

Pastor's Perspective

*New Translation of Our Mass Prayers (New Roman Missal)

[From the Sept. 18 2011 bulletin]

Most of the changes affect the prayers that the priest leads and prays aloud (Opening Prayer, Prayer over the Gifts, Eucharistic Prayers, etc.). Eventually I will take time to go through each of them with you and point out some of the changes and the reasons for them. But for now we will be looking at the prayers we all say together or in common: the Greetings and Dialogues, Confiteor, Glory to God, Creed, Holy Holy, May the Lord Accept This Sacrifice, Memorial Acclamation (now will be called the Mystery of Faith), and the Lord I Am Not Worthy. Most have very minor changes and we will, I'm sure, quickly adapt to them, especially the ones that are sung. The Creed has a bit more change and that will take some time to get used to. Note well though: nothing in the structure or way the Mass is celebrated is being changed, only the English words and phrases we use. The words mean the same thing as before but the Vatican asked that a different set of principles be used in choosing them.

To begin with, let's look at the main principle used in re-shaping the English translation from the Latin original. There was a desire that the translation preserve a better connection to the underlying Latin. The idea behind this is three-fold. As other language groups re-translate the Mass in the years ahead and share this principle, there will be a greater commonality to each other, even though in different languages, because they will all reflect better the underlying Latin style and structure. Secondly, because English is so dominant a language in the world today, many non-European language groups use the English translation as a basis for their own text. Now with the English text more faithful to the Latin, these other language groups will be drawn closer to the original as well, when they re-translate the English into their native languages. Thirdly, staying closer to the Latin allows the rhythm and structure of the Latin to come into our prayers, even in English. At least that is the idea.

The current translation, with the blessing of the Vatican, used a different principle in translation called "dynamic equivalence." That led our current Mass prayers to be inspired by the underlying Latin but with great freedom to change

the structure and even images to better reflect contemporary English expression. For example, a prayer in Latin that was one long sentence was often rendered into English into two or three or even four sentences, to make it easier to understand. Also, when there was a choice of words that reflected more idiomatic English versus more obscure English, the former was often used. An example of this is in our Nicene Creed. The underlying Latin text of "*consubstantialem Patri*" is currently translated as "one in being with the Father". But there is in English the word "consubstantial" which more directly reflects the Latin root and means the same thing. The new translation replaces "one in being with the Father" with "consubstantial with the Father" in order to preserve that Latin connection.

It should be noted that these types of changes do lead, at times, to making the prayers we pray a bit more challenging. But given time we can become as familiar with the new translation as with the current one. Moreover, in many of the places where the new translation is a bit more awkward—preserving the underlying Latin root more directly—it is not a case of simply preserving Latin for the sake of Latin. Often it is an issue of preserving doctrinal language that has served the Church for many, many centuries. When the Nicene Creed was formulated it was to ensure that the Church universal understood that Jesus Christ in his divinity is not somehow a lesser God or less than fully God. The original Greek formulation of that doctrine was to say that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit share the "same being" (*ousia*) but in three different "persons" (*hypostases*). In order to preserve unity between the eastern, Greek-speaking Church and western Latin-speaking Church, those words were translated into Latin by "*substantia*" and "*persona*". So, "consubstantial" reflects a core doctrinal truth of our faith that goes back to the 4th century. The new translation highlights that theological concern by preserving in English the underlying Latin word. The irony, of course, is that when asked to explain what "consubstantial" means, we will all go back to the current English translation. It means "one in being with". But knowing the theological background helps to connect us to a core doctrine of our faith.

[From the Sept. 25 bulletin]

Last week I looked at the key principle guiding the new translation of the Mass prayers

from Latin into English: that the English preserve as much as possible a connection to the Latin original. As a result, we have a new translation of prayers going into full effect at the end of November, where sentence structure and words are changed to reflect more that Latin base. Tied to this core principle of the new translation are others: keeping the biblical connections clear; adding some poetic nuance; and maintaining a theological depth.

A clear example of the biblical connection is the “*Lord, I am not Worthy*” (*Domine non sum dignus*) prayer we pray in preparation for communion. The current English translation we use reads: “*Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed.*” The new translation reads: “*Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.*” The current translation is a very good rendering of the meaning of the Latin: “*receive you*” captures the idea of “*entering under my roof*” and “*I*” captures the idea of “*my soul*” as referring to the whole person not just to the inner spiritual part of us. However, the current translation does not maintain as clearly the biblical allusion to Luke 7:6-7 (the story of the centurion coming up to Jesus and saying “*Lord, I am not worthy you should enter under my roof...speak but the word and my servant shall be healed*”), which is underlying the Latin text. The new translation keeps that biblical connection more clearly, although it does mean we have to be careful in explaining that “*soul*” is not simply about our inner spirits but our whole person. [And for children, explaining that “*roof*” is not the roof of the mouth or simply the literal roof of the house!] In any case there are hundreds of biblical allusions in the prayers we pray at Mass, many of them in the prayers assigned to the priest. Where possible these biblical connections are more clearly maintained.

