

## From Fr. Michael

*Dominus Vobiscum. Et cum spiritu tuo.*

For Catholics of a certain age, this exchange is very familiar. These are the Latin words of the greeting that is exchanged between the priest and the assembly several times during the Mass:

The Lord be with you. And with your spirit.

When the Second Vatican Council granted permission in the 1960s for the liturgy to be celebrated in the vernacular, Catholics around the world produced translations in their local languages. Those of you who are old enough to remember those days will recall that for some years, those translations were in flux. There was a time, shortly after the Council, when we said, in English, “The Lord be with you.” “And with your spirit.”

The process of translating the Mass into English took some time. As the years went by, some words were changed. Rather than saying, “And with your Spirit,” the official translation became: “And also with you.” We’ve been saying these words now for about forty years. They roll off the tongue automatically. The benefit of this is that it allows us to participate in the Mass easily, naturally, ritually. One downside may be that we can participate in the Mass without thinking about what we’re saying. All that is about to change.

You may have seen news reports in recent months about the fact that the English translation of the prayers of the Mass has been revised. This process of revision has been going on for many years. It has involved an international commission of theologians and linguists, Catholic bishops from throughout the English-speaking world, and the Vatican Congregation responsible for directing the Church’s liturgy.

English-speaking Catholics around the world will begin using the new translation on the First Sunday of Advent (November 27, 2011). Starting on that Sunday, we will no longer say, “And also with you.” Instead we will say “And with your spirit.” Many other words in the Mass will also change: the Penitential Rite, the Gloria, the Creed, the Eucharistic Prayers (including the Sanctus and the Memorial Acclamation), the words before Communion, the Dismissal – all of these will be altered in some way.

This change will certainly present some challenges. As I said, the prayers that we’ve been saying for 40 years now come automatically. We will need to retrain ourselves to say new words. This can, however, also be an opportunity for us to reflect more deeply on the Mass we celebrate – each time we speak those words, and also as we prepare to make the transition. We can use this time to engage in some very intentional catechesis (educational programming) that will help all of us to grow in our appreciation of the Church’s liturgy.

Here at Saint Bart’s, we have formed a Task Force for the Implementation of the New Roman Missal. The members of this group have been meeting for some time and have been working to educate themselves about the new Missal (the book of prayers for the Mass) and begin laying plans for how we can make the implementation at Saint Bartholomew an occasion for growth rather than an exercise in frustration. The Task Force members include: Jim Vogl (Task Force Chair), Richard Clarke (Director of Liturgy and Music), Mary Conklin, Dan Delmore (Chair of our Liturgy Commission), Jim DeShane (Director of Faith Formation), Dave Obermiller, Lynnette Savaloja, Liz Thornton, Lynn Volkenant (School Principal), Deacon Rick Witucki, and me.

In a few weeks, I’ll be talking a bit about the new Roman Missal in my preaching at Mass. Over the summer, we hope to offer some additional educational materials to you in a rather low-key manner so that you can learn more about what to expect. Then in the fall, we will offer some in-depth opportunities for education so you can be well-prepared for the change on November 27 and also more informed about the liturgy we celebrate.

Some folks have asked, “Why are we making these changes to the liturgy?” Here are just three points I’d offer in response to that question:

- Remember: the Mass is not changing. The Latin prayers are not changing. All that is changing is the English translation of those prayers.
- The new translation seeks to be a more literal – more formal – translation of the Latin. In doing so, it draws us closer to other Catholics around the world.
- The new translation makes the Scriptural references in our liturgy clearer. Our Mass is filled with words and images from Scripture but some of these are not readily apparent with our present translation.

There is much more to learn about this subject. You can be sure that we will be sharing lots of information with you in the coming months. In the meantime, if you’d like to learn more on your own, the best place to start is with the official website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. They’ve posted many resources online, including all of the new prayers (for the priest and the assembly) for the Ordinary of the Mass. You can find it at [www.usccb.org/romanmissal](http://www.usccb.org/romanmissal).