

being planted to emerge as something so much greater than what was laid in the earth. A simple physical body is laid to rest but a spiritual, life-filled body will be raised.

In our reply we say that the Lord is with the priest who has greeted us in every aspect of who he is. The priest is really saying this about us as he says 'the Lord be with you'. Also we are praying that the Lord may be with the priest in every aspect of his life and who he is and who he will be. It applies to all of us too. Using the word 'spirit' reminds us that we are thinking about who we are and who we shall be.

Should the priest say 'the Lord be with your spirit' to recall that this spiritual aspect applies both to priest and people? Unfortunately it would unravel a greeting taking us back to the Church's beginning. There is graciousness in this Hebrew greeting. One person mentions the Lord's presence and the other adds more. There is much to be said for preserving this ancient example of Middle Eastern charm and good manners.

Q *Think about/discuss this idea of 'your spirit' and the 'resurrection of the body.'*

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Roman Missal, 3rd Edition

Looking at the text 1

The Priest, extending his hands, greets the people, saying:

The Lord be with you.

The people reply:

And with your spirit.



The Lord be with you

This greeting is made several times during Mass. It comes, of course from the Latin, 'Dominus vobiscum' and it has been used at Mass since earliest times.

It is a Jewish greeting that is found many times in the Bible. Sometimes it is used to promise that God shall be with someone (Amos 5:14) or a prayer that he will protect or help (Joshua 14:12). It can be used to say hello or goodbye (Ruth 2:4, 1Samuel 17:37, 20:13). In Latin it can be taken as meaning both a prayer that God should be with others or a confident statement that he is present among them.

'The Lord be with you' is used at Mass at certain important moments when prayer, a reading or an action is about to happen. It is a greeting that helps us to focus on our beginning something. We respond, affirming that God is indeed present and that we are ready to proceed - that we are all involved in what is going to happen.

Above all it is about the presence of the Lord. It can occur at four important moments in the Mass to help us think about the presence of Christ.

- At the beginning of Mass, we remember that we gather in the presence of Christ ('where two or three are gathered together in my name' Matt 18:20),
- At the proclamation of the Readings, we remember Christ speaks to us in the Word.
- At the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer, when Christ becomes present among us as we share in his sacrifice under sacramental signs.
- At the end of Mass, Christ is with us as we glorify him by our lives and witness.

There should be a joy about this greeting and response that can be easily lost. They are acclamations that Christ is present with us in our celebration. If the Lord is with us then we should rejoice. A hope is

expressed that he will accompany us in this sacred action. As we enter the sacred mysteries, the Saviour joins us.

Q *Think about/discuss our awareness of how Jesus is present with us in these different ways.*

And with your spirit

The response 'And with your spirit' to 'The Lord be with you' is part of a Jewish greeting used in the Bible and in the Mass from earliest times.

Think carefully about the way the word 'spirit' is being used. It means the whole of us. It sums up all that makes us truly human. Made in the God's image, we are creatures with a body who have a spiritual destiny.

In the Apostles' Creed we say we believe 'in the resurrection of the body'. Here we are talking about our bodies that will be raised like Jesus'. Our bodies help us to know who we are. Looking in the mirror it is those eyes we recognise, that face we know. Our features, the lines formed by laughter or sorrow, the hair (or lack of it!) and much more record who we are and what has happened to us. Remember Saint Thomas wanting to put his finger into the holes made by the nails and the spear so that he would know that it really was Jesus.

Our bodies are part of what will be redeemed. They change and decay but the fact that we have one is part of what makes us ourselves. It is not a question of shape or size. People are no less human if they lose a limb or are tiny in the womb. But it would be impossible to be a human being if we had never in some way had a body.

When we use this word 'spirit' we should also think about what each of us shall be eventually. When Saint Paul explained the resurrection of the body in his first letter to the Corinthians (Chapter 15) he likened our death to a seed