Perhaps the clearest example of adding a poetic nuance in the prayers we all pray together occurs in the new English translation of the Gloria. Currently we pray/sing: “*we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.*” With the new translation we will pray/sing: “*we praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory.*” Notice the redundancy, the superfluous, overflowing language, which reflects the underlying poetic text. The current translation of the Gloria took some of that out to keep the meaning clear. The new translation restores that excessiveness to enhance the poetic

expression. Again, even more of this will be heard in the prayers reserved for the priest than in ones we pray in common.

Last week I mentioned the word “*consubstantial*”, used in the new translation of the Nicene Creed, as an example of a theological depth the new translation is trying to maintain. That would also be true of the phrase “*only begotten Son*” that is in both the Creed and Gloria, and other phrases that we will be hearing in the prayers prayed aloud by the priest. Where there is a significant issue to point out, I will do so in future columns.

[From the Oct. 16 bulletin]

Beginning next week we will have a little teaching at the start of each Mass. Each hymnal will have the new translation of the Order of Mass inserted in the inside cover of the hymnal so that we can practice saying and singing the new wording. Yes, it will be awkward for awhile. Change is never easy or perfectly smooth. But please remember: nothing is changing in the Mass itself. It is the same Mass that came out of the Second Vatican Council; the same Mass we have celebrated now for over 40 years. Let’s relax with the introduction of the changes. Not make too big of deal out of it. Even have a little fun learning it and the background for it.

Take the most common dialogue we do at Mass several times. The priest says “*The Lord be with you*”. All respond with? “*And also with you.*” You vintage members (that includes me by the way) remember the underlying Latin: “*Dominus vobiscum...et cum spiritu tuo*”. When this was translated into English 45 years ago the decision was made to make more colloquial sense of the words by saying “*And also with you*”. The new translation tries to connect us more literally back to the underlying Latin and so we will now respond “*And with your spirit,*” a more literal, exact translation.

This greeting and response has some biblical roots, but nothing exactly as we use it at Mass. Most likely the original underlying greeting and response were parallel. The priest /bishop would say “*The Lord be with your spirit*” to the whole community. And the whole community would respond “*And with your spirit*” back to the priest /bishop. Over time it gained the shortened form we used in Latin and now will use in English. Interestingly, most language groups around the world, when the Latin was being translated into

their local language, kept the response as “*And with your spirit*”. In English we will now be joining in that response. As mentioned, however, let’s not sweat it. It will take some time to get everyone on the same page, even for something as simple as this response.

Most of the word changes are actually not in the responses of the community at Mass but in the prayers or words the priest is responsible for. All of the Opening Prayers (now called the Collect), the Prayers at the Preparation of the Gifts, the Communion Prayer after communion, and the Eucharistic Prayers have been changed quite extensively. Thankfully, these are prayers we tend to read from the Sacramentary (now going back to being called the Roman Missal) and so priests don’t need to memorize them, only learn to pray them aloud in a meaningful way. At the same time, some of these word changes, although making some sense when you study them on the written page, are very difficult to understand and absorb when spoken. After we have introduced the changes in the community’s responses these next five weeks, I will begin to use this column to go through some of the major changes in the Eucharistic and other prayers that the presider leads.

One thing I do ask, however, is that we not get hung up on exact wording. The Mass is not a magical formula, which if not said exactly the same way each time, is invalid. Nor is the Mass a drama which we are watching from theater seats to see how it is being performed. The Mass is a living act of worship and praise that involves our minds and bodies and spirits. The Lord invites us to actively participate. He offers the prayer with us, feeds us, and uses our active participation to transform not just the bread and wine but all of us more deeply into his body and blood.

That doesn’t mean that there is no definite structure, wording or sense to each prayer and part of Mass. There is. Nor does it mean that a priest is free to do anything he wants. He is not. But it makes no sense to celebrate Mass and not have people understand the proper meaning of the words being used. My biggest worry in this whole new translation endeavor is that people might be tempted to become more passive at Mass or “read along” in missals rather than actively engaging in the prayers and responses. Let’s not let that happen in our Eucharistic celebrations here. On my part, I will do my best to pray the priest’s prayers in such a way that they are clear and understandable. On all

our parts, let’s have some relaxed learning and practice of the new words over the next few weeks.

[From the Oct. 23 bulletin]

We have placed an “Order of Mass” booklet in the front cover of each hymnal so that the new translation is available for use. Please try to keep those blue Order of Mass booklets tucked into the plastic cover so they can be easily found and used. I have placed a copy of that booklet on our website (link is on the home page), as well as other links to materials from the U.S. Bishops’ Conference and Archdiocese of Detroit dealing with all the new translation.

Why do this new translation? What are the overall goals in re-translating the Latin into English? One goal is to eventually align all the various language translations more closely to the Latin original so that, no matter what language we pray in, we have a greater sense of connecting to the common, Latin-based rite we are all part of. When the Church first grew (first 3 centuries or so), since the liturgy was celebrated in the local language and Greek was the dominant language at the time, even in Rome the liturgy was in Greek.

But by the 4th and into the 5th century Latin came to dominate in the west. The prayers at Mass were translated from Greek into Latin and the style of liturgical prayer was adjusted to fit the Roman culture. This led to a style that was more literary, poetic, and a bit elevated, with liturgical prayer reflecting the stance of a humble petitioner asking favor and blessing from the holy God. We are part of that Roman or western rite of the Catholic Church and so our translation will now more closely reflect that style and language.

