

This is the fifth article...

**Latin? English? What’s the fuss?  
What kind of changes? Part II**

This continues the commentary on the changes in the new Mass translation that will affect the assembly’s parts of the Mass.

PART OF MASS	PRESENT TEXT FOR PEOPLE	NEW TEXT FOR PEOPLE
The Apostles’ Creed	<p>I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.  <b>I believe</b> in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.  <b>He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate,</b> was crucified, died, and was buried.                      He descended <b>to the dead.</b>                      On the third day he rose again.</p> <p>He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand <b>of the Father.</b>  <b>He will come again</b> to judge the living and the dead.                      I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and <b>the</b> life everlasting. Amen.</p>	<p>I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, <b>and in</b> Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  <b>who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,</b> was crucified, died and was buried;                      he descended <b>into hell;</b>                      on the third day he rose again <b>from the dead;</b>                      he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand <b>of God the Father almighty; from there he will come</b> to judge the living and the dead.                      I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.</p>

Some of the changes made in the Apostles’ Creed have already been given comment in the Nicene Creed. There remain two changes to highlight. First, “he descended into hell.” The original Latin word for “hell” here is *inferos*, literally, “the lower ones,” i.e. the underworld. In early English, this abode of the dead was called “hell.” Thus, the story of Christ in the tomb, descending to the lower regions to free all those from Adam and Eve on who were awaiting redemption, was given the title in medieval times “the harrowing of hell.” Here, “hell” refers to this abode of the dead, and not to a place of eternal damnation.

The second change to mention is the phrase, he rose again “from the dead.” The new version has two phrases: Christ descended to “hell” (*inferos*), and he rose again “from the dead” (*a mortuis*). The current translation only renders one of these phrases and leaves the other out. The new translation pays attention to both. It is important to state that Christ rose “from the dead” because it makes clear that he has conquered death and left behind all traces of it. Because of Christ’s resurrection, there is no death in him at all, and this is the hope for all who follow him!

PART OF MASS	PRESENT TEXT FOR PEOPLE	NEW TEXT FOR PEOPLE
<i>Suscipiat Dominus</i>	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 Church.	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 <b>holy</b> Church.

This is the prayer which the assembly prays at the close of the preparation of the gifts, just before the priest-celebrant begins the preface dialogue. The new translation restores the adjective “holy” to the Church. If the Church is the Body of Christ, and the Body of Christ is holy, then the Church, too, by all means, is holy.

PART OF MASS	PRESENT TEXT FOR PEOPLE	NEW TEXT FOR PEOPLE
Preface Dialogue	<i>Priest:</i> The Lord be with you. <i>People:</i> <b>And also with you.</b> <i>Priest:</i> Lift up your hearts. <i>People:</i> We lift them up to the Lord. <i>Priest:</i> Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. <i>People:</i> <b>It is right to give him thanks and praise.</b>	<i>Priest:</i> The Lord be with you. <i>People:</i> <b>And with your spirit.</b> <i>Priest:</i> Lift up your hearts. <i>People:</i> We lift them up to the Lord. <i>Priest:</i> Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. <i>People:</i> <b>It is right and just.</b>

The first of the two changes made here has received comment in the previous article. The second change is a more accurate rendering of the Latin original. The two adjectives “right” and “just” refer both to the goodness (right) as well as the duty (just) to return thanks to God. These two words also act as prelude to the first words of the prayer which follows (the preface). That prayer begins, “It is truly right and just...”

PART OF MASS	PRESENT TEXT FOR PEOPLE	NEW TEXT FOR PEOPLE
<i>Sanctus</i>	<b>Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might.</b>	<b>Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts.</b>

	Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.	Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.
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The current translation is actually taken from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. The new version is not only a more accurate account of the original prayer of the Church, but also embodies a more precise echo of Isaiah 6:3. “God of hosts” is a translation of the Latin “Deus *Sabaoth*.” *Sabaoth* is plural and evokes the image of the angelic armies who serve God night and day.

