

## From the Pastor 080413 – The Mass – The Greeting

Dear Friends,

**Today I am continuing my once-a-month column on the Mass.** I began this in June and am doing this on the first Sunday of each month. On these Sundays we are also doing what we call a Liturgical Minute right at the beginning of Mass. A deacon or a member of the Worship and Prayer Committee presents this and it highlights the content of the column. In my columns of June 2 and July 7, I reflected on the Introductory Rites, the first of the four parts of the Mass, and I am continuing that today. By the way, those past columns can be found on the parish website at [www.stmargaret.org](http://www.stmargaret.org).

**The Greeting.** Immediately after the Sign of the Cross, the priest offers the formal liturgical greeting. There are three possible greetings.

**The first** is based on Saint Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians 13.13: "*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*"

**The second choice** is based on various letters of Saint Paul, as in Romans 1.7: "*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*" **And the third possible greeting** is very simple: "*The Lord be with you.*" This appears as a greeting of encouragement in several places in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament, as when the angel Gabriel greets Mary in Luke 1.28.

**Whichever of the three greetings is used, all respond: "*And with your spirit.*"** We make this response, "*And with your spirit,*" at four other times during the Mass: in the introduction to the Gospel, in the Preface or introduction to the Eucharistic Prayer, in the prayer for peace before Communion, and in the Concluding Rite immediately before the Final Blessing.

**The reply "*And with your spirit*" is based on the conclusion to four of the letters of Saint Paul (e.g. Galatians 6.18).** Paul prays that the Lord will be with the spirit of the entire community that is receiving his letters.

**This response that all make – "*And with your spirit*" – to the greeting of the priest – "*The Lord be with you*" – probably means to echo the same theme that the greeting expresses.** One commentator says that the priest is saying to the people the same thing that the people are saying to him. The priest in effect says: "*The Lord be with your spirit*" and we respond "*And with your spirit.*"

**The English response "*And with your spirit*" precisely translates the original Latin prayer and connects the prayer clearly to its biblical roots.** It conveys that we are engaged in prayer or worship, in the celebration of the Mass where God comes to us in Word and Sacrament. This response, as now translated, is not just a general extending of good wishes to one another. Instead, it conveys the idea that we are engaged in a sacred action that is intended to touch our inner spirit. The greeting and response, taken together, show the interdependence of priest and people both for the celebration of the liturgy and the everyday living out of the life of the Spirit.

**Next month I will continue and probably finish my reflections on the Introductory Rites of the Mass.** My intention, little by little over time, is to work our way through each part of the liturgy so as to deepen our appreciation of the richness of the Mass. I welcome any comments, reflections, or questions that you may have.

Father Mike