

THE REVISED ROMAN MISSAL AND THE PARTS OF THE MASS

A Reflection in Session One of the *Lifting Up Our Hearts* small group faith-sharing program states: "With this new edition of the Roman Missal we have an opportunity to hear the words with a new heart and thus gain a deeper understanding of our faith so as to share what we have received." We also have an opportunity to review the significance of the four parts of the Mass and our role in the liturgy.

THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

The Introductory Rites of the Liturgy provide a "bridge" from whatever we were just doing before the liturgy into the liturgical event of feast or season. These rites begin with the **Entrance Chant and Procession**. The song that we sing corresponds to the particular feast or liturgical season. Next the **Sign of the Cross** is marked on our bodies to identify us as disciples who were baptized into the Triune God. The **Greeting** follows, and it is here that one of the major changes occurs. Currently, the priest says, "The Lord be with you," and we respond, "And also with you." In the new translation, we will respond, "And with your spirit." Today, English is the only major European language that does not mention the Spirit in the current translation. The word spirit here refers to the spirit received by the priest at his ordination: "Look upon your servant who is here and grant him the *spirit* of grace and of council of the presbytery so that he may aid and govern your people with a pure heart." The priest blesses in the name of the Church because of the "spirit" he has received in ordination.

Next, we acknowledge our dependence on our gracious and merciful God in the **Penitential Act**. There are three forms for this: a short form and a longer, also known as the Confiteor. You will see a slight change in our responses for the shorter form, but there is a bigger change in the Confiteor. After we pray "that I have greatly sinned in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do" we will return to the original poetic repetition found in the Latin text: "through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault." As we say this, we will **strike our breast**. This is an ancient gesture expressing sorrow and is a sign of our contrition. Jeremiah says in Chapter 32, verse 19: "I turn in repentance....I strike my breast." The third form is the the *Kyrie, eleison*, which remains the same.

Next follows the **Gloria**, the ancient hymn based on the song in the Gospel according to Luke that the angels sang to the shepherds announcing that Jesus was born.

Finally, we come to the conclusion of the Introductory Rites, the **Collect**. The priest invites personal prayer, "Let us pray," and then offers the prayer of *The Roman Missal* which is connected to the season or feast. The prayer unites -that is, collects- the personal prayers spoken within the human hearts and minds to the prayer in the missal.

Through these Introductory Rites, we are gradually immersed into the aspect of Christ's great mystery being recalled and celebrated.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

The **Liturgy of the Word** follows the Introductory Rites. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* states, "When the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to his people, and Christ, present in his word, proclaims the Gospel." The Liturgy of the Word begins with the **first reading**, typically from the Old Testament. A period of silence follows allowing people to reflect upon the word they just heard proclaimed. Next a **Psalm** is sung reflecting a vast array of human emotions: lament, thanksgiving, praise, and petition. These words help us express our own varied expressions of faith. The **second reading** is usually an epistle, a letter from the New Testament. The climax of the Liturgy of the Word is the **proclamation of the Gospel**. The **homily** that follows should connect the readings to the lives of the assembly.

Following the homily, we profess our faith in the **Creed**. The first change in this prayer will be immediately apparent. We have been beginning the Creed with the words, "We believe..." With the new text, we will profess, "**I believe**..." The Church wants us to use the "I" when we profess our faith. A reflection in Session Four of the *Lifting Up Our Hearts* Program states: "I can only witness to what I believe, but together our witness is greater than the sum of the parts. Thus, in the liturgical act the "I" becomes "we" as we proclaim it together." There are two other reasons for this change to the form of the Creed. First, every other major liturgical language either already uses the singular "I" or soon will. This change will unite English-speaking Catholics more closely to the rest of the Catholic world. Secondly, the Latin text of the Creed in *The Roman Missal* uses *Credo* ("I believe") rather than *Credimus* ("We believe").

Another notable change occurs in the second paragraph of the Creed. The phrase "**consubstantial with the Father**" will replace "one in being with the Father." This unique word comes closer to the Greek word **homoousios** (ho-mo-u-ze-us) chosen in the 4th century by the Council of Constantinople to name the Great Mystery that is the relationship of Jesus Christ to God the Father, that is, of one substance, or the same being.