A second reason is the hope of creating a more timeless vernacular language of prayer, one less affected by the changing meanings and idioms of everyday language. This is especially true when it comes to theological language about Jesus. The 4th and 5th century Church fought hard and long to safeguard the teaching that Jesus is truly human and truly divine. In his humanity he is like us in all things but sin. In his divinity, because there is only one God, he shares in the very same divinity of the one and only God. Three terms in particular will be noticed in the new translation of the Gloria and the Creed, which connects us directly to the language of those early Christological debates: calling Jesus

the “Only Begotten Son,” naming him as “consubstantial with the Father”, and saying that he is “incarnate of the Virgin Mary”. Each sounds a bit odd to us in current English and so it will take time to pray them more easily. Yet they preserve an important theological connection to the core reality of Jesus as both truly God and truly human.

A third reason for the new translation is to create what might be called a “sacred vernacular”. By using phrasing and words that are not as common in everyday English (for example by replacing the word “cup” with the less common word “chalice”) and by translating each instance of Latin’s use of “sacred” and “holy” into English (something not done in the translation we now use), the hope is that our praying at Mass will have a sense of specialness, of holiness as we address God and Jesus. It is added to by the invitation to make a slight bow of the head, every time we name God as Trinity, or Jesus, or Mary or the saint whose feast we might be celebrating.

We will have to be careful, of course, to avoid the pitfalls that come with all that use of the language of “holiness” and “sacredness”—a temptation the Church fell into in the past—to so emphasize the sacredness of all that was taking place in the church that more care was given to vessels and sanctuaries and priest hands than to the reality they point to, the living out of our daily Christian lives as Christ’s body and blood, broken and shared for the salvation of others. At the same time, however, a new translation enables us to tune in more closely to the texts we pray at Mass and to embrace them with full and active participation. It will take some effort, parents, but why not use the new translation as a way to practice the prayers of Mass with your children? Let them know that mom and dad are relearning them as well and so they can be learned together. In most cases, our children have no problem entering into the learning, if the parents do as well. Moreover, if your children cannot now recite by heart the Gloria or Holy Holy or Creed, then learning a new version won’t be confusing. In fact, it can be a wonderful opportunity to really memorize the core responses of Mass.

I realize change is not easy. We changed from Latin to English over 40 years ago and that was a difficult transition for some. We are now changing the style and wording of English. It is not a case of bad versus good. Rather, it is one of good but different. Please use the worship aids we will be

providing and especially the blue booklets in the inside front cover of the hymnals to pray/sing these new English versions of familiar prayers. Let’s take it a step at a time, with patience and even some humor. The words we use are not magical or absolute, so let’s not get hung up on everything being perfect. At the same time the new English translation will be with us for another 40 years or more, so let’s teach it to our children and grandchildren and enter into praying with it as fully as we can.

***The Creed (Part One)**

The first change that jumps out if you compare old and new versions of the Nicene Creed (our website has a link you can open up and a document you can download—the one that was used as an insert in last week’s bulletin) is the change from “We believe” to “I believe”. “We believe” reflects the original Greek translation of this creed; the fact that our faith is not simply an individual faith but embraces the community’s faith. Why the change? In Latin *credo* (“I believe”) shares the same root with *cor* (“heart”). The Latin focus is on the personal, heart-felt appropriation of the faith. Each of us must personally declare and proclaim our faith. At each Sunday Eucharist we are able to affirm that faith as something that is more than simply being born into or forced to believe. It is our own personal embrace of the faith of the Church. Thus “I believe”.

I think a case can be made for the strength of either translation. We allow baptism of infants, for example, even though the Church insists that faith must be present for baptism to occur. The child is not capable of professing faith. Therefore, it is the faith of the parents, the godparents, and the whole Church that makes baptism possible for an infant. “We believe” and so they can be baptized. Also, at times we need the faith of the community to sustain us in our journey of life, because we are going through a period where we are finding it difficult to believe. Once again because “we believe” the individual can be sustained by that communal faith. On the other hand, unless we embrace that faith personally and in a heart-felt way, something is lost. Each of us must make that “I believe” again and again in life if the community’s faith is to be strong. Moreover, because we are praying the creed in unison at Mass, the communal aspect comes through that shared, united praying of the creed. The “I believe” said

together becomes a shared faith, a shared “we believe”. Thus both translations make sense but we will now shift to the “I believe” throughout the Creed beginning this week.

A second change is minor—from “*of all that is seen and unseen*” to “*of all things visible and invisible*.” The point is the same in both translations: God is the ultimate creator of everything in the universe—all matter and energy, all physical and spiritual beings, what we know about now and what we might discover in the future. The new translation uses English words that have a clear connection to the Latin—*visible* and *invisible*. One of the principles that guided the new translation was to use such English words, when possible, to bring out the underlying Latin roots. But a more important principle that is at work here, is to let the English reflect the biblical roots of our prayers at Mass. In Colossians 1:15-16, the Father is said to create, through Christ, “*all things in heaven and on earth, the invisible and the visible*”. The Church had that passage in mind when it first formed the Creed in the 4th century. The new translation helps bring out that connection more clearly.

