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My daughters and the new Mass

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NCR Today

My two teenage daughters are on the warpath. Not about some mean girl at school, or a teacher who grades on an unfair curve. No, they are all riled up about -- the Roman Missal.

Both my girls go to Catholic school (one in high school, the other in middle school). And for the past few days, they've been reviewing and rehearsing the upcoming liturgical changes. They are not happy.

I walked into the house last night in a grumpier-than-usual mood: Traffic was the worst it had been in memory. I poured myself a sizable glass of wine as we all sat down to dinner -- right away, I could tell the teens were steaming. I glanced over at my wife, who looked at them and said, "What's wrong?"

Normally, this is an invitation to a series of alternating dinner-time monologues from each about the torture of physics and algebra, the inability to regurgitate random dates and the difficulty conjugating certain verbs in obscure tenses of the Spanish language.

This time, they both began a harangue about the new Roman Missal. Here is a list, in order of outrage:

1) "And also with you" now becomes "And with your spirit." (This "just sounds weird." Whoever says, "How's it going with your spirit today?")

2) The Penitential Act now includes the phrase "through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault." (Why? "I've already said I'm sorry two times! Do I have to really drive it home in case God was a bit distracted?")

3) In the Nicene Creed, "of all that is seen and unseen" is now "of all things visible and invisible." (Just not as "poetic" as seen/unseen. "They took all the poetry out.")

My wife explained that most of this was to bring the English closer in meaning to the Latin -- which did not really help the case. Mostly, I think, my kids have had their fill of change. Each day, something new bombards their brains -- from the classroom, from TV, from Facebook and their smartphones. They would never admit this, but Mass is a rock of stability in their lives. The fact that, most weeks, they find it boring and predictable is actually the main attraction. The words of the church, the liturgy of the faith, are what they are and -- for the length of their lives -- as they always have been.

Not next weekend. Starting next weekend, they are going to have to pay closer attention. We all will.

"I know I'm going to mess up," my middle-schooler told our parish priest after the 10 o'clock Mass this past Sunday.

"Me, too," he said. "And I've got a lot more to remember. But we'll get through it."

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