

Welcoming the New *Roman Missal*



What will we be saying differently at Mass? Preface Dialogue, Preface and Sanctus

The center and summit of the Mass is the Eucharistic Prayer, our great prayer of thanksgiving and sanctification (GIRM 78). Indeed, the Greek word for thanksgiving is *eucharistia*. The prayer is mainly recited by the priest as, in the name of the entire community, he addresses God the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit. How this prayer begins is evidence of its importance.

THE PREFACE DIALOGUE

The prayer begins with a dialogue between the people and the priest, who invites us to give thanks to God. “The Lord be with you / **And with your spirit**” is an exchange already experienced twice during the Mass. Next, the priest invites the people to “Lift up your hearts” (*sursum corda*) and they respond “**We lift them up to the Lord.**”

“Let us give thanks to the Lord our God” can be found in sources dating back to the first Christian communities. Indeed, it is found in nearly all sources except the East Syrian texts. In the new translation, we will respond “**It is right and just.**” This is an accurate translation from the Latin. Moreover, it is a natural complement to the line that follows: “It is truly right and just...” The priest reinforces what we have just said as he begins the preface.

THE PREFACE

In the preface (*praedicatio* – “speaking before”), the priest, “in the name of the entire holy people, glorifies God the Father and gives thanks for the whole work of salvation or for some special part of it that corresponds to the day, festivity or season” (GIRM 79a). The scholars of Vatican II restored the practice of having a rich variety of prefaces – some are proper to the prayer itself, but most have been composed for a particular liturgical season or day. They highlight a particular reason to be thanking God.

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THE SANCTUS

The Sanctus (“*holy*”) is one of the oldest congregational hymns of the Mass. It is taken from an ancient synagogue practice and was incorporated into Christian worship as early as the first century. It is not seen everywhere in Western practice until after the fifth century.

The first line of the *Holy, Holy, Holy* is from Isaiah 6:2-3. In a vision, the prophet sees God on a throne surrounded by his angels. In Hebrew, the term is *sabaoth* and implies that God has command over an army or “host” of angels. It is just one more indication of God’s power over all things. So, in the new translation, we will say “**Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts.**”

“Hosanna in the highest” quotes what the crowds said as Christ entered Jerusalem (Matt 21:9). “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” recalls those same crowds who originally were shouting out a verse from Psalm 118:26.

So let us be attentive to every word, as we offer God this whole great prayer of thanksgiving and praise. It is “truly right and just” that we should do so.

– Rita A. Thiron, Director of the Office of Worship for the Diocese of Lansing.

*Preface Dialogue, Preface and Sanctus

PRIEST: The Lord be with you.

PEOPLE: **And with your spirit.**

PRIEST: Lift up your hearts.

PEOPLE: We lift them up to the Lord.

PRIEST: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

PEOPLE: **It is right and just.**

PRIEST: **It is truly right and just**, our duty and salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Father most holy, through your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, your Word through whom you made all things, whom you sent as our Savior and Redeemer, incarnate by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin. Fulfilling your will and gaining for you a holy people, he stretched out his hands as he endured his Passion, so as to break the bonds of death and manifest the resurrection. And so, with the Angels and all the Saints we declare your glory, as with one voice we acclaim:

PEOPLE: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord **God of hosts.**

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

*Preface for Eucharistic Prayer II