

**Six Questions on the Translation of *Pro Multis* as “For Many”  
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*Of all the changes in the translation of the Roman Missal, the translation of pro multis as “for many” may require the most significant explanation and sensitive pastoral catechesis. In 2006, when the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments announced the change, the Secretariat of Divine Worship (then the Secretariat for the Liturgy) offered Six Questions on the Translation of Pro Multis in the November 2006 Newsletter. We offer these updated questions and answers to assist in offering appropriate rationale for the change.*

**1. What does the decision regarding the translation of *pro multis* mean?**

After having consulted with Conferences of Bishops throughout the world, Pope Benedict XVI determined that the translation of *qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum*, presently translated “which will be shed for you and **for all** so that sins may be given,” will be changed in the new edition of the *Roman Missal* to “which will be poured out for you and **for many** for the forgiveness of sins” (See [circular letter from Francis Cardinal Arinze to Presidents of Conferences of Bishops](#), dated October 17, 2006 [Prot. no. 467/05/L]).

**2. Why did the Holy Father choose to translate *pro multis* as “for many” and not as “for all?”**

“For many” is a more accurate translation of the Latin phrase *pro multis* than the present translation. This is also the wording used in the Biblical narrative account of the Last Supper found in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark:

Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28).

Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many” (Mark 14:24).

**3. Does this mean that Christ did not die for everyone?**

No. It is a dogmatic teaching of the Church that Christ died on the Cross for all men and women (cf. John 11:52; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Titus 2:11; 1 John 2:2). The expression “for many,” while remaining open to the inclusion of each human person, is reflective also of the fact that this salvation is not brought about in some mechanistic way, without one’s own willing or participation; rather, the believer is invited to accept in faith the gift that is being offered and to receive the supernatural life that is given to those who participate in this mystery, living it out in their lives as well so as to be numbered among the “many” to whom the text refers.

**4. What is the significance of “for many” in this context and in the context of the Gospel?**

With these words, Jesus identifies his mission to bring salvation through his Passion and Death, his offering of himself for others. In a particular way he identifies himself with the Suffering Servant of the Prophet Isaiah, who suffers to “take away the sins of many” (Is 53:12).

**5. What will this mean for the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy when the *Roman Missal, Third Edition*, is introduced?**

When the change is first introduced with the *Roman Missal* in Advent 2011, the shift from “for all” to “for many” could be misunderstood as some sort of narrowing of the scope of Jesus’ salvific action. It will be important to keep in mind the context of the narrative both in the Gospel and in the liturgical action. In the context of the Last Supper, Jesus was speaking to the Twelve, extending the reach of his sacrifice beyond the boundary of his closest disciples. In the context of the celebration of the Eucharist, the phrase “for you and for many” connects the particular gathered assembly with the larger sense of the Church in every time and place, as if to say “not only you gathered here, but many more as well.” In this regard, “for many” has an eschatological meaning beyond some particular limited number.

**6. What is happening to this text in other languages?**

The 2006 circular letter was addressed not only to the United States or to the English-speaking world, but to all Conferences of Bishops and all language groups. For example, in Spanish, what had been translated as “por todos” will now be translated as “por muchos.” That change will be implemented when the Spanish translation of the *Roman Missal* is approved and published for the dioceses of the United States of America.