PART OF MASS	PRESENT TEXT FOR PEOPLE	NEW TEXT FOR PEOPLE
Mystery of Faith (formerly the Memorial Acclamation)	<p><i>Priest: Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:</i> <i>People:</i> A – Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.</p> <p><i>or B – Dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life.</i> <b>Lord Jesus, come in glory.</b></p> <p><i>or C – When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim your death, Lord Jesus,</i> until you come <b>in glory.</b></p> <p><i>or D – Lord, by your cross and resurrection, you have set us free.</i> <b>You are the Savior of the World.</b></p>	<p><i>Priest: The mystery of faith.</i><sup>1</sup> <i>People:</i> [Christ has died... a U.S. adaptation yet to be decided by Holy See]</p> <p>A – <b>We proclaim your death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.</b><sup>2</sup></p> <p><i>or B – When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your death, O Lord,</i> until you come <b>again.</b><sup>3</sup></p> <p><i>or C – Save us, Savior of the world,</i> <b>for</b> by your Cross and Resurrection, you have set us free.<sup>4</sup></p>

My comments are given *per* the “footnotes” in the text above.

<sup>1</sup>Prior to the Second Vatican Council, the phrase “the mystery of faith” was not a separate acclamation, but simply part of the Eucharistic Prayer prayed by the priest (actually a part of the Institution Narrative, specifically the words over the Chalice). With the liturgical reforms following the council, Pope Paul VI approved making this phrase the introductory line for an acclamation recited by all. The current English translation

facilitated that shift by adding the words “Let us proclaim” to “the mystery of faith.” The actual text of the Church, however, had never changed. The new translation removes the additions for a couple of reasons: first, in order to be more accurate to the actual prayer of the Church, but second, the shortened phrase can now relate to what has gone before in the prayer as well as to what follows. It is no longer simply an introductory line, but also a proclamation in its own right. The priest prays the words of Christ over the bread and wine, genuflects and then says “The mystery of faith.” This announces to all what is happening on the altar. The assembly responds to the sacrifice of the cross on the altar by proclaiming one of the acclamations that follow.

In the Roman Missal, the Church provides three options for this acclamation by the people that is our response to the great mystery present on the altar. The acclamation “Christ has died...” is not in the Roman Missal. It was created and approved by the U.S. Church (with the blessing of Rome) following the Second Vatican Council. At the present time, Rome has simply approved the translation which is common for the whole English-speaking world. Specific adaptations of each country are still awaiting approval.

<sup>2</sup>The first acclamation comes almost entirely from 1 Cor. 11:26. The new translation returns to this more biblical rendering. The current translation is rhetorically pleasing, but simply portrays the Church telling Christ what he is doing “Dying, you destroyed our death; rising, you restored our life.” Rather, the Church’s prayer is actually a profession of faith in what Christ has done: “We proclaim your death...and profess your resurrection.” The last line of this acclamation is not a command to Christ as the current translation would have it, “Lord Jesus, come in glory.” Rather, it is a statement of our resolve to profess our faith and never to cease doing so until the Lord returns.

<sup>3</sup>The changes to the second acclamation are minor adjustments to make it more accurate to the prayer of the Church. This acclamation, too, is a slightly different edit of the same scriptural citation from 1 Cor 11:26 as before.

<sup>4</sup>The third acclamation is also scriptural in origin, from the Gospel of John 4:42 (“We know that this is truly the Savior of the world.”). This is a plea to the Savior, present in the mystery on the altar, to save us by the sacrifice of his cross and resurrection.

The reworking of these three acclamations succeeds in bringing forth more clearly the fact that we are responding to (and addressing!) the mystery present on the altar. The new translation returns to the Church’s intention of drawing the assembly more deeply into the mystery re-presented on the altar. This acclamation is not meant as a wake up call or simply a way to give the people more lines in the Mass. It is an engagement and a response to the mystery of the cross and resurrection on the altar.

