest and allows us all to look inside.

Prayers of the Saints

Many of the prayers in the Missal were written by great saints like St. Leo. They come from people with a profound spirituality, and a great ability to express their experience of the Holy Trinity in concise powerful language. The prayers in the Missal are thus a gift from the well-spring of the prayer of others that can in turn be a source of nourishment for us.

Formation of the Heart

Grant, we pray, almighty God, that, as we are bathed in the new radiance of your incarnate Word, our deeds may shine with light that illumines our minds through faith.

-Collect: Christmas Mass @ Dawn

The Church is the Bride of Christ, who has continued to turn over in her heart along with Mary (cf. Lk. 2:51) the saving deeds of Jesus for 2000 years. The selection of prayers in the Missal is a collection from many times and places, but all of the prayers are the fruit of people living deeply the exchange of Christ and God’s Chosen people, the Church. The prayers in the Missal are the fruit of this meditation in the heart of the Church. If we can only listen deeply to these prayers, our own hearts will be transformed to beat more in tune with the heart of the Bride - who is already near to the heart of Jesus.

How?

As I mentioned, I have been spending hours with these prayers daily as I do my Doctoral research. Over this time, a certain pattern of praying with the prayers of the Mass has emerged. I offer five short points, using the new translation of the Collect (opening prayer) for the Christmas Mass at dawn as inspiration. The nice thing about praying these prayers in this way is that a good time of meditation can be made in short time of 10-15 minutes for those who are short on time yet want to grow in prayer, and yet can easily extend to be an integral part of a full hour of meditation for those who normally take more daily time with God.

1. Read the prayer

2. Look for connections - We recognize that Christ’s birth brings light. This light should then *penetrate* our minds and lead then to a transformation of our *actions*. Christ is the source of everything, yet He transforms even our daily deeds.

3. Let the images soak in - This image of being “bathed” in Christ’s light is so tangible. It is especially so during those darkest days of the year around Christmas. The image itself communicates something of His presence -

simple, peaceful and transforming. It may be that your imagination calls up those lovely renaissance paintings of the birth in which the baby Jesus, the central figure, is the source of light for the canvas. Perhaps, instead, you will simply sit at the manger and receive these rays of Divine light streaming from the Savior.

4. Ask if there are bible references - There are no immediate Scriptural references in this prayer, though it may call to mind the glorious light that the shepherds saw with the Angel, as this is the reading for the Mass at Dawn on Christmas. [For the interested, the Latin phrase behind "new radiance" can also mean morning. There is a subtle play on words there in which the incarnation of Christ is the Morning: the "Dawn of Grace" in our world, darkened by sin.]

5. Rest in the image of God and your relationship with Him - It can be healing to sit in Christ's light. Perhaps His light will illuminate some area of your heart that needs to be converted. It could be that you realize that you are not allowing His light to shine in your daily life as it ought. Or, maybe you need strength for a trial you are enduring for which and desperately need His help. Or, He may simply want to shower you with light and warmth because He loves you. In any case, the newborn Son is the Sun who provides warmth, light and revelation in His own marvelous light.

I can testify that praying with the prayers of Mass in this way for a week prior to Sunday Mass will make the liturgy an even more intense experience of encounter with God. When your priest says "Let us pray," for one who spends a brief time daily with these prayers, all of the experiences and insights of the week's prayer are taken up and offered - your heart more in tune with the deep inner mystery of God's love that is taking place in your very midst. God bless you!

VII. PRAYER STRUCTURE

Can you believe it is already October?! Change is in the air - summer vacations are over, autumn weather is arriving, trees are dropping their leaves and school is starting. Change is in the air in the Church as well. Next month on the first Sunday of Advent, we will already begin using the new English translation of the Roman Missal 3rd Edition on the first Sunday of Advent. Many of your parishes have already begun using new musical settings for the common parts. It will take some time to get used to everything, I'm sure. There will be a few uncomfortable moments along the way. Yet, I am confident that not only will what is different force us to think more consciously about the rich words we pray to God every week at Mass, but the words themselves of the new translation more vividly convey the realities we are celebrating.

Over the past months of this article, we have examined a number of the common parts of Mass in the new translation - particularly those that might raise a few eyebrows. Last month, I

O God, who gladden us year by year as we wait in hope for our redemption, grant that who joyfully receive your Only-Begotten Son as Redeemer may also be able to face Him confidently when He comes as Judge. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

-Collect, Christmas Vigil

suggested a way of praying with the prayers that the priest prays. Next month, we'll look at one of the new prayers for Advent season concretely to get you ready for what you will hear. Then, in the new year we will return to look at more of the common parts as we all pray these texts

So, what about this month? This article will be a little more academic - bear with me. I intend it as an appendix to my article on praying the new prayers from last month. I want to explain the *structure* of the prayers that the priest prays for all of us (the "proper" prayers). This structure can tell us a lot about what we are asking of God at Mass. A bit of knowledge goes a long way as we pray these prayers. As an example, let's take

the new translation of the opening prayer for the Christmas Vigil Mass.

