

26 Sunday A – 2011
Divine Mercy Parish
1st of a series on the New Missal

It has been almost 50 years since the Council of Vatican II promulgated the “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.” It has been eight years since the NEW General instruction to the Roman Missal was put into effect. I remember when that happened because I gave a four part series to explain what that was all about within its historical and theological context. I don’t know what Fr. Scherger did to prepare his congregation, but I assume he did some preparation work. Now you have all heard through the grapevine that there are some changes coming in the way we are going to pray the Mass. You may have heard or seen things in other dioceses when you were on vacation this summer. Well the stories are true. Beginning with the First Sunday of Advent the translation of the Third Edition of the Roman Missal will become the norm for all English speaking countries. Now before you get all excited here is how I intend to approach the matter. For almost a year the diocese has been offering workshops and seminars for the clergy, pastoral leaders, musicians, religious education teachers and all sorts of people. Over the summer I have done a lot of reading and study as to what this will entail.

I plan during the next four weeks to break it down in the following manner. This week some introductory remarks and a couple of liturgical principles that guide Catholics in the way we pray, especially the Mass. Next week I want to look at the principles and guidelines used in making the translation. Then in the third and fourth weeks explain why certain of the more glaring translations changes were made the way they were. I think if you understand the background it will make the transition easier. But will it be

easy? I don't think so. We will have to be on our toes and we will have to be thoughtful about what we are saying. That, however, is not a bad thing, that we have to pay attention and think. This past summer I was having supper with some friends and some of their non-Catholic relatives were there. When we got done racing through the Grace Before Meals one of the non-Catholic said, "I'm sure that was nice but could you say it again and slow down; it sounded like one long word." He was right. So we said it again and slowed down. It made a difference. Well, after almost fifty years it's not going to hurt us to have to pay attention and be a bit more careful.

So let's begin by putting this into some context. After Pentecost the apostles moved out into the known world bringing the message of the gospel. Depending upon where they were located Mass began to develop within these differing cultural surroundings. They might be developing in Jerusalem, Rome, India, Egypt, Antioch and various other places. As the centuries passed these varying ways of celebrating Mass were refined, codified, and established in their differing places. Is one better than another? "No," they are all of ancient lineage and all have apostolic roots. Today within the Catholic Church there are about 23 different rites. All of them are venerable and apostolic. But most people when they think of Catholic they think the Roman Rite because it is by far the largest. Each of these rites is under the control and protection of what is known as a Patriarch. No other person can make changes in a given rite except its Patriarch.

Now there are five cities that from the earliest years of the Church were, because of their importance in our history, designated as Patriarchal sees (a see is a diocese). Those cities are: Jerusalem, Antioch (where we were first called Christians), Alexandria

(in North Africa, Constantinople (what today is Istanbul, Turkey) and of course Rome. All of the rites fall under the care of one of these Patriarchs. It happens that the Patriarch of the Roman Rite is the Bishop of Rome, the Pope. So all changes in the Roman Rite come from the Holy Father through his official channels: The Congregation of Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

None of this is “my doing” or Bishop Blair’s, or the American Bishops or the bishops of the English-speaking world. With the first translation into English about 50 years ago it was written in the introduction that at a later times the translation would need to be looked at again. Pope John Paul II at the time of the millennium decided that that was a good time to study the translation. So for the past eight years with numerous revisions and the consultation of many many experts in diverse disciplines Pope Benedict received the translation of the Roman Missal, Third Edition on April 28, 2010. He acknowledged the “great labor” expended in “the preparation and translation of texts that proclaim the truth of our redemption in Christ, the Incarnate Word of God...I welcome the news that the English translation of the Roman Missal will soon be ready for publication, so that the texts you have worked so hard to prepare may be proclaimed in the liturgy that is celebrated across the Anglophone (that means English speaking) world. Through these sacred texts and the actions that accompany them, Christ will be made present and active in the midst of his people.”

You might be wondering, “What difference does it make – a word here a phrase there?” Remember that we are the Roman Rite and the language of the prayers is Latin. Our liturgy is a translation of Latin into English and there is a liturgical principle that’s very important. It goes like this lex orandi, lex credendi. The “law of prayer is the law of

faith. In other words, the way we pray as a church, the gestures, the movements and especially the words are expressive of what we believe. If these adaptations help us get closer to the content of the faith, if they help us be more attentive to what we are praying, if we become more conscientious of what we are saying, it might help our faith grow, deepen and be stronger. If it does than I think this is good. Not just for you but also for me.