

Roman Missal, 3rd Edition

Going deeper into the text 1

AND WITH YOUR SPIRIT

The dialogue, therefore, is not a simple greeting – the liturgical equivalent of a mutual handshake. It is, rather, a recognition of the presence and action of the Spirit at each stage of the Mass. The context for this is set in the opening and closing dialogues: the assembly gathers because the Spirit has brought it together, and has created unity out of our human diversity by drawing us into the Body of Christ; the assembly goes forth from the Church back to the world in the power of the Spirit. As the Gospel is proclaimed, Christ himself speaks through the presence of his Spirit in the minister and his voice is recognised because the same Spirit is present in the assembly. As the bishop or priest addresses the congregation at the start of the Eucharistic Prayer, the response ‘And with your spirit’ is at one and the same time a recognition of the gift to the community of his ordained ministry, and an acknowledgement of our liturgical dependence upon the action and power of the Holy Spirit.

6. Pastoral Reflection

Q *How do I recognise the presence of the Lord at Mass?
How does this help me participate more deeply?*

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1. Overview of Change

	1973 Order of Mass	Latin Ordo Missae	2011 Order of Mass
Introductory Greeting, Before Gospel, Preface Dialogue, Final Dismissal	The Lord be with you. And also with you.	Dominus vobiscum. Et cum spiritu tuo	The Lord be with you. And with your spirit.
Sign of Peace	The peace of the Lord be with you always. And also with you.	Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum. Et cum spiritu tuo.	The peace of the Lord be with you always. And with your spirit.

2. Its place in the Mass

As the above grid shows, the congregational response occurs at five places in the Liturgy. These are all key points in the Eucharist, and the inclusion of the greeting and response at each of them speaks eloquently about the nature of the gathered assembly, and of the ministry performed in and for it. The parallel greetings at the opening and conclusion mark the gathering of a diverse group of individuals into the liturgical assembly in the first instance, and then the sending out of that assembly to the world. The Sign of Peace, similarly, speaks of the fundamental nature of the liturgical Assembly: Christ's presence in it is manifested in the image it presents of a broken humanity reconciled in His Body, the Church. The two other occurrences are likewise linked to the presence of Christ; that is, in the proclaimed Gospel, in the ordained ministers who proclaim the Gospel and preside at the Eucharist, and in the Body and Blood of the Lord. On each occurrence the greeting and response is simultaneously a call to attention and an entrance into the liturgical action.

3. Scriptural Foundations & Resonances

The Apostle Paul used the expression, 'With your spirit,' in the closing greeting of a number of his letters. For example, he concludes the letter to the Galatians with the words, 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be

with your spirit, brethren. Amen.' (Galatians 6:18. Other close parallels are Philippians 4:23 and Philemon 1:25). In the second letter to Timothy we find a variant of this greeting that is closer to the one found in our liturgy: 'The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.' (2 Tim 4:22) The word 'spirit' used in this context can carry a range of meanings in St. Paul's writings, but the general understanding would be that here he is using a semitic turn of phrase to mean, quite simply, 'with you.' That interpretative approach lay behind the 1974 English translation, which rendered 'et cum spiritu tuo' as 'and also with you.' However, whilst the phrase clearly carries New Testament resonances, the question has to be asked as to whether it conveys further possible meanings – beyond the straightforward 'and also with you' - when spoken in a liturgical setting. To take this further we need to turn to the manner in which the Fathers of the Church spoke of this phrase.

4. Historical Background

The exchange literally translated as 'The Lord be with you – and with your spirit' occurs in many of the ancient liturgies of both the Western and eastern Churches. In that liturgical context, the expression, 'et cum spiritu tuo,' was long understood to have a fuller meaning than simply a congregational mirroring of the minister's 'Dominus vobiscum.' Instead, it was held to look beyond the minister himself, to the Holy Spirit who was present in him and without whom the liturgical action could not take place. St. John Chrysostom drew this meaning out in a sermon for Pentecost, in which he spoke of the dialogue that took place before the Eucharistic prayer:

'...you answer him, "and to your Spirit", reminding yourselves by these words that the man who is present does nothing, and that the gifts set before you are not achievements of human nature, but that it is the Spirit's grace, present and descending on all, that prepares that mystical sacrifice.'



5. The Meaning of the Text Today