

# THE NEW MASS TRANSLATION

Part 1

*In Nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.  
Introibo ad Altare Dei. Ad deum qui laetificat juventutem meam.*

Do any of my contemporaries remember the start to Mass in the days of our youth?

## LATIN TO ENGLISH

Perhaps many of us have become so used to Mass being in English that we almost forgot that for many centuries, right until the 1960's, all the prayers at Mass were in Latin. Although the possibility of using local vernacular languages for Mass had been discussed in previous centuries, and by the 20<sup>th</sup> century in some places the scripture readings were repeated in the vernacular after they were read in Latin, the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) decided that the time was now right to permit wider use of vernacular languages.

As is well known, the Council also called for a reform and renewal of the

whole Order of Mass. But even before that work was done, parts of the existing traditional Mass, especially the parts which could be said or sung by the people, were able to be in English from 1964 onwards, while most of the prayers said by the priest remained in Latin. Gradually, use of the vernacular was extended to more of the priest's parts, including in 1968 the Canon, or Eucharistic Prayer. My first Mass at Enoggera in 1968 was part English, part Latin.

By 1969 the new Order of Mass had been prepared, and in 1970 the First Edition of the reformed Roman Missal was published in Latin. The Latin

edition of the Roman Missal is the **normative version** from which the vernacular translations are made, meaning that the prayers of the Mass in, say, English are the same as those of the Mass in French or Tagalog or Japanese, but spoken in a different language.

The new Missal then had to be fully translated into English, and in the meantime an interim English translation of the Order of Mass was used.

## PROCESS OF TRANSLATION

The translation into English was undertaken by I.C.E.L. (International Committee for English in the Liturgy). It was prepared relatively quickly with accommodation for English idiom and style, different in structure from the Latin – like a “prudent equivalence” of meaning.

The end result of this process was the English version of the Missal that we are so used to, having prayed it together now for several decades. It is characterised by an English style that generally uses very simple and common words, and which tends to paraphrase the more complex and detailed ideas present in the Latin texts to make the language seem more normal to us.

It was always the intention to follow up with the revised more considered translation into the vernacular (English) and NOW we have that more complete revised translation. The **Latin text** of the Post Vatican II Mass **has not changed** – just its **up to date translation**. This translation is not a return to the Tridentine Latin Mass (approved Council of Trent – post Protestant Reformation). It is simply an up to date translation.

Pope John Paul II approved this current Edition of the Roman Missal in 2000. Initially I.C.E.L. were working on the translation into English (Fr Tom Ellich was for years on I.C.E.L.) and that group's work was given to the current translators “Vox Clara”. This group was instructed to keep closer to the Latin text – for several reasons.

## WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE NOW?

One of these is the need to preserve the unity of the Roman Rite. The Roman Rite of the Mass binds together in a unified expression of faith those parts of the Catholic Church which use it – which is the great majority. If the translations into many different languages do not follow the Latin originals closely enough, different language-groups can find themselves diverging more and more from the common prayers and perhaps from the faith which they express. This problem is more

significant than it first seems, because the Latin texts of the Missal often contain key concepts for an authentic understanding of the Christian faith as it is believed by the Catholic Church. There is a profound inter-connection between what the Church prays and what the Church believes. Sometimes the effort to translate prayers into a style of English that was easily understandable and “normal” sounding had inadvertently meant a loss of valuable and spiritually nourishing ideas. This will

always be a point of linguistic discussion! There is a downside – as fidelity to the Latin texts does not translate always to inclusive language because Latin is an inclusive language already with masculine & feminine words.

And of course we need to get used to some new phrasing when we have “old expressions” of the last 40 years on our tongue.

We will look at these next week.

**See over for some common questions and answers. Over the next two weeks we will explore the key changes in words and find the ways to make them work.**

## **NEW TRANSLATION OF THE MISSAL: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Why is there a new translation of the Missal?**

Following the Second Vatican Council a new Latin Missal was produced by Pope Paul VI in 1970. This Latin Missal was revised with minor adaptations and additions in 1975 and in 2002. English versions of this Vatican 11 Missal began appearing in the 1970s and the 1973 English Missal has served us well for many years. Over this time there has been much discussion of the need to revise the original English translation. In 2001 the Vatican issued a document *Liturgiam Authenticam* which outlined new principles for translation into vernacular languages. These principles governed the work of the new translation of the Missal.

### **Who did the work of translation?**

The work of translation has been done by a group of people specialising in translation and linguistics. The International Commission for English in the Liturgy (ICEL) has translated the Latin into English and then submitted the drafts to the Bishops of the English speaking world. Finally the translation has been approved by the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments with the assistance of a committee called Vox Clara.

### **Is this Missal the Vatican 11 Missal?**

It is most definitely the Vatican 11 Missal. It is the same missal which was produced in 1970 and revised on two later occasions. It is the translation into English that has changed not the original prayers of the Mass.

### **Will it sound very different?**

Yes, it will. Not only will the people's responses change but the prayers said by the priest will also change. The Eucharistic Prayers will sound different. Remember, it is not the original Latin Missal that has changed only the translation. So it will be the same Mass that we have had since Vatican 11 but it will sound different.

### **Will there be any changes in posture?**

No, any changes in posture have already been introduced in recent years. Therefore you will continue to sit, stand and kneel as you have always done.

### **How will we know the new responses?**

Pew cards are being produced by the Brisbane Liturgical Commission for use throughout Australia to assist the people with responses. Some Churches have data projectors that may also be used for this purpose (provided the whole Mass is not projected on the screen and so distract attention from the altar and the celebrant).

### **When can I buy a new Missal for my personal use?**

The new Missal for use by the priest during Mass will be printed in the latter half of 2011. The new version of the readings will not be available for a few years. At this stage it is not known if publishers will publish personal missals with the Mass prayers only.

### **When will the new translation be introduced at Sunday Masses in Australia?**

When sung, the new version of the Lord have mercy, Gloria, Creed, Holy, Eucharistic Acclamations and Lamb of God may be used from the beginning of January 2011. From Pentecost Sunday, 12th June 2011, the Lord have mercy, Gloria, Creed, Holy, Eucharistic Acclamations and Lamb of God, whether spoken or sung, together with the Priest's Invitations and People's Responses, the Confiteor, and the Invitation before Communion, will be introduced immediately or gradually.

All of these parts of the Ordinary will be obligatory throughout Australia from 1st November 2011.

The Altar Missal with the Priest's Prayers, Prefaces, Eucharistic Prayers and the Propers will be introduced immediately it is available. This is expected to be late in 2011. A date upon which the Altar Missal is to be obligatory will be set by the Bishops in due course.