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## From the Inside Out

A Reflection on Receiving the *Revised Roman Missal, Third Edition*

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The *recognitio* for a revised translation of the ritual has been signed. The current translation I have been praying with the Church for 38 years. I will be in the middle of my 40th ordination year when the *Revised Roman Missal* begins in the English-Speaking world. It took these decades for the current texts to have an inner life. I pray the texts differently at a funeral than during the Christmas Vigil. I have learned a cadence; homiletic references to the Eucharistic prayers and ritual have become second nature. My liturgical training when first received often centered on rubrics. In the 1980s I was fortunate to learn some spiritual principles for the presider as a *public* pray-er. For example, the Eucharistic prayer is not *mine*; it is meant to form the people and me, me even more so. Like my boyhood New Jersey pastor in the 60s, I will have to learn my ~~draft~~ = all over. He was younger than I am today.

My skill sets do not include an STD, or an avocation with the Latin language, or a master rhetorician of the English language. I am unable to credibly comment on the best words to use in any translation. In the last few months, almost weekly, I have ~~prayed~~ = the words of the revised canons *out loud in my room*. Rather than talk about the words, I want to sense the words in prayer. Eventually I expect the words will become even comfortable **from the inside out**. I borrow the phrase from Msgr. James Moroney whose explanations have helped me formulate some observations as I enter the remote preparations for this transition. Perhaps these reflections can help:

- 1) When studying for a Masters in Spirituality I had the privilege to have Fr. Ray Brown, SS as a scripture professor. Some of us were able to catch him after class to gather more nuggets from his brilliance. Once he cautioned us on the inherent danger with translations. A translation remains less than the original. He shared this story. Fr. Brown had been asked to offer the translations of the scriptural corpus of St. John for the 1970 edition of New American Bible (NAB). He agreed. Before he submitted his final text, Fr. Brown was informed that someone was going to put all the New Testament translations (including *his*) into similar language and then use a colloquial form for easy reading. Fr. Brown withdrew his text. For him, translating from the Greek was one translation enough; translating twice again created further distance from the inspired writer. Eight years after its first publication, a revision of the New Testament began. We now have the NAB with New Testament Revised (1986). One example of the revision

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some priests will remember; we went from: *Happy are the poor in spirit* to *Blessed are the poor in spirit*. Blessed sounds and reads better.

We have had several editions of the Bible. The forthcoming *Revised Roman Missal* is the third edition and only the second English translation to see the light of day. There may be a fourth edition someday; I suspect not in my lifetime. Will it evoke prayer? As I pray the words, in many cases I find myself formed by the richness of the new language.

2) Along with the inability to translate credibly from Latin, another skill set lacking in me is the ability to read or speak in two or more languages. I am amazed, sometimes jealous, of the brothers who have two and three languages in their tool box = . When it comes to the translation of the Roman Missal into Vietnamese, Korean, Spanish, German, Italian, French, etc., the vernacular texts - I am told - remain faithful to the Latin in both imagery and layered meanings. In the English translations there were variations inserted into the text. Australia currently prays in the Creed *consubstantial*; this seems not to have been a challenge for the Aussies.

3) I learned these months that our texts were translated under a process called **dynamic equivalence** rather than **formal equivalence**. With that understanding here are a few reflections:

a. The Latin word for *chalice* in our current rendering is translated *cup*.

Cup = has many meanings in our culture; chalice has a unique meaning, a bit more symbolic and poetic. Cup, well teenagers use the word for other items it holds. Chalice reads better for worship.

b. *From east to west* is another form of dynamic equivalence. The Latin is more closely translated *from the rising of the sun to its setting*. As a young priest it was difficult to get the East/West political divide out of my mind. Where were Africa and South America in the imagery? It seemed possible to miss the inclusion intent. While we know the sun neither sets nor rises, the poetry is indeed inclusive of the globe. I look forward to using this formal equivalence from the Latin.

c. Four times in the Liturgy a familiar greeting-dialogue occurs: As we begin the Liturgy, as the Gospel is about to be read, as a Preface begins the Eucharistic Prayer, and as the Liturgy concludes. The same four greetings occur in the midst of the Church = s single prayer. Maybe these are not greetings.

