



Praying the Mass Anew

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

3. Our Words of Prayer Increase our Love of God.

At the heart of the question of “why do we need new translations” is the simple truth that *words have power*, beyond the simple acts of speaking them and hearing them; they have the capacity to form us, to uplift us, to draw us into higher truths.

Think for a moment of your own use of words in different relationships. The words you might speak to your own mother will reflect your relationship with her, as much as your words with a co-worker while on the job will reflect that relationship. Likewise, *the way you speak* will be different when speaking to a person whom you deeply love, than with a group of people to whom you simply need to communicate information or address a point of view.

The same principles are true when we think of our relationship with God. Certainly, each and every one of us is encouraged to pray “from the heart,” speaking words to God as we might be so moved. Yet, in the more formal setting of the liturgy of the Church, wherein we not only speak onto God, but above all we open ourselves to him in seeking a deeper encounter with his living presence, our words are not chosen lightly. Some words, such as those meant to convey the real circumstances in the lives of the

people, as used in the General Intercessions (or what is also called “The Prayer of the Faithful”) will be more expressive of real needs. Other words, such as those prayed by the priest during the Consecration, are meant as a proper representation of the words that Jesus himself, the Son of God, expressed in his instituting of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. In each and every part of the Mass, by no means do we offer words only for their own sake; each word is spoken for a specific purpose and with a particular meaning.

Might we also consider God’s Word, by which we think not only of the Bible itself, but more fittingly of Jesus Christ himself, who is “the Word made flesh [who] dwelt among us.” (John 1:14). The Word made flesh, in “speaking” to us, offers us not merely teaching and encouragement, but the life of God himself, who is love. The power of the Word made flesh is found in his self-sacrificing love, by which sin and death are conquered. Jesus Christ “speaks” to us in the most eloquent and sincere way possible: by humbly giving himself up for our sake out of love for us. Such is the power of the Word of God, made flesh.

As love is the motive of Jesus Christ's saving work, so too our response to Jesus' offering of self, of which we are privileged to partake at each and every Mass, ought to be words of true love. In applying this truth to the new translation, we once more return to our relationships with other persons. Just as your words to your mother would not be those in addressing a co-worker on the job, so too the language we use to address God ought to be all together unique. Taking it further, to be in communication with God is to communicate with the Creator, to whom we owe our whole existence. Hence, why would we not want to approach He who made us and loves us, even onto death, with the most noble, humble, and

meaningful of words? Likewise, it is more than proper that these words ought to convey God himself in the most powerful and awe-inspiring way as is His nature – so that our own faith in Him and our desire to encounter Him in all of His beauty in heaven may only increase.

In implementing the new translation, such understanding of the power of words is truly invited. In answering “why” we need these new translations, might we keep this reflection of the power of words in mind, aware that words have the power to uplift and inspire, and above all, to love – and that God himself is worthy of the most noble, majestic, and loving words that we could ever hope to speak.

Questions of the Week:

➤ ***Where do the official prayers for Mass come from?***

As we look closely at the prayers of the Mass, we discover that the prayers have primarily two sources: the Bible and the Tradition of the Church. The greetings, many of the responses, and even the acclamations are either direct quotes from the Bible, or are based on biblical words. Other prayers have their roots in the 2000 year life of the Church and her formulations of our faith teaching (such as in the Creed), or in the natural development of the liturgy through the centuries, that includes prayers written by popes or those designated by the pope or other bishops to aid in making the liturgical prayer of the Church more consistent.

➤ ***Why do we need such strict ways of praying? (Wouldn't more spontaneous words be more sincere and meaningful?)***

One of the main characteristics of liturgical prayer is “ritual.” Just as each of us has rituals or consistent routines in everyday life by which necessary tasks are completed, so the liturgy of the Church is “ritual prayer,” through which the consistent and predictable routine of actions and of words opens us to a renewed encounter with God, who comes to us. As in God's creative work, that had order and harmony in its beginning, so ritual has the capacity to place order and harmony in life. Through the ritual of the liturgy, such order and harmony is offered to us, that we might open our hearts to a very deep and real encounter with the Lord, who gives life its true harmony.

The words that we use in the liturgy should not be a disruption to such order – rather, they ought to facilitate it and make it more recognizable. Hence, while there are always some prayers in the liturgy that change from one day to the next (as the calendar of the Church presents to us), most of them are the same each and every time. Through such order and harmony, we can become less concerned about “what” we are to do, and more open to Jesus Christ, “who” we encounter in the order and harmony of liturgical ritual.