

We continue this week with Questions & Answers About Changes to the Mass.

**Why will this translation be so different?** For centuries Catholics prayed the Mass only in Latin. After the Second Vatican Council the liturgical texts were translated for the first time into the vernacular or language of the local people. The groups involved in the translation process worked under pressure to complete their job quickly. They translated using the principles of **dynamic equivalence**. This approach to translation attempts to convey the overall meaning of the original text (Latin) rather than giving a word-for-word translation. A word-for-word translation approach is known as **formal equivalence**. Now that we have had more than 40 years experience of using the dynamic equivalency texts in worship, we are able to see where the texts might be improved. The new English version, based on formal equivalency, is meant to be a better translation of the original Latin source texts.

**How should we speak to God?** In translating from one language to another, there is more than one way of saying the same thing. “Hey, pass the salt!” or “Would you pass me the salt, please?” are both basically saying the same thing and will likely result in you getting the salt shaker. But some ways of speaking are more appropriate for one context than another. We speak differently sitting with family around the kitchen table than we would at a formal dinner. Our current English translation has been criticized for being at times too “conversational.” The new translation is meant to provide a more courteous, reverential way of praying the liturgy. It is God to whom we are speaking, not someone sitting at the table next to us at a fast food restaurant.

**Where do the prayers come from?** Another reason for the changes in wording is to make more obvious the biblical origin of many of the prayers we using during Mass. A good example is found in the change from **And also with you** in response to the priest’s **The Lord be with you**. The wording **And with your spirit** more directly translates the original Latin *Et cum spiritu tuo*, but also it brings out that the Holy Spirit is at work in both priest and people (though in different ways) as we gather to celebrate the Eucharist. This expression recurs in various combinations throughout St. Paul’s letters to the early Christian communities he founded.