

PREPARING FOR THE NEW TRANSLATION

COMMUNION RITE (PART IV)



Current Translation	New Translation		
<p><i>The sign of communion is more complete when given under both kinds, since the sign of the Eucharistic meal appears more clearly. The intention of Christ that the new and eternal covenant be ratified in his blood is better expressed, as in the relation of the Eucharistic banquet to the heavenly banquet.</i> (GIRM, no. 240).</p> <p><i>If any are receiving in both kinds, the rite described elsewhere is to be followed</i></p> <p><i>When he presents the chalice, the priest or deacon says:</i> The blood of Christ.</p> <p><i>The communicant answers:</i> Amen and drinks it.</p> <p><i>The deacon and other ministers may receive communion from the chalice.</i> (GIRM, no. 242).</p> <p><i>While the Priest receives the Body of Christ, the Communion song is begun.</i></p>	<p><i>If any are present who are to receive Holy Communion under both kinds, the rite described in the proper place is to be followed.</i></p> <p><i>While the Priest is receiving the Body of Christ, the Communion Chant begins.</i></p>	<p><i>The vessels are cleansed</i> <i>by the priest or deacon or acolyte after the communion or after Mass, if possible at the side table.</i> (GIRM, no. 238).</p> <p><i>Meanwhile he says inaudibly:</i> Lord, may I receive these gifts in purity of heart. May they bring me healing and strength, now and for ever.</p> <p><i>Then the priest may return to the chair. A period of silence may now be observed, or a psalm or other canticle of praise may be sung.</i></p> <p><i>Then, standing at the chair or at the altar the priest sings or says:</i></p> <p>Let us pray. <i>Priest and people pray in silence for a while, unless a period of silence has already been observed. Then the priest extends his hands and sings or says the prayer after communion, at the end of which the people respond:</i> Amen.</p>	<p><i>When the distribution of Communion is over, the Priest or a Deacon or an acolyte purifies the paten over the chalice and also the chalice itself.</i></p> <p><i>While he carries out the purification, the Priest says quietly:</i> What has passed our lips as food, O Lord, may we possess in purity of heart, that what has been given to us in time may be our healing for eternity.</p> <p><i>Then the Priest may return to the chair. If appropriate, a sacred silence may be observed for a while, or a psalm or other canticle of praise or a hymn may be sung.</i></p> <p><i>Then, standing at the altar or at the chair and facing the people, with hands joined, the Priest says:</i> Let us pray. All pray in silence with the Priest for a while, unless silence has just been observed. Then the Priest, with hands extended, says the Prayer after Communion, at the end of which the people acclaim: Amen.</p>

COMMENTARY:

The Current Translation imports certain paragraphs from *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)* at this point. Nearly all of the liturgical laws and principles governing the Celebration of the Eucharist, the ministers and their proper roles, the furnishings and arrangement of the church, et al are found here. When the *Third Typical Edition of the Roman Missal* (in Latin) was promulgated in 2002, a revised *GIRM* accompanied it. This was translated into English in 2002 and has been in effect ever since. It will also be included in the New Translation of the *Roman Missal*.

Certain principles and instructions require explanations and elaboration. The rubrics or instructions found in the Order of Mass, which we are examining in these columns, are by their nature short and to the point, so that the priest can read what is to be done and do so immediately. The fact that certain instructions that were present in the Current Translation do not appear in the New Translation does NOT imply that they have been abrogated. For instance, that the Precious Blood may still be offered to the faithful even the New Translation does not give instructions for doing so at this point in the *Roman Missal*. The instructions governing the distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds are to be found in the *GIRM*, where more detailed instruction is possible.

At the beginning of the celebration of the Eucharist, we noticed how the New Translation has opted for the word “chant” in place of the Current Translation’s “song”. The same shift in language is observable here with reference to the “Communion chant” in place of “Communion song”. This is to be intoned as the priest is receiving the Body of Christ. According to the revised *GIRM*, in the dioceses of the United States there are four options for this chant, if sung: 1) the antiphon from the *Roman Missal* or the Psalm from the *Roman Gradual*; 2) the seasonal antiphon and Psalm of the *Simple Gradual*; 3) a song from another collections of psalms or antiphons approved by the Bishops’ Conference, or 4) a suitable song that expresses the nature of Holy Communion. If nothing is to be sung, the antiphon found in the Missal may be recited at this point.

At the conclusion of the distribution of Holy Communion, the revised *GIRM* instructs the priest to consume any remaining Precious Blood at the altar and to either consume the remaining hosts or place them in the tabernacle. The revised *GIRM* allows for the “purification” (and not “cleansing” which would involve soap or detergent) by the priest, deacon, or instituted acolyte at either the altar or at a “credence table”. It no longer states a preference. As to the manner of purifying the

vessels, the typical Latin edition has undergone no change: “purifying the paten over the chalice and also the chalice itself”. The New Translation simply translates what the Current Translation had kept obscure.

The prayer said by the one purifying the paten(s), chalice(s), and (perhaps) ciboria is noticeably different in the New Translation, but since it is a prayer to be said “inaudibly” the change in the translation could go unnoticed by most in the pews. The Current Translation makes this a prayer for only the one purifying the sacred vessels (I/me). The New Translation reminds us that the prayer is in the first person plural (we/us) and is offered on behalf of all who have communed and received the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ as spiritual food—a gift given in time with hoped for everlasting benefit.

The Rite of Communion ends with the option of a period of sacred silence in which the faithful are given the opportunity to meditate upon the mystery that they have received and entered into, to thank God for this great gift, and to rest in his presence. A communion meditation piece may alternatively be sung: a psalm, canticle of praise, or a hymn. The previous typical Latin edition of the *Roman Missal* did not mention “hymns” at this point, so this is an actual change. Perhaps it signals that this is an appropriate place for a hymn, where as at the entrance and at Holy Communion an antiphon from the *Roman Missal* or a Psalm would be preferred.

Finally, we reach the end of the Rite of Communion with the Post-Communion Prayer. In this occasion, the New Translation is not simply a more faithful rendering of a Latin text that has gone unchanged. The Current Translation, in this instance, is a literal translation maintaining the order of the text. The New Translation reveals changes to the Latin text: the altar is mentioned as the first option now and the chair as the second; the priest is instructed to be facing the people; and he is instructed to have his hands joined when he says, “Let us pray”. The re-ordering of altar before chair may signal a preference for the altar. Since the Post-Communion Prayer completes the Rite of Communion and the altar features so prominently in this rite, it is understandable why such a preference might be given. This prayer is also the conclusion of the prayer of the People of God in the Celebration of the Eucharist, and, for this reason, offering the prayer from the chair is still perfectly licit. If the priest does say the prayer at the altar and is facing the same direction as the congregation (*ad orientem* or “towards the East”), the rubric to face the people at this point and say, “Let us pray” is in keeping with the long liturgical tradition of the Church, since this prayer is not one solely of the priest but of the entire Church.

