

Sign of Peace

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Following the Lord's Prayer at Mass, the Sign of Peace is shared with one another. In the revised edition of *The Roman Missal*, this is how the priest celebrant invites us to exchange the Sign of Peace, as well as our response or acclamation to his offer of peace to the liturgical assembly.

Priest: Lord Jesus Christ,
who said to your Apostles,
Peace I leave you, my peace I give you;
look not on our sins,
but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with your will.
Who live and reign for ever and ever.

People: Amen.

Priest: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

People: And with your spirit.

Priest: Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

Two things definitely stand out with the revisions. First, our response, "And with your spirit," is consistent with our response during the rest of the liturgy. This is a literal translation of the Latin in *The Roman Missal* of *Et cum spiritu tuo*.

The second is the now explicit request for Christ's peace that brings not only peace but unity. This Sign of Peace takes place within the Communion Rite. Therefore, Christ's peace is one that brings people into union—into communion. This

unity or communion is one that is "in accordance with [Christ's] will." Because we are sinful, we do not always have the peace of Christ foremost in our words and deeds.

Just before the Sign of Peace, we proclaimed the Lord's Prayer. We named and prayed for our heavenly Father to "forgive us our trespasses, / as we forgive those who trespass against us." It is our faith, the faith of the Church, which leads us to Christ's peace. This sign, this rite, is one in which we are invited to turn from sin to ways of true unity—Christ's unity. The priest, in his part of the Lord's Prayer, which is technically called an embolism, proclaims: "Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, / graciously grant peace in our days, / that, by the help of your mercy, / we may be always free from sin. . . ." These words that come immediately before the Sign of Peace flow naturally into the Sign of Peace. Christ's peace overcomes the sin of the world that would bring disunity between one another and with the Triune God. This Sign of Peace is therefore also a sign of hope.

Christ's offer of peace to us, is one that brings peace, love, and communion with one another. As disciples, this experience of divine Communion within Mass, especially through the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ, is one that we are called to live daily. We become visible and tangible signs of peace, signs of unity, signs of hope in a world afflicted with sin, disunity, war, and despair. This world longs for peace, a peace that only the Lord Jesus Christ can bring about. The Sign of Peace is a rite that calls us beyond sin and disunity to Christ's peace and communion. We are called as disciples to live this peace and communion that Christ gives us daily. This indeed becomes then a sign of hope for all peoples.