

PREPARING FOR THE NEW TRANSLATION

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER I (PART V)



Current Translation	New Translation
<p><i>Then, with hands extended, the priest says:</i></p> <p>Father, we celebrate the memory of Christ, your Son. We, your people and your ministers, recall his passion, his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into glory; and from the many gifts you have given us we offer to you, God of glory and majesty, this holy and perfect sacrifice: the bread of life and the cup of eternal salvation.</p>	<p><i>Then the Priest, with hands extended, says:</i></p> <p>Therefore, O Lord, as we celebrate the memorial of the blessed Passion, the Resurrection from the dead, and the glorious Ascension into heaven of Christ, your Son, our Lord, we, your servants and your holy people, offer to your glorious majesty from the gifts that you have given us, this pure victim, this holy victim, this spotless victim, the holy Bread of eternal life and the Chalice of everlasting salvation.</p>

We have the audacity to believe that we can celebrate the Eucharist now *because* of what Christ accomplished in the Paschal Mystery (Christ’s Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension) and His command to **DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME**. The recalling of the Paschal Mystery happens *as* the **pure victim** is being offered to the Father and not as a separate event. The “**Therefore**” also pushes the historical event into the present—our own day. It is possible and happens only because it has been commanded (DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME) by Christ, who alone possesses the Divine power to make it possible.

In the Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC), the council fathers called for the simplification of rites “unencumbered by useless repetition” (SC 34). This reform, however, took place with the typical texts (Latin texts) and called for no further editing by translators. The Current Translation omits the entire mention of **victim** at this point and in so doing obscures the belief that Christ perfectly fulfills what the animal victims of the Old Testament sacrifices only foreshadowed. In Hebrew, repeating something three times is a way of expressing the superlative (e.g. Holy, Holy, Holy means The Holiest One). In repeating **victim** three times here is a linguistic way of indicating the perfect nature of our offering, the Paschal Lamb, who is Christ the Lord.

COMMENTARY:

In the New Translation, many of the modifiers found in the Latin official texts that were omitted for some reason in the Current Translation appear in the New Translation:

blessed, glorious, glorious majesty, eternal, and everlasting. The return of these modifiers and the replacing of **cup** with **chalice** signify that this is not simply a pedestrian affair. The elevated language should reflect the sacred nature of this greatest action of worship.

The Current Translation reveals that it is a paraphrase of the official text at this point. It breaks up this one long sentence in the Latin into smaller parts, and in doing so it opens itself up to possible false interpretations. The Current Translation might lead some to think that we are simply thinking about an historic event and *then* offering gifts to God, as if the two were only incidentally following one another. In the New Translation, the word “**Therefore**” reminds us that what follows is essentially linked with what came before both in the text and historically: the institution narrative that (**THIS IS MY BODY...**).

Previously, we noted the distinction between “**eternal**” and “**everlasting**” namely that something **everlasting** can have a beginning (e.g. the human soul), but only that which is Divine is **eternal**. The life spoken of here is Divine life, which is uncreated and therefore **eternal**. Salvation, however, is an act in time of God’s power with never-ending effects. From the perspective of men and women, participation in the life of God is an offer of everlasting life, because they have not always shared it while from the perspective of God this life is His very being and transcends time itself. While the Current Translation’s use of **bread of life** calls to mind the Bread of Life discourse in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John where Jesus says, “I am the bread of life” (cf. Jn. 6:35, 48, 51), the New Translation is a literal translation of the Latin text, which succinctly summarizes Jn. 6:51: *I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I give is my flesh for the life of the world.* If Jesus gives us His life, He gives us eternal life for that is the life of His Personhood, which is Divine.

Current Translation	New Translation
Look with favor on these offerings and accept them as once you accepted the gifts of your servant Abel, the sacrifice of Abraham, our father in faith, and the bread and wine offered by your priest Melchizedek.	Be pleased to look upon these offerings with a serene and kindly countenance , and to accept them, as once you were pleased to accept the gifts of your servant Abel the just , the sacrifice of Abraham, our father in faith, and the offering of your high priest Melchizedek, a holy sacrifice, a spotless victim.

COMMENTARY:

At this point in the Eucharistic Prayer, we continue to reference the offering to God of the perfect oblation of His Son and the spiritual sacrifice of ourselves in union with Christ our head. The New Translation again restores a more fitting language even if the meaning is the same. **A pleasant and kindly countenance**, mentioned in the New Translation, is an anthropomorphism (attributing to God human qualities) in which we ask that the appearance of his face would reveal that kind and pleasant acceptance of the offering. In reference to the Old Testament figures mentioned immediately following (Abel, Abraham, and Melchizedek) it is worth noting that Cain (Abel’s brother) is described as having a “fallen countenance” (Gen. 4:5) in older English translations of the Bible when his sacrifice was not accepted. Even in modern translations God is said to have looked with regard or favor upon Abel and his offering.

Abel is described as “**the just**” in the New Translation, for the just renders unto others what is their due. Abel sacrifices the first of his flock (the best) to God; it is the first reli-

gious act of attempting to render to God something of the goodness that He has freely bestowed upon us. It is the first sacrifice accepted by God in the Bible. Religion, it may be said, is a virtue related to justice. Unlike justice, however, we are incapable on our own of fully giving God all that is owed to Him. Abel’s offering of the first of his flock and his succumbing to the hatred of his brother foreshadows Jesus, who is the Lamb of God (Jn. 1:29, 36), who suffers death at the hands of His own people, and whose death becomes a sacrifice of redemption. He is the perfect, spotless sacrifice of which all Old Testament sacrifices were only prefigurements. Abraham is the father of faith (Rom. 4:12, 16), who was willing to sacrifice his only beloved son (Gen. 22:2), but received him back alive (Heb. 11:19). Christ was obedient unto death and was raised from the dead. Finally Melchizedek is the mysterious priest and king of Salem (Gen. 14:18-20; Ps. 109 [110]:4), of unknown origin who appears on the scene to offer sacrifice to God after Abraham defeats the surrounding kings. While it is true that Melchizedek offered bread and wine, as the Current Translation states, the Latin typical edition and the New Translation rightly point out that these are understood to be “bloodless sacrifices” pointing to the sacrifice of the New Covenant.

In the offering of bread and wine the wheat and the grapes have been sacrificed, in a sense, to make these gifts. Our eyes do not see the blood of Christ on the altar the way the blood of the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament was seen, yet they signify that full gift of self, which Christ made of himself and to which we unite ourselves. Commenting on this passage from Eucharistic Prayer I (the Roman Canon), the influential liturgist Joseph A. Jungmann, S.J. noted, “That prayer of ours will be fulfilled if the oblation proceeds from an intention pure as theirs, and if the temper of our own hearts accords in some measure with the incomparable holiness of our sacrifice” (*The Mass of the Roman Rite*, Vol. II, Christian Classics Inc.: Westminster, Maryland, 1992, p.229).

