

# The missal translation begins... my thoughts

Father Matt Buening looked out on his congregation Nov. 27 as he was concluding Mass at St. Paul's in Ellicott City and offered something he has done throughout his young priesthood. "The Lord be with you," he said. What came next probably happened all across the country this weekend. One half responded "And also with you," while the other said, "And with your spirit." Father Buening smiled and offered, "*Pretty good.*" It wasn't the first time the congregation relied on what it had done for decades. Earlier in the Mass, Father Buening offered "The Lord be with you." The congregation responded with "And also with you." Father Buening looked at them and said, "One more time." The parish giggled a bit and said, "And also with your spirit." Father Buening again asked, "One more time." Finally, they said, "And with your spirit." English-speaking parishes all across the country started the new translation (third edition) of the Roman Missal this weekend during Masses. And there were "a few slip-ups" at some parishes as one Catholic Review tweet put it. People in the Archdiocese of Baltimore who knew all of the previous responses and the Mass spent the weekend looking at pamphlet guides. The Masses lacked the sure-footedness of previous ones, as people read, rather than recited, much of their responses. More than anything, the biggest changes happened for the priests, who prepared for the consecration in a whole new, and almost unrecognizable, way. I think one of my biggest adjustments to the new translation will be the wordiness of it all. That's saying something considering I'm a writer. Journalists are often told to "dumb it down" for their audience so the reader will understand the story better. The Catholic English Mass is going in the opposite direction, using wordy prose that is more faithful to the original Latin text that guided the Catholic Church for much of its 2000 years. As a retired altar boy, I spent a lot of time looking down, rather than up, this weekend. I no longer know the Mass like the back of my hand. I knew what I said before, I meant it and it was true. It's not my job to judge the decisions of Catholic leaders who know more theologically than I do. Their goal is to make the worship experience deeper and fuller. For me, there wasn't anything deeper and fuller than the Mass as I knew it. It might not have been close enough to the Latin for some, but, for me, Mass wasn't about chasing a language. It was about

celebrating Christ's sacrifice and his real presence in the Eucharist. It might not have been perfect for some, but it was perfect for me and I suspect for a lot of people. To be honest, I do worry about the large number of ex-Catholics who might entertain returning to the Holy Church one day. Fall-away Catholics make up one of the most significant portions of faiths in the country. If they return, will they recognize the Mass and will it bring them the comfort they're seeking? The page in the Missal has been turned. It's my job as a Catholic newspaper reporter to turn with it. I can't educate people in the paper if I don't go deeper in my own Catholicism and explore what's being said at Mass all over again. The reality is, this is going to be the Mass of my children. They won't know anything different until it's possibly changed down the road... and then they'll be the ones talking about how they feel like a stranger in a familiar pew. One of the unfortunate side effects of this change has been the online battle between those who dispute the change and those who embrace it. I've seen some resort to calling those faithful to the former translation "protestants." A love of the Mass is a love of the Mass. It's not protestant to think the Mass, as it was, was beautiful and true. A person has the right to miss that translation as much as some miss the Latin Mass proper. We all have the same goal in the Catholic faith. As English-speakers, we're just saying it differently now and that's no small thing.