

the roman missal

The Roman Missal, Eucharist, and Social Mission

INTRODUCTION

Through the eucharistic celebration, God draws us into communion with himself and with others, forming and transforming us to live as the Body of Christ in the world. A number of changes in the Roman Missal can help us to better understand the social nature of the eucharistic celebration. A few of these changes are described below.

“THE COMMUNION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT”

In the Roman Missal, among the options for the presider’s greeting is: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” This greeting emphasizes “communion,” or “union with.” The greeting reminds us that as members of the Body of Christ, we are called to real and deep union with one another.

“AND WITH YOUR SPIRIT”

In the Roman Missal, we respond to the presider’s greeting with: “And with your spirit.” This response repeats St. Paul’s greeting to the early Christian communities (Gal 6:18; Phil 4:23; 2 Tm 4:22) and reminds us of our connection to the tradition of the Church across the centuries. “And with your spirit” is an affirmation by the community of the priest who presides over the eucharistic celebration. In other words, the community acknowledges that the priest has received the gift of the Spirit in ordination to lead them in the sacraments.

“THROUGH MY FAULT”

The prayers of the Penitential Rite now emphasize having “greatly” sinned and include a repetition of acknowledging that this sin has occurred “through my fault.” The change challenges us to acknowledge the impacts of our choices not only on ourselves and our own relationship with God, but also on others. In Scripture, acknowledgment of the magnitude of humanity’s sin is paired with the even greater mercy and forgiveness of God. We are called to turn once again to God’s mercy so that our relationships with God, self, and others can be healed and systems and structures that oppress those who are poor and vulnerable can be reformed.

“PEACE TO PEOPLE OF GOOD WILL”

At the Gloria, we will now sing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.” The phrase “people of good will” acknowledges our desire for peace for all in the human family who work for peace and good. It also reminds us that conforming our will to God’s will can enable love, justice, and peace to be present in our lives and in the world.

“I BELIEVE”

In proclaiming “I believe” (instead of “we believe”) in the revised Nicene Creed, we recall the original liturgical purpose of the Creed as part of the baptismal formula. This change provides an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of our Baptism, including our membership in the Body of Christ and our profession of common values, beliefs, and vision. In Baptism, we are also made participants in Christ’s life and mission for the renewal of the world to love, justice, and peace. Another important change in the Creed is that instead of saying Christ is “one in being” with the Father, we will say that he is “consubstantial.” This term is rich in meaning, reminding us that Christ is of one “substance” with the Father. This also implies that Jesus is “co-substantial” with us in his human nature. Jesus is both with the Father and with us. Christians today are called to imitate Christ in being concerned about both the spiritual and the earthly. We strive for communion with the Father, but we

also imitate Jesus' human work of feeding the multitudes, healing the sick, and caring for the poor. In doing this work, we turn to Christ, whose divine nature can help perfect our all-too-human strivings.

“MY SACRIFICE AND YOURS”

During the rite of the Preparation of the Gifts at the altar, the priest will now say, “Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable . . .” This change recalls the eucharistic celebrations of the early Christian communities, in which each person brought small pieces of bread to place on the altar—their own contributions to the sacrifice. The new language reminds us that we bring our very selves to the altar along with our donations, bread, and wine. We place our intentions on the gifts and we offer our hearts. The change in wording reminds us that the entire community is actively participating in the sacrifice on the altar.

“EAT OF IT . . . DRINK FROM IT”

During the Eucharistic Prayer, the priest will say “eat of it” and “drink from it” (instead of “eat it” and “drink it”). The “of” indicates that those who partake of the Body and Blood of Christ will take one share of it, leaving the rest for others. The Body and Blood are to be shared among everyone, not hoarded by only a few. In this way, our eucharistic celebration recalls the multiplication of the loaves (Jn 6), in which five loaves and two fish feed all when shared by the entire community.

“THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD”

At the words of institution, the priest will now say, “Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my Blood,” with the word “chalice” replacing “cup.” The word “chalice” reminds us that we are sharing in Christ's sacrifice as a community. The Latin word for “cup” refers to an individual drinking cup. On the other hand, “chalice” describes a communal drinking cup. A chalice normally had two handles, making it easier to pass in a group setting. When “chalice” appears in Scripture, it often alludes to communal sharing. In the Gospels, Jesus proclaims that

whoever shares a cup of water with the “little ones” will be rewarded (Mt 10:42). At the Last Supper, the Apostles drink from the same cup. St. Paul refers to a single cup of blessing in which we all share (1 Cor 10:16). In the Latin version of these quotes, the word is always calix, which means “chalice.”

“GO IN PEACE, GLORIFYING THE LORD BY YOUR LIFE”

In the Roman Missal, there are four formulas that can be used for dismissal, all of which call to mind Jesus’ command in Matthew 28:19 to “go, therefore, and make disciples” and in Luke 10:37 to “go and do likewise”:

“Go forth, the Mass is ended.” We are not simply told to “go,” but to “go forth.” We have been given a direction and a job to do, and now we must do it.

“Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.” This formula reminds us of the prophetic nature of our ministry.

“Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.” The celebration of the Eucharist does not end when we leave the church; we must carry out our eucharistic mission in daily life.

“Go in peace.” We are called to go and do Christ’s work on earth. In doing so, we can look forward to the eternal peace of Christ.

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