

Catechesis on the Revised Mass Texts: FOR MANY

As we pray the Eucharistic prayer together using the new revised texts the priest will use a different wording for what is formally known as the institution narrative. This is the portion where we recall the words and actions of Jesus on the night he was betrayed and the story of the Last Supper is retold. Where we recall the actions of Jesus the words will now read are:

*Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my Body,
which will be given up for you.*

*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.

This new translation, which is closer to the lengthy Latin text attempts to bring out more closely the connection between the invitation of Jesus, the reasons for the necessity of receiving the Body and Blood of the Lord and the purpose of it.

You will notice the word ‘chalice,’ this connects with the Jewish ceremonial use of the vessel at the ritual Last Supper where Jesus led the prayer action.

The word everlasting is replaced by ‘eternal’ highlighting more fully that the covenant Jesus makes with us lasts forever, is infinite and cannot be measured.

The phrase ‘poured out’ links more strongly with the active quality of what Jesus did for us.

The Passion of Christ is not something that Jesus took part in passively but rather he actively and freely chose it for our salvation, in other words he poured out his life blood for us.

When this new translation was being prepared Pope Benedict insisted on the translation 'for many', as he was keen to make the closer biblical connection with Matthew and Mark's gospel version of the Last Supper.

This also connects more strongly to the Latin text which is *pro multis*. This phrase resonates with the Old Testament figure of the Suffering Servant in the book of Isaiah.

This suffering servant figure is described as suffering to take away the sins of many, later in the Christian Tradition the great Fathers of the Church would look back to this passage in their preaching and help their congregations to notice that this was pointing towards the suffering messiah, Jesus who takes away the sins of the world.

These biblical passages are not directly concerned with whether every woman or man who ever lived will be saved, but reflect a biblical imagination about vast, uncountable numbers.

These vast uncountable numbers are recalled at the end of the New Testament in the book of Revelation where John has a vision of the multitude who are saved by the Blood of the Lamb, a vast number too numerous to be counted.

This week as you reflect on these changes in the text you might want to think about the following:

- *How important is it to you to fully participate, to take and eat, take and drink, every time you gather for Mass?*
- *How do you imagine forever?*
- *How grateful are you for the eternal covenant Jesus has made with us?*
- *How do you imagine the vast array of those who have been saved through the power of this moment?*