

PREPARING FOR THE NEW TRANSLATION EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER I (PART I)



Following the *Sanctus*, the Priest chooses one of the Eucharistic Prayers. For the vast majority of the history of the Roman Catholic Church, the Roman Canon—now known as Eucharistic Prayer 1—was the only Eucharistic Prayer used. We will begin our examination of the changes to the translations of the Eucharistic prayers with the Roman Canon. You will notice that the changes involved here are far more extensive than those involving the spoken parts of the faithful.

Current Translation	New Translation
<p><i>The priest, with hands extended, says:</i></p> <p>We come to you, Father, with praise and thanksgiving, through Jesus Christ your Son.</p> <p><i>He joins his hands and, making the sign of the cross once over both bread and chalice, says:</i></p> <p>Through him we ask you to accept and bless + these gifts we offer you in sacrifice.</p>	<p><i>The Priest, with hands extended, says:</i></p> <p>To you, therefore, most merciful Father, we make humble prayer and petition through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord:</p> <p><i>He joins his hands and says</i></p> <p>that you accept</p> <p><i>He makes the Sign of the Cross once over the bread and chalice together, saying:</i></p> <p>and bless + these gifts, these offerings, these holy and unblemished sacrifices,</p>

<p><i>With hands extended, he continues:</i></p> <p>We offer them for your holy catholic Church, watch over it, Lord, and guide it; grant it peace and unity throughout the world. We offer them for N. our Pope, for N. our bishop, and for all who hold and teach the catholic faith that comes to us from the apostles.</p>	<p><i>With hands extended, he continues:</i></p> <p>which we offer you firstly for your holy catholic Church. Be pleased to grant her peace, to guard, unite and govern her throughout the whole world, together with your servant N. our Pope and N. our Bishop, and all those who, holding to the truth, hand on the catholic and apostolic faith.</p>
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COMMENTARY:

Where to begin?! Simply looking at the two translations, it is easy to see that one is rather free with the liberties it took. Is it possible that the opening sentence in each of these translations has the exact same Latin text underlying it? Believe it or not, the answer is “Yes.” The New Translation is very close to being a literal translation, so notice what words are missing in our Current Translation: **most merciful, humble prayer and petition, our Lord**. The Current Translation strips the Roman Canon of some of the exalted language with respect to God and humbling language with respect to us. The return of these important descriptive words and phrases points to the fact that we are not speaking in street language or ordinary conversation. This is the language of the most sacred prayer of the Church, and it should sound somewhat different from dining room conversation.

In the blessing over the gifts, a more colorful and descriptive account is again given in the New Translation. It is worth repeating that the typical Latin text has not changed one letter, only the approach to translation has changed. The mundane **these gifts** from our Current Translation are now referred to as **these offerings, these holy and unblemished sacrifices**. The bread and wine offered are signs of our spiritual sacrifice and of Christ’s perfect sacrifice—the one perfect and unblemished sacrifice.

Fr. Joseph Jungmann, S.J., states, “The sacrifice which we offer up humbly to God, and which should, in the first instance, be our thanks and our tribute to our Creator and Father, will also draw down upon us God’s protection and grace precisely because it is a sacrifice and because it is this sacrifice” (*The Mass of the Roman Rite*, Vol. II, Christian Classics Inc.: Westminster, Maryland, 1992, p. 153). The sacrifice is offered first of all for God’s holy Catholic Church. Just as in the Prayer of the Faithful, the petition for the Church comes first. The Church is the bride of Christ; it is for her that our Lord shed His blood and died. She it is whom our Lord comes to meet in the wedding banquet of the Mass. Notice too that the New Translation returns to the traditional custom of referring to the Church as **she**. The Church is our mother and the perpetually virgin bride of Christ. Referring to the Church as “it” robs her of this personal character and leaves the doorway open to treating her not as she truly is by her divine constitution but as simply another human institution: manmade, flawed, bureaucratic, etc. When one attempts to harm the bride of Christ (whether it be one of her ministers or someone opposing her from the outside), it is a far graver offense than harming a manmade institution, and so it is fitting that the words **guard** and **govern** are included.

Finally, the phrase **holding to the truth** appears in the prayer for the bishop and all those who pass on the catholic and apostolic faith. The word **the truth** is used to translate the Latin word: *orthodoxi*, which might also be translated “orthodox”. Again there does not appear to be any substitute for this phrase in our Current Translation, but it is not a trivial line. “Catholic” means universal. The faith, which has been handed down to us by the apostles, is not simply a collection of personal opinions that are more-or-less professed by the members of the institutional church spread across the globe. Instead the faith is true, right, or “orthodox.” Its catholicity comes not merely from the fact that men and women from so many nations profess it, but more importantly because it is *meant* for all people. The truth it makes known is universal. The truth of the faith finds its solidity in its author, Christ, and its guardian, the Holy Spirit. Jesus says, “*I Am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me*” (John 14:6). It is the faith that unites us as one with God. It is through the faith that our intellects have a certain unity with God. The bishop has a grave responsibility to hold to the fullness of the truth of the faith and pass it on; this is an indispensable dimension of his ministry as head of the local church and builder of unity.

[To conserve space, the rubric governing the mention of auxiliary and coadjutor bishops during this section of Eucharistic Prayer I have been omitted here.]

Current Translation	New Translation
<p><i>Commemoration of the Living:</i> Remember, Lord, your people, especially those for whom we now pray, N. and N.</p> <p><i>He prays for them briefly with hands joined. Then, with hands extended, he continues:</i></p> <p>Remember all of us gathered here before you. You know how firmly we believe in you and dedicate ourselves to you. We offer you this sacrifice of praise for ourselves and those who are dear to us. We pray to you, our living and true God, for our well-being and redemption.</p>	<p><i>Commemoration of the Living.</i> Remember, Lord, your servants N. and N.</p> <p><i>The Priest joins his hands and prays briefly for those for whom he intends to pray. Then, with hands extended, he continues:</i></p> <p>and all gathered here, whose faith and devotion are known to you. For them, we offer you this sacrifice of praise or they offer it for themselves and all who are dear to them, for the redemption of their souls, in hope of health and well-being, and paying their homage to you, the eternal God, living and true.</p>

COMMENTARY:

The Current Translation once more looks like a loose paraphrase of the typical Latin text. This is the point in Eucharistic Prayer I where the priest is to silently mention the intention of the Mass if the intention should be a living member of the Church on earth.

The distinction between the ministerial priesthood and the priesthood of the baptized is clearer in the New Translation in this passage: **For them, we offer you this sacrifice of praise.** The priest offers the sacrifice of Christ the head—the sacrifice on Calvary—in the sacrament. The faithful, the Body of Christ, offer their own spiritual sacrifice in union with His, and those living for whom the sacrifice is offered are mentioned under the various manners in which they might stand in need of the sacrifice: redemption of their souls, or hope of health and well-being.

Finally, the New Translation does not shy away from the mention of the word **soul(s)** unlike the Current Translation.

