

THE NEW TRANSLATION OF THE ROMAN MISSAL

The Invitation to Holy Communion

After the Lord's Prayer and the sign of peace, we sing the *Agnus Dei* ("Lamb of God") as the priest breaks the sacred Host. The *Agnus Dei* text remains unchanged, though it is always good to recall its origin in the words of John the Baptist, as he heralds Christ's arrival at the River Jordan: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29).

That passage from the Gospel of John is also embedded in the subsequent line spoken by the priest, while he holds the Host over the chalice: "**Behold the Lamb of God...**"

The new translation recovers the word, "behold," which also evokes the words of Pilate to the crowd in presenting the scourged Jesus: "Behold, the man" ("*Ecce homo*" – Jn 19:5). The Eucharist is a re-presentation of that same sacrificial Victim, and our partaking in it is a foretaste of the heavenly wedding banquet of the Lamb (Rev 19:9).

Then come the words we pray in response, before the distribution of Holy Communion begins: "Lord, I am not worthy..."

The replacement of the former, relatively terse "not worthy to receive you" with "**I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof**" is a significant change. The new line comes directly from Matthew 8:8, in which the faith-filled centurion begs Jesus to heal his paralyzed servant: "Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof; only say the word and my servant will be healed." It is therefore a Biblical text that conveys humanity's unworthiness on account of sin, and our need for sincere humility before receiving the Holy Eucharist.

Previous Translation	New Translation
<p><i>Priest:</i></p> <p>This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are those who are called to his supper.</p> <p><i>All:</i></p> <p>Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed.</p>	<p><i>Priest:</i></p> <p>Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.</p> <p><i>All:</i></p> <p>Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.</p>

Indeed, when Jesus encounters the centurion's humility, he says, "Amen, I say to you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith" (Mt 8:10).

Nonetheless, despite these Biblical origins, speaking of "my roof" may seem strange before Holy Communion, since Christ comes to us in the form of food – not literally entering into our houses. Certainly, the association with Matthew Chapter 8 has a figurative intent, but it is also important to recall that Saint Paul says, "your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you" (1 Cor 6:19).

We are therefore to make our bodies into fitting homes for God's grace to dwell within our souls. The Eucharist is true food that provides spiritual nourishment, which is why we will refer more specifically to "my soul" in the last line. But this sacramental strength for our souls in turn informs both our mental and physical deeds (just as the *Confiteor* at the beginning of Mass mentions both – "in my thoughts and in my words"), such that the totality of our bodies, souls, and lives may become suitable instruments of the Lord.

This series was prepared by the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. For more Roman Missal resources, please visit <http://www.diocesefwsb.org/diocesan-offices/worship-office/roman-missal/>