

Deepening Our Appreciation For The Liturgy: The Revised Roman Missal

Part 3: *Missale Romanum: The Roman Missal: Embodiment of Liturgical Renewal* Liturgical texts help translate the reform into transformative action. At the conclusion of the Council of Trent, the pope was tasked with enacting liturgical renewal. Pope Pius V published the Roman Missal in 1570 with the intention of giving the liturgy the vigor it once had in the tradition of the Fathers of the Church. The liturgy has always undergone adjustments throughout the centuries. The need for vernacular translations of the Roman Missal arose after the Second Vatican Council. The translations following Vatican II were intended to bring about the renewal of the Sacred Liturgy and to bring the faithful closer to it.

The reform has come to us in different stages, each more refined than the preceding one. There have been three different editions of the *Missale Romanum* since the Second Vatican Council. “After the Second Vatican Council, the first edition of the *Missale Romanum* [Roman Missal] was published in 1970 (*editio typica latina*) with the English translation coming out in 1973. Since it was the first, it was rushed and had inaccuracies; the poetry and rhythm of the Latin language were lost as well as the loss of the sense of solemnity and sacredness. A revision was ordered and it is the text we use now – the 2nd Edition which was more complete than the first also called *editio typica altera* of 1975. The second edition changed 7% of the pages of the first edition. It has problems that needed addressing: too often the translators paraphrased the original Latin losing much of the richness of the metaphor and imagery; the sacred language of the liturgy seemed to be lost by the use of more secular language and with it the loss of the sense of awe and mystery. The Mass texts we have been using are theologically inadequate because they do not accurately reflect our beliefs. In the Jubilee Year 2000, Pope John Paul II announced a revised edition of the *Missale Romanum*, containing prayers for newly minted saints, additional prefaces for the Eucharistic Prayers, Prayers for various needs and occasions, plus updated and revised instructions for the celebration of the Mass. The third edition was published in 2002 (*editio typica tertia*) and the translation in English came out in 2011. This edition has changed a quarter of the pages of the last one, some of which are editorial, others are updating old sections, and others still are real changes. The church asks the priest to act in the person of Christ: the one who washed feet, the one who lays down his life for the flock, who comes to serve and not be served, and the one who celebrates the memorial of the Lord.

Implementing the new Missal will give the Church an opportunity to take a fresh look at its liturgical practice and to renew its celebration of the Sacred Liturgy, which is the “source and summit” of Christian life (*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, # 11). This revised Missal gives us an unprecedented opportunity. We will not let this opportunity pass us but rather fully utilize it. We will do catechesis for most of the duration of the new liturgical year not just on helping us receive the new

translation but to deepen our understanding of the Liturgy, and appreciate its meaning and importance in our lives.

What makes the translation of the 2002 edition of the Roman Missal different is that this translation was carried out under the latest Vatican guidelines for translating the Mass into vernacular languages. This new guideline, *Liturgiam Authenticam*, published in 2001, urged a stronger adherence to Latin wording and structure than earlier directives and called for the maintenance of the unique style of the Roman Rite. By “style” is meant here the distinctive way in which the prayers of the Roman Rite are expressed. The principal elements of such a style include a certain conciseness in addressing, praising and entreating God, as well as distinctive syntactical patterns, a noble tone, a variety of less complex rhetorical devices, concreteness of images, repetition, parallelism and rhythm. While the current translation focuses on rendering the texts understandable to modern English-speakers, the new translation will focus more on keeping the nuances in the original Latin. The result will be the use of some phrases and words that are not normally a part of everyday English discourse.

The results have led to some concern, voiced even by bishops, that the new English translations of the missal are not user-friendly. Msgr. Anthony Sherman, executive director of the U.S. bishops’ Secretariat of Divine Worship, counters that “in the United States today, people are almost daily learning new vocabulary, and sometimes it is quite technical. The words in our liturgical prayers can afford celebrants the opportunity to reflect on the broader context of those words and so lead the faithful in a deeper understanding of the beliefs being explained.” Msgr. Kevin Irwin, dean of the theology faculty at Catholic University of America, says that the Church uses technical words in its vocabulary sometimes because those words capture concepts of the faith that would not be easy to understand without using a lot of other words. “For example, since the 13th century, we have used the term ‘transubstantiation’ to describe the change that occurs in the bread and wine at Mass. Before the change, it is bread and wine. After the change, it looks like, smells like and tastes like bread and wine, but now it is something totally different.”

Most experts grant that “the new translation is not perfect because, in a certain sense, no translation can be perfect. “Anytime you translate you are doing your best. But it is nearly impossible to capture all the nuances and bring them into a new language,” says Fr. Paul Turner, a Latin and liturgy expert. The differences of opinion on the translation will be wide but we need not be held hostage by them. These liturgical texts offer a treasure for our spiritual nourishment because they articulate what we believe, they are what we believe, they articulate most clearly who we see ourselves to be, they proclaim the revelation that God has given to the church about what she is called to be, therefore we seek to preserve this rich patrimony and to pass it to future generations. So, at St. John Vianney we will seek to embrace the entire liturgical reform of Vatican II (# 48): “

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The Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ's faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators; on the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers they should take part in the sacred service conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full involvement." Herein lies our inspiration to do catechesis on the liturgy for the coming year. This column will bring you very enriching catechesis, and at Mass we will complement it with 2 to 3

minute "little teachings." I hope that it will be an opportunity to grown in the faith.



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