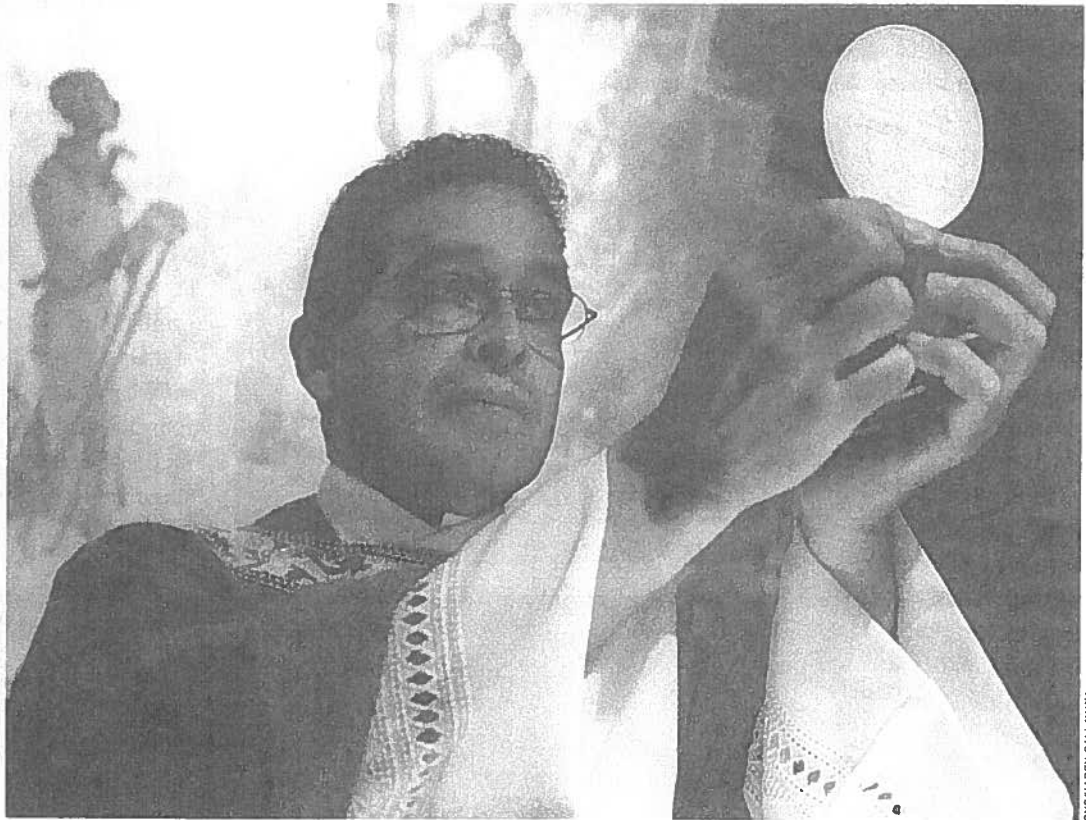


Changing How We Pray

A GUIDE TO THE NEW TRANSLATION OF THE ROMAN MISSAL



By Rev. Lawrence E. Mick

There has been much written in recent years about the forthcoming revisions in the language we use at the liturgy. Some of the concern that has been expressed arises from the perception that these changes are part of a larger trend in the Church to reverse the renewal of the liturgy that was mandated by the Second Vatican Council in its *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (1963). Some writers have rejoiced in

this prospect while others have been deeply distressed by it.

Even a quick look at the coming changes reveals that they are not a major reversal of the post-Vatican II reforms. This is a new translation of the Mass, not a new ritual for celebrating the Eucharist. The Mass will still have the same parts, the same patterns and the same flow as it has had for the past several decades. It is only the translation of the Latin that is changing. But that's happening in some key spots in the liturgy, so congregations will notice the change.

The new translation seeks to correspond much more closely to the exact words and sentence structure of the Latin text. At times, this results in a good and faithful rendering of the original meaning. At other times it produces a rather awkward text in English that is difficult to proclaim and difficult to understand. Most of those problems affect the texts that priests will proclaim rather than the texts that belong to the assembly as a whole. It is to the assembly's texts that we now turn our attention.

