

## **Sample Homily to Preach about the new Roman Missal**

*Also available on line at [www.archnyliturgy.org](http://www.archnyliturgy.org)*

In many churches now in the Archdiocese of New York, priests and deacons are preaching a special kind of homily - an announcement about some important changes in the words that we use at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

I know that when people hear the word *change*, alarms go off in their heads. Most of us like things the way they are, and are suspicious of anything new. We priests often have this feeling ourselves, and respect it when we hear it from others. But I am happy to say that we will soon have a change that is positive - some significant improvements in the English translation of the prayers we use at Mass.

The first thing about these changes is that they are not huge, and not hard to learn. The Mass stays the same; only some of the words as translated into English will be different. And rather quickly the new words will become very familiar to us.

But why is a change happening? The answer goes back to the Second Vatican Council, a meeting of all the Catholic bishops of the world that was held in Rome from 1962 to 1965. In a very important decision, the bishops decided that Mass could be celebrated in other languages besides Latin. After that each language group – English, Spanish, Italian, etc. - hurried to make a translation of the Latin prayers that they could use.

But after awhile, Pope John Paul II and others knew that these first translations of the Latin prayers into other languages could and should be improved. For example, our early English translation was not wrong, but it was not close enough to all that the Latin actually said. Therefore Pope John Paul ordered that every language group should look at the Latin again, and make a new translation to gain a greater sense of the beauty and dignity, the biblical references and theological precision that the prayers have in Latin.

These new prayers will take getting used to, and you and I have the right to like some of them better than others. But the purpose of this new translation is to help us to pray to God with even more awareness and devotion. We know that Pope Benedict himself made the toughest decisions and gave the final approval. So on higher authority than mine, but adding my own recommendation, I want you to know that this opportunity to grow spiritually is coming soon, and ask you to give these changes a fair hearing.

The starting date is not far away - on November 27, the first Sunday of Advent. That Sunday we will have new missalettes for you with all the new words in there, and we may even have some special cards in the pews so you can find things quickly.

Let me tell you some of the changes that affect you. We will go over them again in the weeks to come, but today I can give you some highlights. Our parish bulletin will also have an announcement including websites that you can go to for more information.

First thing is, we get a more accurate translation for the Latin phrase *Et cum spiritu tuo*. This is used four times in the Mass as the people's response to a greeting by the priest. Instead of saying *And also with you*, we will say: *And with your spirit*.

During the Confiteor in the Penitential Act, we will say *Through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault* - and strike our breast as a sign of real sorrow for our sins.

The Gloria and the Creed will have more complete and precise translations of what appears in the Latin texts. In the future we will go over those two prayers with you so that you can see the differences.

At the consecration, the words of Jesus in the Gospel about shedding his blood "*for you and for many*" have been restored to that translation, as it is in every other language. We will need to explain that change several times so that everyone understands that Jesus certainly did die for everyone. But we do not use the word *all* because the Latin word is *multis*, meaning *many*, and not all take advantage of Jesus' sacrifice.

The memorial acclamations after the consecration will now begin with the priest saying, *"The Mystery of Faith."* The three responses all address Jesus with reference to his death and resurrection for us. The three choices are: *"We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection, until you come again" / "When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again" / "Save us, Savior of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection, you have set us free."*

One short homily cannot cover every detail, but at least now you have heard that a new translation is coming, and had a preview of some specific examples. As your priest, it is my job to try to teach so that people will not say to me in two months: *Nobody ever told me about this!* But I need your help. Since I cannot talk to everybody, you can tell your families and neighbors what you are learning, and use this opportunity to invite them to come to Mass with you and experience both the old and new translations.

We all have a lot to learn about this. We clergy, and catechists, school teachers and music directors have been going to workshops and doing our own preparing. And in the bulletins between now and November 27, we will be putting in new information, plus addresses of websites for you to go to.

This change is not like a final exam. It is more like a commencement, a new beginning with a lot of possibilities. Before and after we start on November 27, we have a chance to discover more to love about the history and structure and promises of the Mass. Archbishop Dolan started this, calling 2011 a YEAR FOR MASS and teaching that all of us should "Come to Mass in the Lord's house on the Lord's day."

Coming to Mass every Sunday does not guarantee you a ticket to heaven, but it sure improves your chances of getting there. Join me in praying that we ourselves - and all the people we love and meet - will increase our love for the Mass as we welcome this new translation of the prayers that help us to know, love and honor our God.