

MAY THE LORD ACCEPT AT YOUR HANDS

Background:

The Prayer Over the Gifts, which concludes the Preparation of the Gifts, is preceded by a prayer in which the priest-celebrant asks those present to pray that the sacrifice about to be offered will be acceptable to God the Father. This prayer came into the Mass in the 9th century and originally was addressed, not to the people, but to the clergy present in the sanctuary. The response was given in a low voice either by the server, or even by the priest himself if he was celebrating alone.

In the early twentieth century, as part of the Liturgical Movement, the response to this prayer became one of the acclamations of the people. At the same time, the growing understanding that the Sacrifice at Mass belonged to all the baptized, not only to the priest-celebrant, resulted in a shift in the emphasis of the prayer from the sacrifice as that of the priest alone, to acknowledgement that it was the sacrifice of the entire assembly, priest, ministers and people.

The New Translation:

The wording of the new translation makes clear the theological truth that there is only one sacrifice, and that that sacrifice belongs both to the priest and the people. The response of the people, [made after they rise, since all responses to a prayer of the priest are made standing] makes clear that, while the sacrifice is that of priest and people, it is offered at the hands of the priest who stands in the person of Christ. This prayer, prayed as we move toward the Eucharistic Prayer, reinforces the truth that the sacrifice is offered to the praise and glory of the Father, for the salvation of all present and for the entire holy Church. The new translation also includes, as a modifier of Church, the word “holy” which, while present in the Latin, was omitted from the previous English translation.

The new translation of the prayer reads:

Pray, brethren (brothers and sisters), that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

[the people rise and reply:]

May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

Gender and God:

Because, in the response of this prayer and at other points in the Mass, it is the practice of some to replace the masculine pronoun “his” with the word “God,” this is perhaps an appropriate place to clarify the position of the Church on gender-language. The Church maintains that revelation is to all, men and women. In this new translation of the liturgy, every effort has been made to insure that, wherever appropriate, gender-inclusive terms are used rather than those which are masculine, for example, in the Gloria *peace to people of good will* replaces *peace to men of good will*.

On the other hand, the Church has never advocated the elimination of gendered references to God. To eliminate the concepts of Father and Son is to deny personhood to God, and ultimately to deny the Trinity. The Church maintains and preaches that God is Spirit, neither male nor female, but she also relies on Scripture as the revelation of God. Clearly in Scripture the Trinitarian God is made known to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and this truth is reflected in the liturgy of the Church