Entrance Rites

One of the most publicized of the new texts occurs just after the Mass begins and recurs several times throughout the Mass. Whenever the priest says, “The Lord be with you,” the new assembly response will be “And with your spirit.” This is a more direct translation of the Latin and matches what many other language groups have been using for years. It will obviously take some adjustment, since we are used to saying, “And also with you,” but it is a minor change.

There are also some changes to the penitential rite. The *Confiteor* (I Confess) has been revised, again to match the Latin more closely. Those who are old enough to remember reading along in their Sunday missals when the Mass was celebrated in Latin may recognize the new wording, which puts more stress on our unworthiness than the current text. It now says, “I have greatly sinned” and later adds “through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault.”

The other two options for the penitential rite have also been revised. The second form, which has gotten little use in recent years, will now read as follows: The priest says, “Have mercy on us, O Lord.” The people respond, “For we have sinned against you.” Then the priest says, “Show us, O Lord, your mercy,” and the people

respond, “And grant us your salvation.”

The third form of this rite, with the various invocations of Christ (e.g., “You came to call sinners”) will be much the same, though an option is added to conclude each invocation in Greek: “*Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison,*” rather than the English: “Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.” The first two forms conclude with this threefold litany, too, either in English or in Greek.

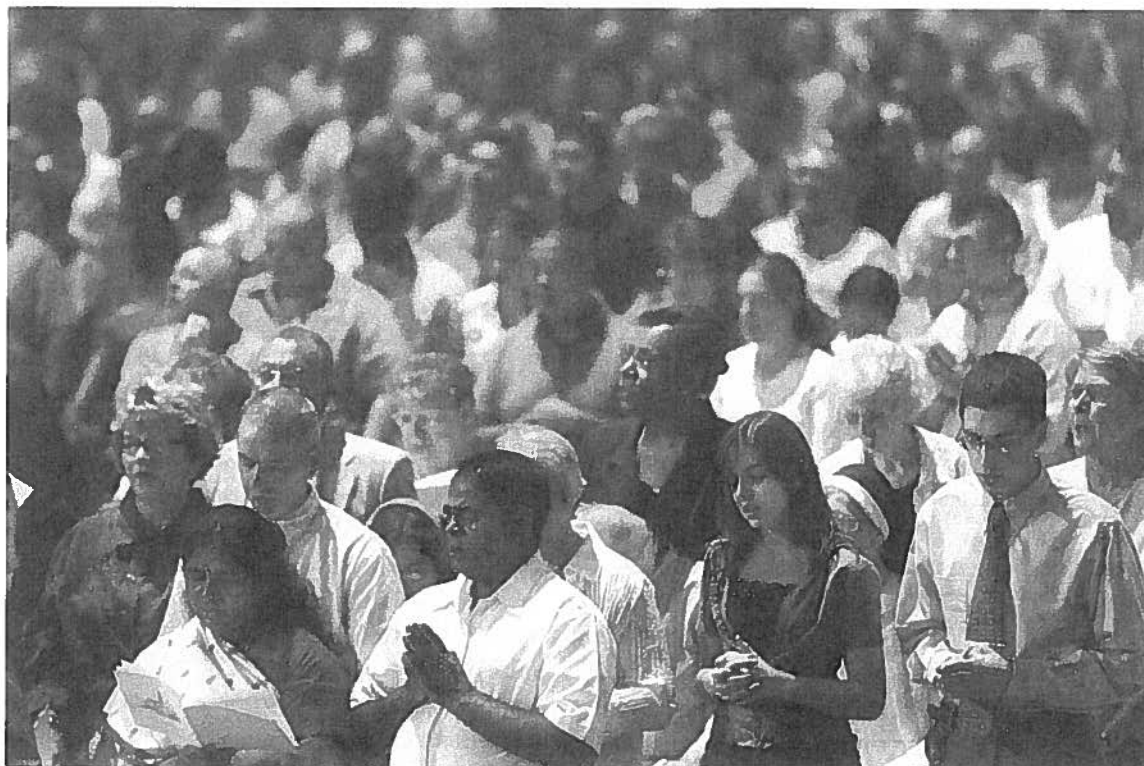
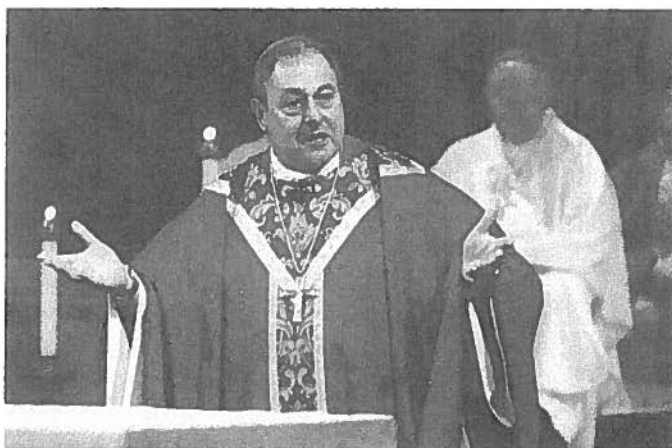
The Glory to God (Gloria) has been significantly changed, with more words and many lines rearranged (see box on p. 3). Some of those lines had been abbreviated in our current version because they were rather repetitive, but

