

The New Translation of the Holy Mass: The Concluding Rites

by Brian W. MacMichael

The Communion Rite, which we examined last week, ends with the Prayer after Communion - the prayer said by the priest after a period of meditative silence following Holy Communion. Like the Collect Prayer at the beginning of the liturgy, the Prayer after Communion is a part of the Proper of the Mass, changing from day to day.

After we have stood and the priest has recited or sung the Prayer after Communion, we arrive at the Concluding Rites. For the final time during the Mass, the priest begins with "The Lord be with you," and we respond, "And with your spirit."

Then comes the final blessing (sometimes preceded by a prayer or three-fold solemn blessing on special occasions, or by the pontifical blessing if a Bishop is celebrant): "May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit." While the wording for the final blessing is not changing, it should be noted that the priest does not bestow the blessing by saying, "*in the name of the Father...*" Rather, by virtue of his ordination, the priest simply invokes the Holy Trinity, and God grants the blessing through His ordained minister. After all, it would not make sense for God to bless us in His own name.

Following our response of "Amen" to the final blessing, Mass is concluded with the dismissal, said by the priest (or a deacon, if one is present). With the new Missal, our three current dismissal formulas will be replaced by these four:

- Go forth, the Mass is ended.
- Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.
- Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.
- Go in peace.

The first corresponds to the actual Latin dismissal, which is familiar to many: "*Ite, missa est.*" In fact, this is where the word "Mass" comes from - "*missa est*" - which at its most fundamental level means "it is sent" or "it is the dismissal." More than a mere declaration that it is time to leave, this has the function of emphasizing our Christian call to "mission" (a word with the same Latin origins).

Pope Benedict XVI spoke of this in *Sacramentum Caritatis*, the document he released after the Bishops' Synod on the Holy Eucharist. Our participation in the Eucharistic liturgy should translate into a life in imitation of Christ, such that from the sacred liturgy springs forth the "missionary nature of the Church." He wrote that it would be helpful to "provide new texts" for the final blessing "in order to make this connection clear." Therefore, the Holy Father himself selected the three other beautiful dismissal formulas we see above, and they were added to the Latin text of the Missal.

Our response at the dismissal remains the same: "Thanks be to God." What else can we do except give thanks to God? He has provided us with an inestimable gift in the Holy

Mass, and a means by which He draws us and the entire world into closer communion with Him.

So ends our exploration of the newly translated Order of Mass. There is much more that could be said, but for the moment, let us consider one clear consequence of the new translation: our priests will have to adapt to far more textual changes than we laity in the pews. Aside from all the prayers in the Order of Mass (including the entirety of the Eucharistic Prayers and a number of priestly prayers we have not examined in detail, some of which are prayed quietly), priests must prepare to offer new prayers from the Proper of the Mass every day.

It will be fascinating to listen attentively to the new translations of these proper prayers, which promise a depth and richness that may not have always been apparent in our current translation. This richness will help priests pray for us with even greater focus and intensity, but priests will also need our prayers, encouragement, and understanding as they strive to adjust to the new words of our beloved Mass.

Next week, we will have some closing thoughts on the benefits of the new translation. But to finish this week's article, we include both the current and anticipated future versions of the Collect for this Sunday, the Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time:

Current:

Father, your love never fails.
Hear our call.
Keep us from danger
and provide for all our needs.

New:

O God, whose providence never fails in its design,
humbly we implore you
to banish all that would harm us
and to grant all that works for our good.