A third change is to use here (and elsewhere in the Mass prayers) the term “*Only Begotten Son of God*” rather than simply “*only Son of God*”. The Church went through much hardship and disagreement in fashioning the precise wording about how to describe the historical Jesus’ relationship to the Son or Word of God and the Son of God’s relationship to the Father and Spirit as one and only one God yet a trinity of persons. As a human being Jesus is born of Mary but as Son or Word of God that reality of Jesus is eternal, not part of our historical time. The new wording tries to capture this more precisely. Jesus is the “*Only Begotten Son of God*” and therefore as God is not born of Mary but “*born of the Father before all ages*.”

This leads to a fourth change, one that doesn’t flow easily in English. Jesus is said to be “*consubstantial with the Father*.” The old translation is a lot easier and more direct in English—“*one in being with the Father*”. And that is precisely what “consubstantial” means. Personally I wish the translators had left that as it was. However, this word, directly from the Latin, was the way that the Church translated the Greek word *homoousios*, a word for which blood was

shed, bishops and others were exiled or excommunicated, and on which the fate of the whole Church rested in the 4th century during what was called the Arian heresy. In other words, it is one of the key theological words in our Catholic tradition. Arius and his followers and then later groups of similar tendency did not accept that Jesus was fully the same God as was the Father. He was divine but in some secondary, subordinate way. Only the Father was truly God in an absolute way.

To solve this crisis different language was tried. In the end the Council of Nicea—the first ecumenical council in our history—decided to coin the word *homoousios* to ensure that people would understand the full divinity of Christ. He was not just “similar in divinity” to the Father but shared the very same being, the same divine reality with the Father. For the Latin, western Church this was translated precisely. “*Homo*” in Greek and “*con*” in Latin were used in the same way and meant the same. “*Ousios*” in Greek and “*substantia*” in Latin were precisely the same. Thus *consubstantialis*. It is a precise, theological word that carries with it the weight of the whole resolution of the Arian crisis. On it rests our understanding of how God is truly and only one God, yet is experienced as a tripersonal reality—the central doctrine about God in our faith tradition. The new English translation wanted to preserve that word in our awareness, because of its significance, and so we will now use it in the Creed.

One of the difficulties, however, is that the word “*substance*” has undergone a change in understanding since those days. When we think of “substance” we think of physical, material, sensible reality. That is why the original translators used the phrase “*one in being with*” rather than “consubstantial”. In current English it steers us away from a false understanding of God as somehow a material reality. But the importance of the word “consubstantial” to our tradition was considered significant enough by the new translators that it has been restored in the Creed. It doesn’t flow off the tongue, and we have to remember that it is not trying to say that the Son and the Father share a common material substance, but when we use it we will at least know we are using a word that preserved the faith of the Church at a critical time and is essential for understanding our doctrine on the Trinity.

[From the Oct. 30 bulletin]

***The Gloria**

We learned the opening words to the Gloria last week, the same as we are used to, but with the changed ending. From “*peace to his people on earth*” to “*on earth peace to people of good will*”. Why the change? Mainly because the new translation more accurately reflects the traditional wording of the underlying Scriptural text that is being referred to—Luke 2:14. That was one of the key principles in shaping the new translation. Where there is an underlying Scriptural text in the Latin, the translators tried to bring that out more clearly in the English. The goal is to both highlight such scriptural connections and to invite us to go back to the passage in the Bible and understand it in its own context.

A second change in the Gloria occurs in the way our praise of God the Father is structured. In the new translation we poetically and almost excessively build up the praise—*we praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks*—until we finally culminate in who this is all for: for God, our heavenly king and almighty Father. This more poetic approach captures another of the principles used in the new translation: to let the words, where possible, reflect some of the underlying Latin poetic rhythm and sentence structure. This principle will become even more apparent in many of the changes in the prayers that the priest leads (Opening Collect, Eucharistic Prayers, etc.).

***The Creed (part two)**

Many of the changes in the new English translation of the Roman Missal reflect the desire to use English words which have a Latin-based root, whenever possible, to tie our prayer more closely to the underlying Latin. In the Nicene Creed we see this in the change from “*maker...of all that is seen and unseen*” to “*maker...of all things visible and invisible*.” The “poetic” principle, mentioned above with the Gloria, comes less into play with the Creed, but the new translation of “*he suffered death and was buried*” conveys a more emotionally powerful image than “*he suffered, died, and was buried*”. But the majority of changes in the Creed have to do with the principle of keeping us connected to important theological concepts of our faith tradition.

It is clear from the second “I believe”, the one pertaining to Jesus Christ, that the Church

wants to make clear how the one and only God was truly the same God we are talking about when calling Jesus divine. Jesus is said to be “*God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God...consubstantial with the Father*.” These words capture a decisive moment in our Church’s history, when the core faith of the Church in Jesus as Savior of all humanity was being threatened. We did not create ourselves and we cannot bring the gift of eternal salvation to ourselves. So, unless Jesus is truly in some way God, he would not be the definitive human event of salvation in all of human history. The key words in our tradition for this are “*consubstantial*” and “*Only Begotten Son*”. The Creed highlights this reality as well through the phrase “*born of the Father before all ages*”. Every time we use these words we are connecting our faith to that of the 4th-century Church which coined them as a way to guarantee a proper understanding of Jesus’ divinity.