such repetition is not inappropriate in a hymn of praise to God. Since this is a hymn, composers will have to create new musical settings of the Glory to God for us to learn.

Liturgy of the Word

There are only two texts that change in the people’s parts in the Liturgy of the Word. One is very small; the other is quite large. The small one is the response before the Gospel, where we will respond again, “And with your spirit,” when the priest or deacon says, “The Lord be with you.”

The bigger changes come in the text of the Creed (Profession of Faith). The first obvious change is with the first word. Currently we begin with “We believe,” while the revised text has “I believe.” When our current translation was prepared, the scholars decided to use the plural because the original text of the Creed (in both Latin and Greek) proclaimed by the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople in the fourth century used the plural. But the Latin text in the missal is in the singular, perhaps because it came into the Mass from the Baptismal Rite,



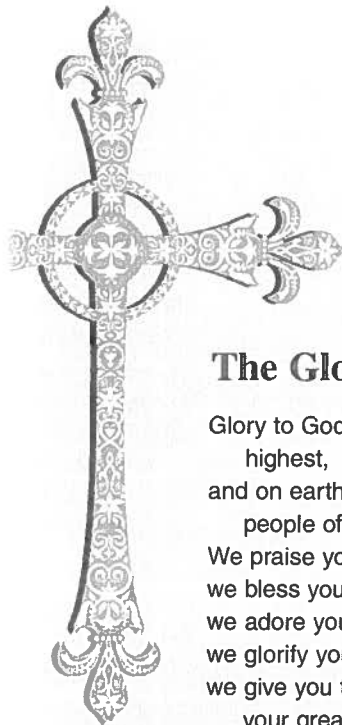
where the one being baptized made an individual profession of faith. The use of the singular could remind us of our Baptism, though here we are clearly professing our faith as an assembly rather than as individuals.

We only say, “I believe,” once in the new text, which means that most people will probably not say it at all, since the assembly usually joins in after the priest says the first two words of the Creed. In the current text we repeat “We believe” when the text moves to our faith in the Son, in the Holy Spirit and in the Church. (The new text simply starts each of those sections with the word “And,” resulting in long passages that are not even sentences in English.)

Another noticeable change comes in the line about the Son’s divinity. We currently say he is “one in being with the Father.” The new text says he is “consubstantial with the Father.” *Consubstantial* is not really a translation. It is a transliteration—the same Latin word, spelled in English—of the Latin *consubstantialis*, which means “one in being.” Whether translation or transliteration, the point is that Jesus is God, one with the Father.

Another change appears when we speak of Christ’s human nature. We currently say, “by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary and became man.” The new text says, “and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became man.” *Incarnate* means “enfleshed,” so using the term here reminds us that he was human from the moment of his conception, not just at his birth.

There are several other minor changes in the text of the Creed (see box at right). It will no doubt take us a while to commit the new version to memory so that we can profess it together easily. The new missal also allows the option of using the Apostles’ Creed instead of the Nicene Creed, especially during Lent and Easter. The Apostles’ Creed is another ancient Christian creed, long in use by Roman Catholics in our baptismal promises. Those who pray the Rosary will also recognize it.



The Gloria

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.

The Creed

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial
with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate
of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of
the Father.

