

## RETURN TO THE NEW ROMAN MISSAL THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST – PART I

The **Liturgy of the Eucharist** begins with the *Preparation of the Table and Gifts* which, before Vatican II was commonly known as the *Offertory*, a word that is no longer used. The good news for you was that the new translations introduced in 2012 for this second part of the Mass provided more of a challenge for presiders than for the assembly, with only a few words added or changed here and there in your responses. Many of those changes though, large or small, involve some significant symbolism or poetry, sometimes based on a precise translation of the original Latin and in other cases flowing from a desire for consistency throughout the prayers. It's worthwhile to take a look at all of those.

The great *Eucharistic Prayer* begins with a threefold exchange between the priest and the people called the *Preface dialogue*. The priest's side of this wasn't altered, but two of the assembly's responses were. By now – at least for those who come to mass more often than Christmas, Easter or funerals – *And with your spirit* is second nature in response to *The Lord be with you*. But the response to *Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God* was changed to the very simple and strong *It is right and just*. This new wording was meant to accomplish three things: it is a more precise translation of the Latin; it's a simple, declarative affirmation that avoids an unnecessary repetition of the priest's invitation; and it eliminated the inappropriate masculine pronoun for God – *It is right to give him thanks and praise*.

But there is also something wonderful that this last response of the *Preface dialogue* accomplished. In the past, after this exchange of invitation and response between priest and people, the priest would launch into the Preface in a way that made it seem as if there hadn't been this powerful dialogue drawing all of us into the great prayer of thanksgiving. After the response *It is right to give him thanks and praise*, every Preface began with the words *Father, all-powerful and ever-living God, we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks....* Now, after your response of *It is right and just*, every Preface begins with the words *It is truly right and just* – a clear acknowledgement that the priest has actually heard what you just said and is including everyone in the prayer that he alone speaks but that **all** of us offer to God as one community of faith.

Moving from the Preface into the *Holy, Holy* there was just one small change. Instead of *Lord God of power and might*, we now say *Lord God of hosts*. This reflects, as accurately as possible, a somewhat untranslatable Hebrew word that was retained in the original Latin text: *Sabaoth*. But, as with so many of the other changes we encountered in the New Roman Missal, this one also has theological and scriptural significance. The beginning of the *Holy, Holy* derives from a passage in the book of the prophet Isaiah, a vision of God's power and glory. In that passage, it's not particular attributes of God – power and glory – that are being emphasized, but rather God's dominion over all

creation, even those dimensions of creation invisible to us: the *hosts* of heaven—the angels and saints as well as the cherubim and seraphim, powers and dominions whose identities are obscure but who are frequently included in the conclusion of many prefaces. In a very real sense, we are joining our praise of God with the praise of all the powers of heaven. An appropriate description of what's happening here would be that much abused and overused word, “awesome!”

Fr. Bob