



Sacred Heart

Catholic Church

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Homily

Fr. Paul Ward

Saturday, Sept. 3 and Sunday, Sept. 4, 2011
23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, A
Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Imlay City

New Translations: The Collects and Readings

With the summer adventures drawing to a close, it's time for us to continue our series regarding the new translations of the Mass in English, which will come into effect starting on the first week of Advent.

Before I enter into this topic, I only wish to remind all the families to make sure their children are registered for Catechism *this week*. The education of children in the faith is and has always been one of the top priorities of the Church. Courses start very soon, so please do not delay.

We last finished discussing the Gloria. Today I only wish to provide some simple notes about the *collects* and *readings*, and next time we will begin looking at the Creed. There are no translation changes that affect the congregation here, so today I'll only provide some background on these important parts of the Mass, and provide strong encouragement so that we pay attention better to these important parts of the Mass.

The collects are the prayer that the priest sings alone, to which all answer, "Amen." The collect is the principal prayer of the Mass, a sort of climax; not that it is greater than the Our Father or the Eucharistic Prayer, but it is the main prayer for the spiritual theme specific to that mass. It is said just before the readings. There are two other prayers like it during the Mass, the offertory prayer or prayer over the gifts, and the postcommunio, or prayer after communion. All three are tailored to the day, be it a Sunday, a day of Advent or Christmas, Lent or Easter, or a day of a martyr, or a virgin, or a doctor, or other such, or a Mass

dedicated to the Eucharist, the Precious Blood, our Lady, the Sacred Heart, and so forth.

Up until now, all three of these prayers in English, at every Mass, were vastly, mind-bogglingly different from the Latin. All of these prayers have been very much improved. You will notice a higher grade of vocabulary, a more poetic tone, and a more complex sentence structure, as the prayer is in Latin.

The collect is said out loud, and is not a private prayer of the priest. “This prayer before the Epistle [or first reading, in the Paul VI Missal] is not merely a private prayer of the priest, but a liturgical one, that is, a public prayer which the celebrant recites in the name and by the commission, as well as according to the ordinance of, the Church, and with a special intention for the welfare of the whole Christian people.”^[1] The name draws, therefore, from this; for the priest, “as [the people’s] representative, gathers up and collects, so to say, their supplications and desires to present them before the God of holiness.”^[2] The priest collects in this way, but all are invited to *recollect* themselves in prayer at this moment.

Collects typically follow a pattern. First there is an invocation of God, sometimes under some title or another; second, there is an amplification about God regarding some quality or deed of his in salvation history; third, there is the petition; finally, there is a conclusion, and in this conclusion, the Holy Trinity is always brought to bear in some way. The Church is commanded to answer “Amen” to this priestly prayer, which means, “Let it be so,” or “So be it done!” It is a term of ancient tradition, found even in the Old Testament and used very often by our Lord Himself. By “Amen,” we affirm, we attest and we consent.

Then we have the readings from the Bible. As for the new translations, they are basically the same except for one tiny detail. The first and second reading conclude like usual, “The Word of the Lord,” to which we will continue to respond as always, “Thanks be to God.”

At the Gospel, here is where more attention is needed. The priest or deacon says, “The Lord be with you.” We must remember that, starting in Advent, the reply will be, “And with your spirit,” the significance of which was discussed already in a previous homily. Then when the priest or deacon says, “A reading from the holy Gospel according to John,” or whichever evangelist is read that day, we are accustomed to say, “Glory to you, Lord.” The new translations add an “O” in there, that is to say, “Glory to you, O Lord.” But many say it with the “O” now anyway, so that might not be too hard. And the conclusion is the same, that is, to the priest or deacon who concludes with “The Gospel of the Lord,” the congregation responds, “Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.” So for the readings, there are only two things to remember: to reply, “And with your spirit,” and to add the “O,” in “Glory to you, O Lord.”

As for the readings, one must read from the Bible, according to the lectionary approved by the Church in holy obedience, and it is a grave sin to intentionally change words, a popular liturgical abuse in our day.

It is up to each of us to let the Word of God penetrate in our hearts. That means we should pay attention to the readings, memorize what we can.

On this point, let me encourage parents to discipline their children, especially at the earliest ages when it is possible for them, to behave at Mass. Some parents let their children run around the pews and aisles during Mass, or talk, or play with toys, or color in books, or other such. Yes, some distractions help the smallest of infants be calm during Mass. But, dear parents, when do you hope to train your children to be attentive and prayerful at Mass? When they are fifteen? Good luck! Or when they are forty years old? And I do not intend to mortify those good parents whose babies have the occasional melt-down, for no one can control that. But what I am saying is, *as they grow into disciplinable age, do not omit discipline*, or sorry will you be for that sin of omission later on in this life, and certainly hereafter. Love enough to care about your children’s conduct, as I know so many of you do.

One of the greatest evils of our time is that so few Catholics attend Mass, and the few that do attend so poorly! There is enough grace at one Mass to make a person holy forever, but we are often so distracted, not paying attention, eager for the ordeal to end, not entering into the mysteries, not thinking about the words, not elevating any real prayer, so that when God is trying to teach us love and beauty and truth, we nonetheless carry on in our spiritual sterility in ignorance, distraction and sin. [Creed next week.]

As we prepare then for the new translations, let it be a real opportunity to penetrate into the mysteries of the Mass, and an occasion for spiritual renewal. For this grace we beg the intercession of our Lady, the Queen of Heaven, Mother of the Eucharist. Amen. ■

[1] Gühr, *The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass etc.*, Eng. tr., p. 409

[2] Ibid.