

The New Translation of the Holy Mass: The Eucharistic Prayer, Part II

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We continue our overview of the new translations in the Eucharistic Prayer by looking at the revised texts for the words of consecration, also known as the words of institution. At every Mass, the priest repeats these words by which Christ instituted the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper, and by which the bread and wine become the true Body and Blood of Christ for us today.

The following are the words of consecration over the bread and wine, respectively, with changes in bold.

Take this, all of you, and eat **of** it,
for this is my Body,
which will be given up for you.

Take this, all of you, and drink from it,
for this is the **chalice** of my Blood,
the Blood of the new and **eternal** covenant,
which will be **poured out** for you and for **many**
for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this in memory of me.

The changes at the consecration of the bread are minor, but there are a few changes in the text for the consecration of the wine that are worth explaining. First is the replacement of "cup" with "chalice." Both refer to vessels from which we drink, and both terms appear in the Bible. However, "chalice" implies a special kind of cup – one that is precious and set aside for a noble purpose (in this case, the "new and eternal covenant"). This is part of the dignified language brought out by the new translation: just as we do not refer to the altar of sacrifice as merely a "table," so saying "chalice" at this moment emphasizes that the Blood of Christ is no ordinary drink. Such language can help foster greater reverence at the Holy Mass.

A significant change is the revision of the current phrase, "shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven," to "poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins." The imagery of Blood being "poured out" is more vivid than "shed" - it portrays His Blood as true drink (Jn 6:55) and accentuates that Jesus entirely emptied Himself (Phil 2:7) out of love for us.

However, the most noticeable revision in those same lines is the replacement of "for all" with "for many." At the most basic level, "for many" is a faithful translation of the original Latin phrase, "*pro multis*." Moreover, Isaiah 53:12 prophesied that the Messiah would take away "the sins of many," and Christ Himself also said His Blood would be shed for "many" (Mt 26:28, Mk 14:24). This does not mean that Christ did not die for the sake of all humanity, for that is indisputable from Scripture. Rather, it upholds the reality that each individual must also accept and abide in the grace won by Christ in order to

attain eternal life. The recovery of the wording, "for many," affirms that salvation is not completely automatic.

Nonetheless, it should not be interpreted as overly restrictive, either. The fact that Jesus was addressing only the Apostles in the Upper Room while saying, "for you and for many," implies far-reaching inclusion – that many more besides the Twelve would benefit from this new covenant.

So, the revised translation of "*pro multis*" is important, but may require some of the most careful catechesis, due to potential misunderstandings.

Then, after the consecration, the priest will simply announce, "The mystery of faith" ("*Mysterium fidei*") – a declarative statement about the Eucharist now present. Venerable Pope John Paul II reflected on these words in his encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, writing that the very thought of the mysterious gift of the Holy Eucharist should fill us with "profound amazement and gratitude."

In response, the people shall make one of these acclamations:

We proclaim your Death, O Lord,
and profess your Resurrection
until you come again.

When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup,
we proclaim your Death, O Lord,
until you come again.

Save us, Savior of the world,
for by your Cross and Resurrection
you have set us free.

All three are rooted in Scripture (1 Cor 11:26, Jn 4:42). But what is conspicuously absent is the popular current acclamation, "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again." This line, although powerful, is not found in the Latin. In addition, it does not directly address Christ made present in the Blessed Sacrament, nor does it speak of our relationship with Him, as the others do.

Next week, we shall examine some of the final parts of the Order of Mass.