However, unless Jesus is truly human, sharing fully in our created, limited humanity, we would still be without a definitive way to salvation. God doesn’t need saving. Humanity does. Jesus’ reality as both fully human yet fully divine guarantees that our salvation in and through him really happens. This focus on Jesus’ true humanity is tied in our faith tradition especially to the word “*incarnation*”, a word that means “he took on human flesh”, i.e., he was not God pretending to experience human life but was truly human with all the emotions and bodily reality and limitations that implies. The desire to highlight the theological importance of this word “incarnation” leads to what is probably the most awkward phrasing in the new translation of the Creed: “*and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became man*.”

The previous translation properly said he was “*born of the Virgin Mary*”, which is another way to say that the incarnation really happened. Jesus is human, born of a human mother. However, because the new translation in its more direct reflection of the underlying Latin already used the word “born” when saying Jesus was “*born of the Father*”, we will now say he was “*incarnate of the Virgin Mary*”. It is a bit awkward, but it keeps in front of us that key word “incarnate”, a word which has an important place in our theological tradition.

So, “*consubstantial with the Father*” and “*incarnate of the Virgin Mary*”. More of a mouthful than “*one in being with the Father*” and

“born of the Virgin Mary”. Yet no change in meaning; only a more direct connection to the two key words in our faith tradition which guarantee a proper understanding of Jesus and the possibility of salvation through him: “*consubstantial*” (and so Jesus is truly and fully God) and “*incarnate*” (and so Jesus is truly and fully human).

There are a few other, very minor, wording changes in the Creed to better reflect the underlying Latin (rose again “*in accordance with*” rather than “*in fulfillment of*” the Scriptures; he is “*adored*” rather than “*worshipped*”; we “*look forward to*” rather than simply “*look for*” the resurrection of the dead). The one that will probably stand out for you is the change from “*we acknowledge on baptism*” to “*I confess one Baptism*” for the forgiveness of sins. It incorporates the new translation’s focus on the first person “I”. But why the word “*confess*”? The Latin underneath is “*confiteor*” and so that is one reason. But “to confess” also carries a more full sense of commitment than the word “acknowledge”. It is not just a matter of acknowledging with our heads that there is one baptism. It is a matter of living it with our lives. A good New Testament reference for this is Romans 10:9 (“*if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved*”).

A few final thoughts on the Creed:

(1) As it is prayed, the Creed seems to have a four-fold structure: “*I believe in one God, the Father...*”; “*I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ...*”; “*I believe in the Holy Spirit...*”; “*I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church...*” But that is misleading. I wish the translators had stuck to their principle of more faithfully rendering the Latin here as well. The Latin uses “*Credo*” (I believe) only once, at the very beginning, to make it clear that everything that follows about Jesus and the Holy Spirit is talking about the same “one God”. The underlying Latin shows very clearly the Creed’s three-fold structure: “*I believe in one God the Father...and in one Lord Jesus...and in the Holy Spirit*” (all tied together). The use of “and in” connects them all. The Latin then changes when dealing with the Church. It doesn’t use “and in” when speaking of the Church. Our belief in God is on the divine level. Our belief of the Church is essential but not exactly on the same level. We believe **in** God. We believe the Church **about** God.

(2) We are invited to bow toward the altar at the words “*and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of*

the Virgin Mary, and became man”. This is not new; we were asked to do this previously; but I think it is a good time to incorporate this gesture, if we haven’t done it before. One of the ways we actively participate in the Eucharist is through such non-verbal gestures.

(3) Someone was concerned that we were becoming “too Lutheran” with the change to the word “*consubstantial*”. They had done some online reading and had been directed to a discussion on the word “*consubstantiation*”. This is a different word. Lutherans and Catholics share a common profession of the Nicene Creed. We have no disagreements there. We do have, however, slightly different understandings of how the real presence of Christ is to be talked about at the Eucharist. In our Catholic tradition, we coined the word “*transubstantiation*” to emphasize that this can no longer be considered bread and wine. The reality has been changed into the body and blood of Christ. Lutheran theology has used the word “*consubstantiation*” to emphasize a distinction from Catholics. For Lutherans that word signals their belief that Jesus is “truly present with” the bread and wine but not necessarily that the bread and wine have been changed (it doesn’t preclude such a belief for Lutherans; but it doesn’t require it as it does for Catholics).

[From the Nov. 6th bulletin]

*** Introductory Prayers of Priest**

The majority of changes in the new translation occur in the prayers which are assigned to the presiding priest. I will go through the key changes in the most important of these—the Eucharistic Prayers—from Advent on, as we begin to hear the new translation of these prayers. The least important of these—prayers said by the priest quietly to keep him focused on what he is doing but not intended to be part of the whole community’s prayer—have insignificant changes and so I won’t be commenting on them. The real challenge for the community will be to listen attentively to prayers that are a bit more ornate, a bit more convoluted, due to their closer adherence to the underlying Latin. It will take time to adjust our ears to them in such a way that they truly make meaningful sense and become part of our prayer.