PART OF MASS	PRESENT TEXT FOR PEOPLE	NEW TEXT FOR PEOPLE
<i>Ecce Agnus Dei</i>	<i>Priest:</i> <b>This is</b> the Lamb of God who takes away	<i>Priest:</i> <b>Behold</b> the Lamb of God, <b>behold him</b> who takes away

	<p>the sins of the world.  <b>Happy</b> are those <b>who are called to his supper.</b>  <i>All:</i>          Lord, I am not worthy  <b>to receive you,</b>          but only say the word          and <b>I</b> shall be healed.</p>	<p>the sins of the world.  <b>Blessed</b> are those <b>called to the supper of the Lamb.</b>  <i>All:</i>          Lord, I am not worthy  <b>that you should enter under my roof,</b>          but only say the word          and <b>my soul</b> shall be healed.</p>
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The last translation change which affects the assembly in the Mass is the “Lamb of God.” First, the priest-celebrant’s introduction is slightly different. It begins with the more evocative and poetic “Behold” instead of the prosaic “This is...” One of the goals in the new translation has been to create through language use a greater sense of the sacred, thus “Blessed” replaces “Happy.” The last phrase of the priest’s introduction is a quote from Rev. 19:9: “Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” The new translation brings out more faithfully and clearly the connection between our Eucharist and the heavenly banquet for which we long.

In the original prayer of the Church, the assembly’s response is a quote from Luke 7:6-7. The new translation is more faithful to the scripture which underlies this prayer, calling to mind the faith, humility and reverence of the centurion in Luke’s Gospel who sought the healing power of Jesus, but felt unworthy to have Jesus come under the roof of his house. The Christian who approaches the altar should have the same faith, humility and reverence in preparing to receive the holy Eucharist under the “roof” of our body. Just as the roof is the external shelter for what is most important, so too is our body the “roof” or external shelter for that which is most precious—our soul.

It is important for Catholics to realize how thoroughly scriptural are the prayers and actions of the Mass and indeed all of Catholic liturgy. The new translation does well to allow the underlying scriptural texts to stand forth more strongly, even at the cost of a slightly odd turn of phrase.

Unfortunately, some Catholics—laity and priest alike—will be upset by the upcoming changes. The reasons for their upset may well range from the deeply theological (“I disagree with the vocabulary choice or style”) to the deeply personal (“I have been hurt in the past by Church leaders and their choices, and do not trust their judgments”), or even to the deeply immature (“I don’t like the new translations and I won’t say them!”). I hope that others will be patient with their brothers and sisters who may struggle with these changes. Change is often not easy, and particularly change that affects the way we worship. Worship is such an intensely personal (and communitarian) act, and it stirs up strong emotions. This is ok. It is alright for someone to be upset with the Church. The Church must respond with patience and love and understanding. Are the new translations perfect? By no means. But then, neither is the Church perfect. She has been promised the eternal protection of the One who is all holy and perfect, but in this life, she will

always be on pilgrimage. *Ecclesia semper reformanda* (“The Church is always in need of reform”).

The new translations will bring a different linguistic style and there will be some new vocabulary, and it will take some time to accustom ourselves to it. But perhaps that is also an important lesson in conversion: we should not demand the faith to conform to us, but rather be willing to conform ourselves to the faith. When these new translations are approved by the Holy Father and published for our use, we will be asked by the Church to conform our faith to this particular expression of it, admittedly an imperfect and even stumbling expression of the person of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Trinity. But then, even Latin and Greek stumble to express those divine and mighty mysteries...I hope we can give the new translations a chance to raise and deepen our faith and our understanding of it. They are filled with beautiful images and metaphors from scripture and our tradition. We should give that scripture and tradition a chance to work on and in us.

The next (last) article will cover a few miscellaneous—though important—matters referring to liturgical vocabulary for the new Roman Missal.