The prayers in the Missal very often - even nearly always - have three parts - an invocation, a petition, and either a reason or a goal of the request. The prayers then always end with a doxology: "Who lives and reigns..." We leave this doxology aside for now.

The first part of the prayer is an **invocation**. Here, we invoke God - we call upon Him. The most simple way of doing this is to say, "O God." This is, with very few exceptions, God the Father. "O God" - a nice prayer anyone can pray at anytime (though, as you and I both know, there are a lot of different tones "O God" can take - some are prayers, others may be good for our examination of conscience to bring to confession!). The prayer normally adds something to this simple invocation. We remind God of something He has done in the past. Here, it is, "Who gladden us year by year as we wait in hope for our redemption."

The second part of the prayer is the **petition**. This what we are asking from God here and now. In the prayer from the Christmas Vigil Mass, it is, "Grant that [we may] be able to face Him confidently when He comes as Judge." There is a connection between the invocation and the petition. Christ is our redeemer - the one who

"Collect" The new translation calls these opening prayers "Collects" from the Latin word for them - "collecta." This is because the prayer is really meant to "collect" - to gather together all of our prayers and address them to God the Father. Yet another reason why spending time with these prayers can be a good preparation for Sunday Mass! If we pray the prayers ourselves, the thoughts feelings and desires we offer God at these moments of common prayer will be more tuned in to what the prayers express.

saves us from sin and makes us right. Yet, at the end He will come again as Judge. If God is the one who has gladdened us with the gift of the redeemer and we truly receive the gift of redemption, we should have no fear but great confidence before the same Jesus when He is our Judge.

The third part of the prayer is generally either a **goal** - the intention for which we are asking something - or a **reason** - why God should grant what we are asking. In the prayer for the Christmas Vigil we are looking at, it is a **reason**. “[We] who joyfully receive your Only-Begotten Son as Redeemer.” The reason why God can give us confidence before the Judge is only that we first receive Him as redeemer.

The effect of this prayer in our own lives and hearts hangs on this point - receiving the gift of God. Confidence before the Judge does not come from ignorance of our sinfulness. That would be nothing more than spiritual pride, a loss of the sense of sin so common in the wider world today. Good Christians, though, in humble awareness of our brokenness receive the gift of the redeemer to heal, correct and make right what is set awry in us. *Then* we will be able to stand confidently before the Judge. If the Redeemer has been at work to illumine every dark corner of us, there will be nothing left for the Judge to condemn. Now we can see how the three parts of this prayer hang together. Everything is tied up with redemption through this new-born king.

One final note beyond the structure. The emotions expressed in this prayer are extremely positive. God “gladdens” us, and we “joyfully” receive our redeemer. Of course, what is in need of redemption in us plays a part in the equation. Nevertheless, our focus is not on ourselves, but on Jesus. The new-born Christ comes as Redeemer. That should truly leave us glad and joyful!

Personal time in prayer with the texts of Mass helps us make them more our own. Knowing their structure will do even more to give them life in us. The simple knowledge of the structure of this prayer has helped us unlock the connection between receptivity in prayer and our own ability to stand confidently before God. Every prayer, on deeper inspection, will unveil for us a part of the mystery of our ongoing growth in relationship with God. There are many historical and theological reasons behind this structure, but what we essentially say to God is, “God, you have done such-and-such good thing for us in the past - do it again!” Amen!

VIII. PRAYER COMPARISON

First Sunday of Advent, 2011

November is finally here. November means a lot of things – Thanksgiving, cooler temperatures and the start of Advent. This year, it also means that we will begin using the new translation of the Roman Missal in earnest. On November 27 – the first Sunday of Advent – we will start using the whole new translation. Some of you have

been building up to this in your parishes by using new musical settings starting already in September.

In the last few months of this article, I have been explaining some of the mechanics of

the prayers of Mass. This month, I simply want to compare the prayers you heard at Mass last year on the First Sunday of Advent with what you will hear this year. To be clear, I am not criticizing the translation we have used for the last 30 years. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the new translation is a vast improvement.

Last month, I mentioned that the “opening prayer” of Mass is called a “collect” because it “collects” our sentiments and offers them to God. The prayer we used last year is on the left. The prayer you will hear on Nov. 27 is on the right.

You can see that the prayers say *similar* things. First, though, the structure of the current prayer does not reflect the structure of the prayer in Latin. Read the prayers through a few times and see how the new prayer captures – in a way that is difficult to express – the triple coming of Christ that we await in Advent: in His birth, His presence to us now, and His coming at the end of time.

The vocabulary is also improved in the new translation. For instance, “strength of will” was the translation for the phrase now rendered “the

resolve to run forth to meet you Christ.” This image of “running” for the action of faith is, of course, a notion right out of St. Paul (cf. Gal. 5:7 and 2 Tim 4:7). The concreteness of the phrase takes into the “good fight” and the resolve to cling to the truth that Paul expresses. The scriptural echo is clear, and the concrete image of running with resolve is much easier to grasp than the rather abstract “strength of will.”

