



The 'Family Meal' An Overview of the Mass

By Father Greg Friedman, O.F.M.

WHEN JESUS INSTITUTED the Eucharist at a meal, the Last Supper, he forever linked a basic human activity—eating and drinking—with the sacrificial gift of himself. This sacrifice is his love, poured out for us on the Cross.

The profound, history-changing event of Christ's life, death and Resurrection are experienced in the sacred, sacramental actions we know so well—gathering, sharing our stories and a holy meal, being strengthened to witness.

As we emphasize, in this series, the differences in the new translation of the Mass we may be relieved to find its familiar structure unchanged. The well-known pattern remains so much like our own family gatherings at home around the table. We gather, we share stories (Liturgy of the Word), we eat together (Liturgy of the Eucharist), then take our leave.

Listen carefully

Our new translation will sharpen your

focus on this ritual pattern. As Mass begins, and you respond to the priest's greeting, "The Lord be with you," with the words, "And with your spirit," you will, I hope, begin to reflect. *Why are we here together? What does it mean to share a common Spirit—Jesus' own gift of the Holy Spirit—at Mass?*

New versions of the Confiteor, or "I confess," and Gloria move us from an awareness of our own sinfulness and need for God to a spontaneous song of praise and thanks. The priest's opening prayer—all new translations, by the way—"collects" the assembly's prayers. These new texts are rich in theology. They'll require careful preparation and attention. The priest may add a note of solemnity by singing them, inviting your sung "Amen" in response.

The Liturgy of the Word is largely untouched. Put aside the card or missalette and listen actively to the stories of salvation, the homily that follows and our prayers of petition.

The words of both the familiar Nicene

ST. ANTHONY
MESSENGER PRESS

CatholicUpdate.org/
RomanMissal

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JOHN FEISTER

Art Director:
CONSTANCE WOLFER

Cover Photo:
CNS/GREG TARCZYNSKI

Creed and the Apostles' Creed have been retranslated (we look at those more closely in issue 3).

Poetry of Praying

TRANSLATING THE LATIN text of the Roman Missal results in a special kind of English texts. Our translators have used their creative powers of invention, first with a goal of greater fidelity to spoken qualities of Latin. Then they strove to produce a kind of "music"—not sung—but spoken with elegance.

Hidden beneath the surface of the prayers are many Biblical passages about Jesus and expressions coined by the Church Fathers. All of this adds up to the elements of poetry: invention, music and story.

Sacred dialogue

Now we move from the Liturgy of the Word to the Liturgy of the Eucharist. There, in the Eucharistic Prayer, the center of our celebration, you will notice some meaningful changes.

The priest's retranslated parts bring the English text closer to the official Latin version. You will hear clearer language, which better reflects

Biblical and other ancient liturgical texts. In most cases, wording is less gender-exclusive than our current translation.

The Eucharistic Prayer begins with a dialogue between presider and people, thanking God for the work of salvation in Jesus, with special emphasis on the season or feast being celebrated. All acclaim this preface with the Holy, Holy, Holy (Sanctus), whose words are slightly altered.

You may notice some changes in the priests' prayers as the Mass proceeds. Most recognizable, of course, are the words from the Last Supper which recall how Jesus gives his Body and Blood as food and drink, and commands his Apostles to "do this in memory of me."

A new, more literal translation of the prayers of institution will demand study and careful proclamation (more on that in issue 5). And there are new acclamations for the Mystery of Faith.

The Communion Rite begins with the Lord's Prayer, which remains unchanged. When the priest presents

to us the consecrated bread and wine, though, both his proclamation and your response are newly translated.

The people will more closely echo the words of the centurion in the Gospel, who says he is not worthy to have Jesus come "under his roof" (see Mt 8:8). A more literal focus on the Gospel story's text will challenge us to reflect on how we approach our Communion with the Lord.

After Communion, as our Mass concludes, we are sent forth into the world. The final words of the Eucharist are meant to give us a mission in the world. The priest has new texts which can help us realize that we leave church as missionaries. We witness to how we've been changed by hearing the Word and sharing the Body and Blood of Christ. When we respond, "Thanks be to God," we're affirming that mission.



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Assisi Pilgrimage and the *Catholic Update Video series*.

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 When are family meals important in your life? Why?
- 2 Name some ways the Mass is similar to your family meals.
- 3 Why did translators try to produce "poetry" in the new translation?

THIS SERIES, or the full video series with study guide, can be ordered from St. Anthony Messenger Press by calling 800-433-0433, or on the web at CatholicUpdate.org/RomanMissal.