



# NewsLetter

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## **Principles of Translating the *Missale Romanum***

As the translation process for the third edition of the *Roman Missal* continues, we would like to take the opportunity to provide our readers with a somewhat detailed insight into the principles that are being used for the translation process.

The sources for these principles are the Instruction *Liturgiam authenticam*, and the *Ratio Translationis for the English Language*, issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments in 2001 and 2007, respectively. One of the guiding principles of the translation is to be found in number 20 of *Liturgiam authenticam*:

The Latin liturgical texts of the Roman Rite, while drawing on centuries of ecclesial experience in transmitting the faith of the Church received from the Fathers, are themselves the fruit of the liturgical renewal, just recently brought forth. In order that such a rich patrimony may be preserved and passed on through the centuries, it is to be kept in mind from the beginning that the translation of the liturgical texts of the Roman Liturgy is not so much a work of creative innovation as it is of rendering the original texts faithfully and accurately into the vernacular language. While it is permissible to arrange the wording, the syntax and the style in such a way as to prepare a flowing vernacular text suitable to the rhythm of popular prayer, the original text, insofar as possible, must be translated integrally and in the most exact manner, without omissions or additions in terms of their content, and without paraphrases or glosses. Any adaptation to the characteristics or the nature of the various vernacular languages is to be sober and discreet.

One of the most challenging aspects of this principle has been to keep the balance between creating a flowing vernacular text that is compatible with the rhythm of popular prayer while, at the same time, translating the text in an integral and most exact manner. The question of translating the text in an integral and exact manner demands a great deal more than just simply translating word for word. Sometimes, those not engaged in translation are of the impression that one simply has to take a dictionary and perhaps a thesaurus and thus produce an “exact” translation. Understanding of vocabulary and syntax are simply the entrance way into the process of translation. Translators, when they first approach a text, must explore the biblical and patristic sources of the texts they are dealing with. They do this through careful study of various scholarly studies. Sometimes, understanding the use of a word or phrase by the Church fathers can unlock important aspects of the meaning of a particular prayer. The particular context that surrounds the use of a word by a

particular Church father is very important. Oftentimes the Fathers of the Church are trying to address particular epistemological, anthropological and soteriological issues of their day. One also has to have an understanding of the particular heretical or separatist movements that could have influenced the use of particular language.

A very challenging syntactical issue is that of preserving the relationship of the elements of syntax as a text is translated into English. *Liturgiam authenticam* notes in number 57:

That notable feature of the Roman Rite, namely its straightforward, concise and compact manner of expression, is to be maintained insofar as possible in the translation. Furthermore, the same manner of rendering a given expression is to be maintained throughout the translation, insofar as feasible. These principles are to be observed:

- a) The connection between various expressions, manifested by subordinate and relative clauses, the ordering of words, and various forms of parallelism, is to be maintained as completely as possible in a manner appropriate to the vernacular language.
- b) In the translation of terms contained in the original text, the same person, number, and gender is to be maintained insofar as possible.
- c) The theological significance of words expressing causality, purpose or consequence (such as *ut*, *ideo*, *enim*, and *quia*) is to be maintained, though different languages may employ varying means for doing so.
- d) The principles set forth... in n. 51, regarding variety of vocabulary, are to be observed also in the variety of syntax and style (for example, in the location within the Collect of the vocative addressed to God).

The application of this paragraph of *Liturgiam authenticam* has made some extraordinary demands on translators, especially with reference to 57a. The use of extended subordination is a method to order all the elements of a sentence in such a way as to express a dependence on God as the source of all saving action. The very syntax of the sentence indicates what is secondary or subordinate. In addition, the meaning of the prayer is communicated through the use of a sequence of tenses that links all action solely to that of the main clause.

When such a sentence is broken up, in English, into many shorter sentences there comes about a cumulative loss of meaning between those ideas which are secondary and their subordination to a principal action. In general, the translators have remained faithful to the principle, but there have been some prayers that were so extensively long that they needed to be broken into two sentences.

We close this consideration with an example of a draft translation of the Prayer Over the Offerings for the Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time:

*Latin Prayer*

Deus, qui humáni géneris utrámque substántiam  
præséntium múnere  
et aliménto végetas et rénovas sacraménto,  
tríbe, quæsumus, ut eórum  
et corpóribus nostris subsídium non desit et  
méntibus.

*A Suggested Early Draft*

O God, who in the gifts presented here  
nourish with food and renew with Sacrament  
the twofold nature of the human race,  
grant, we pray, that their sustenance  
may not fail us in body or in mind.

## **Year of Saint Paul to Begin on June 28, 2008**

On June 28, 2007, Pope Benedict XVI gave a homily at the First Vespers of the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul in which he announced that from June 28, 2008 until June 29, 2009, a special Jubilee year would be celebrated in honor of Saint Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles.

The Holy Father pointed out that St. Paul often repeated in his letters that his whole life was a fruit of God's "freely given and merciful grace." Despite his limitations, Paul was able to achieve great things for the proclamation of the Gospel.