Current Translation	New Translation
All powerful God, increase our strength of will for doing good that Christ may find an eager welcome at his coming and call us to his side in the kingdom of heaven.	Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God, the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ with righteous deeds at his coming, so that, gathered at his right hand, they may be worthy to possess the heavenly kingdom.

There are two other places where the current translation lacks the powerful strength and poetic beauty of the new translation. In the current version, “at his right hand” is translated simply as “side.” “Right hand” conjures all of the Biblical symbolism of God’s strength (there are hundreds of examples here – eg. Ps. 59:7) and the places of honor in the heavenly kingdom (cf. Mk. 10:40). “Side” does not carry this rich

Biblical and poetic weight.

Finally, the notion that “worthiness” is granted by God alone is restored in the new translation. Sure, the current prayer says that God calls us to His side. The new prayer, though, makes more explicit that God transforms us interiorly to make us actually worthy of possessing the Kingdom! Therein is much greater cause for rejoicing!!

The second prayer is over the offerings that the priest makes before praying the great Eucharistic Prayer.

Current Translation	New Translation
Father, from all you give us we present this bread and wine. As we serve you now, accept our offering and sustain us with your promise of eternal life.	Accept, we pray, O Lord, these offerings we make, gathered from among your gifts to us, and may what you grant us to celebrate devoutly here below, gain for us the prize of eternal redemption.

There are many things that can be said of the differences between the two prayers. I only ask you to read through the two prayers once or twice and focus on one difference: the phrase “offerings... gathered from among your gifts to us” in the new translation vs. “this bread and wine” in the current translation. Theologically, there are two enormous differences.

First, the new prayer recognizes that all good gifts come from God above. The current prayer neglects the fact that what we offer is already God’s gift. In fact, the whole of the newly translated prayer captures the sense that what we offer – and even the possibility to offer it – is God’s gift. The possibility to worship God is not our creation, but already something that God grants us.

Second, the current prayer focuses our attention on “bread and wine.” That, of course, is a part of the offering, but it is incomplete. At the offertory, we offer our entire lives to God and ask Him to transform us. We place our joys, suffering, hopes and dreams on the altar and ask that as the Holy Spirit transforms the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, so he might transform our suffering into light, our joys into thanksgiving, indeed, our whole selves into an offering to God. Limiting the prayer to the bread and wine does not allow for this more expansive sense of *everything* being offered to God.

The third prayer is the prayer after communion, prayed just before the priest gives the final blessing

The current prayer is not so much a translation

as a paraphrase, and it loses much of the powerful impact that is captured in the new translation. The whole idea of communion as a participation in divine mysteries (something we will look at in more depth in future editions of this article) is lost in the current translation. To “walk amid passing things,” “love the things of heaven” and “hold fast to what endures” are all attitudes of the heart. These attitudes of the

heart are not only fundamental to the Christian life, they are also the whole goal of expectation of heaven in the midst of this passing world that is the nucleus of Advent. These attitudes of the heart are also meant to be the fruit of participating in the Eucharist. The season of Advent and the liturgical moment after communion are connected through these essential attitudes of the Christian heart in a marvelous way in this prayer. While our current prayer misses this, the new translation recovers this beautiful integration.

So, there is a look at the prayers for the first Sunday of Advent – the first time you will experience the new translation. I should be clear by now that the new translation is not merely the change of a word or two here and there, but a new translation from the ground-up. If we believe that we worship the living God in the liturgy, if we believe that this liturgy is the source and summit of our life in God, this new translation can be the source of a great growth in the spiritual life if we are but open and receptive to it. My prayer for all of us is for this attitude in all of us – openness and receptivity. God bless you!

Current Translation	New Translation
Father, may our communion teach us to love heaven. May its promise and hope guide our way on earth.	May these mysteries, O Lord, in which we have participated, profit us, we pray, for even now, as we walk amid passing things, you teach us by them to love the things of heaven and hold fast to what endures.

IX. MIND IN AGREEMENT WITH VOICE

We have begun to use the new translation of the Roman Missal 3rd Edition in all of our parishes by now. This month, I want to take a brief pause in this article. We have been exploring prayers – those of the common responses and the priest’s own prayers alike. This month I want to reflect on one theme, and to do so rather simply.

Most of us are familiar with Benedictines. Between the presence of the brothers and sisters on the prairie at Richardton and the sisters who founded and continue to support the mission of the University of Mary and various health care initiatives around the state, most of us have had some contact with them.

For my part, I am deeply in debt to Benedictines for much of my education. I am a graduate of the University of Mary in Bismarck. Further, my training in the liturgy comes at the hands of Benedictine monks in Rome at the Pontifical Atheneum St. Anselmo.

Why all of this talk about Benedictines? Because behind the great *ministries* they provide and for which we know them stands a great *mystery* that is the heart and soul of their life – the prayer and preservation of the liturgy in the Church. In honor of the profound tradition of Benedictine monasticism and our own Benedictines, I would like to comment on a single line of St. Benedict’s famous “Rule” of monastic life. It is a phrase that captures what I believe the new translation of the Roman Missal can mean for us.

