



Praying the Mass Anew

*The New Translation of The Roman Missal
and Our Actual Participation at Mass*

19. The Lord's Prayer and Sign of Peace.

Over the last several articles, we have examined the Eucharistic Prayer as the “center and summit” of the offering of the Mass. Now that the offering of Christ's Body and Blood has been made, presenting to the Father “all glory and honor,” we prepare ourselves to partake in the sacrifice more perfectly through praying the Lord's Prayer or “Our Father.” We follow this prayer by asking Christ for a share in the peace that only he can give. We examine each of these moments separately:

The Lord's Prayer

Every offering of the Mass includes the prayer that Jesus gave to his disciples when he taught them to pray. As we continue to make ready to pray the Mass anew, please note here: **the words of the Lord's Prayer have not changed.** The way we have all learned to pray this prayer remains the same. However, *the words by which the priest will invite us to pray* are changed, giving our praying of this prayer deeper significance.

In the new translation, the priest is to use these words in inviting the people to pray:

“At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching, we dare to say:”

As we already have seen elsewhere, great emphasis has been placed on

following the Latin words literally, holding more formally to the original meaning. These words of invitation to pray are another clear example of literal translation. Within this translation, it is particularly noteworthy how the Lord's Prayer is invited as a “dare.” If nothing else, hopefully this causes us to stir with the question of “what are we *really* praying for that we are ‘daring’ to say it?” When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we “dare” to call God “Our Father,” asking within this prayer that the Father's “will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” and to “forgive us...as we forgive those...” In short, we are committing ourselves to a way of discipleship that requires openness to God's will in its entirety, which requires the willingness to forgive that we might be his true children. Hence, we are once more to pray the Mass anew through this translation, with a deeper sense of the power and meaning of our prayer.

The Sign of Peace

As with the Lord's Prayer, the words by which the priest introduces the sign of peace have seen changes that make the prayer more in keeping with the Latin. The only notable change for the people is what we have already pondered elsewhere, as the people will now respond to the words “The peace of the Lord be with you always,” with the

response “And with your spirit.” As in other places, this response once again expresses the awareness of the grace within the priest that configures him to Christ in ordination.

As further reflection on the Sign of Peace, what is very important for all to understand is the nature of the peace that is “offered” in this moment. The priest prays that Jesus Christ may “graciously grant [the Church] peace and unity in accordance with [his] will.” Simply put, the peace that is asked for is not merely a mutual peace among participants at Holy Mass; we seek *the peace of Christ given “not as the world gives”* (See John 14:27), which

implies a sharing in salvation. Hence, as we are exhorted by the priest or deacon with the words “Let us offer each other the sign of peace,” we are not suddenly being thrown into a social time; rather, we are to visibly express our share in the peace of Christ and the true self-sacrificing charity that such peace contains. (More is said about the “Sign of Peace” in the questions below.)

Having prayed according to Jesus’ command and for the peace that only he gives, we are made more ready to partake in Holy Communion, where the salvation of Christ, the true Lamb of God, is to be beheld.

Questions of the Week:

➤ ***What is the proper way to “offer” a sign of peace?***

In GIRM #82, the Sign of Peace and the way that it is offered between individuals is said to be decided by conferences of bishops, who are to be mindful of “culture and customs of the peoples.” Accordingly, the US bishops have designated the “handshake” as the fitting way to offer the Sign of Peace. Furthermore, the same paragraph tells us that the Sign of Peace is appropriately given by each “only to those who are nearest and in a sober manner.” While some give hugs, or sometimes you see spouses give a kiss to one another, the significance of the gesture is to be as a pledge of “self-sacrificing love;” that by expressing this sign, you are saying “I would willingly die for you than have you sin.” Admitting that most people are not aware of this meaning of the Sign of Peace, this question serves all of us as a good reminder of the deeper meaning behind this part of the Mass – that we express self-sacrificing love for one-another as we prepare to receive Jesus’ self-sacrifice in the Eucharist. Hence, our goal with the Sign of Peace is never for the sake of pleasantries; it is an expression and participation in the self-sacrificing love of Jesus Christ.

➤ ***What words are supposed to be said by the people during the Sign of Peace?***

This question may be answered two ways:

- GIRM #154 shows that when people offer peace to one another, they can say “The peace of the Lord be with you always,” to which the other simply responds “Amen,” (not “And with your spirit.”). Here, the response “amen” is a simple acknowledgement of *Christ’s peace* within each person. (This response was also treated in Insert 10 of this series, on the response “And with your spirit.”)

- The offering of the Sign of Peace, while it *appears* as though each person can openly talk, is not meant as a social time. As we learn to pray the Mass anew, might each and every one of us has an opportunity to dignify the Sign of Peace with reverent silence, exchanging the proper sign with one or a few people around us (we should not have to leave our pew), saying only the words prescribed in the first part of this answer. May we leave all desire for casual conversation at the door of the Church – for above all we are entering an encounter with God; not merely a social encounter with one another.