

AND WITH YOUR SPIRIT



RECOVERING A SENSE OF THE SACRED
IN THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE
ROMAN MISSAL — 3RD EDITION

LOUIE VERRECCHIO

PART TWO:
CHANGE IS IN THE AIR

*Yea, at that time I will change the speech of the peoples
to a pure speech, that all of them may call on the name of
the LORD and serve him with one accord.*

- Zephaniah 3:9

CHAPTER SEVEN: INTRODUCTORY RITES

Highlighting the changes

The commentary to follow in Part Two will highlight and explain the changes to the people's parts of Holy Mass in the English translation of the Roman Missal – 3rd Edition. It references the text provided by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. This and other resources are available on the USCCB website at: <http://usccb.org/romanmissal>

These changes to the text, of course, are intended to more accurately reflect the Latin original, but our goal here will be to look *beyond* the mechanics of the translation to its effect and its purpose. My intention is to provide some answers to questions like, how does the new translation speak more clearly about the sacred action that is taking place at Holy Mass? How do the newly worded prayers give us a greater awareness of the sacred mystery being celebrated? How does the new translation help us to recover and to heighten our sense of the sacred?

All of the current text containing those words that are subject to change in the Missal will be in *italics*, while the new text itself will be in ***bold italics***.

And with your spirit

Once the Mass begins, we won't have to wait long to encounter our very first change in the text:

When the priest says: *The Lord be with you*, no longer will the people reply: *And also with you*, but will we say instead: ***And with your spirit***.

I can almost imagine some of you cringing just a bit at the thought of one; saying it yourself, and two; trying to explain it to other people! This is a perfect example of the absolute necessity of engaging in the *liturgical instruction* urged by the Second Vatican Council as a key for promoting fully conscious and active participation in Holy Mass.

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

Louie Verrecchio - *And with Your Spirit* - An Excerpt

This exchange, as you know, takes place a number of times throughout the Mass, starting with the Introductory Rites.

You mean the greeting?

No! I mean the Introductory Rites, and as you will see in just a moment, this is a great illustration of just how important proper terminology can be.

The people also respond, ***And with your spirit:***

- Before the Gospel is read
- At the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer
- After the Our Father
- At the “Have a Nice Day Please Take a Bulletin Home Rite,” I mean... the Concluding Rite

Even those who are unfamiliar with the Latin in general might be familiar with the exchange that this is based upon:

*Dominus vobiscum.
Et cum spiritu tuo.*

Now you don’t need to know Latin to guess that the phrase “*et cum spiritu tuo*” is not the equivalent of “and also with you.”

The Lord be with you.

One just kind of expects to hear this sort of thing from a priest, right? In other words, there’s nothing all that out of the ordinary about it. But that response of ours; *And with your spirit*, what can we say about that?

Peculiar? Unusual? Remote from everyday speech? You bet it is! But what exactly does it mean?

Well, the first thing you should know is that this manner of speaking has ancient Christian roots; in fact, it’s documented as far back as the year 215 A.D. Share *that* with the grumblers back in your parish who are upset with the *neufangled* translation!

One of the many great things about our Catholic faith is that it’s rarely if ever necessary to reinvent the wheel. In the present case,

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for example, rather than attempting to explain ***And with your spirit*** to you myself, I'm going to let St. John Chrysostom do it.

In his "Homily on the Holy Pentecost" which dates to the end of the fourth century, St. John taught:

If the Holy Spirit were not in our Bishop [referring to Bishop Flavian of Antioch] when he gave the peace to all shortly before ascending to his holy sanctuary, you would not have replied to him all together, ***And with your spirit***. This is why you reply with this expression not only when he ascends to the sanctuary, nor when he preaches to you, nor when he prays for you, but when he stands at this holy altar, when he is about to offer this awesome sacrifice. You don't first partake of the offerings until he has prayed for you the grace from the Lord, and you have answered him, ***And with your spirit, reminding yourselves by this reply that he who is here does nothing of his own power, nor are the offered gifts the work of human nature, but is it the grace of the Spirit present and hovering over all things which prepared that mystic sacrifice.*** [Emphasis added.]

What does this excerpt tell us? Well, the first thing we might notice is that the exchange took place during Holy Mass in St. John's day at essentially the same times that it does in the Ordinary Form of our Holy Mass as well.

Secondly, St. John makes it pretty clear that we're not simply exchanging pleasantries here; i.e., it's not as though Father is saying, "Greetings in Christ, everybody!"

To which the people politely reply, "Same to you, Big Guy!"

I'm being a little facetious, of course, but isn't this pretty much the way most people tend to view what is taking place? Some well-meaning folks have even taken to making a gesture that calls to mind the tossing of an imaginary beach ball when they say "and also with you." It's as if their body language is saying "right back atcha, Father!"

Now I don't say this to poke fun at these good people who are putting their all into the liturgy *as best they know how*. Enter liturgical instruction. Once the faithful realize what is *truly* taking place – once the new translation is well accepted for what it really

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means to say – I expect these kinds of gestures to just naturally disappear.

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

So if it's not a "*Holy how'd ya do,*" what exactly is going on here?

