
The New Missal Explained—Part 1

The Dialogue

“The Lord be with you, and with your Spirit.”

At the beginning of Mass, immediately after the Sign of the Cross, the celebrant extends one of three different liturgical greetings to the people. Our new response will be the first major change in the Order of Mass. Instead of, “And also with you,” we now will say, “And with your spirit.” This new response also will be made at the four other times during Mass when this dialogue occurs: at the reading of the Gospel, at the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer, during the Sign of Peace (when the priest says, “The peace of the Lord be with you always”), and at the conclusion of Mass.

Why the change? At the most basic level, “And with your spirit” is the proper translation of the original Latin text: “*Et cum spiritu tuo*.” By correctly expressing this dialogue in English, we are actually aligning our translation with that of all the other major language groups, which have long been translating the Latin properly.

This liturgical dialogue in the Mass is an exchange whereby all present – both Priest and congregation – ask that the Holy Spirit (whom we call “the Lord, the giver of life” in the Nicene Creed) establish a stronger communion among us. In addition, for the congregation to answer the Priest, “And with your spirit,” is actually a theological statement

about what we Catholics believe regarding ordained ministers. No. 367 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* speaks of how “spirit” can refer to an elevation of the soul, whereby the soul “is raised beyond all it deserves to communion with God.” Through Holy Orders, Christ has forever configured the Priest’s soul to Himself in a special way, by the power of the Holy Spirit. By specifically referencing the Priest’s spirit, we can affirm this transformation and pray for his ministry.

This new response of “And with your spirit” will be a difficult change to remember – perhaps one of the most difficult for us laity. However, it will not take long to grow accustomed to the new wording, especially given its frequency. Above all, we should reflect on how it conveys the content of Sacred Scripture, as well as the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

Penitential Act:

The Penitential Act immediately follows the greeting dialogue. Important changes occur in the first form of the Penitential Act, which is the commonly used formula called the *Confiteor*. “*Confiteor*” is Latin for “I confess,” and comes from the first line of the prayer. Most of this text remains the same as the version we presently use. However, there are two key

modifications. The first replaces our current wording of “I have sinned through my own fault” with “I have greatly sinned.” The new text reflects the Latin wording by incorporating the adverb “*nimis*,” which means “very much.”

The second set of changes occurs about halfway through the *Confiteor*, and is more significant. The words removed from the first section (“through my own fault”) are being returned to their proper place here, but with the expression’s full content. “Through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault” is a direct translation of the Latin phrase “*mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*.” As a well-known line from the old Latin Mass, “*mea culpa*” has even become a familiar part of our secular parlance, by which one admits having made a mistake.

Some might wonder, why this seemingly heavier emphasis on sin in the revised English *Confiteor*? Looking beyond simple fidelity to the Latin, language that calls to mind our fallen human nature is actually very important in the Sacred Liturgy. The great Apostle of Christ, St. Paul, spoke of his complete and continual reliance

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It is good to acknowledge our sinfulness at particular times, just as we should do at sacramental Confession. Unlike Reconciliation, we are not sacramentally ab-

solved of our sins at this point during the Holy Mass. Nevertheless, this is an appropriate way to “prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries,” as the Priest says at the beginning of the Penitential Act. We must strive to approach the altar of God with humble dispositions, and should receive the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ free from grave sin, and in a worthy fashion, as St. Paul exhorts us in 1 Corinthians 11:23-29.

During the *Confiteor*, the faithful should “strike their breast” while saying, “through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault.” This prescribed “striking” is a symbolic tapping of the chest with a clenched fist over one’s heart, signifying remorse. This is part of the beauty of our Catholic liturgy – sacramental words are complemented by sacramental actions. This action also recalls the penitent tax collector in Luke, chapter 18, who “beat his breast and prayed, ‘O God, be merciful to me a sinner.’” The *Confiteor* ends with the individual asking for the prayers of the rest of the assembly and the Saints, led by the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose sinlessness and humility are the perfect model for our own Christian lives.
