

"I believe" and "consubstantial" in the Creed

In the present English translation of the Missal the Creed begins with the words "We believe." In the new translation it begins in the singular: "I believe". *Credo*, "I believe", is how it begins in the Latin of the Roman Missal, and this use of the singular has long been the Church's custom for the liturgical use of the Creed. The change to the plural, "We believe", in the present English translation is something of an anomaly in liturgical usage. While it is certainly not wrong to say that collectively in the Church "we believe", at this point of the Mass we are each giving our individual assent, "I believe", to the truths of Faith expressed in the Creed.

Also, in the new translation "consubstantial with the Father" replaces the expression "of one Being with the Father". The nature of the relationship between God the Father and God the Son, and the truth of the Son's divinity, are most important aspects of the Christian faith, and Councils such as Nicaea (325) and Chalcedon (451) were held to address these questions and to discern and express the orthodox belief of the Church. The difficulty in expressing in an acceptable way the relationship between God the Father and God the Son required the Church to give new subtleties of meaning to existing Greek and Latin words. The expression "of one Being with the Father" in the current translation is not always thought to convey the meaning of the Latin *consubstantialis* (nor indeed the original Greek *homoousios*) in an adequate way. The reality is that some Latin words have meanings which are simply not readily translatable into ordinary English. The metaphysical concepts of "essence", "being" and "substance", of which *consubstantialis* speaks, are themselves not straightforward. In fact, those English words are easily misunderstood because their theological meaning is not exactly the same as their conversational meaning. "Consubstantial", "of one substance", has a genuine and distinct theological meaning. It is not a common word in English, but it is used in the Creed to identify and express a unique relationship and an important point of doctrine.

At the Consecration: "Poured out for many"

One of the more noteworthy changes is found in the Eucharistic Prayers, at the very words of Consecration of the Precious Blood. These will be:

Take this, all of you, and drink from it,
for this is the chalice of my Blood,
the Blood of the new and eternal
covenant
which will be poured out for you and
for many
for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this in memory of me.

In the present translation we are used to hearing

"for all" rather than "for many". Yet the Latin is indeed *pro multis*, "for many". In the accounts of the Last Supper in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew Jesus said "for many" at the Last Supper, and the liturgical usage in the Roman Rite has traditionally been "for many". The Church does not understand this expression to mean that there are some people for whom Christ did not shed his blood. In fact it is a dogma of faith that Christ died on the cross for all men and women (cf. *Jn* 11:52; *2 Cor* 5:14-15; *Tit* 2:11; *1 Jn* 2:2). The expression "for many", found in the Gospels, expresses the reality that the believer is invited to accept in faith the gift of salvation that is being offered, so as to be numbered among the "many".

"Lord, I am not worthy"

The new English translation of the prayer "Lord, I am not worthy" which we say just before Holy Communion says:

Lord, I am not worthy
that you should enter under my roof,
but only say the word
and my soul shall be healed.

This is an example of how the new translation highlights the words of Scripture embedded in the Latin prayers of the Missal, for the first part of this prayer is exactly the words spoken to Jesus by the Roman centurion with a sick servant in *Matthew* 8:8, and the second part simply changes the centurion's "my servant" into "my soul". We speak to the Lord with the words of Scripture, imitating the centurion's faith in the goodness and power of Christ to heal and save.

The Opening Prayers or "Collects", and other prayers prayed by the priest

Among the most distinctive features of the Roman Rite of Mass that has been handed down to us are the prayers known as "Collects" which are prayed by the priest. These are the opening prayers of the Mass, after the introductory rites. The prayers over the offerings and the prayers after Holy Communion are of a similar style. The great majority of these prayers in the post-Vatican II Roman Missal are hundreds of years old, reaching as far back as the eighth century and more. They have a dignified and formal style which, however, is not that usual in modern speech. The English translation done in the 1970s tended to paraphrase these prayers and shorten them. Unfortunately, this led to a loss of some of their spiritually rich and stimulating content and their distinctively respectful attitude. Taking into account the Church's growing awareness of what we were missing out on, the new English translation seeks to hand on, to the extent that our language can reasonably manage, the full style and content of these important liturgical prayers. As a result, they are often made up of a series of ideas linked together by commas. We should soon get used to their style and they will reward attentive listening.

Looking forward: unity and participation

We should all look forward to praying with these newly-translated prayers, even though it may not be easy for many of us to change from what we have become used to. We will be helped by the fact that some parts of the Mass are changing only slightly and others, such as the "Lamb of God", are not changing at all. We can be confident that in praying our English prayers at Mass we will be united in the expression of our faith with the billion Catholics around the world who use the same Roman Rite in their own languages or in Latin. Above all, we should become more aware that in celebrating the liturgy the Church – which is the Mystical Body of Christ – is joined with Christ and speaks with his voice to our Father.

As we rise to the challenges of using the new English translation of the Roman Missal, may we all discover the joy and the blessing of participating more fully, more consciously, more actively, in the liturgy.

