

27 Sunday A –2011  
Divine Mercy Parish  
2<sup>nd</sup> in Missal Series

This translation of the Roman Missal has not been a translation that was quickly written by a couple of people. Over the past eight years the Bishops' Conferences of the English speaking countries, the International Commission for English in the Liturgy known as ICEL and an organization established by the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments for this particular project known as 'Vox Clara' a clear voice have all been working on this translation. Bishops, linguists, poets, musicians and experts from the United States, Canada, England, Ireland, India, Australia, English speaking African countries joined with the Congregation for Divine Worship in an intensive process involving the careful study of every line of the translation in order to insure that the texts would be faithful to the Latin original and understandable in every region where English is the language of the sacred liturgy. You know, in the Constitution on the Liturgy from the Council of Vatican II there are just a few lines of how to deal with translating the Latin into the vernacular. For this third edition of the Roman Missal there is an entire document full of principles that are to be followed. In other words, we have learned a lot in the past 40 years about translating sacred texts.

It seems to me the translation strives to do at least two things: 1) have literal accuracy – that the meaning is conveyed in the words and 2) it is to use language that is conducive to reverence. As for the first I think you all understand that if the law of prayer is the law of faith then the translation, the expression of the faith, needs to be accurate. However, as to the second I want to say a bit more. Language is like music; there are many instruments. There is the bragging of the boys on the street corner, the

colorless precision of an office memo, the incomprehensibility of tax law, the tender phrases of a love letter, the intricacy of poetry in meter and rhyme. All are language but all are different. What instrument in English is best for this instrument in Latin? In other words, how do we translate the language of prayer? The consensus is to use the language of oratory, the language of poetry. Remember, even though many of you follow every word in the missalet, the language of the liturgy is primarily to be heard and not seen. It is a language of the ears rather than the eyes. So with this translation you will notice long sentences, repetition, imagery, all sorts of poetic devices that were there in the original but didn't make it into the second edition of the Roman Missal.

Let me give you a few examples contrasting common language with oratory. Here's one: "A number of years ago our old relatives did something new in this country." Compared to "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent new nation...." The second is oratory. What about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's speech on the Washington Mall where he kept repeating, "I have a dream." The repetition of that phrase has kept that speech alive. A number of years later when Pope John Paul II made his first visit to this country he gave a homily at the Mass on that same Mall that I have not forgotten. He spoke on three related themes: marriage, family life and the dignity of every human person. The structure was simple and powerful. He would give a description of the problem and then say "we will stand and we will say" and then he gave the Church's teaching on that issue. "We will stand and we will say...we will stand and we will say." The power was in the repetition. Do you remember my Easter homily this year when I went on my rant about "God is against...." I went back and checked it. Eight times I used the phrase "God is against" and with each one the intensity grew

stronger, ending with God is against priests using their position and authority to harm or abuse children. When I said that one I could cut the tension with a knife and everyone knew I meant business. The power of repetition. In this translation you will find oratory, poetry and the striving for the transcendent.

Also, and this is my last point today and it is maybe the most important is that the original Latin texts are steeped in the language of the Scriptures. This translation is trying to get that across. A passage of St. Paul is next to a phrase from one of the psalms all effortlessly interwoven to make a profound theological point. Even the short prayers like the Collect, the Opening Prayer will echo one or two of passages from Sacred Scripture. But let me give you an example of this biblical language that is being used. Right now in the little prayer before communion we say, “Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed.” The new translation says, Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.” Does that sound familiar? It should it is the words the centurion spoke who had a beloved servant who was dying. The story is in Matthew 8:8. When Jesus offers to enter his house and heal the servant, the centurion utters this declaration of obedience, faith and humility, “for I am a man under authority” he said, remarking that when he orders a soldier to go he goes, or to do this he does it. The analogy is clear. Jesus only need say the word and the servant will be healed. The centurion is too humble to see Jesus submit to his hospitality. Well, I am not worthy to have Jesus enter under this roof but despite my unworthiness we are granted the great grace of the Eucharist where the Lord does enter under my roof. It’s his initiative, not ours. He comes to us despite the lowliness of our dwelling place. And what beneath our roofs lies ill? No mere

servant, no he comes under our roofs to heal our very souls. This is what I mean about this translation taking us right back into the sacred world of the scriptures