

Teaching Children About Changes in the Roman Missal

(For an official, downloadable version of the text of the new translation of the Missal, please go to the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:

<http://www.usccb.org/romanmissal/order-of-mass.pdf>)

Children and Change

While children can be profoundly affected by change in their lives, they are likely to deal better than adults will with the forthcoming changes in the words they hear and say at Mass. At first, they will have a period of adjustment, while they become comfortable with the different prayers and responses. They will falter and make mistakes, and their adjustment will take time. But with many repetitions, they will rediscover their spontaneous response at Mass.

Where Do Teachers and Parents Begin?

As all educators know, for the most part the simplest explanation is the best when helping children understand change. In the case of the new texts at Mass, teachers and parents should explain that Catholics the world over use the same book to pray. This book, called the Roman Missal, is always written first in Latin. Then this Latin book is translated by all the countries of the world into the language spoken in that country. In our case, that means English. The English version of the Missal that they are used to has been re-translated so that the words we pray at Mass are as close to the words in that Latin book as they can be. For older children, teachers can explain that a new document was published, *Liturgiam Authenticam*, that changed the way Catholics translate liturgical texts, and that this document's concern was that all our texts be translated as accurately as possible.

"...and with your spirit"

Although this change (from "And also with you," when the priest says, "The Lord be with you") may be the most awkward for many children, it is also one whose rationale will probably be the most easily grasped by them, especially those in schools and environments where some Spanish is spoken. The Latin response, "et cum spiritu tuo," means, literally, "and with your spirit." Children who perhaps have attended a Mass in Spanish may already be familiar with this response. For those who are hearing it for the first time, the explanation that "And with your spirit" *means* exactly what the Latin expression means, and so is a much closer translation, makes sense.

"Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Hosts"

Besides being closer to the Latin prayers, the prayers in our new translation are closer to the words in Scripture from which they are taken. Children can be told that ALL our prayers are rooted in Scripture and in the writings of the Church Fathers. (This is a good opportunity, if it has not happened already, to teach children about the Scriptural root of our Mass texts, as well as introduce them to the early Church Fathers—at an age-appropriate level.)

The present text for the first line of the *Sanctus* is translated as “Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might.” The phrase “power and might” is not a literal translation from the Latin, “*Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus Dominus Deus sabaoth.*” “*Sabaoth*” is a transliteration of the Hebrew *Tz’vaot* meaning “armies or hosts.” The revised version now reads “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts.” This expression is also closer to the rendering of Isaiah 6:3 found in the Douay-Rheims, King James, and New American translations of the Bible—so more referential to its Scriptural roots.

Other Noticeable Changes

In addition to the literal translation of the *Sanctus* and *et cum spiritu tuo*:

- The text “through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault” has been added to the *Confiteor*.
- There are word changes in the *Gloria* that are closer to the Latin text and Latin word order (syntax).
- When, in the Preface, the priest says, “Let us give thanks to the Lord Our God,” the response will be, “It is right and just.”
- Instead of “Let us proclaim the mystery of faith,” the priest will now simply say: “The mystery of faith.” The assembly will then acclaim one of newly translated acclamations. It should be noted that the familiar “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again” (formerly known as Memorial Acclamation A) will not be one of the approved acclamations.
- The revised response of the people to the “Behold the Lamb of God” is “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.”

Parents and teachers who would like to review the different prayers and responses with their students and children can find a complete text of the changes at <http://www.usccb.org/romanmissal/order-of-mass.pdf>. This is not approved for public, liturgical use until the first Sunday of Advent in 2011.

God’s Children: Learning the Liturgy for Life

Educators understand that there are many approaches to learning. Some are tactile, some involve memory, some involve working in groups, etc. The beauty of our liturgy is that it incorporates all aspects of human engagement: we use our body, mind, and spirit, alone and in community, when we pray the Mass. We use our ears to hear, our voices to speak and sing, our heads to bow, our bodies to stand, sit and kneel, our mouths to taste the Eucharistic species, our eyes to gaze at stained glass and candles, the presider, and our friends. In part, that is the meaning of full, active, and conscious participation, a liturgical goal for all of us but especially for children, who are absorbing this ritual as they pray and learn it, and making it part of themselves.

Children should understand that they share in the priesthood of Christ by virtue of their baptism (CCC 1546).

Undoubtedly, the new translation is more formal sounding. This will be less of a problem for children, in all likelihood, than for their parents. "Some people will not like the translation," said Cardinal Francis George, OMI, USCCB President, "but in the end it will be the text the Church uses for prayer." The issue is now closed, and the task at hand for those who deal with the well-being of children is to move forward positively, and to help their students and children do so as well.

Teachers and catechists can prepare children for some of these changes by explaining the reasons for them, by practicing them at school and at home, and by answering questions in a positive way. But ultimately, children will gradually become familiar with the new words in the same way they became familiar with the old: by repeating them with their schoolmates and with their parents on Sundays.

For More Information: Contact Tish Thornton at tthornton@rcdb.org, or visit OCP's website at <http://www.ocp.org>, which has many resources for celebrating Mass and other liturgies with children.