¹Vatican Council II: Dogmatic Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 4 December 1963, art. 36.

²Consilium for Implementing the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy: Instruction *Comme le prévoit* - On the translation of liturgical texts for celebrations with a congregation, 25 January 1969.

³Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments: Fifth Instruction for the Right Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* art. 36), *Liturgiam Authenticam* - On the Use of Vernacular Languages in the Publication of the Books of the Roman Liturgy, 28 March 2001.

⁴cf. Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments: Letter "On the Translation of *Pro Multis*", 17 October 2006.

Questions for reflection

1. What do you think the benefits of the new translation will be?
2. How long will it take for people to get used to the changes?
3. Do you think the changes will draw people more deeply into the Mass?
4. How can the new translations assist with the Church's mission of evangelisation?

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Free resource

To download a free resource that compares the 2002 Latin text, earlier English translations and some of the more significant changes in the new English translation, please visit www.caec.com.au/inform



The New Mass Translation

Same Mass, Deeper Meaning

Looking back

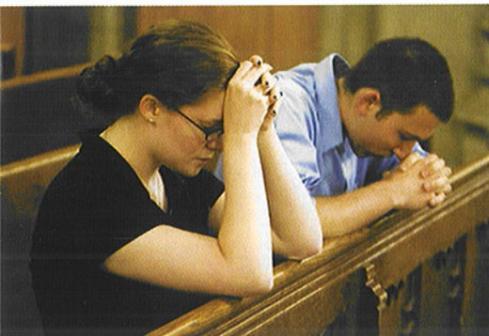
Perhaps many of us have become so used to Mass being in English that we almost forget that for many centuries, right up until the 1960s, all the prayers at Mass were in Latin. Although the possibility of using local vernacular languages for Mass had been discussed in previous centuries, and by the 20th 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. The Council declared:

...since the use of the mother tongue, whether in the Mass, the administration of the sacraments, or other parts of the liturgy, frequently may be of great advantage to the people, the limits of its employment may be extended. This will apply in the first place to the readings and directives, and to some of the prayers and chants...

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.

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.



Finally, the English-language version of the new Roman Missal was introduced in 1974. That Missal was translated from the Latin original according to a style and method of translation authorised by the Holy See in a document known as *Comme le prévoit* issued in 1969. The document favoured the idea of a translation that was not too concerned with the structure, form and precise expression of the Latin original but more with producing a vernacular translation that accurately conveyed the original intention in the language of the particular time and place. This methodology, known as "dynamic equivalence", required a degree of re-imagining on the part of the translator, who must understand what the original meaning is and re-present it as if it had been first written in the English language of this time.

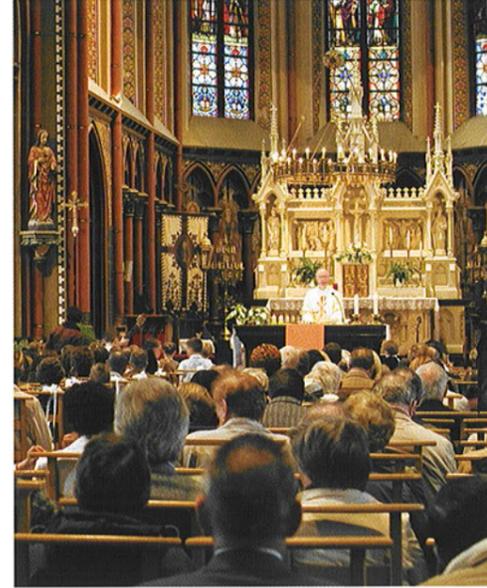
The end result of this process was the English version of the Missal that we are so used to, having prayed it together now for several decades. It is characterised by an English style that generally uses very simple and common words, and which tends to paraphrase the more complex and detailed ideas present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

A Second Edition of the reformed Roman Missal was issued in Latin in 1975, with a few added prayers and minor changes to the instructions on how Mass was to be celebrated. Most of us would not have noticed when the English version of that Missal was introduced because the changes were few and the translation of the prayers remained the same.

A new approach

Pope John Paul II approved the Third Edition of the Roman Missal in 2000 and it was issued in Latin in 2002. It contains a number of new Masses in honour of recently canonised saints and other new texts for various feasts and special occasions, plus some other revisions. These new Mass texts then needed to be translated into English. Between the 1970s and 2002 there had been other developments in the life of the Church which in turn led to an evolution in thinking about the character of liturgical translations. In 2001 the Holy See issued a new document about translating liturgical texts, called *Liturgiam Authenticam*, which identified some important considerations.

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. Also, the life of the Church should be a communion in faith, and an important way this communion is expressed is by the unity of the Roman Rite that we use. The better the various vernacular translations of the Roman Missal help us to encounter in our own languages the full content and meaning of the Latin texts, rather than diverging too far in different directions, the better they serve the unity of the Church.

