

The Institution Narrative

Kristopher W. Seaman

Every time we celebrate the Eucharist, we pray with the priest celebrant the Eucharistic Prayer. Contained in this great prayer of praise and thanksgiving is the Institution narrative—sometimes referred to as the consecration. Thus, we, with the priest celebrant, pray over the gifts of bread and wine with the words of Jesus from the Last Supper. In the revised translation of *The Roman Missal*, the priest “takes the bread / and, holding it slightly raised above the altar,” “bows slightly” and proclaims over the hosts: “TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND EAT OF IT, / FOR THIS IS MY BODY, / WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP FOR YOU.” Over the cup filled with wine, the priest “takes the chalice / and, holding it slightly raised above the altar” proclaims: “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. / DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.”

Immediately upon seeing this text, we can notice two distinct changes in the words from the previous translation to the revised edition of *The Roman Missal*. First, the word “chalice” is used for cup. One of the current procedures in translating from the official Latin liturgical texts into English is the use of elevated language. Rather than using cup, the translators chose chalice. Chalice is not a word we ordinarily use—outside of Mass—in everyday speech, but it is a word we tend to reserve for the vessel for Eucharist. Chalice comes from the Latin for cup. This term gives significance to the liturgical vessel used in worship. A second word change in the text is from “for all” to “for many.” In a letter dated October 17, 2006, then-prefect for the Holy See’s Congregation for Divine Worship and the



Discipline of the Sacraments, Francis Cardinal Arinze, noted a few reasons why Pope Benedict XVI changed the word from “all” to “many.” First, the Latin edition of *The Roman Missal* has “for many” and so the English should correspond accurately to the Latin. This is based on the liturgical principles of translation outlined in *Liturgiam authenticam* (2001). Second, the Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke primarily contain “for many” rather than “for all.” Finally, another reason Cardinal Arinze provides for the change has more to do with the theology of this phrase than with principles of translation. “For many,” he states, remains “open to the inclusion of each human person.” In other words, there is the possibility of including every human person. He

continues by suggesting that “for all” may communicate that salvation is somehow mechanical or automatic without human free will to reject or accept God’s offer of salvation.

These words of Institution provide us with a key to eucharistic theology and eucharistic living. The texts contain these phrases from Paul: “will be given up for you” and “poured out for you and for many.” This bread becomes Christ’s Body; this wine becomes Christ’s Blood. It is Christ himself who is given up and poured out. This is sacrificial imagery of who Christ is for us. One who is for us, who wishes to save and reconcile all human persons. This is the One who calls us not only to receive his Body and Blood but also to be given up and poured out for many. As Christ’s disciples, the receiving of Christ himself into our very beings impels us to die to selves in order to live as Christ calls us to live. The next time we hear these words proclaimed, we can remember the mission Christ gave to the Church, the mission of all disciples: to be Christ’s tabernacle and presence in a world hungry for true nourishment and reconciliation.

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