

Welcome to Our Parish: Changes in the Texts of the Mass

Dear

Today is a joyous occasion when two persons are united sacramentally in a covenantal relationship. We pray that their union—their communion—will mirror the love God has for all of us. We ask God to unite them, to bless them, and to help them grow in their call to discipleship for the rest of their lives. May we pray for them in this new vocation, this new way of life.

For more than a decade, the English translations of our prayers and responses have been undergoing a revision. This past November 27, 2011, the First Sunday of Advent and the beginning of a new liturgical year, we began using the revised prayers and responses. In your pew is a prayer card that contains your responses. Please use these cards to help with your participation in the liturgy. Even though the card contains the texts, I would like to give some background to the changes and then provide a few samples of the changes.

For over forty years we have been using an English translation that has served us well. However, two things have happened that provided for a revision to the English translation. First, Pope John Paul II added more saints to the liturgical calendar. Prayers for these saints were included in the revision of the book we call *The Roman Missal*. This book contains all of the prayers for Masses on Sundays, weekdays, and feast days. The second was the publication of new directives on translation from the Holy See. All our liturgical books are published in the official language of the Church: Latin. Thus, all the English-speaking bishops have to translate the text into English. The Holy See wanted translators to translate closer to the Latin vocabulary, structures of words, and theology. Also, the Holy See wanted the texts we pray to be more sacred in tone. Finally, the texts should closer match the scriptural references. A lot of our responses are from scripture.

Here are a few samples of the changes.

Sanctus

The word *Sanctus* is Latin for “holy.” Hence, the name of this acclamation comes from the first three words of the text. Here is the text of the Sanctus:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts.
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.

The text of the *Sanctus* in *The Roman Missal* has only one change. The change is in the first line. We once sang, “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of power and might.” Now, as we see above, the translation is rendered, “God of hosts.” While the word *hosts* is a literal translation of the official Latin edition of *The Roman Missal*, it also opens up the interpretation beyond God being only for those who are mighty and powerful to a God who is of the hosts: God of heaven and earth. God’s dominion, reign, or kingdom stretches beyond our worldly understandings of power and might to a God who is God of all. Indeed, God is holy.

Invitation to Communion

Our response to the Invitation to Communion is as follows:

Lord, I am not worthy
that you should enter under my roof,
but only say the word
and my soul shall be healed.

This text is from scripture: Matthew 8:8. The Roman centurion asks Jesus to heal his paralyzed servant. Jesus then insists on going back to the centurion’s house to heal his servant. However, the centurion replies with the above text. As mentioned before, the translation in general, and here in particular, is closer to the text from scripture.

And with your spirit

Today, our response to “The Lord be with you” is now “And with your spirit.” This is a literal translation from the Latin text in *The Roman Missal*. It is a phrase used in the letters of Saint Paul.

I hope this helps with some of the changes you will experience tonight/today. These changes to our text can be a renewal in words that perhaps we can take for granted when saying them so often. May the love the couple feels for one another be a sign to us of God’s love for each of us.

Sincerely in Christ,