

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT [B]

Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b, 64:2-7; Psalm 80; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:33-37

We are witnesses to a momentous change. The book containing the instructions for conducting the celebration of Mass and the prayers said by the priests and people has a new English translation.

Now rest assured that the Mass as we Catholic Christians know it and love it is not changing. Nor is the Church reverting to the old Mass.

Beginning today the words we use at Mass are a new translation of the centuries old original Latin.

Why do we have a new translation?

The new translation vastly improves the 40-year old English translation which we must admit was completed rather hastily after Vatican II first allowed Mass to be celebrated in the common language.

Almost immediately, Church leaders and language experts have known that a more correct and more thorough translation of the original Latin text was needed. In 2000 Blessed Pope John Paul told the bishops to see the new translation through to completion. After 11 years of especially intense study and preparation by English speaking bishops (from 11 different nations and 4 continents), linguists, writers and poets we have the new translation before us.

What is different with the new translation?

The new translation helps to restore the formality and magnificence of the centuries old original Latin.

Keep in mind that before all else, Holy Mass is worship of Almighty God. There is a style in which God rightly is to be addressed.

Let me give you an example.

If you were to address a king you wouldn't saunter into the king's presence bantering about like we do going through the turnstiles at Cedar Point.

The previous translation was rendered in the late 1960's and early 1970's. The task then was English language that was simple, casual and straightforward.

Think for a moment about how people spoke in movies from that era versus conversation from movies made in the 1940's and 1950's – very, very different indeed!

The new translation is designed to recover more of the formality and majesty of the centuries old Latin original. In contrast to the previous translation which was

simple, short, curt and even blunt, the new translation is much more formal and regal and more developed theologically.

The new translation retains the grandeur of the Latin prose and poetry and also cites much more of Sacred Scriptural.

Let me give you an example from today, the **First Sunday of Advent**.

Opening Prayer (Previous Version - 1973)

All powerful god, increase our strength of will for doing good that Christ may find an eager welcome at his coming and call us to his side in the kingdom of heaven.

- It is simple, short and rather vague – exactly as the language of the late 1960's and early 1970's was intended to be.

Opening Prayer (New Translation - 2011)

Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God, the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ with righteous deeds at his coming, so that, gathered at his right hand, they may be worthy to possess the heavenly Kingdom.

- Say what you want about the language, but it certainly is more poetic and imaginative and follows much more closely the centuries old original Latin.

And With Your Spirit

I wish to cite one more example – an example that stands to be among the very hardest change for you.

Several times during Mass the priest is instructed to say “the Lord be with you.” For 40 years you have responded “And also with you.”

The fact is that represents a very curious representation of the Latin original.

- Priest: *Dominus vobiscum*
- People: *Et cum spiritu tuo*

When I lived in Germany, the response was “und mit deinem Geiste.”

So, too, did all the major romance languages have this right. Just like the German translation of the centuries old original Latin, the major romance languages also had it right from the beginning - Spanish, French, Italian and Portuguese are the same [and with your spirit].

We were the only major language group to opt away from the Latin.

When the priest says, “The Lord be with you” the response of the people never was to mean something like “you too – right back at you”. The centuries old original Latin is not designed for politeness but structured as a profound theological statement within the context of public worship.

That’s why the Latin is *et cum Spiritu tuo* – and with your spirit. That is, you are publicly confessing that the Holy Spirit inhabits me in a distinctive way because of me ordination. It is as you are helping to keep me awake and alert to the Spirit of Christ in me (priest). This language is marvelously poetic and wonderfully imaginative.

Some very good people – bishops, theologians, linguists, writers and poets – worked on this dedicatedly for over a decade.

And with time, we’re going to like it – we’re going to like it a lot.