

# The spirit of the liturgy: 'And with your spirit'

*The phrase is a blessing: when the priest gives a blessing, it is God Himself Who is giving it*

By C.S. Morrissey  
Special to The B.C. Catholic

*C.S. Morrissey, a professor of Latin and philosophy at Redeemer Pacific College, interviews Father William Ashley, pastor of Sts. Joachim and Ann Parish in Aldergrove, about the spirit of the liturgy.*

**C.S. Morrissey:** People are starting to remember to say, "And with your spirit. I notice in the Ordinary Form of the Roman Rite we say it five times at Mass.

**Father William Ashley:** That same phrase is said nine times in Latin: *Et cum spiritu tuo*, in the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite.

**CSM:** "And with your spirit" is the correct translation of the Latin *Et cum spiritu tuo*. Tell me, why is this correct translation so important? Why not just say, "And also with you"?

**FWA:** The response contains, behind it, a number of theological truths. "And also with you," the previous English translation, sounds instead somewhat like text messaging. You send a message to a friend and get the response, "Back at ya!" or "U2!" and there's no more to it than that.

**CSM:** So the response at Mass is not like a text message?



**Father William Ashley**

**FWA:** No, the Mass is a reality that exists at a totally different level.

**CSM:** How is it a different form of communication?

**FWA:** We're dealing with communicating the faith of the Church regarding what exactly the Mass is all about.

**CSM:** Tell me more about what is communicated by the words, "And with your spirit."

**FWA:** The response is to the priest's greeting, "The Lord be with you," which is really a blessing. When a priest, a bishop, or a deacon gives it, they are giving it in the context of having received the Holy Spirit through the sacrament of holy orders.

**CSM:** "And also with

you," then, sounds like the people are giving back what they have just received, as if they had the same ability to do so.

**FWA:** Like responding to a text message with your own text message!

**CSM:** So whose "spirit" are we talking about when we say "and with your spirit"? Is it the priest's spirit or the Holy Spirit?

**FWA:** The priest's spirit works, in the sacrament of Holy Orders, through the power of the Holy Spirit. So when the priest is giving a blessing, it is God Himself Who is giving the blessing.

The greeting, "The Lord be with you," is considered to be a blessing.

**CSM:** When the people respond, "And with your spirit," then, they are saying that they recognize that, in the spirit of the priest, there is something special at work?

**FWA:** Yes, which he has received through the sacrament of holy orders, which enables him to give this greeting in this context: that is, in the sacred liturgy of the Church.

**CSM:** So why doesn't the priest say, "The Lord be with your spirit"? Don't the

people in the pews have a spirit?

**FWA:** They do, but in this context, of a blessing, we are referring to the Spirit that is in the priest in a special way. You might wish to say those same words, but the priest can say them in a way that no one else can.

**CSM:** Would it be fair to say that the reason the people say, "And with your spirit," is to show they understand that it is a priest who is doing the blessing?

**FWA:** Yes, or a deacon, or a bishop. The people, with their response, indicate they recognize the priest, bishop,

or deacon, who has received the sacrament of holy orders, has blessed them in the name of the Spirit.

*Morrissey will teach a six-week course called "Latin Boot Camp," regarding the original Latin of the Mass, at Redeemer Pacific College on Tuesday nights May 22 to June 26. The focus will be on how to understand Latin in prayers and at Mass, focusing on original phrases like et cum spiritu tuo. Details are available at 604-888-7727 and [www.redeempacific.ca](http://www.redeempacific.ca). □*