“Thus let us be at prayer that our mind is in agreement with our voice.”¹ This simple phrase of St. Benedict strikes to the very heart of what our attitude toward the liturgy should be. Normally, when we speak, we try to choose words so that they match our mind. We have a thought. We wish to express it. We go about speaking to express those thoughts. The normal way of things is that we try to make our words in agreement with our mind.

In the liturgy, it is precisely the opposite. We hear and speak the words of God and His Church. We pray that our minds may be transformed to accord to those words of God and His Church. The best approach to the liturgy is to ask the Lord to make our minds, our hearts, the whole of our being in agreement with the words of the liturgy.

Because the new translation of Mass is richer, more poetic and more biblical, there is more for our minds to digest. This is true even more in the prayers the Church addresses to the Father through the priest than in those we speak together. I believe that if the Church – all of us – is more attentive to these words, if we allow God to bring mind into agreement with these words, we will be profoundly transformed.

“Thus let us be at prayer that our mind is in agreement with our voice” – St. Benedict

My prayer is that as we are welcomed anew into the divine mysteries, and especially as we hear a richer language in the prayers at Mass, our minds accord to our voices. May God lift our minds and hearts – yours and mine – into His very own mind and heart through our prayer of the liturgy. May we there find strength, solace and comfort as we prepare to welcome the Newborn King, Christ Our Lord. To you and to yours, I wish a blessed and Merry Christmas.

¹ Cf. *Regula Sancti Benedicti* Chapter 19,7. “Sic stemus ad psallendum ut mens nostra concordat voci nostrae.”

X. MASS OVERVIEW

I pray you all had a blessed Christmas, filled with the joy of welcoming Christ. For those who have been following this article, you will know that over the past months, we have briefly traversed the new translation of the Roman Missal, 3rd Edition. We looked at a few principles, and then some of the biggest changes to both our dialogue parts and the priests parts.

Now, in the new year, I intend to start at the top and slowly work our way through the Mass from beginning to end. Of course, along the way we will look at parts of the new translation - what has changed and why. Nevertheless, my biggest goal is simply to explain the Mass so we know what is happening, and can participate more fruitfully.

This month, I want to take a give an overview of the Mass. Broadly, the Mass is structured in four parts: 1. Introductory Rites 2. Liturgy of the Word 3. Liturgy of the Eucharist 4. Communion/Concluding rites. In the coming weeks, we will get more specific. For now, let's take a short glance at the purpose of each part.

Introductory Rites

The main purpose of the introductory rites at Mass is to recognize that God is about to do something amazing for us, and that we need His help to enter into this marvelous gift. After the priest processes in accompanied by a sung antiphon, we start with the Sign of the Cross. The Sign of the Cross should reminds us of our Baptism - "In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." We were baptized into Christ, our sins were washed away, and a new life began in us. The power of that cleansing and rejuvenating bath is the power of the Cross of Christ.

The source of our being able to enter into the sacred mysteries is that baptism. Nevertheless, we all know too well that after baptism we have all sinned. For that reason, the next part of Mass - before confessing God's greatness - is to confess our sins. This general confession of our sins is not a replacement for Confession. In fact, to worthily participate in Mass, we should make a

habit of regular confession, and if we are aware of having committed any mortal sins since our last confession, we are not to receive communion at Mass. Nevertheless, a general confession of our sin as well as asking God's pardon and everyone's prayers is an essential part of Mass.

The "Gloria" follows on Sundays outside of Lent and on Feast days. After we recognize our sins, we recognize God's Glory.

The introductory rites conclude with the "collect." This prayer is meant to "collect" the private prayers of the entire gathering and offer them to God. The Priest speaks this prayer to God on behalf of the community, and is usually addressed directly to God the Father. This opening prayer very regularly contains the essential aspect of the feast being celebrated, and reflects what the proper attitude of the mind and heart should be toward the mystery being celebrated. It is worth taking a quick look at this prayer sometime before Mass starts to ask the Lord to shape our minds and hearts in accord to the desires that the Church expresses here.

Liturgy of the Word

In the Liturgy of the Word, we listen and respond to God's Word in the Scripture, and hear it broken open. Of course, we are all familiar with the structure. There is one reading followed by a Psalm that comments on the reading. On Sundays and Solemnities, there is a second reading. On such days, one reading is from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament. Then, after an Alleluia verse, the Priest or Deacon proclaims the Gospel. After this, on most days and always on Sundays and Solemnities, there is a Homily explaining the readings.

The Church teaches that when Scripture is proclaimed and explained in the Liturgy, it is Christ Himself who proclaims the Word. The ministers give voice to the Word, but Christ Himself speaks His Word to us. What an tremendous gift that Christ uses ordinary people through whom to speak His own life-giving Word! For this reason, it is important that readers prepare well to truly be instruments of God.

