

10 March 2011 The New Missal – programme of preparation

Concluding a short series, Fr Patrick Jones looks beyond the final publication of the new Roman Missal

Last June, the date for using the new edition of the Missal was given as “towards the end of next year.” Therefore, the First Sunday of Advent, 27 November 2011 has emerged as the implementation date. It has been a long journey, involving many people.

In the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (1963), the Second Vatican Council set out the programme for a revision of the Missal. The new Latin edition of the Missal was published in 1970. Its translation into English and Irish has been our Roman Missal and Leabhar Aifrin since 1975. It is important to note that the books we use at liturgy are, for the most part, translations of what are called the Latin typical editions.

The International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL), set up by eleven Bishops’ Conferences, is entrusted with the task of translating the liturgical books into English. They never regarded their work for the 1975 Missal to be perfect and, indeed, seven years later held a consultation with an openness to revision. They did a new translation which was approved by the Bishops’ Conference in 1998 but it did not receive the approval of the Roman Congregation for Divine Worship. In 2001, the Congregation issued new norms for translation and these have guided ICEL in giving us the new edition of the Missal. For over six years, ICEL issued the Missal in twelve segments, firstly for comment and then revised. The Bishops, with their primary consultative body, the Irish Commission for Liturgy, reviewed and commented on each segment as it was received. Much has been known about the translation: the norms are published in the instruction *Liturgiam authenticam*, the translation of *pro multis* as “for many,” changing what we have had, has been in the public domain since 2006 and samples of the texts have been in circulation.

The preparation for use of the new edition of the Missal must be two-fold. Firstly, it is about the changes, and their explanation. The changes will affect the priest celebrant in a very obvious way; prayers used at every Mass are changed, prayers used just once a year, for example of a particular feast, are also changed.

No problem

The latter don’t present any serious problem, other than sentences are usually longer as they translate the Latin more fully. But they are printed in short sense lines and, using the punctuation well, they can be proclaimed –and heard- well. But the common prayers at every Mass, the Order of Mass, are more difficult since most of us have got into a certain rhythm and even know many of them by heart. The congregational changes were the subject of last week’s article.

Secondly, catechesis is not only about the words but also about our better understanding and celebrating the Eucharist. This is an opportune time as we also prepare for the International Eucharistic Congress in June 2012.

Several dioceses have already held workshops for their priests. It is hoped that all priest before Easter will have had the opportunity to be familiarised with the publication of the new Missal and our preparation for its use. Also within this period and in the time after Easter, the catechesis will be extended to include diocesan and parish liturgy committees, parish and pastoral councils, pastoral workers, diocesan advisers (primary and post-primary), chaplains, those with responsibility and leadership in music and so on.

Resources

Again, the catechesis will continue to be extended to all who are part of our congregations, whether regularly on Sundays, on weekdays and occasionally. If it is sometimes said that the changes in the 1970s were introduced with catechesis or explanation, that should not be the situation today. It might be more difficult to change from English to English now rather than the dramatic change from Latin to the vernacular forty years ago. But resources are available. A *Congregational Card* with the changes will be available shortly. It could be used for an explanation of the changes but also it could be introduced in a sensitive way at weekday Mass and even on Sundays.

The New Missal: Explaining the Changes, published by Veritas, has been put together by the National Centre for Liturgy as an accessible guide to the changes and their explanation. An interactive DVD, *Become One Body One Spirit in Christ* is like a library of books on the Mass, its history, its understanding and its celebration. A collection of music, using the new translation, is in preparation. It will contain several new Masses, just like what happened in the second half of the 1970s but will also contain settings from those years, modified to the new words, thus giving us newness as well as continuity.

We can look forward to a new edition of the Missal –it will not be the last. We can look forward to a new translation –giving us a translation of what is in the Latin Missal but not claiming to be perfect! It is also an opportunity to better understand and celebrate the Eucharist which is the source and summit of the life of the Church.