Pope Benedict pointed out that from the life of Paul, a great lesson could be learned. The actions of the Church are credible and effective "only to the extent to which those who belong to her are prepared to pay in person for their fidelity to Christ in every circumstance."

The Holy Father noted that in this day and age we are more than ever in need of people who are willing to bear witness even unto martyrdom.

Pope Benedict announced that there would be a series of liturgical, cultural and ecumenical events taking place in Rome as well as various pastoral and social initiatives, all inspired by Pauline spirituality. Certainly within the coming year, religious communities devoted to St. Paul will be providing resources that can be used by all during the Pauline Year. This does not prevent various Diocesan offices from starting to look at their normal planning sessions with a view to the year of St. Paul. For example, Dioceses may want to encourage pilgrimages of people to various churches in their diocese named in honor of St. Paul.

While there can be study conventions and special publications on St. Paul, parishes might plan to provide their people with a basic bibliography on St. Paul. Guest speakers might be invited to the parish to talk on St. Paul and his significance for the life of the Church. Teachers in parochial schools might give special attention to teaching the students about St. Paul.

A holy hour might be held in which the readings might come from the letters of St. Paul. Reflections could be given on the life of St. Paul and some of the more important aspects of Pauline teaching could be highlighted.

Finally, the Holy Father underlined an important element which he indicated should be part of the upcoming year, namely, the ecumenical element. The opportunity to study together the history and writings of St. Paul, particularly on the local level could be the opportunity to create a new experience of harmony among all Christians.

## **150th Anniversary of Lourdes Apparition Brings Plenary Indulgence**

James Francis Cardinal Stafford, Major Penitentiary, has issued a decree dated November 21, 2007, concerning the granting of two plenary indulgences. It is granted to the Christian faithful who, from December 8, 2007 until December 8, 2008, devoutly and in accord with the established conditions, visit the Grotto of Massabielle, as well as those who from February 2 until February 11, 2008, visit a blessed image of Our Lady of Lourdes solemnly displayed for public veneration in any church, oratory, grotto, or suitable place. The faithful may gain this indulgence:

a) If, during the year running from December 8, 2007 until the end of December 8, 2008, they devoutly visit the following places, preferably in this order – 1) the parish baptismal font used for the baptism of Bernadette; 2) the house of the Soubirous family called the "*cachot*"; 3) the Grotto of Massabielle; 4) the chapel of the hospice where Bernadette made her First Communion – and pause to reflect for an appropriate length of time at each of

these Jubilee sites, concluding with the Lord's Prayer, some legitimate form of the Profession of Faith, and the Jubilee prayer or some other Marian invocation.

b) If, from the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord on February 2, 2008 until the end of the Memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes on February 11, 2008, which is also the 150th anniversary of the apparition, they devoutly visit a blessed image of Our Lady of Lourdes in any church, chapel, grotto, or other suitable place in which it is solemnly displayed, and in the presence of that image perform some pious act of Marian devotion, or at least pause to reflect for an appropriate length of time, concluding with the Lord's Prayer, some legitimate form of the Profession of Faith, and the Jubilee prayer or some other Marian invocation.

c) The elderly, sick, and all those unable to leave home for a just cause, if they consciously reject all sin and have the intention to fulfill the above-mentioned conditions as soon as possible, are likewise able to obtain – at home or wherever they may be – a plenary indulgence, if, between the days of February 2 and 11, 2008, they complete a “spiritual visit” to the aforementioned places in the desire of their heart, recite the prayers indicated above, and trustingly offer the pains and discomforts of their own lives to God through Mary.

The decree states that the plenary indulgences are received by the faithful under the usual conditions (sacramental confession, freedom from all attachments to sin, reception of Holy Communion, and prayer for the intentions of the Holy Father), and can only be received once daily.

### **Saint Patrick's Day and Upcoming Liturgical Observances**

As Lent approaches, we call your attention to the following excerpt from the April 2007 *Newsletter* that affects upcoming liturgical celebrations:

In 2008, the traditional date of Saint Patrick's day (March 17<sup>th</sup>) falls on Monday of Holy Week. In most of the Dioceses of the United States of America, therefore, the feast will not be commemorated liturgically.

In those places where Saint Patrick is the principal patron of a particular church (Table of Liturgical Days, no. 4c) it is, customarily, commemorated as a solemnity. Because number 60 of the General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar allows that “a solemnity impeded by a liturgical day that takes precedence over it should be transferred to the closest day not listed in nos. 1-8 in the table of precedence...,” this solemnity may be transferred to Friday, March 14<sup>th</sup>. It might be noted that, as previously announced in the *BCL Newsletter* (September, 2006), the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has established that in the year 2008, the Solemnity of Saint Joseph will be transferred from the Wednesday of Holy Week to March 15<sup>th</sup>, that is, the Saturday preceding Palm Sunday. This decision impedes the transfer of the solemnity of Saint Patrick to March 15<sup>th</sup>.

In the vast majority of the dioceses of the United States of America, where the feast of Saint Patrick is commemorated as a non-obligatory memorial, the feast will not be commemorated liturgically in the year 2008.

In addition, the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord has been transferred this year from March 25 (now the Tuesday in the Octave of Easter) to Monday, March 31.