Many of the words and phrases the priest uses to lead into a response by the community have been altered as well. For example, a slight change occurs in what has traditionally been called the *Orate fratres* (“*pray brethren*”). Currently the

priest says “*Pray, brothers and sisters, that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.*” The new translation says “...*that my sacrifice and yours...*”. In one sense a very small change. It is one, however, I wish hadn’t happened. It doesn’t intend to imply that the priest’s offering and the people’s offering are different, but in English it could be heard incorrectly in that way. The meaning is still the same: “*our sacrifice*”. There is only one sacrifice—Jesus—no yours or mine. Incidentally the word “*holy*” is added on the end of the people’s response: “*for our good and the good of all his holy Church.*” This is one of many instances where the underlying Latin word for holiness is directly translated into the English. In the current translation many of these were taken out because there was a concern it might sound too stuffy. The new translation has restored them here and elsewhere in order to create a more “sacred sounding” English in the liturgy.

After the consecration the priest will now sing/say: “*The mystery of faith*”. It is more concise, in a sense more dramatic, than the current statement “Let us proclaim the mystery of faith.” I like this change a lot, as simple as it is. The focus isn’t on us proclaiming the words of our faith. The mystery is here, on the altar in front us, and we are to become that mystery as well. The priest is saying, in effect, “*here it is*” and all are responding with an acclamation about Christ’s saving death and resurrection. The often used acclamation of “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again” is no longer an option. Instead of an acclamation addressed directly to Christ, it was simply a declarative statement of our faith. This moment in the liturgy is meant to be one of awe, an exuberant acclamation to Christ for what he has done in his death and resurrection and now making that present among us here and now. The three other options we use have been re-translated. Because we usually sing them, we will learn the various new responses as we learn the new musical settings over the months ahead.

The introduction to the Lord’s Prayer will include the words “*we dare to say*” rather than the current “*let us pray with confidence.*” Again, not much of a difference but the word “*dare*” does capture the sense of boldness we are to have in our prayer to the Father. The Our Father itself has not been re-translated. There was a worry that to do so would cause too much upset. The prayer led by the priest after the Our Father, however, (called the

embolism) has been re-translated. You will notice it most in the change from “*as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior*” to “*as we await the blessed hope and coming of our Savior*”. It changes the focus from our internal state (*in joyful hope*) to the objective reality of Christ (*who is the blessed hope*). I like that switch but have noticed the word “*blessed*” seems to be overused in the new translation.

[From the Nov. 13th bulletin]

*The New English Translation of the Roman Missal (continued)

I have been using the weekday Masses to “practice” all of the changes, since it will take some time to get good at praying all the new translations of the Eucharistic prayers, as well as the various lead-ins to the responses of the Masses. Beginning this weekend, we will use all the new responses, both sung and spoken, except for the Confiteor (we will introduce that in the weeks following the Christmas season). People will get a sense of how the prayers sound and begin to work out how and when they want or need to use the blue “Order of Mass” booklet in the inside cover of the hymnal. My guess is that it will be easiest to use that booklet apart from the hymnal. But I do ask that you place it back in the plastic insert before leaving, and not leave it out by itself, so that it is available for the next person. Also, as mentioned above, everyone will be receiving a paper copy of that booklet in the mail this week. Or, it can be downloaded anytime from our parish website. Thank you. Let us look below at some final minor changes in the sung and spoken prayer for all of us at Mass.

The Preface begins the Eucharistic Prayer. Since the Eucharistic Prayer is structured as a dialogue with the presiding priest and people responding, the responses during the Eucharistic Prayer are an important part of actively participating in the Mass. These dialogues can be spoken but often, especially on Sundays, they will be sung. *The Lord be with you* leads again to the response *And with your spirit*. Then, *Lift up your hearts* retains the familiar response *We lift them up to the Lord*. Then, *Let us give thanks to the Lord our God* leads to a new, shortened response *It is right and just*. The previous response was longer—*It is right to give him thanks and praise*. But as a dialogue, the Eucharistic prayer is meant to flow in a unified manner. Thus, after the response *It is right and just* the presider will now immediately

begin the preface proper with *It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation* and then go on to proclaim why this is so on this particular day or for this particular feast. Something connected to the history of salvation will be brought out, after which we all affirm it by joyously entering into the *Sanctus* (Holy, Holy).

The Holy, Holy has only one minor change. The phrase *Lord God of power and might* is changed to *Lord God of hosts*. Beneath these words is one of the Old Testament's names for God: "Yahweh Sabaoth," Lord of the armies of the skies" or "Lord of the hosts of heaven". The translation we have been using helps us understand what that name for God means. Yahweh Sabaoth was a way to proclaim the power and might of God in the face of adversity and enemies. Going back to the word *hosts* connects us more directly to this Scriptural designation for God (one of the principles used in this new translation), but it runs the risk of obscuring its meaning, since "hosts" is so often used for the Eucharistic bread or host received at communion. The good thing about knowing well the translation of the last forty years is that its plain-spoken English can help us know immediately the intended meaning of the revised translation's more poetic, biblical and Latinized English.

The Lamb of God (*Agnus Dei*) remains the same but you will notice one change in the sung versions of this prayer. Previously, composers often added other invocations for Christ (Bread of Life, Prince of Peace, Word of Life, etc.) between the first Lamb of God and the final one. Now only the invocation "Lamb of God" will be used, as often as is needed until the bread has been broken or distributed onto the various plates. Then the final "Lamb of God" will end with *grant us peace*.

