



The Eucharistic Prayer

By Father Greg Friedman, O.F.M.

THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER is the central prayer of the Mass. Most of the prayer is spoken by the priest, so the retranslation may not be so jarring.

If you listen carefully, though, you'll hear that the new translation has a different style. Each prayer sounds a bit more poetic, the language more formal. The tone is that of a humble petitioner coming before an important person to make a request. Here's an example. In the old translation of Eucharistic Prayer II, in the part after the consecration of the bread and wine, and the people's acclamation, the priest said:

In memory of his death and resurrection, we offer you, Father, this life-giving bread, this saving cup. We thank you for counting us worthy to stand in your presence and serve you. May all of us who share in the body and blood of Christ be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit.

In the new translation of the same text, he says:

Therefore, as we celebrate the memorial of his Death and Resurrection, we offer you, Lord, the Bread of life and the Chalice of salvation, giving thanks that you have held us worthy to be in your presence and minister to you. Humbly we pray that, partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, we may be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit.

Do you hear the difference? By taking the English translation back to a more literal rendering of the Latin official text, the translators have given us longer phrases and more formal language. There are also some new ways to express our relationship to God at Mass. Instead of thanking God that we've been found worthy to "serve you," we now say, "minister to you." For me, that expression offers just a bit more nuance and meaning. Ministering to God—that makes me stop and ponder my role and yours.

When we pray to be transformed by the Holy Spirit, instead of the older translation's "be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit," there's a bit more

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action implied in the new version: “be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit.”

These examples represent a couple dimensions of the change you’ll notice

as we start using these retranslated Eucharistic Prayers. I don’t have space to give other examples, but I hope that in your parish, your pastor will take time to show you others. You can also find the translations on the bishops’ web site, [www.usccb.org/roman missal](http://www.usccb.org/roman-missal). It’s worth studying the new language.

There is another dimension to the new prayers that has caused some

controversy. Some familiar phrases and parts of the prayers have changed in slightly more dramatic ways. You may already know about how the responses have changed: “And also with you” becomes “And with your Spirit” in the dialogue at the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer.

Another new response: When the priest says, “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God,” we now say simply, “It is right and just.” In the Holy, we will now say, “Lord God of hosts,” in place of “Lord God of power and might.”

While these simple changes may be just verbal stumbling blocks, others may provoke some questions.

In the prayer of consecration, the priest will now refer to a “chalice” rather than a cup. *Chalice* is a more literal way of translating the Latin word *calyx*. In keeping with the new rules of translation, the more strictly translated text also results in a more formal term.

Whatever kind of cup Jesus might have used at the Last Supper, the chalice used at Mass—even if it is not made of precious

metal—still carries all the sacramental symbolism of what is in it, the Blood of Christ, shed for our salvation.

Along with that change is another, which has caused a great deal of discussion. In the words of consecration over the wine, the priest prayed, “Take this, all of you, and drink from it. This is the cup of my Blood, which will be shed for you and for all, so that sins may be forgiven.”

Now, he prays, “Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my Blood, the Blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

Pope Benedict XVI, by the way, reminds us that the words *for many* (see Matthew 26:28) do not change our belief that Christ died for all.



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This brief handout series is adapted from the 18-segment video, Catholic Update Guide to Changes in the Mass, produced by St. Anthony Messenger Press and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Questions

- 1 How can the new translations help us to deepen our understanding?
- 2 Are the changes in familiar prayers upsetting to you? Why or why not?
- 3 How is “And with your Spirit” different than “And also with you”? Similar?

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