There has developed a fresh appreciation that some earlier translations into vernacular languages, including English, were not as effective as they could be in passing on the rich scriptural and theological contents that are woven into the Latin prayers of the Missal. 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.

In addition, the impetus had grown to find a way of expressing liturgical prayer in vernacular languages in a manner that is truly appropriate for public, collective, sacramental worship, rather than in a register appropriate and helpful for more private individual prayer.

These developments reflect a maturing of thought based on the experience of the previous three to four decades, as we Catholics have been coming to terms with the experience of celebrating the liturgy in our mother tongues for the first time in many centuries.

Therefore, when the Third Edition of the Roman Missal was published in 2002 it needed to be translated into vernacular languages using the revised methods proposed in the Instruction *Liturgiam Authenticam*. This has led to a new English translation that often sounds quite different from the one we are used to. This process has taken nearly ten years to complete and has been conducted by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL), made up of bishops from the English-speaking countries, assisted by various experts in liturgy and languages. Another group of English-speaking bishops, known as the *Vox Clara* committee and headed by Cardinal George Pell of Sydney, was established by the Pope to assist the Holy See in assessing the translations prepared by ICEL and approved by the various national Conferences of Bishops, so that the long and exacting process could be brought to a fruitful conclusion.

Some of the changes you will notice

There is not the space in this article to list and explain all the differences between the old and the new English translations of the Missal, but the following are some of the more noticeable ones.

"And with your spirit"

When the new English translation of the *Missale Romanum* is introduced this year, a noticeable difference from the present version occurs after the greeting "The Lord be with you". In the Latin Missal, the priest says *Dominus vobiscum* and the people respond *Et cum spiritu tuo*. This literally means "The Lord be with you" – "And with your spirit", and that is exactly what we will now say in English. This expression has a very long history in the Church. There are references to it in texts from as far back as the third century, and it occurs in the liturgies of both the Western and the Eastern Churches from ancient times right up to the present. In fact, translations of the Missal into most vernacular languages have retained this reference to the "spirit" of the priest. So, for example, the French at Mass say *Et avec votre esprit*, the Italians *E con il tuo spirito*, the Germans *Und mit deinem Geiste*, and so forth.

But what does it mean? St John Chrysostom (died AD 407) spoke of it in terms of the grace given by God in his Church for our worship to be fruitful and for the priest to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice. In effect, the priest or deacon's greeting, "The Lord be with you", calls us to recognise and acknowledge the grace of Christ present in each of the baptised and in the whole Church. By responding "and with your spirit", we are doing more than saying hello back to

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

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him. We are affirming that the priest or deacon can only exercise his ministry because of the particular office and ministry he has been given by the sacrament of Holy Orders for the building up of the Church.

"Through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault"

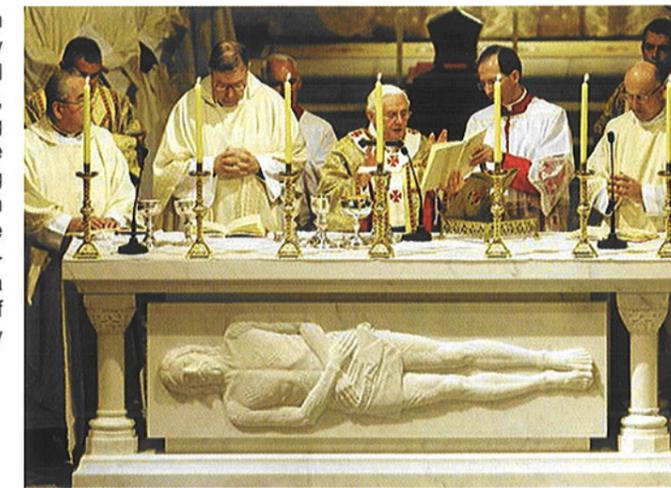
In the current English translation of the "I confess", the structure of the beginning of the prayer was changed somewhat from the Latin original. Reference to how much one had sinned – "greatly" – was left out altogether, and "through my fault" was said in a slightly earlier place in the prayer and only once. In the new English version of the prayer, we will say:

I confess to almighty God, and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault...

It is worth recalling that the three-fold repetition of "through my fault" was deliberately retained in this prayer in the reformed Order of Mass after Vatican II, and it was included in most vernacular translations except English.

The "Gloria"

The new English translation presents the "Gloria" in a way that respects the unusual structure of this ancient hymn, which features a layering of images that enhance the impact of the praises being sung. The current translation largely does away with the layers of images and re-arranges the main ideas a little, while whole phrases of the Latin original have simply been omitted altogether.



The new translation begins:

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.

Then, in keeping with the original layered structure, it continues:

We praise you,

we bless you,

we adore you,

we glorify you,

we give you thanks for your great glory,

Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.

A further example of the layering for emphasis which is present in the Latin original and is recovered in the new translation is:

You take away the sins of the world,

have mercy on us;

You take away the sins of the world,

receive our prayer;

You are seated at the right hand of the Father;

Have mercy on us.

The Roman Missal - A Time Line

