

# A Christmas Time Welcome!

Dear

On this solemnity of the birth of Christ, I wish you on behalf of the entire parish, a blessed Christmas. In the waters of Baptism, Christ was birthed into our very hearts. This divine presence is why we gather for the Mass, for Eucharist.

For more than a decade, the English translations of our prayers and responses have been undergoing a revision. This past November 27, 2011, the First Sunday of Advent, we began using the revised prayers and responses. In your pew is a prayer card that contains your responses. Please use these cards to help in your participation in the liturgy. Even though the card has the texts, I would like to give some background to the changes and then provide a few samples of the changes.

For over 40 years we have been using an English translation that has served us well. However, two things happened that provided for a revision to the English translation. First, Pope John Paul II added more saints to the liturgical calendar. Prayers for these saints were included in the revision of the book we call *The Roman Missal*. This book contains all of the prayers for Masses on Sundays, weekdays, and feast days. The second was the publication of new directives on translation from the Holy See. All of our liturgical books are published in the official language of the Church: Latin. Thus, all the English-speaking Bishops needed to oversee the translation of the text into English. The Holy See wanted translators to translate closer to the Latin vocabulary and structure of phrases. Also, the Holy See wanted the texts we pray to be more sacred in tone. Finally, the texts should more closely match the scriptural references. Many of our responses during Mass are from scripture.

Here are a few samples of the changes.

## GLORIA

During Advent we do not sing the Gloria, with the exception of the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Tonight we begin singing the new words of this ancient text from the Gospel according to Luke. The text of the opening refrain is closer to the scriptural words in the revised text we sing this evening/today. “Glory to God in the highest, / and on earth peace to people of good will.” This text now matches the text of the angels to the shepherds in the Gospel according to Luke.

## THE CREED

We used to say, “We believe” for the Creed. With these revisions we now state, “I believe.” This is our personal assent to the basic Creed of our beliefs. Saying “I believe” in the context of the

Church community is not private, but a communal and personal assent to belief.

There is a term in the Creed that will seem unfamiliar to you. This term is “consubstantial.” In the Creed we proclaim that Christ Jesus is “begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father.” We used to say, “one in Being with the Father.” This was not inaccurate; rather, the term “consubstantial” was the theological and philosophical term used in the Creed. Originally, the term was Greek, and later the early theologian, Tertullian, translated it into Latin as *consubstantialis*. In English we would say, “consubstantial.” This is a precise theological word, that means one substance, or one essence. We believe that the three persons of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit share in the same substance and essence of divinity.

## INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Our response to the Invitation to Communion is as follows:

“Lord, I am not worthy / that you should enter under my roof, / but only say the word / and my soul shall be healed.”

This text is from scripture: Matthew 8:8. The Roman Centurion asks Jesus to heal his paralyzed servant. Jesus then insists on going back to the Centurion’s house to heal his servant. However, the Centurion replies with the above text. As mentioned before, the translation in general, and here in particular, is closer to the text from scripture.

## AND WITH YOUR SPIRIT

Tonight, our responses to “The Lord be with you” is “And with your spirit.” This is a literal translation from the Latin text in *The Roman Missal*.

I hope this helps with some of the changes you will experience tonight/today. These changes in our text can be a renewal in words that we can take for granted. As Christ grows in our hearts, so too our hearing and our living the words we proclaim can help us to grow in the holiness to which Christ calls us.

On this Christmas night/day, may we listen to Christ present in our hearts and present through the words of liturgy so that we may grow deeper in the love of God.

In Christ’s Peace,