

New and Corrected Translation of the Mass – Part 25

The *Pax*

The Pax, or Sign of Peace, comes in two halves, (a) the Peace of the Lord, which is compulsory, and (b) the Exchange of Peace, which is optional.

Part A. The Peace of the Lord. The priest has just recalled, in the embolism of peace, how Christ wished His apostles peace, and asked Him for His peace on our behalf. He then turns to the people and wishes them peace, and the people respond in their turn.

✠ The peace of the Lord be with you always.

Gal 1.3; Phil 4.7; 2 Jn 1.3

✠ **And with your spirit.**

Gal 6.18; 2 Tim 4.22

The priest wishes the people the peace of Christ Himself (not the priest's peace), because that is the peace which the world can neither give nor understand (cf. Jn 14.27; Phil 4.7). Likewise, the people wish the priest the peace of Christ (and not their own). Remember that the response 'And with your spirit', is an acknowledgement that *Christ* is the head of the liturgy, not the priest. So here the people recognize that the priest also stands in need of the peace which only Christ can give. Notice that this exchange of peace is not simply a mutual well-wishing. It is an act which only baptized Christians can do – wishing the peace that Christ (and He alone) can give.

Part B. The Exchange of Peace. In the new rite of the Mass, this part of the Pax is *optional*, and it is completely at the discretion of the priest celebrating Mass. So after the priest wishes Christ's peace to the people, and the people wish him back with Christ's peace, the Sign of Peace is finished. Full-stop.

Should the priest choose to, he (or if a deacon is present, it is his task) may exhort the people to exchange a physical gesture of peace with each other, on top of the one they have already wished. To offer and receive the sign, say,

✠ **Peace be with you.**

Gal 1.3; Phil 4.7; 2 Jn 1.3

✠ **Amen.** (Notice the response is not 'And also with you/And with your spirit'.)

The exchange of peace should not be disruptive or prolonged. It should be sober, and exchanged with one's immediate neighbours. It must not mislead people into believing that this is the highlight of the Mass. The high point is yet to come. If it is disruptive, it is better to omit it, as the norms permit.