

## RETURN TO THE NEW ROMAN MISSAL THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST - PART II

Moving farther into the Eucharistic Prayer, the major changes in the New Roman Missal were found in the *Memorial Acclamation*—the *Mystery of Faith*. Instead of the previous invitation by the priest, *Let us proclaim the Mystery of Faith*, the revised, simple invitation *The Mystery of Faith* mirrors the many other simple, declarative statements found elsewhere in the Mass, e.g. *The Word of the Lord* and *The Body of Christ*. But the biggest changes were found in your responses, with one eliminated, two significantly altered, and one completely new. Probably the most familiar of the original acclamations, *Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again* was dropped for one simple reason: the other responses we had been using for over forty years were addressed to Jesus while this one was a statement, which is not what an “acclamation” should be. Our three remaining acclamations affirm our faith in the Lord who died and rose for us and who will return again one day.

Following the *Concluding Acclamation*—the *Great Amen*—the portion of the Liturgy of the Eucharist called the *Communion Rite* (which I explained previously in another series on the Liturgy) begins with the Lord’s Prayer. The scripturally significant changes we encountered here are found in the words of priest and people just before Communion. Instead of the former *This is the Lamb of God*, the priest now says **Behold** *the Lamb of God*. Why? Well, because that is what we hear John the Baptist exclaim in the Gospel of John as he sees Jesus approaching him for baptism. And rather than the previous invitation of **Happy** *are those who are called to his supper*, we now hear **Blessed** *are those called to the Supper of the Lamb*. Happy is one of those weak, ambiguous words that crept into the post-Vatican II English translation of the Mass and even into some very poor scripture translations. But in the Revised New American Bible translation of the Beatitudes in Matthew and Luke, Jesus uses **blessed**, not *happy*. Being a disciple of Jesus is about holiness—*blessedness*—not happiness! And in the Book of Revelation, the *supper*—or wedding feast—**of the Lamb** is a powerful and poetic image that finds an echo here.

Finally, in the Communion Rite, we found a significant change in the *Lord I am not worthy* response to the priest’s pre-communion invitation. The first change was again based on scripture: *Lord I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof*. This is the famous profession of faith of the Roman centurion who trusts in Jesus’ power to heal his servant without having to come to his home. For us, preparing to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, *under my roof* is an acknowledgement that communion is not just a matter of *receiving* Jesus, but of our need to have Jesus enter intimately into our lives, into our very souls. And so that word **soul** replaced *I* in the completion of our response: *Only say the word and my soul shall be healed*. The healing we all need goes beyond an egocentric surface, the *I*, to the very depths of our being where we enter into true communion with Jesus and with one another.

And perhaps this is a good time to point out the power of that beautiful *Lord I am not worthy* prayer. When any of us approach the table of the Lord to share in Jesus' Body and Blood, it's only right that we humbly acknowledge the reality of our unworthiness. However, possibly the most important word in that little prayer is *but!* Yes, none of us is truly worthy to be the recipient of such a great gift. *But* just one word from Jesus changes all that. It has long been held that saying that prayer before Communion sincerely, wholeheartedly, and with a deep desire to be forgiven IS forgiveness for all but the most serious sins. It is **not** the Penitential Rite that accomplishes that forgiveness because that small litany at the beginning of Mass is a **praise** of God's mercy, not a request for mercy. Although translated into English as *Lord have mercy*, the Greek original, *Kyrie Eleison*, would really be better translated as *Lord, you are merciful*. It's the *Lord I am not worthy* prayer before Communion that provides God's forgiveness for all of us and makes us *worthy* to share in the Supper of the Lamb.

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