Well, as St. John Chrysostom's homily indicates, it's not so much a greeting at all; rather it's a *prayer of blessing* met with a *profession of faith*.

He tells us that when the bishop – or the priest who celebrates Holy Mass in his stead - says *The Lord be with you*, he is "praying for you the grace from the Lord," and most importantly as it relates to our reply, St. John says that when we respond, ***And with your spirit***, we are actually making a rather profound and very *timely* profession of faith.

We're acknowledging that the priest who stands before us is not just another member of the congregation. He not even just the "presider;" rather the priest who stands before us does so as one uniquely configured to Christ, present in this place to serve *in Persona Christi* - in the Person of Christ – and most certainly not by his own resources.

So when we say, ***And with your spirit***, we are actually professing our faith in the sacrament of Holy Orders and the mark that is bourn on the soul of the ordained minister who leads us.

I can assure you that some folks will hear this and say to themselves (and maybe even to you), "*Here we go again; it's that pre-Vatican II clericalism coming back to haunt us. Here we are 90 seconds into the Mass and already we have to tip our hat to Father and tell him how special he is. It's all about the hierarchy...*"

The truth, however, is just the opposite.

The response, ***And with your spirit***, is not just important for *what* it says, it also happens to be timely for *when we say it*. We're acknowledging that Holy Mass and the various parts therein are not really about Father Joe *personally* at all. It's not *his* Mass, it is *Christ's* Holy Mass.

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The liturgy according to the Vatican II document *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is first and foremost an action of the one High Priest - Jesus Christ - to whom the priest standing before us is configured, and it is in recognizing Christ who acts in a profound way through the sacred minister that we are moved to say, ***And with your spirit.***

And so this exchange – *The Lord be with you* / ***And with your spirit*** – is not an act of clericalism at all, in fact, it's a very tangible example of what St. John the Baptist said of himself; the priest must decrease so that the Lord Jesus Christ, the true High Priest, might increase.

In other words, when we say ***And with your spirit*** in response to *The Lord be with you* we are affirming that we have just received, not a priestly “Good Morning,” but rather a blessing imparted by the spirit of Christ at the hands of His ordained minister. And so we prepare our hearts and minds to see with the eyes of faith, imparted to us at Baptism, this very same spirit of Christ *in action* in the Sacrifice of the Mass as it is carried out in our midst, again, at the hands of His ordained minister.

This is why the Church understands that it is only proper for an ordained minister to offer in this way, “*Dominus vobiscum, The Lord be with you,*” because it is in fact an act of blessing that is reserved to those who are sacramentally configured to Christ through Holy Orders.

With all of this in mind, we should now be able to see why this exchange that takes place during the Introductory Rites is so much more than just a mere greeting, and why such a view is so very deficient. It should also be apparent to us how much rich theological significance can be at stake in just a hand full of words. Here we are, just mere moments into the Mass, and already we're getting a sense for the great treasure that was lost thanks to the poor translation that we've been using for these 40 years.

We're also getting a hint for just how much treasure remains to be recovered...

Hopefully this excites you as much as it does me. A *great* blessing is coming our way in this new translation. Embrace it, personally, and remind yourself that a tremendous gift is at hand.

Be excited; *you should be!*

I honestly believe that of all the bishops, priests, Directors of Religious Ed and others who are charged with preparing the way for the new Missal, the *only ones* who will be truly effective in that role are those who are keenly aware of the gift that is coming, know how important it is, and can honestly say they're excited about it.

That kind of passion is truly compelling, and the opposite, of course, is just as true.

If you are among those charged with paving the way for the new translation and it feels like a burden and a hassle and you're wondering what all of the bother is about - know this; you can dress it up with a smile all you want, but those with whom you interact will know how you really feel and ultimately you'll end up poisoning the attitudes of others.

If this describes you, don't despair. This simply means that you need to work very diligently to seek the grace you need in order to be *truly* receptive of the gift that is coming, so that your commitment to recovering a *sense of the sacred* in our Holy Mass might be sincere and contagious, igniting the passions of the people you're called to serve to the glory of God's Holy name.

Imagine – all of this and we've just gotten started!



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On April 28, 2010, Pope Benedict XVI spoke about the necessity of providing solid catechesis in the task of preparing both clergy and laity for the reception of the new English translation of the Roman Missal.

Salve Regina Publications, publisher of the internationally acclaimed *Harvesting the Fruit of Vatican II Faith Formation Series*, is pleased to present author Louie Verrecchio's contribution to this effort - *And with Your Spirit* - in which he focuses on the changes taking place in the people's parts of Holy Mass.

Written with an eye toward addressing the needs and concerns of pastors, Directors of Religious Education and others who are officially charged with paving the way for the Missal's reception, *And with Your Spirit* has valuable insights that will assist *every Catholic* who is committed to embracing the new translation – in the words of Pope Benedict - “as a springboard for a renewal and a deepening of Eucharistic devotion all over the English-speaking world.”

An excellent faith formation tool for use by individuals, or as a supplement to your parish's efforts to provide the “necessary liturgical instruction” that will open the door to “fully conscious and active participation on the part of all the faithful in the Sacred Liturgy.”

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