

# The Deacon's Corner By Deacon Ron Desmarais

**Priest: "The Lord be with you." People: "And with your Spirit."**

As you know we will soon be making the transition to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition of the Roman Missal or the GIRM (General Instruction on the Roman Missal). Cardinal Francis George of Washington, DC sings the praises of the new missal while Bishop Donald Trautman of Erie, PA thinks it is "archaic" and "just clumsy language." Maybe there is a little of both. Yes, there are changes we are going to stumble over, there are words we are not familiar with, but that is not necessarily a bad thing.

One of the changes to the missal is something we are all familiar with and that is the response, "And also with you." This will change to "And with your Spirit." For some of us pre-Vatican II Catholics we remember this very well only we remember the Latin "*et cum spiritu tuo*" or "and with your spirit or and the spirit be with you" This has been the normal response in Spanish, French, and German for 40 years. I'm just sorry that we don't use the Latin version a little more often in the Mass. There is just something to keeping a little of our Latin heritage going. I would not want the whole Mass in Latin, but enough to remind us of our roots. I like using the Kyrie Eleison which comes to us from when the Mass was in Greek for the 1<sup>st</sup> 300 years.

Some may ask, "What's wrong with the old way?" There is nothing wrong with the old way it just doesn't go far enough to express the true meaning of the response. This expression is not just a greeting with a response there is more to it than that. Would we say to someone, "The Lord be with you." And respond with, "And back at ya." Not in the Mass where we are offering praise and thanksgiving to God and not on the street where it would be considered rude.

So why are we going back to the Latin Mass you may ask? Well, we aren't we are going back to scripture the Word of God. St. Paul in uses the phrase to end his letters, "*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit*" (Gal 6:18, Phlm 1:25, and Phil 4:23) "*The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with all of you.*" (2 Tim 4:22). You can see this was a greeting used very early in the church.

When the priest says, "The Lord be with you" and we respond, "And with your Spirit" we are praying to God to send His Holy Spirit upon the priest that he may truly act in "persona Christi" *in the person of Christ* as he celebrates the Mass. This is a response that is offered and given in the expectation that the priest will fulfill his commission to truly offer us the Body and Blood of Our Lord not through his hands, but through the Hands of Christ. See the difference?

St. John Chrysostom, honored in both the Eastern Orthodox churches and in the Roman Rite churches held that the congregation's response was an **implicit profession of faith in the power of the sacrament of Holy Orders.**

*"If the Holy Spirit were not in this your common father and teacher, you would not, just now, when he ascended this holy chair and wished you all peace, have cried out with one accord, 'And with your spirit.'*

*Thus you cry out to him, not only when he ascends his throne and when he speaks to you and prays for you, but also when he stands at this holy altar to offer the sacrifice. He does not touch that which lies on the altar before wishing you the grace of our Lord, and before you have replied to him, 'And with your spirit.' By this cry, you are reminded that he who stands at the altar does nothing, and that the gifts that repose there are not the merits of*

*a man; but that the grace of the Holy Spirit is present and, descending on all, accomplishes this mysterious sacrifice. We indeed see a man, but it is God who acts through him. Nothing human takes place at this holy altar."*

Wow! Those are powerful words. No wonder St. John Chrysostom is called "The Golden Mouth".

*"The Lord be with you, and with your Spirit."*

Do you realize that we express this address and response five times during the Mass? We say it at the beginning of the Mass after the sign of the cross. How better to greet the celebrant and the people before we begin our worship then to ask God to send down his Spirit upon us all.

The second time we hear and respond is at the introduction to the Gospel. We stand to hear the Word of God proclaimed by the priest or deacon. He calls on the Lord to open our hearts, our minds, and our ears to hear his Holy Words. We respond with a prayer to have the Holy Spirit aid the minister in proclaiming His words.

The third time we hear the greeting and response is just prior to the offertory. Here we the people pray that the Lord will manifest His Spirit through the priest, who as St. John Chrysostom tells us the man at the altar can do nothing, but through Grace of the Spirit accomplish the mysterious sacrifice.

The fourth time we hear and respond is at the Sign of Peace. The priest offers us Christ's peace and we ask the Lord to bring it to him as well. Then the deacon calls all of us to share that peace with one another.

The fifth and final time we greet and respond is at the conclusion of the Mass. Just as the priest greeted us at the beginning of the

Mass so he concludes the Mass. At the beginning of Mass we receive the Holy Spirit to aid and assist us in our praise and worship of God. Now at the end of Mass the priest offers us a peace that we can take with us when we leave church. A Spirit that will dwell within us, gives us peace, and helps us as we return to the world that lies outside the doors. When the Angel Gabriel greeted Mary, he said, "Hail Mary full of Grace." The Holy Spirit wants to fill us to the brim with His Graces just as Mary was full of the Grace He gave her. Isn't that awesome? How can we not be overjoyed with the blessing that God offers us, both in the Mass and in our daily lives?

Five times we use this greeting and response. Don't you think that five times during the Mass would tell us that this is not just an ordinary greeting? God wants us filled with His Grace, to allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives, from our baptism to our death God wants to be with us. What more could we ask for? How can we take this offering of the Holy Spirit between the priest and us so lightly?

So when the priest says, "The Lord be with you" and we respond, "And with your Spirit" Maybe you won't think about how it has changed, but embrace it for what it is truly expressing.