We will no longer say that Jesus was "born of the Virgin" but rather "**incarnate of the Virgin**." God's incarnation is more than just being born as you and I were. Jesus' divine nature was present at his conception. At this part of the Creed, we will **bow our heads**.

After the Creed, the priest celebrant invites prayers of petition. The intercessions of the **Prayer of the Faithful** flow from the homily and the Word of God. They juxtapose the needs of the Church, the world, the oppressed and the local community with God's word proclaimed in the liturgy. The closing prayer of the Prayer of the Faithful concludes the Liturgy of the Word.

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Eucharist means “thanksgiving.” A reflection in Session Five of the *Lifting Up Our Hearts* program states: Eucharist is thanksgiving for our share of divine life through Christ. We must recapture a notion of Eucharist as action instead of passive reception. According to Pope John Paul II, “Whoever receives Christ in the reality of his body and blood cannot keep this gift to himself, but is impelled to share it in courageous witness of the Gospel, in service to brothers in difficulty, in forgiveness for offenses.”

The Liturgy of the Eucharist begins with the **Preparation of the Gifts** and is followed by the **Eucharistic Prayer**, the center and summit of the entire Mass. This prayer begins with a dialogue between the priest and the people. Afterward, the priest says the preface, and then all proclaim the “Holy, Holy, Holy.” In the previous translation, this prayer referred to the Lord as “God of power and might.” In the new translation, we address him as “Lord God of hosts.” This more clearly echoes the biblical language of the angels in Isaiah and underscores the infinite breadth of God’s power. All things in heaven and on earth are under his dominion. During the institution narrative, when the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ, the priest will say “this is the chalice of my blood” rather than “cup.” The word “chalice” highlights the ceremonial use of the vessel on the altar; and it matches the frequent use of the word “chalice” in the Bible. The Acclamation of Faith that follows is sung. The entire prayer concludes with praise to God the Father; through, with and in Christ; in the unity of the Holy Spirit. You respond in faith with one of the most important words at Mass: “Amen.”

Following the **Eucharistic Prayer**, is the **Communion Rite**. This rite consists of the Lord’s Prayer and the Sign of Peace, followed by the breaking of the bread and the Agnes Dei. Among the changes in this prayer is the addition of the phrase: **Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof**. This makes a more direct connection with Matthew 8:8 and Luke 7:6, where a Gentile centurion has asked Jesus to heal his servant. Jesus intends to go to the house, but the centurion believes himself unworthy to have Jesus come to his home. Jesus admires the man’s faith and cures the servant from afar. By quoting the centurion, you’re telling Jesus of your sins and that you are not worthy to have him enter sacramentally under the “roof” of your soul in communion. Next follows the Communion Procession, the reception of Communion, the period of silence and/or the Song of Thanksgiving, and finally the Prayer after Communion. Each part of the Liturgy of the Eucharist - as well as the Liturgy of the Word - is about the Triune God working in our midst and calling us to become holy as God is holy.

THE CONCLUDING RITES

The **Liturgy of the Eucharist** ends with the Prayer after Communion, and the **Concluding Rites** begin with announcements, if not already made.

The priest celebrant then greets the people with “The Lord be with you” and we respond “And with your spirit.” A blessing is then proclaimed over the people to which they respond, “Amen.” The priest or deacon then dismisses the people from the liturgy. We will continue to respond, “Thanks be to God.” A hymn may be sung as the liturgical ministers depart.

The original Latin for the dismissal is *Ite missa est*. The word *missa* is the root for Mass and thus gives the Mass its name. It has become common to hear people talk about the connection between *missa* and mission. The Mass should bear fruit in our lives. Pope Benedict XVI articulated in his recent exhortation, *Sacramentum caritatis*, “The mystery of the Eucharist inspires and impels us to work courageously within our world to bring about that renewal of relationships which has its inexhaustible source in God’s gift....In a particular way, the Christian laity, formed at the school of the Eucharist, are called to assume their specific political and social responsibilities.” The social dimensions of the Mass extend beyond the walls of the Church to live the mission Christ gives to the Church: to grow in holiness and to be good stewards of God’s creation.