He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and
the Son,
who with the Father and the Son
is adored and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
And one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.

I confess one baptism for the
forgiveness of sins
and I look forward to the
resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.

English translation of The Order of Mass I

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Liturgy of the Eucharist

During the Preparation of the Gifts, the prayers of the priest have several changes, but the only change for the assembly is the addition

of the word *holy* to the response just before the Prayer over the Offerings. Where we now say, “for our good and the good of all his Church,” the new text says, “for our good and the good of all his holy Church.”

Changing How We Translate

There was controversy for many years as the new translation was developed. Vatican II's *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* states: "Translations from the Latin text into the mother tongue intended for use in the liturgy must be approved by the competent, territorial ecclesiastical authority" (# 36, 4). Those "territorial ecclesiastical" authorities are the national or regional conferences of bishops. The translations in turn were to be "approved, that is, confirmed, by the Apostolic See" (#36, 3).

In 2001, the Holy See issued a new set of guidelines for preparing translations, called by its Latin title *Liturgiam Authenticam*. This replaced the 1969 instruction on translation, known by its French title, *Comme le prevoit*.

This document was issued three years after all the English-speaking conferences of bishops around the world

had submitted to Rome a revised translation of the missal that had taken over a decade to complete. All of that work, already approved by those bishops' conferences, was shelved by Rome and the whole process had to begin all over, following the new rules established in *Liturgiam Authenticam*.

Comme le prevoit had established as a fundamental principle of translation what is known as "dynamic equivalence." In brief, that means that translators should strive to express clearly the meaning of the original text in the translated text, recognizing that each language has its own sentence structure, rules of grammar, and idioms that make a word-by-word translation often stilted or even unintelligible.

Liturgiam Authenticam, on the other hand, insists on formal equivalence. This focuses more on the exact literal translation of the text.

When the Eucharistic Prayer begins, we will again respond, "And with your spirit," to the first line of the opening dialogue. The last line of that dialogue also changes. We now say, "It is right to give him thanks and praise," but the new text is simply, "It is right and just." This will lead more clearly into the opening of the prefaces, which will commonly begin with the words, "It is truly right and just."

There is only one change in the Holy, Holy. Where we now say, "God of power and might," the new text has "God of hosts." While this may make many people think of round Communion wafers, the meaning here is "armies," and it refers to the armies of angels who serve God.

The memorial acclamations that we currently use have all been changed, too. The one that is most familiar to us (Christ has died, Christ is risen...) has disappeared completely. (The U. S. bishops have requested its return, but at this writing, Rome has not yet responded.) The three remaining ones are similar to those in the current missal, but the wording is different in each case.

There is no change to our final "Amen." *Amen* is in fact a Hebrew word that has been kept in the original for centuries.

In the Communion Rite, there are only two changes in the assembly's responses. At the sign of peace, we find again "And with your spirit" instead of

"And also with you." When the priest invites us to share in the Lord's supper, we will respond, "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed."

The use of "under my roof" is a reference to the Gospel passage where the centurion asks Jesus to heal his servant but says he is not worthy for Jesus to enter his house (Lk 7:6). The other change is "my soul" instead of "I," which focuses more clearly on the spiritual dimension of the healing we seek.

At the dismissal, we find the final "And with your spirit." There are some new forms of the dismissal for the priest to use, but the assembly's final response stays the same: "Thanks be to God."

While these changes require us to learn some new language, the arrival of the new missal offers us a prime opportunity to deepen our understanding and appreciation of the Mass. That's why you may find a variety of forms of catechesis about the Mass offered in your parish and online as we await the implementation of the new texts. Taking advantage of these opportunities is more important than debating the value of the new texts.

In the words of Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium*, #11, the Eucharist is the "source and summit" of Christian life. Anything we can do to understand our liturgy more deeply will draw us closer to God. ■

Lawrence E. Mick is a priest of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. He holds a master's degree in liturgical studies from the University of Notre Dame. He is author of over 500 articles in various publications.

NEXT: 7 Myths About the Sexual Abuse Crisis
(by David Gibson)

UPDATE

Question Box

- 1) Why do we say the Creed together?
- 2) Why does Vatican II call the Eucharist the "source and summit" of Christian life?
- 3) What changes at Mass will be most difficult for you? Why?

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