

Three Perspectives on the New *Roman Missal*

A *Pastor's* Perspective

Rev. Ronald E. Brassard

"They're awful.... They're fine.... It's horrible English.... It's quite beautiful.... Where are the periods? etc. ..." So goes the flurry of articles on the quality of the new translation of the *Roman Missal* that is projected to go into effect on the First Sunday of Advent in 2011. My purpose here is to convey a pastor's opinion of these translations. And I definitely have an opinion.

The comedian Stephen Colbert invented the word "truthiness" in one of his shows. Basically, "truthiness" occurs when someone claims something to be true based on nothing more than opinion.

I suspect that "truthiness" is controlling the wide range of opinion of the new translation. Articles abound giving opinions based upon the opinions of others. Articles have been written using not the final prayers but those from the interim "green book" translation (first draft), which was replaced by those in the "gray book." And there is a big difference between the two.

I decided to skip the opinions and just read them for myself. Because I am the chair of the committee for the implementation of these translations in my home diocese, I had access to the final translations. So I read them—slowly, carefully, and prayerfully. I have to be honest. I found them very beautiful. I found them to be rich in symbol and in theology. I found them to be an honest and sincere attempt to raise the language of liturgy to a higher level.

A *Liturgist's* Perspective

Mary Jo Quinn, SCL

Perhaps the greatest gift of the third edition of the *Roman Missal* is the opportunity for a renewed catechesis, especially with the assembly. For the first time since the renewal after Vatican II, the catechesis is focused on the people who make up the Sunday assembly. While the immediacy of new texts makes some catechesis a necessity, best practices will suggest that focusing only on texts will limit the opportunity. The new texts, including the phrases of the dialogues between presider and assembly, and the revised prayers of the Mass provide a framework for renewed reflection on the meaning of the

Are these translations perfect? I doubt it. Is what we are using now perfect? Hardly. Many have been complaining for years that what we are presently using is sorely lacking. The new translation is a sincere attempt to remedy the problem.

I think that the key to understanding and exploring these translations is not simply to scan them as you would a book, but to take them and learn to pray them out loud. That is the challenge for any presider: not to simply look at the words and analyze the grammar but rather to learn to articulate them in prayer.

I urge everyone to see in this new translation an attempt to create a more beautiful experience of prayer. I urge presiders to take the time and effort to prepare these translations for proclamation so they may be experienced as prayer and as a fitting offering for our common act of worship. And I urge all of us to be patient in the experience of transition from the present translation to the new. I think that the end result will be well worth the effort.

Finally, I encourage everyone to see these translations in perspective. They are not the end-all of what we are about as a people of faith. Liturgy is best understood when it is seen as a preparation and sustenance for living our faith and seeking after justice and peace in our world. Our goal must always be to make the Gospel tangible so that what we proclaim at Eucharist may become what we live and do in every event of our lives.

Father Ronald Brassard has been pastor at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Cranston, Rhode Island, since 1993. A contributor to *Liturgical Ensemble Basics* (www.ocp.org/6142), he co-wrote the chapter on organ with James Kosnik.

Mass, the centrality of the Eucharist in our Catholic life, and a review of the documents of Vatican II that gave birth to the liturgy we pray today.

About three years ago, the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions (FDLC) was invited to collaborate with the USCCB Committee on Divine Worship to develop a body of materials that would be used throughout the United States with dioceses, pastors, and liturgical leaders. The context of this catechesis as determined by both of these national bodies is the continued renewal of the liturgy based on the experience of the last fifty years. By November 2010, a series of workshops will have been presented around the country to begin the process of training leaders for the implementation of the *Roman Missal* in 2011. These workshops, presented by mem-

bers of the CDW staff and FDLC leadership, consisted of presentations on the challenge of transition and the process of translation; highlighted the new ICEL chant settings of the Missal, especially the dialogues between presider and assembly; and offered some practical guidance for use of the orations and private prayers of presiders. Additionally, excellent print materials, DVDs, recordings, and website resources are available from the USCCB for use in parish catechesis. Many other materials are available from publishers and professional organizations (see ocp.org/newmasssettings for OCP's offerings). The 2010 annual convention of the National Association of Pastoral Musicians (NPM) in Detroit focused on the *Roman Missal* and will continue to be a fine resource for pastoral musicians.

Because so many musical settings of the Mass are already in place and can be learned by music leaders ahead of the implementation of the missal, assemblies

will more easily learn the new texts. Many dioceses will probably offer help to parish musicians in choosing appropriate Mass settings and may even seize the opportunity to ask that parishes learn at least one common setting so that dioceses will be able to worship together easily. The renewed chants in the missal provide the opportunity for more collaboration among priests and musicians in order to attain common musical ends.

Opportunities abound! Priests and musicians must take on the leadership for this task. The revision of the *Roman Missal* can provide a renewed energy to deepen the “full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations called for by the very nature of the liturgy” (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* 14).

Mary Jo Quinn is a member of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. Currently a pastoral assistant at Blessed Trinity Catholic Church in Missoula, Montana, she has more than thirty years of pastoral experience.

A Perspective *from the Assembly* Bari Colombari

As a liturgical musician who now spends most of the time worshipping from the pew, I have some hopes for the implementation of the revised translation of the *Roman Missal*. The obviously good news for the laity is that well over ninety-five percent of the text changes are in the priest's parts, leaving few modifications in the texts spoken by the faithful in the pews.

The real question is how, if at all, the revised translation will change my faith. In all honesty, I have to say that the new texts will not alter my faith at all. My faith is securely rooted in belief in the Trinity and the communion of saints, and it is not tied to a set of words. However, as one who daily works with words, I have an appreciation for eloquence, clarity of expression, and the power of an artfully formed phrase. The words of the new translation can, in many respects, serve to strengthen faith.

The underlying challenge to the people in the pew is to be open to catechesis and understanding about the new texts and their future implementation. If I approach the revised translation with a negative expectation, I'm sure to find fault with it. Likewise, if I look toward the texts with an open mind and heart, my faith can be strengthened and nourished.

It's been said that change isn't difficult, but nurturing change can be a challenge. With these new texts, we faithful in the pews would do well to avail ourselves of all opportunities to learn more about the revised trans-

lations. Admittedly, once the revised translation is promulgated, there will be minor slip-ups. We'll probably forget and open the Creed with “We believe” instead of “I believe.” No problem—we *will* learn the revised texts. Remember, our challenges will be miniscule compared to what the faithful faced on the First Sunday of Advent, November 29, 1964, when the global (vernacular) text changes were promulgated after the Second Vatican Council.

When asked my thoughts about how the faithful can prepare to embrace the revised texts, I suggest the following:

- attend any and all gatherings on the topic in your parish, vicariate, and/or diocese
- seek out presentations and articles on the texts by qualified liturgical scholars
- read and share applicable bulletin notes, bulletin inserts, and other hand-outs you might receive
- access Internet sites that provide dependable resources. I recommend:
 - OCP's offering: www.ocp.org/newmasssettings
 - the definitive site of the US bishops: www.usccb.org/romanmissal
- when it is available, get a copy of the revised texts and use them to enrich your personal prayer life
- keep the faith

Bari Colombari, in OCP's employ since 1984, is the company's senior research editor. Bari has served as director of choral music for schools and parishes. He received the Archdiocese of Portland's advanced certificate in liturgy.

© 2010 OCP. All rights reserved.