



Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time September 18, 2011 A

Why the Church Has Revised the Prayer Text of the Mass; What Will and Will Not Change

Beginning on the First Sunday of Advent, November 27th, Catholics participating in the Mass will notice changes in some of the wording in both the priest's invocations and the assembly's responses at Mass. One example is when the priest says: "*The Lord be with you,*" the assembly's response will now be "*and with your spirit.*" The Creed will begin with the words "*I believe...*" in lieu of "*We believe....*"

Why these changes

In short, Rome was not happy with the current English translation of the prayers in the sacramentary (the big red covered book used by the priest during Mass). Rome wanted Catholics in English-speaking countries to have a translation that was much closer to the Latin text. For example, the Latin "*et cum spiritu tuo*" (currently translated "and also with you") is more accurately translated "*and with your spirit.*" In addition, as the Church has canonized many new saints in the last forty years, prayers for these new saints will be added in the revised sacramentary.

What will not change

The following parts of the Mass will not change:

- ◇ Its basic four-fold structure, i.e., Introductory Rites, Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of the Eucharist and Concluding Rites;
- ◇ Scripture readings which had undergone a translation revision some years ago;
- ◇ Singing of songs from the hymnal in the pew.

What will change

The change will impact the priest considering that a vast majority of the revisions involve his part in the Mass. Some of the responses by the assembly have also undergone revision. We will have leaflets in the pew to help people follow the new translations. Finally, there will be new musical settings for the Gloria, Sanctus and Memorial Acclamation. Beginning next Sunday, we

will introduce you to some of these new musical settings.

Challenge of translating the Latin text of the Mass into the vernacular

Prior to Vatican Council II (1962-1966), Catholics could travel to any country in the world and follow the Mass because it was prayed in Latin. Most Catholics had a missal which had the Latin and English texts of the Mass.

During Vatican II, the bishops voted to allow the Mass to be prayed in the vernacular—in the language of the people. With that decision came the challenge of translating the Latin text into the many languages of our diverse Catholic world.

In an address to translators gathered in Rome in 1965, Pope Paul VI gave these instructions:

"The vernacular now taking its place in the liturgy ought to be within the grasp of all, even children and the uneducated. But, as you well know, the language should always be worthy of the noble realities it signifies, set apart from the everyday speech of the street and the marketplace, so that it will affect the spirit and enkindle the heart with love of God."

Clearly, the task of the translators was challenging. On the one hand, they were to come up with a translation comprehensible to all, including the unlearned. On the other hand, the translation must protect the significance of the liturgy and be expressed with all reverence.

All of us have heard and used the phrase "something got lost in the translation." If this can be experienced by people speaking in the *same* language, how much more likely can it happen to those translating from one language to another. The people responsible for the English translation of the Mass texts form the *International Commission on English in the Liturgy* (ICEL). When ICEL translated the Latin text after Vatican II, it used a method where the emphasis was on providing a translation that was user-friendly. Long sentences in the Latin text were divided into two or more sentences. This translation of the Latin text helped a

whole generation of Catholics to transition from Latin to English for the Mass prayers.

New guidelines issued for translators

In the mid 90's, ICEL planned to revise its English translation of the Latin text of the Mass. Shortly thereafter, Pope John Paul issued a document called *Liturgiam Authenticam* which introduced a whole new set of guidelines for translators to follow.

Liturgiam authenticam (authentic liturgy) required that “the original text, insofar as possible, must be translated integrally and in the most exact manner, without omissions or additions in terms of their content, and without paraphrases or glosses.”

Furthermore: “Certain expressions that belong to the heritage of the whole or of a great part of the ancient Church...are to be respected by a translation that is as literal as possible.”

It was judged that in previous translations, some of the expressions did not accurately represent the meaning in Latin. However, countries where Spanish is the primary language and many other countries will *not* be affected by the changes in the prayer texts of the Mass as Vatican has acknowledged that their current translation is sufficiently close to the Latin version.

With the new translation, the sacramentary receives a new name, *The Roman Missal*, which more closely reflects its ancient character.

Translation—close to ten years in the making

You may wonder why the translation of the 2002 Edition of The Roman Missal has taken almost ten years to complete. Undoubtedly, a lot of work went into the revision of the thousands of prayers and blessings contained in the Missal, which was intended for use in eleven countries where English is the primary language.

In her book *What's New About the Mass for Teens*, Maureen Kelly writes:

“Many people worked on the translation. The entire process was guided by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL), the same organization that provided the first translations for all English-speaking countries a generation ago—though now with new members. Eleven bishops from different countries around the world attended the meetings. They have relied on teams of experts to propose translations that are faithful to the Latin, constant in style, and consistent in vocabulary. Individual bishops and lay people were

consulted in the process. The ICEL bishops evaluated this work and made some changes to enhance it. They brought the results to the conferences of bishops whom they represent from around the world. The conferences sent their suggestions back to ICEL, which made a further round of improvements. These went back to the conferences for their vote and the submission of the texts to Rome. There, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, having consulted with the Vox Clara Committee, which has its own team of experts, made some final adjustments to the texts before approving them for publication.”

In the end, an imperfect translation

When we have a group of people from very diverse backgrounds and opinions on liturgy working on the translation of a text, we can be sure that no one is going to be totally happy with the end result. For example, some of the Opening Prayers of the Mass contain fifty plus words. Such lengthy prayers can be hard to proclaim and equally hard to absorb. For a while, the prayers and responses might sound awkward for all of us. But in time, we will get used to them.

Many parishes will be using the occasion of introducing the revised Mass texts as an opportunity to help parishioners to take another look at the Mass. When we recite the same prayers repeatedly, it is very easy for our prayers to become rote. Adjusting to a new translation of the prayers we have been accustomed to say for about forty years will be an opportunity for us to take a serious look at what we say and pray week after week. Priests and lay people alike are being called to use this time to grow in their appreciation and understanding of the Mass. Taking the time to read the above mentioned forty-seven page booklet will be helpful. It is available after Mass today. ***The booklet has a copy of the current translations of the people's response alongside the new translations.*** The booklet walks the reader through all the changes in the new Roman Missal effective November 27th. In the meantime, we will have more bulletin inserts and homilies on the changes that will occur in the Mass.

Have a blessed week,