You will notice a change as well in the prayers just before communion. The prayer "Lord I am not worthy" (*Domine, non sum dignus*) has been retranslated back to "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed". This reflects both the underlying Latin but also a more direct connection to the language from the New Testament story of the centurion's request to Jesus for the healing of his servant (Matthew 8:8 or Luke 7:6; all the many biblical allusions in the liturgy can be explored on our website, which has a link to them). Once again the translation we are used to was written in a more direct English to convey the meaning of those words, rather than the literal

words themselves. And, again, knowing the current words well allows us to not be misled by the new translation. The Lord enters not the roof of our mouth (!) but enters us (so we currently pray *Lord I am not worthy to receive you*). And our whole person is healed, made right with, reconciled with God. Not just our spiritual reality but our entire body-spirit unity. Thus *soul* in this prayer is not to be seen as only one part of us. Communion is a time where we are fully—body, spirit, soul, the whole person—put into a healing relationship with the living, risen Lord.

There is also a change in the lead-in words used by the presider at this time. Instead of the more mundane *This is the Lamb of God* the word *Behold* is used twice to convey the sense of wonder and awe and to capture the words of John the Baptizer (John 1:29). Also, *Happy are those* becomes *Blessed are those*. Again, the word "blessed" is probably a bit overused in the new translation, but it does have the ability to drive home an important point: this is not about an internal subjective state of feeling happy or well; it is about the objective fact that we are blessed because Christ's presence is with us. Then, at the end of the lead-in, *called to his supper* now becomes *called to the supper of the Lamb*. That is another direct reference to Scripture, where we are told about a wedding feast or marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelations 19:9).

Finally, the dismissal line from the priest or deacon (*The Mass is ended, go in peace* or something similar) will now emphasize the "Go" part by starting with that word (*Go, the Mass is ended; Go, proclaim the gospel*, etc.). This is very minor but it does bring out how quickly we are commissioned to live this gospel and to be the Body of Christ, broken and poured out for the good of others. The Eucharist is not about us feeling good. This is about the salvation of the world and our essential role in living that in our daily lives so that others might be touched by that same loving, saving reality.

That pretty much covers the changes in all the shared responses, sung or spoken. Next week I will do a bit of a summary and share some further thoughts on the strengths and weaknesses of this new translation. In the meantime we will begin using all of them as we move toward the full implementation of the Roman Missal at the end of the month.

[From the Nov. 20th bulletin]

***The New English Translation of the Roman Missal (summary)**

Over the past few weeks I have written about each of the changes that is taking place in the English translation of the prayers at Mass—the ones that affect the responses of all of us. The one exception has been the changes in the Penitential Rite, including the wording of the Confiteor. We will introduce those after the Christmas season and so I will wait till then to write about them. And the two other responses of the Mystery of Faith (what we called before the Memorial Acclamation after the consecration) will be introduced in sung form in Advent and Christmas.

The majority of changes, however, will be noticed in the prayers reserved for the priest (Opening Prayer or Collect, Prayer over the Gifts, Eucharistic Prayers, etc.). It will take some time for our ears and minds to get used to the some of the words and prayer rhythms in these prayers. To help in that direction we will use only Eucharistic Prayer II for the season of Advent. That gives us four weeks to become more attuned to the wording and prayer pattern in that one. Then we will use the new Eucharistic Prayer III during the Christmas season liturgies. Eucharistic Prayer IV will be introduced in the January Ordinary Time Sundays; Eucharistic Prayers for Reconciliation I and II during Lent; Eucharistic Prayer I during the Easter season; and Eucharistic Prayers for Various Needs I, II, III, and IV during the summer months. The three children's Eucharistic Prayers have not been re-translated as yet. We are allowed to use the existing translations in Masses with children, as long as we substitute the new translation of the words of consecration.

As you can see, the implementation of the new translation is something that will take time to become fully familiar. My hope would be that by the end of the next liturgical year we would have become accustomed to all the responses—so we do not need to look as often at the Order of Mass booklet for the words. At the same time, if the Mass is to be a prayer for all of us, it is important for us all to keep re-visiting the prayers until we know them almost by heart.

There were five main principles used in translating the new English from the Latin: (1) Stay, when possible, faithful to the Latin structure, and word order, including using English words that have a Latin root. This is the principle that had the

greatest effect on the new translation. Longer sentences; sentences where the main subject and verb often are placed after a number of subordinate clauses; words like *consubstantial*, *incarnate*, *chalice*, etc. (2) Allow the poetic structure of the Latin to shine out better in certain prayers, for example, the Gloria with its multiple images of praise. (3) Keeping a closer connection to the biblical words and images contained in the prayers, for example, in the prayer before communion (*enter under my roof*), etc. (4) Keeping us connected to the ancient theological tradition, especially as it relates to key understandings of Jesus as both divine and human (*Only Begotten Son, consubstantial, incarnate of the Virgin Mary*). (5) Trying to produce, in the end, a “sacred vernacular”, an English that is not so tied to current idioms and has a more “lofty” feel to it.

