

28 Sunday A – 2011
Missal Talk #3
Divine Mercy

When I was a boy Mass was still in Latin, and when the priest said, “Dominus vobiscum” we replied “Et cum spiritu tuo.” Translated it means, “The Lord be with you,” and the response is, “ And with your spirit.” Of course my little friends and I discovered a joke, “What is the pope’s phone number? The answer is “Et cum spiri 2 – 2 - 0.” We thought that was hysterical. So much for the sense of humor in a bunch of pre-pubescent boys.”

Of all the changes the one I have heard the majority of people comment upon is this one. That the strict translation is not, “And also with you,” but “And with your spirit.” What is this all about? I will admit that it is very formal, and to be referring to one’s spirit is the language of the sacred. Still, it is a prayer that dates back to the earliest years of the church. I believe the priest asks that the “Lord be with you” no less than four times before entering into very important moments of the Mass. Your response of “And with your spirit” is you praying that the Lord uphold your priest. You ask this not because he is better than you. No, it is rather that, human though he may be, you are praying that in his priestly capacity as an embodiment of Jesus, who is wedded to his bride, the Church, the priest can, because of his consecration at ordination, be Christ for his body, the Church. St. Paul often uses the word “spirit” to refer to the core of a person’s emotional being, what we might call their heart. You are asking then that the Lord will shower his gifts of grace upon the spirit of the priest, so that he might be better able to help build you up into the one body of Christ. St. Paul bids farewell to the church of Galatia with the words, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.” And

again when he says “goodbye to his friend and disciple, St. Timothy he says, “The Lord be with your spirit.” I really think this change will be the hardest for people because we are so used to saying, “And also with you.” I know there will be a few weeks when I will see people clamp their hands over their mouths because they said the old response.

Relax; you are not going to hell. I e-mailed my friend Fr. Wilson last week. In England they implemented the changes a few weeks ago. He said it is going well except for this one response. It’s hard to remember. So we will just have to slow down.

Another change, and this one I like, is that we are returning to the triple confession of fault in the Confiteor. Remember” me a culpa, me a culpa, me a maxima culpa,” it is returning as” through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault.” We utter this humbling truth three times, as each of our sins is a rejection of the love of the Blessed Trinity. This prepares us for an awareness of the triple holy and then three times we beg for God’s mercy, “Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.” Again, as I said last week, this repetition moves us into the language of oratory and poetry so that we more easily think about what we are saying. Also, this particular phrase, even in Latin, is part of our culture. This past week I was listening to a Jimmy Buffet CD, yes I listen to other music besides church music, and low and behold in one of the songs was the line “me a culpa, me a culpa, me a maxima culpa.” It’s funny where you can run across references to Catholic prayers: Jimmy Buffet of Margaritaville fame – amazing.

I will look at just one more change and it is because someone asked me about it. The newly translated phrase in the Creed is “Consubstantial with the Father.” What does that mean? This is a tough one because we are trying to put language around the mystery

of the Blessed Trinity.” Christ is not simply one with the Father, as two different and separate beings joined together in love. The Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit share the same substance or essence. The word substance here is using its ancient philosophical meaning. The essence is what makes something what it is. Since God is one, if Christ is consubstantial with the Father, then he too is God and not a different God, but the same God. This refers to what Jesus meant when he said to the apostle Philip, who had asked him to “show us the Father.” Jesus said, “Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father; the Father and I are one.” The Father and I are consubstantial. So too with the Holy Spirit, all share the essence the substance of the godhead – all are consubstantial, and that’s the best I can do to delve into the mystery of the Trinity.

I know this is some language and words we are not used to using in everyday speech. However, I have been told that the majority of newspaper articles are written at a sixth or seventh grade reading level. Maybe it’s time to expand our vocabularies since we will be speaking to God. If you have any more questions call the pope at et cum spiri
2 – 2 – 0.