After the readings and Homily, on Sundays and Solemnities, we profess our faith in a Creed, and finally ask God for assistance in short intercessory prayers.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

The Liturgy of the Eucharist begins with an offertory. Often on Sundays in parishes, this includes a collection and a procession to bring forth bread, wine and water. Of course, the water and wine and bread are essential to the Eucharist, as they will in fact become the Body and Blood of Christ that we receive at the altar. The action of the procession should remind us that we offer everything to God. It is not just bread and wine that we wish to be transformed into Christ, but our whole life. It ought to be a moment of total surrender and transparency before God. We should be placing our joys, sufferings, hopes - indeed the whole of our life on the altar along with the rest of the gifts.

Then, the priest prays the great Eucharistic prayer. We believe that by this prayer and actions addressed to the Father through the priest in the person of Christ together with the activity of the Holy Spirit, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus. The actions are the same as those of Jesus at the last supper - the priest takes bread, gives thanks, breaks the bread and gives it to the people.

Communion and Concluding Rites

This part of the Mass seems disproportionately short compared to the rest of Mass. We pray the Lord's prayer, exchange the sign of peace, receive communion, and then are sent away. There is good reason, though, for this part being shorter. Here, the people come forth to receive the greatest gift God could give us - His very Self. When we eat what looks like bread, we are actually communicating Jesus Christ - body, blood, soul and divinity. After this, there is not much to say or do. From here, the only thing to be done is to go forth and bring Christ into whatever situation we find ourselves.

There is a quick look at Mass. In the coming months, we will look piece by piece at each part of Mass starting at the very beginning.

XI. MASS PIECES

As promised last month, I intend to continue our examination of the Mass piece by piece. In the last column, we saw that the Mass generally has four main parts: (1) Introductory rites, (2) Liturgy of the Word, (3) Liturgy of the Eucharist, (4) Dismissal. These are the broad lines of the Mass not only now, but in every Christian rite beginning as far back as we have any evidence.

A good early witness to this broad structure is St. Justin Martyr - born in Rome in around 110 AD (over 1900 years ago!!). See Chapters 65-67 of his *First Apology* for a view into very early Christian celebrations of the Eucharist, and how important Sunday Mass already was to Christians. Just two hundred years later (304 AD), during the harshest persecution of Diocletian, a group of Christians was martyred in what is modern day Tunis because they would not give up their practice of Sunday Mass. Their response was, "Sine Dominico, non possumus." The phrase is a play on words and means both, "Without the Lord's gift, we cannot survive," and "Without the Sunday celebration of Eucharist, we cannot go on." Would that each of us would dig so deeply into our faith to experience together with those great early Saints how vital the Sunday Mass is to our Christian life! Then the precept of the Church to attend Mass every Sunday as well as on Holy Days of obligation would be seen not so much as a command to be obeyed out of duty, but a protection for us made in love.

But, I digress from my theme which is the content of the Mass. One could see in this broad structure of the Mass itself a miniature vision of the entire Christian life with Jesus. (1) Everything begins with a recognition of our distance from God - both in our sin (penitential rites) and God's overwhelming greatness (the Gloria). (2) Yet, in spite of this great distance, God Himself chooses to cross over and come to us by proclaiming His Word. Here, He reveals His inner life to us. This is nothing we could figure out on our own. God freely and lovingly allows us to know His inner life. (3) Not only does God let us *know* His inner self, He communicates this divine life to us in the sacramental life of the

Church. This sacramental life is nourished every time we worthily receive the Eucharist. (4) But the Christian life is nothing that is intended to be hoarded for our own pleasure. Christ was sent by the Father into the world to reveal God and redeem humankind. Christ in turn sends the Holy Spirit to be with us. This reality of the inner life of the Trinity is captured in the dismissal as we are sent from Mass to transform the world by our presence and apostolate.

In this way, we can say that everything that the Christian experiences in the ongoing process of conversion is already lived out in the Church every time she celebrates Holy Mass. The infinite graces of Mass can bear tremendous fruit in our lives simply through a reception of this 4-part dynamic of Christian life!

Next month, I intend to begin at the end of the Mass and start working back toward the beginning piece by piece. To give a preview, the structure of that last part of Mass is very simple. After a brief dialogue ("The Lord be with you." "And with your spirit"), the priest gives the blessing, and the deacon (or priest if there is no deacon) dismisses the people. With any luck, we should be able to see the entire section of concluding rites in a single article next month. Until then, may God bless you abundantly!

XII. EUCHARISTIC LITURGY

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST-PART I

Peace be with you! We are continuing in this article our piece-by-piece monthly look at the Mass. Last week, we looked at the fourth and final section of the Mass: the Concluding Rites. This week, I intend to give an introduction to the third section of the Mass: the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

An excellent place to begin for an introduction to the Liturgy of the Eucharist is a brief quote from *Sacrosanctam Concilium*. In Paragraph 7 of *Sacrosanctam Concilium*, we read “Christ is always present to His Church, especially in the liturgical actions. He is present in the sacrifice of

Sacrosanctam Concilium (4. December, 1963) is the document from the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) that examines the Liturgy. It was also the first of the documents published by the council. Since we are approaching the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Council, the Church will be reflecting this year anew on the teachings of the Council.

he Mass when in the person of the Minister – “The same one now offering through the ministry of priests who then sacrificed his own self on the Cross”² – and especially under the Eucharistic species.”³

1. Continuity

There are three things I would like to note in this short text. First, you will notice a quotation from the Council of Trent. In fact throughout the documents of Vatican II, there are citations from scripture, councils, Papal teachings, Fathers of the Church and others. In this, we see that Vatican II is in continuity with the whole history of the Church.

