

REVISIONS IN THE WORDS OF THE MASS?

By P. Lovrien

Change is a constant element in our lives. We change in appearance, in behavior, and in our position in life from child, teen, to parent. Hopefully, our faith, too, changes as it deepens each year.

Change happens in the Church, also, because the Church is a living presence in our lives.

On the First Sunday of Advent, November 26/27, every English speaking parish in the world will pray with revised texts in the Mass. This change will occur for Catholics in the countries of Australia, Canada, England and Wales, India, Ireland, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Scotland, South Africa, and the United States. These countries are part of a group of international Bishops conferences called the International Commission on English in the Liturgy or ICEL. The bishops – and their consultants - who serve on ICEL have been working on this revision called the third edition of the Roman Missal since the late 1990's.

The importance of ICEL's work on the accuracy of this translation is a bigger issue because other nations translate the Roman Missal not from Latin to their vernacular language but from English to the language of their nation. These nations include Antilles, Bangladesh, the CEPAC -Episcopal Conference of the Pacific (Samoa, Zuva, other islands), Gambia-Liberia-Sierra Leone, Ghana, Kenya, Malaysia-Singapore, Malawi, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea and the Solomons, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

A total of 26 nations in the world, then, will use this revision. Our Catholic bishops have worked with the Pope and his translation committee called the *Vox Clara* on this third edition of the Sacramentary which we will now call the Roman Missal.

As we all know, when one republishes a book already in print, the reprint is called a "revision" and we name the revision the second edition. Since the Roman Missal was first written in English in 1969 and revised in 1975, this revision will be called the third edition since it was promulgated, or formally announced, in 2001 by Pope John Paul II.

Many Catholics wondered about the need to adjust the Mass texts. It has been said that in his travels throughout the world, Pope John Paul II, fluent in many languages, noticed that the translations of the Mass were consistently similar among nations except for the English texts of the Mass. He called for revisions of Mass texts in English so they would more closely mirror Latin texts of the Mass from which most languages of the world translate.

As a result, the revised texts will unify Mass texts throughout the world in a renewed way. After the Second Vatican Council, the methods of translation allowed scholars to translate the *meaning* of a Latin phrase (*dynamic* method) using daily phrases from language of the people. In the mid 1990's, Church leaders replaced that method with the *formal* method of translation which considers the literal Latin text and attempts to represent it as it is in the new language.

The Mass will still be in English but include more metaphors from scripture, more poetic phrases, and writings from the Church Fathers. One common prayer in the introductory rite, the “I Confess” or *Confetior*, is also revised:

PRESENT TEXT

I confess to almighty God,
and to you, my brothers and sisters,
that I have **sinned through my own fault**,
in my thoughts and in my words,
in what I have done,
and in what I have failed to do;

and I ask blessed Mary, ever virgin,
all the angels and saints,
and you, my brothers and sisters,
to pray for me to the Lord, our God.

NEW TEXT

I confess to almighty God
and to you, my brothers and sisters,
that I have **greatly sinned**
in my thoughts and in my words,
in what I have done
and in what I have failed to do,

**through my fault, through my fault,
through my most grievous fault;**

therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-
Virgin,
all the Angels and Saints,
and you, my brothers and sisters,
to pray for me to the Lord our God.

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You can preview the texts of the Order of Mass at www.usccb.org/romanmissal.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT – The translation of the response to, “The Lord be with you” according to the formal principal of translation will be, “And with your spirit” which mirrors the words in the Latin phrase, “Et cum spiritu tuo.” In Latin *et* means *and*, *cum* means *with* and the phrase *spiritu tuo* means *your spirit*. When we look at just this one response and analyze it, we can imagine how many revisions might have been needed for other texts of the Mass.

In a Nutshell – Change is one thing in life we can count on. As the living Body of Christ, the Church experiences change in its liturgy as it journeys through time. The bishops of the English-speaking countries of the world dialogue with Rome through the International Commission on English in the Liturgy or ICEL. This organization works with the Pope to provide texts for the liturgy. Recent scholarship has led ICEL to change the way it translates the Mass from Latin to English. Starting the First Sunday of Advent, we will use the formal translation principal and abandon the dynamic translation principal. That means that instead of translating a Latin phrase according to its meaning, ICEL will present to us a more literal translation of the Latin text of the Mass. The shift in this approach will mean that Mass texts in English will mirror the Latin text more closely and reflect Mass texts prayed in French, German, Spanish, Vietnamese, Latin, and other languages of the world. We will see revision in the words of the Mass but the Mass will still be in English, will still call for active participation of all God’s People, and will continue to enable the people to sing the liturgy.