

PREPARING FOR THE NEW TRANSLATION EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER I (PART III)



Current Translation	New Translation
<i>The words of the Lord in the following formulas should be spoken clearly and distinctly, as their meaning demands.</i>	<i>In the formulas that follow, the words of the Lord should be pronounced clearly and distinctly, as the nature of these words requires.</i>
The day before he suffered	On the day before he was to suffer ,
<i>He takes the bread and, raising it a little above the altar, continues:</i>	<i>The Priest takes the bread and, holding it slightly raised above the altar, continues:</i>
he took bread in his sacred hands	he took bread in his holy and venerable hands,
<i>He looks upward.</i>	<i>He raises his eyes.</i>
And looking up to heaven, to you his almighty Father, he gave you thanks and praise . He broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said :	and with eyes raised to heaven to you, O God , his almighty Father, giving you thanks he said the blessing , broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying :
<i>He bows slightly.</i>	<i>He bends slightly.</i>
Take this, all of you, and eat it: this is my body which will be given up for you.	TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND EAT OF IT, FOR THIS IS MY BODY, WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP FOR YOU .
<i>He shows the consecrated host to the people, places it on the paten, and genuflects in adoration.</i>	<i>He shows the consecrated host to the people, places it again on the paten, and genuflects in adoration.</i>

COMMENTARY:

The words of consecration are the most sacred words or part of the Eucharistic Prayer. Here the priest, acting in the person of Christ the Head, utters the words spoken by Jesus with the same intention that He had following His supreme command *Do this in memory of me*, and the substance of the bread and wine is changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, as the words of the prayer indicates. The Word of God has the power over nature and the power to bring into being, and it is this power which is at work through the ministry of the priest. The consecrated bread and wine are NOT symbols of the Body and Blood of Christ. The Eucharist really and sacramentally contains the Body and Blood of Christ. Believing that the consecrated bread and wine are *only* a sign or a symbol of Christ is a formal heresy, and those who come forward for Holy Communion believing this and yet saying Amen when the minister says “The Body (or Blood) of Christ” make liars of themselves before God Himself. St. Paul warned the Corinthians of such lack of reflection before receiving Holy Communion: *Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself* (1 Cor. 11: 27-29). This being said, our knowledge of this belief is not something that we detect by sense (tasting, seeing, touching) nor by comprehension, but by faith alone.

This point in the Eucharistic Prayer is the apex of our worship where the Christ’s sacrifice is presented and made present in sacramental form. The sacrifice of Christ’s Passion is the perfection of which the animal sacrifices of the Old Covenant were only a prefigurement and a sign: *Since the law has only a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of them, it can never make perfect those who come to worship by the same sacrifices that they offer continually each year.* (Heb. 10:1). Whereas the old sacrifices were only signs of what’s to come, that which Christ instituted replaced them is more complete and contains what it signifies: *Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him* (Jn. 6:57). This also reflects Christ’s love for us having taken our mortal flesh and become one with us, by this Sacrament He does not deprive us of His bodily presence. It is an effect of His friendship.

The fact that the Eucharist is a sacramental representation of Christ’s Passion may be seen in the fact that the words

“THIS IS MY BODY” are said first (Note: the words express our belief. THIS means what is seen, but it does not mean “this bread” because the substance—what it truly is—changes at this point), and the species are adored. Then separately and later the words “THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD” are spoken by the priest over the chalice then the contents of the chalice are adored. A body separated from its blood points to death; here what is signified is Christ’s triumphal death and resurrection.

From this point forward what has been consecrated must be treated as these words indicate. They are to be adored and treated as one would treat the most priceless treasure—the very Body and Blood of the God-Man Jesus Christ. This is why the Priest is instructed to genuflect at this point and why even the particles in the ciborium and the drops left in the chalice are to be consumed with the upmost care during the purification rite.

COMMENTARY:

The New Translation makes a few small changes at this point. In the instruction for the priest, the changes are cosmetic. The first spoken words of the priest in this part change slightly with the insertion of the word “**On**” and “**was to suffer**” replacing “**suffered**”. The use of the passive voice “**was to suffer**” denotes a greater sense of providence in the event of Christ’s Passion than does “**suffered**”, which simply states an historical fact.

The Current Translation demonstrates its inclination for shorter choppy sentences in the “institution narrative” that follows, which explains the variation from the New Translation. Presumably the Current Translation’s use of the

phrase “**and praise**” at this point was deemed as a dynamic equivalent to **he said the blessing**, which appears in the New Translation. It is difficult to see how “**and praise**” is more easily understood than “**he said the blessing**,” but that could indicate that the New Translation is much more accessible than some of its critics have tried to argue.

Finally, the word “**for**” (which translates the Latin word *enim*) appears in the New Translation among the words of consecration. According to St. Thomas Aquinas, this word is not an essential part of the words of consecration but its use is a custom of the Roman Church, who derived it from Peter the Apostle on account of the sequence of words preceding the consecration. The preposition “**for**” may have several meanings; here the meaning corresponds to the word “because.” “Take this all of you and eat it, **for/ because THIS IS MY BODY...**” He gives commands the disciples to eat of his flesh because as He has instructed them earlier, *I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world* (Jn. 6:51).

The meaning of the text of the consecration has not changed but the inclusion of this preposition will perhaps call to mind the connection between the celebration of the Eucharist, the giving of eternal life, and Christ’s giving of his flesh and blood so that we may possess this life.

The consecration of the contents of the chalice involves a change in translation of a delicate nature, which merits a significant amount of space, and it is to this which we will next turn our attention.