2. The Eucharist: Christ’s Presence, Our Food

Second, Paragraph 7 picks up from our quote to mention a number of other ways that Christ is present in the liturgical life of the Church: the other sacraments, the Word of God, and in

general when the Church prays and sings together. Yet, among all of these ways that Christ is present, the Church teaches that He is present especially in the Eucharist. After the Eucharistic prayer, the bread and wine that we presented are no longer mere bread and wine. They are the very presence of Christ: body and blood, soul and divinity. To receive the Eucharist is to be nourished with God.

To see how important this spiritual nourishment is, it may be helpful to recall that there is such a thing as a spiritual life. St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that every level of human existence follows its own laws of growth. The body requires food to grow; the emotions require human love; the intellect needs learning; the will must be trained. In the same way, the new life of God that begins at baptism must be nourished. This most rich food for the soul is the Eucharist.

3. The Sacrifice of the Cross

Finally, while the Eucharist is nourishment for the soul from the table of the Lord, Mass is also a sacrifice. The ways of describing this deep mystery have been nuanced in different ways through history. There is not room in this column to discuss the many debates and difficulties surrounding this topic. What we can say, though, is that the one sacrifice of Christ on the Cross is in some mysterious way present again. It is a fitting meditation during Mass to consider that Calvary is present before us during Mass – the entire Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ is mysteriously there at every Mass.

If we but had eyes of faith to see, our heads would spin every time at the sheer mystery. It is for this reason that St. Ambrose referred to the experience of Mass as *sobria ebrietas*: “sober drunkenness.” An encounter with Calvary, being nourished by the living God, entering into Christ’s death and resurrection is enough to make one’s head spin, to make one feel as if they are walking on clouds – an experience like drunkenness. Yet, this is not an experience that takes one out of reality, but instead sobers the mind to the true depths of reality.

² Council of Trent, session 13, 11 Oct. 1551.

³ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman Tanner, S.J., #7. This is my own translation from the Latin.

Conclusion

These central moments of Mass are found in the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Here are the prayers by which mere bread and wine become a participation in the Body and Blood of Christ; here, we are nourished by this body and blood – spiritual food; here, Christ's sacrifice is made present again; finally, here we are placed in continuity with a practice of the Church that stretches all the way back to the Last Supper and the Cross of Christ Himself. In the coming months, we will look at the structure of the Liturgy of the Eucharist and the meaning of the many elements one by one. May God bless your prayer of the liturgy richly!

XIII. EUCHARISTIC LITURGY

Liturgy of the Eucharist –Part II

In last month's article, we started to look at the Liturgy of the Eucharist, especially through the lens of paragraph #7 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* from the Second Vatican Council. This month, I want to continue our introduction to the Liturgy of the Eucharist by looking at the general structure of the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The Big Picture

This month's article gives a window into the mind of a scholar. A good student loves to begin a study by looking the structure she is studying. Seeing the big picture helps a student understand how each piece fits into the whole

Really, the scholarly look at structures is not different from anything else people like to think about. For example, a "student" of baseball can tell you that the person batting 8th in the lineup probably has a lower on-base average and has hit fewer home runs than the person batting 4th. Knowing the structure of a baseball team tells us why. The fourth batter will be at bat more often over a season than the eighth, and will more frequently have a person on base when he comes to bat. A coach who wants to maximize the potential of the ball club will know the whole structure of a team and how each player fits into that structure.

Here are two more quick examples. A wine-lover will know that a good dessert wine will be great at the end of a good Italian meal, but pretty awful with a steak. The structure of a good meal puts sweet foods at the end. There are a lot of reasons for this, many of them biological. In any case, the sweet flavor of a dessert wine like Vin Santo will be off-putting mid-meal with a delicious grilled rib-eye.

Again, perhaps one might think that Eddie Van Halen's guitar solo on Michael Jackson's classic "Beat It" was perfect, but I challenge you to find a place for a Van Halen solo in one of J.S. Bach's Cantatas. Structures matter, and we learn a lot about how things work and what they mean by looking at structures.

Scholars love to argue over these things, and my purpose here is not to get into the finer details of the structure of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, but to give a general overview. It might be useful to hold on to this month's article for the next few months as we put the pieces together. That way, you can see how each piece fits into the bigger picture.

Basically, there are 8 parts to the Liturgy of the Eucharist:

1. Offertory - the gifts are brought to the altar
2. Preface - the spoken or sung introduction to the Eucharistic prayer
3. Sanctus - recalls that we are in the presence of the angels
4. Eucharistic Prayer - the central moment of the Mass; bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ
5. Our Father - the prayer to the Father that Jesus taught us
6. Peace - making peace with one another before receiving Christ
7. Fraction - Jesus' body is broken for us to receive
8. Communion - we receive Christ

In the coming months - probably over the course a year or more - we will look at each of these sections, one after another. In the meantime, I would like to look at what this structure as a whole tells us.

