

# Catechesis on the Revised Mass Texts: THE LORD BE WITH YOU

When you hear the greeting 'The Lord be with you' what does it mean to you? This familiar greeting draws us into the prayerful action of the moment but many of us do not realise that it was a familiar Jewish greeting and is found many times in the Bible. In the Old Testament it occurs in various contexts:

- The prophet Amos uses this as an expression of a guarantee that God will be with someone
- In the book of Joshua it is as a prayer of protection or for help
- and in the book of Ruth it is used as a simple greeting or a way of saying hello.

This reminds me of holidays in Germany, and in particular Bavaria where Pope Benedict comes from. There people do not say 'Good Morning' but the everyday greeting is Gruss Gott highlighting God's goodness!

The Latin expression of 'The Lord be with you' *Dominus vobiscum* becomes a prayer that the presence of God is with others and at the same time a statement that he is present among us.

During the celebration of Mass 'The Lord be with you' is used when there are important prayer moments or actions about to happen.

This greeting reminds us of the presence of the Lord when we gather at the beginning of Mass, when we proclaim the word of God, when we pray the Eucharistic Prayer and at the end of Mass when we are sent forth to bring Christ's presence to the world.

From November when we hear this greeting our reply will be 'And with you Spirit'.

This reply is part of the Jewish greeting prayer formulas found in the Old Testament.

In the context of prayer when we use the word spirit in reference to human beings we are referring to the whole person, because we worship God with all of ourselves.

This greeting also points towards our belief that we are made in the image and likeness of God, we are embodied spirits with a spiritual destiny.

So this greeting reminds us of who we are and what we are to become.

We believe that when we die our physical body is laid to rest but what will rise to new life is a spiritual, life-filled body as we share in the resurrection of Christ.

When we reply 'And with your spirit' to the priest who is leading us in prayer, we are reminding him that the Lord is with him, just as he has greeted us.

We are also praying that God's spirit will enable him to lead us prayerfully and well. So this greeting means much more than a 'Good Morning' or 'Hello', it is a ritual way of drawing us into prayer.

There is graciousness in this ancient form of Hebrew greeting where one person mentions the Lord's presence and the other replies by reciprocating it.

Perhaps this is why St. Paul was so fond of using this greeting in his writings. At the end of his letters he often used the phrase:

*May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit*

*When you are next at Mass notice the amount of times we use 'The Lord be with you',*

*and take time to connect to the presence of the Lord within you,*

*within others gathered with you,*

*in the priest,*

*in God's word*

*and in the Eucharist.*