



Are you in the know?

The Dialogues of the Mass – The Introductory Rites

Over the next few weeks, we will take a look at some of the changes to take place and present the biblical background and liturgical significance of the dialogues and responses of the Mass to help us appreciate more fully what we are saying. Both current and the new wording will be given.

The Sign of the Cross

Presider: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen

The first dialogue between priest and liturgical assembly is accompanied by the gesture of the sign of the cross that we all make as the priest announces that we are gathered in the name of the Trinity and everyone makes the sign of the cross. We do not come together because we are people who share the same ideals, or as gathering of friends or neighbors (though we may be), we are brought together as the Body of Christ, those baptized in the name of the Trinity. We gather under the sign of the cross, the mark of our redemption.

The word *Amen* comes from Hebrew and can be translated as “Yes,” or “So it is,” but perhaps “So be it” is better. In saying *Amen* we are doing more than *agreeing*, we are *committing* ourselves. So in responding *Amen* during the liturgy, we commit ourselves to what the priest has said or prayed for in the name of Christ. Thus, our *Amen* requires a personal commitment, from the heart, spoken or sung with full voice, as real and firm as putting our name on a contract.

St. Augustine (354-430) explained “Amen” to his congregation in North Africa by comparing it to their signature. Regarding God’s blessings requested in the priest’s prayers, he asks: “Do we ask God for all these things in vain? No! For you have knowingly subscribed to it by saying *Amen*. Your *Amen* ... is your signature, your approval, your assent.”

Amen is a constant refrain throughout the course of the liturgy. In response to all the prayers the presider prays in the name of all gathered, we say or sing *Amen* in affirmation. So *Amen* demands to be sung or spoken emphatically. That is why the new Order of Mass states that the people “acclaim”, not just “say” (and certainly not “mumble”!) *Amen* in response to the priest’s prayers (no. 9)

Open Greetings and Response

Current wording	New wording
<p>Presider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✠ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. ✠ The grace and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. ✠ The Lord be with you. 	<p>Presider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✠ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (2 Cor 13:13) ✠ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; 2 Thess 1:2; Phlm 3) ✠ The Lord be with you.
<p>People:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✠ And also with you. 	<p>People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✠ And with your spirit

When family members gather to celebrate a festive occasion, greetings abound. Once we have assembled for worship, the priest's liturgical greeting intensifies the Lord's presence and the assembly's unity that was formed during the entrance procession. After opening with the Sign of the Cross, the priest celebrant extends his hands in an inclusive gesture of welcome as he speaks a greeting drawn from wording found in the letters of St. Paul. The apostle took the customary expressions which was used to begin letter in the ancient world—an expression of good wishes for the recipient—and reshaped it to express a communication of divine life:

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all, ” is one of the clearest expressions of Trinitarian faith coming to us from the time of the apostles.

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” is an expression St. Paul frequently used at the beginning of his letters. We enjoy God's loving favor—grace and peace in abundance—as God's lavish gift in Jesus Christ, who himself was “full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14) and is our peace, the Lord of peace (2 Thess 3:16a).

The third form, “The Lord be with you” is the most familiar since it is used several times during the Eucharist. The greeting and response are used to mark out major stages of the celebration: before the Gospel, at the beginning of the Eucharistic prayer, and before the final blessing. The wording is very similar to St. Paul's greeting to the Thessalonians: “The Lord be with all of you.” (2 Thess 3:16b). Here the priest wishes us the closest possible union with the Lord Jesus who dwells with us and within us.

The idea of the Lord being with a person has a long history in the Old Testament. It expresses and evokes the presence of God's saving power, through the action of his Spirit. This awareness of God's active presence reaches its climax when the angel announces to Joseph that the child Mary will bear “will be called Emmanuel, a name which means God is with us” (cf. Matt 2:23).

As the presider speaks the greeting while extending his hands in an embracing way, he becomes a herald for God, someone who announces a wonderful message to us. We have heard it thousands of times before, but we need to hear it at the beginning of every Eucharist. The priest's greeting is more than a wish; it conveys the blessings that God gives us through these sacred words. And so we reply:

☞ *And with your spirit.* (see Gal 6:18; Phil 4:23; 2 Tim 4:22; Phlm 25)

This response echoes St. Paul's final greetings in several of his letters. He celebrated the fact that believers in Christ "live not according to the flesh but according to the spirit" (Rom 8:4). Thus, we "are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in [us]" (Rom 8:9). By our response to the priest's greeting, while parallels the priest's prayer for us to that the Holy Spirit may be at work in us, we pray in turn pray that the same Holy Spirit, given in a particular way at his ordination, will be at work in him now, as he leads us in worship.

The Collect

Presider ...through Christ our Lord.

People: Amen

The introductory rites of the Eucharist (entrance procession, greeting, Act of Penitence, *Kyrie, Gloria*) are brought to a conclusion by the presider praying the Opening Prayer or Collect. This prayer, as well as the Prayer over the Offerings, and the Prayer after Communion, often end with: "...through Christ our Lord." Jesus told his disciples: "Whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you" (Jn 16:23). The early followers of Jesus took this very seriously, for as St. Paul observed "however many are the promises of God, their "Yes" is in him; therefore, the Amen from us also goes through him to God for glory" (2 Cor 1:20). Paul's witness to praying in the name of Jesus Christ later shaped the endings of the three prayers by the priest at the Eucharist. These prayers are sung or spoken by him alone, but he prays them on behalf of the entire assembly. Our prayers are acceptable to God not because of our personal merit or lofty words, but because we make them in the name of Christ our Lord.

Are you in the know...you are now!



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