

From the Office of Liturgy and Music

Welcoming the

English Translation of the

Roman Missal

THIRD EDITION

Part 12: “And With Your Spirit” & the Eucharistic Prayer

In the new English translation of the Roman Missal, the re-translation which will probably take the most getting used to is the apostolic greeting, “The Lord be with you” which we will now respond to with, “And with your spirit” instead of, “And also with you.” Why was “and also with you” in need of being retranslated?

Like most of the changes in the new translation of the Roman Missal, both theological and translation issues come into play.

The Latin text of the apostolic greeting (from which the English is translated) is “Dominus vobiscum. Et cum spiritu tuo.” Even if you have never studied Latin before, you can probably see that “Et cum spiritu tuo” does not translate to “and also with you.” It does indeed translate to “and with your spirit.”

There is also great theological significance to the response “and with your spirit,” which has its roots all the way back in the Book of Exodus. One day Moses is walking among the tents and listening to all the chosen people he was leading through the desert complaining (the chosen people were great at complaining about everything). Moses eventually had enough, goes into the tent of meeting up to the Lord and says, “Lord, where did you get these people. I can’t take it anymore. Lord, do your servant a favor and let him die.” God tells Moses to go out and bring back seventy wise men and God will take a little bit of Moses’ spirit and give it to each of them so that Moses may govern with greater ease.

In the liturgy of ordination, when a bishop lays hands on the candidate for ordination, he prays, “...in the desert you implanted the spirit of Moses in the hearts of seventy wise men; and with their help he ruled your people with greater ease. Lord, now look upon us in our weakness and grant us this servant that he might share in the priesthood of Jesus, your Son.” A little bit of that same spirit which was taken from Moses and given to the seventy wise men was given to each bishop through apostolic succession, and now a little bit of that same spirit is given to the candidate for ordination: the spirit of governance, the spirit of teaching, the spirit of leadership, the spirit that allows the ordained priest to do his ministry, to pray in the name of the Church. When the ordained minister says, “The Lord be with you,” he is saying, “baptized people of God, the Lord is hear, let God be with you.” And the baptized assembly responds, “and with your spirit,” acknowledging that through ordination, the ordained minister has received the spirit that allows him to pray in their name: in the name of the Church. This dialogue establishes identity and relationship between the ordained priest and the priesthood of the baptized assembly. Before the ordained minister begins any liturgy, blesses anything, proclaims the Gospel, begins the ultimate prayer of praise and thanksgiving: the Eucharistic Prayer, he must use this dialogue to establish identity and relationship.

After the ordained minister establishes identity and relationship with this dialogue to begin the Eucharistic prayer, he then continues, “Lift up your hearts” and hopefully the assembly responds, “We lift them up to the Lord.” The minister continues, “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God” and the baptized assembly responds with the new translation, “It is right and just” (retranslated from the old translation, “It is right to give him thanks and praise”).

“It is right and just” is an ancient Roman formula. You can almost picture the old Roman Magistrate sitting on his throne with a ring on his finger that has a big seal on it. The Roman lawmaker comes in and says, “Lord, Magistrate, we wrote this new law and want to go proclaim it to all the land, but first we need to know: Is it right? Is it just?” The Roman Magistrate stamps the document with the seal on his ring and says, “It is right and just.”

In the same way, as we continue the dialogue beginning the Eucharistic prayer, the celebrant says, “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.” In other words, “Before we enter into this ultimate prayer of praise and thanksgiving, which we will pray together through my hands, I need to know: Are you on board? Is this the right thing to do?” And the baptized assembly, similar to the old Roman Magistrate, “stamps it” with approval by crying out, “It is right and just.” This ancient formula is recaptured in our new translation of the Roman Missal.

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