



“Through My Most Grievous Fault”

EDWARD SRI

On the First Sunday of Advent, 2011, the new translation of the Mass will go into effect in U.S. dioceses. The structure of the Mass will be the same, but some of the responses by the people will change. This is the second of a series of articles on those changes and the reasons behind them.

In the prayer known as the *Confiteor* (which begins, "I confess to almighty God..."), the new translation of the Mass helps us cultivate a more humble, sorrowful attitude toward God as we confess our sins and accept responsibility for our wrong actions. Instead of simply saying that I have sinned "through my own fault," as we have done in the old translation, we will repeat our sorrow three times while striking our breasts in a sign of repentance, saying: *"I have sinned through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault."*

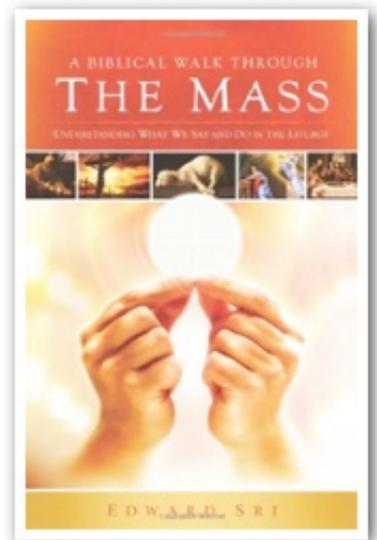
But some people might wonder, "Why do we have to repeat this three times? This seems to be an awkward way of talking to God. Wasn't the previous translation simpler? And besides, this change will make Mass 2.5 seconds longer!"

Actually, the threefold repetition reflects human communication more than we may realize. And if we understand the meaning of this change, the extra 2.5 seconds will be well worth our while!

When we are at fault over something small, we might simply say to the person whom we have wronged, "I'm sorry." If, for example, I accidentally step on your toe, I might say, "excuse me." If I bump into you while waiting in a line, I might say a quick, "sorry" or "pardon me."

But in a deep, personal relationship, things are different. If I have done something to hurt my wife, I don't simply say, "Excuse me, honey!" or "Oh, sorry about that!" That would not go over well in a marriage! When we have done something wrong to someone we love, we do not merely make an apology. We deeply feel sorrow over our actions and we often apologize several times and in varying ways: "I'm so sorry...I really regret doing that...I should not have said that...Please forgive me."

The same is true in our relationship with the Lord. This newly translated prayer in the liturgy helps us to recognize that sinning against God is no light matter. We must take responsibility for whatever wrong we have done and whatever good we failed to do. At Mass, one does not simply offer an apology to God. The revised translation of this prayer helps the Christian express even more heartfelt contrition and humbly admit that one has sinned "through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault."



The Gloria: "Only-Begotten Son"

The opening words of the Gloria echo the hymns of praise sung by the angels over the fields of Bethlehem on that first Christmas night: "Glory to God in the highest..." So the Gloria is somewhat like a Christmas song. Why do we singing a Christmas song at Mass? Because the mystery of Christmas is, in a sense, made present at every Eucharist. Just as the Son of God was made manifest to the world some 2,000 years ago, so he is made present sacramentally on our altars at the consecration at every Mass. Thus, it is fitting that welcome Jesus with words of praise that echo how the angels heralded Christ's coming in Bethlehem.

One noticeable change in the new translation of the Gloria involves Jesus being addressed as the "Only Begotten Son." We have been saying that Jesus was the "only Son of the Father," but the new translation more closely follows the theological language used in the early Church to highlight how Jesus is uniquely God's Son, sharing in the same divine nature as the Father. This also reflects the biblical language in John's Gospel, which uses similar wording to describe Jesus' singular relationship with the Father. While all believers are called to a special relationship with God as his sons and daughters through grace (see John 1:12; 1 John 3:1), Jesus alone is the eternal, divine Son by nature. He is the "only begotten Son" of the Father (see John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18).

Edward Sri offers the following reflections
on the new translation of the Mass:

"And with your spirit"

"Through My Most Grievous Fault"

"I believe..."

A Happy Meal or the Supper of the Lamb?

For All or For Many?

The New Mass Translation: Just Going through the Motions?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

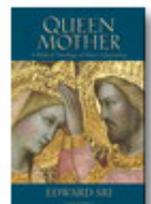
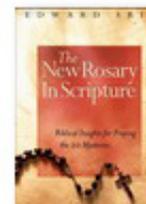
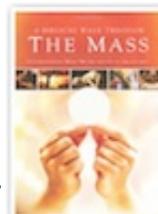
Edward Sri. "Through My Most Grievous Fault." *Fathers for Good* (October 20, 2011).

[Fathers for Good](#) is an initiative for men by the Knights of Columbus.

This reflection is based on Edward Sri's new book, [A Biblical Walk Through the Mass: Understanding What We Say and Do in the Liturgy](#) and is reprinted with permission from the author.

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