



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

10. “And with your spirit”: The New Response to the Same Priests.

In preparing to implement the new English translation of the *Roman Missal*, we once more are reminded that this new translation is more literal to the original Latin, and it seeks to use a more “elevated” or “sacral” style of language, as is fitting for approaching God. These principles in translating, along with the intentional use of more traditional language to express the faith of the Church, are likely most obvious in the people’s response “And with your spirit,” to the priest’s (or deacon’s) greeting of the people. This change is significant because the simple words “and also with you” that we easily and naturally say are being replaced with words that are not part of our common vocabulary. In addition, this change is noteworthy as these new words of response are frequent, typically used five times during each offering of the Mass. What is behind this new translation? How will it impact our offering of Mass?

Why “And with your spirit?”

In order to understand such a noticeable change in the response of the people, the best starting point is the Latin version, “*et cum spírítu tuo.*” The word “*spírítu*” is more clearly translated in the new version

than in the old – with significant effect on the meaning of the response. In this context, we are not directly speaking of the Holy Spirit (which is clear since the words are directed at the spirit of the ordained minister to whom the response is given). *Spírítu* refers to what we might call the “source of life” in the person; that which makes the person “who they really are.”

Accordingly, to discover the deeper meaning of the words “and with your spirit,” we also must understand the basic purpose of the greeting and response. The greetings of the clergy are never meant as simply an exchange of pleasantries. At the beginning of Mass, the greeting “The Lord be with you,” (or any other option for the greeting) is given in acknowledging God’s presence in the lives of the people, who seek to encounter God more deeply during the Mass. The response of the people seeks to fittingly reply to him who that is ordained and the “spirit” that makes him so. It is the “spirit” of ordination that has empowered the priest to give the initial greeting, so that his words of greeting may have a real effect in the lives of those who are greeted. Likewise, this initial greeting, along with the other times the priest (or deacon) greets the people, comes at a moment when he is beginning a

direct exercise of the orders he has received. Hence, it is most fitting that the response of the people is not as though they are saying “the same to you,” but to say “may he be with you in your service to us.” Therefore, the response “and with your spirit,” goes beyond acknowledging the Lord in the life of the priest or deacon as an individual man, to acknowledging that it is the person of Christ who has come to serve, represented as he is by an unworthy man, through the sacrament of Orders.

Responding Well

In practice, while it may take some time to adjust to a new response that replaces one that is very natural for us to say, it may be helpful to remember the following realities. First of all, whenever the priest or deacon greets the people he gives the

greeting not as a function of his own humanity, but according to the Holy Orders that he has received, which is meant to serve and sanctify the people. Second, the greeting itself is meant to have an effect – of making the Lord more properly present in the lives of those who are greeted.

Just as these realities underlie the greetings of the clergy, so the people’s response contains a depth of meaning beyond everyday responses to common greetings. The words “and with your spirit,” invite the people to respond not merely to another person, but to one given the particular grace to serve them as a priest or deacon in their desire for a deeper encounter with God. Thus, these are words that in their own way acknowledge the presence of God in the priest, who is ordained for the sake of the sanctification of all God’s people.

Questions of the Week:

➤ ***How do other languages translate the response that is given in English as “And with your spirit?”***

A not so obvious benefit of the new translation is how the principles of a more literal in translation of the Latin and the more faithful use of particular words of the Church’s teaching and tradition will be recognizable in comparisons between languages. You can note the similarities here when considering how the original Latin phrase “*et cum spíritu tuo,*” is translated in Spanish as “Y con tu espíritu,” and in Italian as “E con il tuo spirito.” The new translation in English as “And with your spirit” more literally translates the Latin in similar manner to these (and other) contemporary languages.

➤ ***What response should we give during the Sign of Peace, when my neighbor in the pew says “Peace be with you?”***

According to the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, paragraph 154, when the people exchange the Sign of Peace with one another, a person may say “The peace of the Lord be with you always.” The response of one person in the pew to another is “Amen” (not “And with your spirit.”) The reason that lay people do not respond with “And with your spirit” one to another is due to the meaning of the response in relationship to the particular grace of the sacrament of Holy Orders, present in the ordained. To say “Amen” to the other person among the laity is to acknowledge their words according to the understanding of that word as “so be it,” with a sense of the same peace of Christ dwelling already in the one who has given that greeting. These differences in response allow for the legitimate distinction between the ordained and the laity to be expressed on the level of how each authentically participates in the Mass.