

“For Many”

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In the previous translation of *The Roman Missal*, the Eucharistic Prayer proceeds as follows: Take this, all of you, and drink from it: / this is the cup of my blood, / the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. / It will be shed for you and for all / so that sins may be forgiven.

In the revised translation of *The Roman Missal*, the words “for all” have been changed—as directed by Pope Benedict XVI. With the revised translation, the priest will pray: Take this, all of you, and drink from it, / for this is the chalice of my Blood, / the Blood of the new and eternal covenant, / which will be poured out for you and for many / for the forgiveness of sins.

Although this change may seem surprising at first, the Holy Father has expressed strong and sound reasons for this change.

1. The synoptic accounts of the Gospel (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24) make specific reference to the “many” for whom the Lord is offering the sacrifice, and some biblical scholars have emphasized this particular wording as a connection with the words of the prophet Isaiah (53:11–12). It would have been entirely possible in the Gospel texts to have said “for all”; instead, the formula given in the institution narrative is “for many,” and the words have been faithfully translated thus in most modern versions of the Bible.

2. The Roman Rite in Latin has always said *pro multis* (“for many”) and never *pro omnibus* (“for all”) at the consecration of the chalice.

3. The anaphoras (Eucharistic Prayers) of the various Oriental rites, whether in Greek, Syriac, Armenian, various Slavic languages, etc., employ the verbal equivalent of the Latin *pro multis* in their respective languages.

4. “For many” is a faithful translation of *pro multis*, whereas “for all” is rather an explanation that belongs properly to catechesis.



5. The formula “for all” certainly corresponds to a correct interpretation of the Lord’s intention expressed in the scriptures. Even more, it is a dogma of faith that Christ died on the Cross for all men and women (see John 11:52; 2 Corinthians 5:14–15; Titus 2:11; 1 John 2:2). However, the expression “for many” is scriptural, historical, and ecumenical, and has a solid theological interpretation:

“for many” is a reminder that, while salvation is *offered* to all, there are some who do not accept it. Salvation is not imposed in a mechanical way, against one’s free will or voluntary participation. It is freely offered **to all** to accept in faith, and **many** do indeed accept it. Some do not. As for those who apparently reject the gift, the Church entrusts them to the mercy of God. But in doing so they place themselves outside the Church’s liturgical offering. Christ’s death on the Cross was certainly intended for all, but it can only help those who respond to it freely and willingly. The holy sacrifice of the Mass may well be offered or intended for all, but it can be fruitful only for those who accept it. The Eucharistic Prayer thus refers to those who accept it, in whatever form that acceptance takes.

6. Lastly, in line with the Instruction *Liturgiam authenticam* (the document issued in 2001 by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments to regulate liturgical translations), translations should be more faithful to the actual prayer of the Church—the Latin text as given, and not as interpreted. It is intended and understood that further catechesis will explain that God our savior, “wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4, NRSV).

Given the reasons above, the hope of the Church is that when the faithful hear the words over the chalice “for many,” they will be inspired to make a personal affirmation of their faith in—and desire for—the gift of salvation freely offered in Christ Jesus to the whole world.

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