

The New Translation of the Holy Mass: The Liturgy of the Eucharist
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We continue our review of the upcoming translation changes in the Order of Mass by starting into the Liturgy of the Eucharist, which begins with the Preparation of the Gifts. When the gifts of bread and wine are placed upon the altar and raised by the priest as an offering to God, we often hear two prayers spoken aloud over each element (they can also be spoken quietly by the priest).

The current versions of these two prayers are very familiar, so it is easy to see that the differences (shown in bold) are relatively minor. The following is the new translation of the prayer spoken when the priest lifts the paten (the sacred vessel that holds the unleavened bread):

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation,
for through your goodness we have **received**
the bread we offer you:
fruit of the earth and work of human hands,
it will become for us the bread of life.

And this will be the new prayer at the lifting of the chalice:

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation,
for through your goodness we have **received**
the wine we offer you:
fruit of the vine and work of human hands,
it will become our spiritual drink.

The people's response to both prayers remains, "Blessed be God for ever."

These prayers over the bread and wine are very important, because they express the sacramental reality of the sacred liturgy. Through our human work amidst creation, we offer back to God what is already His (the new translation highlights that we first "received" these gifts from Him), and He brings it to its heavenly fulfillment. In an overarching sense, this applies to our entire Christian lives on earth. Just as the bread and wine become Christ's Body and Blood, we look forward to our resurrection in glorified bodies (as we profess in the Creed), and also to the perfection of all creation in the heavenly Jerusalem.

After reciting a couple quiet prayers for humility and purity, the priest then washes his hands, and extends this invitation to prayer:

Pray, brethren (brothers and sisters),
that **my sacrifice and yours**
may be acceptable to God,
the almighty Father.

Whereas the current translation has “our sacrifice,” the new translation is changed to “my sacrifice and yours.” This seemingly slight distinction, found in the original Latin, actually conveys the reality that those who are gathered offer the holy sacrifice of the Mass in different ways. The priest offers it on our behalf in a special manner, *in persona Christi* (in the person of Christ), by virtue of his ordination.

But those of us in the pews are not idle spectators. The Second Vatican Council’s *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* no. 48 says that the faithful should be “conscious” participants “by offering the Immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him, they should learn also to offer themselves.”

This call to join ourselves to the action of the priest is answered when the people stand and make the following response:

May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands
for the praise and glory of his name,
for our good
and the good of all his **holy** Church.

The addition of "holy" reminds us that the Church belongs to Christ, and is founded on His grace. Afterwards comes the priest’s “Prayer over the Offerings” – part of the proper prayers that change depending on the liturgical day. Just as with the Collects at the beginning of Mass, many of these will feature richer and fuller content.

The Eucharistic Prayer itself then begins with this dialogue:

Priest: The Lord be with you.
People: **And with your spirit.**
Priest: Lift up your hearts.
People: We lift them up to the Lord.
Priest: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
People: **It is right and just.**

Of the two highlighted changes, we have already seen “And with your spirit.” The phrase, “It is right and just,” is a simple rendering of the Latin, “*Dignum et iustum est*,” emphasizing the fact that it is fitting and fair (“just”) to give thanks to God, since He is both our Creator and Redeemer.

This dialogue is followed by the Preface, a more lengthy prayer that can vary depending on the liturgical occasion. Most Prefaces in the new translation expand upon the words of the preceding dialogue by beginning, “It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks.”