

Transitioning to the new Roman Missal

Part 7 in a series (Prepared for St. James Cathedral, Seattle by Corinna Laughlin)

October 23, 2011

The Preface Dialogue is one of the most ancient parts of the Mass. In the Apostolic Tradition of Saint Hippolytus of Rome, dating from around 215, much of the liturgy of ordination of a bishop is quoted, including these familiar words: "The Lord be with you. All respond, And with your spirit! Let us lift up our hearts. They are turned to the Lord. Let us give thanks to the Lord! It is right and just!" (Quoted in Lucien Deiss, *The Springtime of the Liturgy*, p. 129-30).

The first part of the dialogue, as we have already seen (see *Part 2 of this series on the Cathedral website*), is rooted in Scripture, and appears four times in the liturgy today. The words "Lift up your hearts" have their roots in Scripture—Lawrence Johnson points out their similarity to Lamentations 3:41, "Let us reach out our hearts toward God in heaven." The last part of the dialogue, "It is right and just," a more literal translation of the Latin "Dignum et iustum est," is thought to be a response deriving from the Greek tradition, when it was "an acclamation of agreement." (Johnson, 79) The people's response is echoed at the beginning of the preface, which amplifies the theme: "It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks."

In the 1974 *Sacramentary*, the people's response was translated "It is right to give him thanks and praise" in order to express more clearly the meaning of "just," which has different connotations in English than in the Latin. In this case, "iustum" means "proper" rather than "fair," the meaning we most often assign to "just."

The Preface itself is a prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God for what he has done for us in Jesus. Each preface begins and ends in the same way. It is indeed "right and just" to give God thanks through Christ. And in giving thanks and praise to God, we do so in company with all the saints and angels. The central portion of each preface is richly varied (there are nearly 100 prefaces in the Roman Missal, to be used at different

PREFACE DIALOGUE

The Lord be with you.
And with your spirit.
Lift up your hearts.
We lift them up to the Lord.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right and just.

Texts of the Roman Missal, Third Edition, are copyright © 2010 by International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation (ICEL).

times, in celebrations of the seasons, saints, and sacraments). All of these prefaces say something about what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. The Prefaces of Ordinary Time are especially direct in their presentation of the heart of the Paschal Mystery, the saving life, death, and resurrection of Christ.



The Layman's Missal, 1962. The simple images and the straightforward, contemporary English translations of the texts of the Mass foreshadowed the renewal of the liturgy soon to come with the reforms of Vatican II.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE MASS IS CHANGING

The texts of the Mass, including the parts prayed by the priest and the people's responses, are changing. In just a few weeks, **on November 27**, we will begin using the new translation of the Roman Missal. This page is part of an ongoing series in the bulletin to help us understand the new texts and prepare to use them on the First Sunday of Advent. *Explore the whole series at www.stjames-cathedral.org.*

On the weekends of November 13 and 20, there will be short, intensive sessions focused on learning the new responses after all the Masses. Please participate! Visit the Cathedral's website for more details on these programs.