These four moments, these exchanges, hope the priest and people are willing to enter inside the worship and the listening. These words center on interiority, a willing spirit, more than simple greeting-dialogue. Years ago, when typing *the Lord be with you* on the computer, it was underlined as having made a mistake. Computers are not programmed for subjunctive sentence structures. I re-learned that *The Lord be with you* invites a response unlike a declarative statement. And that the encouraging response from the people, *And with your spirit*, invites me to have that same interior disposition as together we enter these four moments of transition in our public prayer. This subtle explanation will take some time for me and the people to appreciate.

d. *Like the dewfall* stops me. This phrase sounded / felt awkward at first.

After several times praying = the text out loud, the awkwardness lessened. And those people who walk early in the morning or park on the street know exactly this natural phenomenon and might see here a connection to the hidden work of the Holy Spirit over the gifts of bread and wine.

e. *Poured out for you and for many* does stop me. I went to the biblical texts: Mark quotes Jesus with *poured out for many*; Matthew, Luke and Paul have neither *for many* nor *for all*. Some facts: *for many* (*ad multos*) has been prayed for 1500 years in Latin; the more ancient English text of our Eastern Rites offers the wording **for many**; and in the vernacular of most other languages, *for many* is used. The universal salvific will of God remains alive over the centuries and across the continents. *For many* remains a spiritual and a homiletic challenge. Recently I read John 6:37; Jesus says to the people *I will not reject anyone who comes to me*. This encouragement from Jesus offers a beginning of an understanding. Even if it be ever so subtle, known only to the Lord, there needs to be a turning toward Him to be accepted. Free, we always are. It will take time for me to see how this accurate scriptural language during the consecration will have its impact.

- 4) Perhaps English is the new Latin; indeed our language is universal. We can make better use of our sacred ritual language, i.e. less colloquial, more poetic and layered with meanings. Conditional clauses allow for layers of intention. Many lectors have done a decent rendering of St. Paul's 100-word sentences. When the lectors are well prepared, meaning becomes apparent in the listening. The revised translations of Eucharistic prayers hold meanings which, over time, form the pray-er and the listener into the mystery of God. Slowly I am finding the right cadence as I pray these translations, and an understanding of the mystery deepens.

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- 5) Over these years when I complete my homiletic preparation, I often try to see if there is a natural connection to posture or gesture or wording in a Preface or a Canon. Making a connection from the Table of the Word to the Table of the Eucharist seems to be worthwhile in crafting a homily. The scriptural and patristic references abound in these texts. I foresee how this new language will engage my homiletic preparations. It will take awhile, but I look forward to this opportunity.
  
- 6) The Third Edition will have the full calendar of saints with orations. On a trip to Rome I visited St. Bartholomew Parish, on an island in the Tiber. It remains exciting to worship with a very vibrant parish; on Sunday evenings this church fills with young people. John Paul II asked that this Roman parish be a shrine = to the martyrs of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Five altars are so dedicated; inspiration comes naturally. The richness of the lives of the saints will take on a new dimension with the *Revised Roman Missal*. Although a bit more homework will be required, preaching will take on a contemporary focus.
  
- 7) During the last 20 years the Church has been presented a watershed of quality music and composition for worship. The new translation invites composers and musicians to offer the Church new music. My expectation centers on the new and renewed composition and musical settings for enhanced worship.

The English-Latin text and then the full English text of our worship occurred when I was a teenager and a young adult. What I learned about my boyhood pastor was that he initially fought this expectation. My goal remains: to do what I can these coming months to convey our public prayer through, with, and in Christ Jesus to the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Priests have prayed for 2,000 years the text the Church has given. I am finding the new words forming me and, with God = s grace, I expect to be as ready as I can on the First Sunday of Advent November 27, 2011 **from the inside out.**

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