"Sacrum Commercium"

One of the classic ways of describing what happens in the Liturgy of the Eucharist is as a "Sacrum Commercium" - a "Holy Exchange." Many of the prayers over the gifts at Mass have a phrase that speaks of this "commercium." The word "commercium" is the root of our English word "commerce." Much as "commerce" does for us, "commercium" in Latin means an exchange of goods - a trade.

Describing the Liturgy of the Eucharist in terms of a commercial transaction highlights how marvelous what happens really is. We give God bread and wine. In fact, they are already His gift to us, so that what we give Him, he has already given us. In any case, that little bread and wine is

nothing compared to what He gives us in return - the Body and Blood of Christ. God, in exchange for little, gives us His very self. This is not a trade of strict justice, of tit for tat. It is an exchange in the logic of God's love in which He goes far beyond what is simply required. That is the way with God. Give Him an inch, and He gives infinity!

The structure of the Liturgy of the Eucharist reveals this "Sacrum Commercium." There are three key moments. First, at the offertory, we give God simple gifts of bread and wine. Then, in the great Eucharistic prayer, these gifts are transformed into Christ's very Body and Blood. Finally, at communion, we receive these gifts - communing with Jesus Christ, participating anew in His inner life, and becoming even more one body in and through Him. Friends, I cannot stress how mind-blowing this is! When we receive the Eucharist, we are actually nourished by God's self. Our life is filled by God's.

As we offer God our little in exchange for Himself - the one whom the universe cannot contain, who is greater than the heavens and all her stars, who is more ancient than the hills and fresher than the dew - let us do so with abandon. No matter what you give Him even up to your very life, be not afraid. What He gives in return will always be greater. God bless you, and have a great month!

XIV. FOR YOU-FOR MANY

“For you and for many”

Peace to you in Christ! In last month’s article, we looked at the structure of the Liturgy of the Eucharist. This month we should begin by looking at the offertory prayers, but I want to depart briefly from our regular program to touch something timely. Last month, the Holy Father sent a letter to the German Bishops encouraging them to prepare their own new translation of the Mass. His message includes a rich catechesis on the phrase “for you and for many” in the prayer of consecration. We have already touched on this difficult phrase in this article, but it is worth looking at it again. I would especially like to share with you a few of the Holy Father’s insights, both because they are very rich and, since the letter was only published in German, it is not accessible to all of us.⁴

Questions

A friend of mine here in Rome was recently returning to the city by train. The woman in the seat next to him was reading Pope Benedict XVI’s recent book on Jesus of Nazareth. My priest friend asked the woman what she thought of the Pope’s book. She responded that she really enjoyed it because the Pope, in her words, “Asks the same questions we all ask.”

I think the same is true of the Holy Father’s letter to the German bishops. Here is a sampling of some of the probing questions he asks about the phrase “for many.” “Why ‘for many?’ Did Christ not die for all? Has the Church changed her teaching on this point? Is this, perhaps, a reaction that will destroy the inheritance of the [2nd Vatican] Council? If Jesus died for all, why did He himself say ‘for many’ at the Last Supper?” These are, perhaps, questions that strike some of us as we have been hearing the new translation these past months. The Holy Father’s responses to these questions are rich, and invite an even deeper meditation on the words of Mass.

Translation versus Interpretation

Benedict XVI begins with a short reflection on the nature of translation. Christ’s own words at the Last Supper (cf. Mk. 14:24; Mt. 26:28) are “pro multis” – “for many.” For this reason, the Pope writes, “the account of “pro multis” with “for all” was not so much a translation as an interpretation which, although it was and remains well-grounded, is nevertheless an interpretation and more than a translation.”

The idea of mixing interpretation and translations was in vogue for a time following the 2nd Vatican Council. Because the world in which the original texts were composed is in many ways so different than our own, the Holy Father notes that “One felt oneself not only justified, but even bound to mix interpretation into a translation and thereby to shorten the way to people, whose minds and hearts should be reached by the texts.” Of course, this principle is absolutely necessary to a certain point. The very goal of a translation is that a text is hearable in a person’s own language and can be received, somehow, as one’s own. Sometimes cultural divides can make this difficult, and certain phrases, perfectly normal in an original language, are absolutely incomprehensible in a translation.

Pope Benedict, though, offers a reflection coming from his own experience that I can second from my own experience of celebrating the Mass in various languages. “Since I must pray the liturgical prayers ever more frequently in different languages, it occurs to me that there is sometimes hardly any unity to be found between the various translations and that the fundamentally unifying text [ie. the original Latin] is often only barely recognizable. In addition, some texts have in fact become banal, and thus have very little meaning. Thus, over the years it has become even more personally meaningful that the principle of translations that are not merely literal has its limits.” This is exactly the reason why the Church put forth new principles for translating the liturgy in that 2001 document *Liturgiam Authenticam* that we have already discussed several times.