Please note: the previous translation was not wrong and this new one right or vice-versa. Rather, different principles of translation have been used, producing two very different English texts from the identically same underlying Latin text. The previous English version focused on a dynamic rather than literal rendering of the Latin, simplicity rather than complexity, plain-spoken English rather than a lofty vernacular, and use of words with Anglo-Saxon roots rather than strictly Latin roots. As a result, the new version is more challenging for us to listen to and learn, but has the opportunity of providing more depth to some of the prayers as well. Also, it connects us more directly to our western, Latin-rite, a connection that will eventually keep all the vernacular translations a bit more similar to one another than they are at the present time. If I had to name a few of the pluses of the new translation I would point to the rhythm and beauty of the Gloria, to the more direct biblical language in places, the better flow of the Preface dialogue into the Preface prayer itself (*Let us give thanks to the Lord our God...It is right and just...It is truly right and just, our duty and salvation always and everywhere to give you thanks...*), to the stronger, more forceful translations of the Mystery of Faith Acclamations, and the more clearly direct missioning at the end of Mass (*Go forth, the Mass is ended; Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord, etc.*).

On the other hand, I do have some concerns with the new translation. Yes, we all can and will get used to praying the words *consubstantial with the Father* and *incarnate of the Virgin Mary*. But to

explain the meaning of these words, we immediately refer to the previous translation of *one in being with the Father and born of the Virgin Mary*. If we have to do that, I am not sure it was wise to retranslate here. Secondly, English is not well-suited to Latin word order and structure because it does not have the same use of word endings for verbs and nouns. That is why it is very difficult to translate Latin poetry and rhetoric into English in a way that preserves both the meaning and the structure of the original. Usually one or the other has to dominate. It seems to me that the new translation of the prayers reserved for the priest are made extremely difficult to proclaim well because there is more of a concern for preserving structure rather than meaning. This puts a huge responsibility on priests to learn and pray these prayers carefully and well. But will that happen often enough so that the whole assembly experiences itself as included in the prayer and understanding the prayers that are prayed? Thirdly, the desire for a “sacred vernacular” is something totally new in the history of the Catholic Church. In that sense it is a complete innovation, an experiment in translation that has no previous experience to judge it by. I do worry that the meaning of some of the prayers could be lost in the midst of the many references to *holy, sacred, blessed, chalice, oblation, merit, humbly, graciously*, and the like. Only time will tell.

The most substantive critique I have of the new translation is the change from the word *all* to the word *many* in the consecration over the wine: “*for this is the chalice of my blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins*”. There were two reasons for the change to “many”. The first is that the underlying Latin uses the word *multis*, which the English *many* directly translates. The second, and more weighty, reason for using *many* is that the underlying biblical references (Isaiah 53:12, Mark 14:24, Matthew 26:28) speak in that way. However, the problem and even danger in using the word *many* here is that, in ordinary English, it is usually understood to be a middle term between *few* and *all*. Every time we hear “many”, especially younger people, we will have a tendency to hear, in effect, “*Jesus died not for a few and not for all but for many*”. But that is Catholic heresy. We do not believe in limited atonement, as though Jesus’ death was only for those who were either predestined for heaven or who come to freely

accept him No! Catholic dogma is that Jesus died for every human person, past, present, and future. All of us. Not a few of us. Not some of us. Not “many” of us. But all of us. The fact that not all might freely embrace that salvation does not take away, in Catholic thinking, from the core dogma: Jesus death and resurrection is for all humanity, each and every human being.

Moreover, Mark’s and Matthew’s account of the Last Supper and Jesus’ use of *many* needs to be put into its proper context. Jesus is speaking to his closer disciples. We don’t know the number, but certainly fewer than the crowds who had been following him. In that context he is, in effect, saying: “*This blood (of mine) will be poured out not just for the few here but for the many, that is, for all*”. Underlying this saying is the image of the Suffering Servant from Isaiah 53:12 who is said to have “*borne the sins of many*”. But in Hebrew and other Semitic languages, this term is used often as a circumlocution to precisely mean “*all*”. Some vernacular translations of the Mass prayers (for example, the French) try to capture both the underlying Latin but also the connotation of not limiting Jesus’ saving death by saying “*the many*” or “*the multitude*”. Both of those phrases in English would have been a bit better at keeping the core dogma from being misunderstood. In English, *the many* is not used as a contrast to *all* but only to the *few*. Jesus’ death is not for the few but for the many, i.e. potentially all. My concern is that, in faithfully speaking the new translation we might be training generations of Catholics in false dogma. That is why you will hear me still use *all* at the consecration most of the time, at times *the many* and sometimes just *many*.

As we move forward in our use of the new translation, please continue to stay open to the relatively minor changes in the common responses. Take a look at the Order of Mass booklet being sent home to you this week (or download a copy from the parish website). Parents, I think it would be a wonderful thing to use the Gloria or Creed occasionally as a prayer at dinner. In that way the whole family can learn the prayer anew, simply by having prayed it together often. But in the end, please remember that nothing has changed in the structure or meaning or core experience of the Mass. It is our weekly rhythm of answering the Lord’s invitation to gather with his people, placing ourselves and all that we have experienced into his hands, letting our attitudes and lives be shaped by

his Word, joining him in offering all that we are individually and collectively to the Father through the bread and wine placed on the altar, receiving the gift of his body and blood in communion so that we become more truly his Body, and going forth to live as his body broken and shared for the good of others, until we re-gather the following week.

It is rhythm that connects us to the life-giving heart of the universe. It is a rhythm that can sustain and nourish us no matter what is going on. Let us adapt to the new wordings but not lose touch with this life-saving rhythm.