⁴ The text of the Holy Father’s Letter, delivered to Archbishop Robert Zollitsch, head of the German Conference of Bishops on Apr. 14, was not yet available in an official translation at the time of writing this article

“For You”

Of course, these principles do not yet get us to the text, but the Pope gives us a good reminder. The controversial phrase in the prayer of consecration is “For you and for many.” With the change from “for all” to “for many,” we have often forgotten (and I include myself in this) that we also say “for you.” The Pope notes “It must first of all be added that Jesus, according to Matthew and Mark, said ‘for many’ and according to Luke and Paul, ‘for you.’ The circle, in this way, becomes even smaller. But only from this very point can one come to an adequate solution.”

Rather than commenting, I simply want to relate the Pope’s own catechesis on this point, because it is very beautiful. If each of us can take to heart how personally, “for you” and thus also exactly “for me” Christ’s death was, it will change our lives and the whole world. Here are the Pope’s words:

“The ‘for you’ makes Jesus’ mission totally concrete for those present. They are not some anonymous element of some enormous whole, but each individual knows that the Lord died for me, for us. ‘For you’ draws the past and the future together, he meant me personally; we, who are gathered here together, are in this way known and loved by Jesus. This ‘for you’ is in no way a limiting, but rather a making concrete. This is valid for every community that celebrates the Eucharist, that binds itself concretely to the love of Jesus.” Tremendously beautiful words that I think we can all take to heart.

“For many”

The difficulty, of course, arises with the phrase “for many.” The Holy Father writes, “The fact that Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God is the human person for all others, the new Adam, belongs to the fundamental consciousness of our faith.” The Holy Father points out three scriptures that support this fundamental truth of the faith: “God gave up his son for all” (Rom. 8:32); “One died for the sake of all” (2 Cor. 5:14); and “Jesus gave himself up as ransom for all.” (1 Tim. 2:6) The question then comes, “If this is so clear, why does the Eucharistic prayer say ‘for many?’”

The answer is that the Eucharistic prayer reflects two layers of fidelity. The first is Jesus’ own faithfulness to fulfilling the words of the prophets. There is a mysterious figure in Isaiah 42-55 whom scholars often refer to as “The Suffering Servant.” By using the phrases of these chapters of Isaiah, Jesus shows that He is the servant who suffers for the redemption of God’s people. In Is. 53:11, we read, “After the ordeal he has endured, he will see the light and be content. By his knowledge, the upright one, my servant will justify many by taking their guilt on himself.” Jesus is in effect quoting this passage of scripture when He celebrates the Last Supper.⁵ When His words are taken up in the scripture and again in the Eucharistic prayer, we see that there are two levels of fidelity – Jesus to the words of the prophet, the Church to the words of Jesus.

But what does it mean? Again, I will prefer to recount the Holy Father’s own words, because he synthesizes the teaching much better than I could. “As we saw before, that the ‘for you’ of the tradition of Luke-Paul did not limit but made concrete, thus can we now recognize that the dialectic ‘many’ – ‘all’ has its own meaning. ‘All’ touches the ontological level – the being and deeds of Jesus embrace all of humanity, past, present and future. But historically, factually in the concrete communities of those who celebrate the Eucharist, only ‘many’ come. Here, one can discover three meanings of the relationship of ‘many’ and ‘all.’

First, it should mean surprise, joy and thanksgiving for us that we are able to sit at table with the Lord, that He called me, that I can be with Him and know Him...

But then, the second meaning is that of responsibility. The way that God reaches others

⁵ It is almost certain that Matthew and Mark, with the phrase “for many” are recording the words of the Last Supper itself. Matthew was there, and Mark was Peter’s scribe in Rome. The Luke-Paul tradition, “for you,” is likely reflecting the experience of early Christian communities who celebrated the Eucharist in the Spirit of Christ, knowing that they were the ones to receive the gift of His redemption concretely. The Eucharistic Prayer draws the two traditions together.

in His own way – ‘all’ – remains in the end His own mystery. But, without a doubt it is a responsibility to be called by Him so directly to His table, that I might hear ‘For you, for me he suffered.’ The ‘many’ have responsibility for ‘all.’ The community of the many must be a light on a lamp-stand, a city set on a hill top, leaven for the world. This is the vocation that each and every one carries, very personally. The many, as we are, must stand in responsibility for the whole in consciousness of our mission.

Finally, I would like to add a third aspect. In today’s society we can have the feeling that in no way are we ‘many,’ but rather very few – a little crowd that is becoming ever smaller. But no, we are ‘many’ – ‘Then I saw, a huge number, impossible for anyone to count, of people from every nation, tribe, race and tongue,’ as John writes in *Revelation 7:9*. Thus, the two terms ‘many’ and ‘all’ belong together and are related to one another as responsibility and promise.’

Conclusion

With this tremendously rich teaching from our Holy Father, I leave you with a brief thought. Let us try to celebrate each Eucharist with that surprise and joy of those called to sit together with God at table. From this, let’s take even greater responsibility for those who are still far from Him, to give a good example, and call them back to table with Him. God bless you!