



Word on Worship

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When I was growing up one of the things my parents taught me was the importance of prayer. They told me that it was important to pray each day, that it was important to go to Mass each Sunday, that it was important to seek God's mercy in the sacrament of penance. My parents taught me those things by their words, and even more importantly they supported what they told me by their own personal example.

When I was living at home I saw my parents at prayer. We would pray as a family before we began supper. Late in the evening I would often see my mother kneeling in prayer in the kitchen, using the back of a chair as a kind of priedieu as she said her rosary and the other prayers contained in her well-worn missal. My parents always went to Sunday Mass. I cannot recall a single occasion when they failed to go. They went to confession before Christmas and Easter and at other times as well. One of the memories I have as a little child is going with my father to Mass early on Saturday mornings so that he

could go to confession just before the start of the liturgy.

OLD CHILDREN

I learned the importance of prayer and the importance of faith from my parents. I learned from what they said, and what they did. They gave me a consistent message that affected my life. I am sure that if I only heard my parents tell me about the importance of prayer, but never saw them pray, I would not have learned as well as I did, or perhaps not at all. Children learn from what they're told, but most of all children learn from what they see. And what is true for children is also true for adults. After all what are adults, but simply old children! Adults learn from what they hear, but they learn best when what they see matches what they've been told.

More and more we are realizing that while it is important to pay attention to the religious formation of children, it is equally and perhaps even more important to give time and attention to the continuing formation of adults. Many adult members of our Church are going through life with a religious formation that ended with the celebration of confirmation. Their knowledge of the world around them has continued to grow, but their knowledge of their Catholic faith and maturity in it have not.

We know that if we offer programs for adults, such as bible study sessions, lectures, retreats, days of recollection,

faith sharing groups, etc., only a small percentage of adults will take part. And in many cases the adults who do come will be the same adults who come to everything the parish offers.

Yet, if we think about it, we already have something that is attracting at least 20 to 40% of the adults in our parish. It is called Sunday Mass. It is the primary formational event for Catholics. Often, however, the effectiveness of Sunday Mass is weakened because during the liturgy we are saying one thing, and doing another. We are not supporting the words we say by the actions we are carrying out. We are like parents who say one thing to their children, but do something else.

If we want Sunday Mass to be a good liturgical experience and a good formational experience, we need to be consistent; we need to be sure our actions match the good words we are saying. In this article I would like to consider what we say at Sunday Mass and about Sunday Mass, and then consider how often what we do does not support, or at times even contradicts what we say.

SINGING AND NOT SINGING

The celebration of Mass begins with the entrance or gathering song. "The purpose of this song is to open the celebration, intensify the unity of the gathered people, lead their

MATCHING WORDS AND ACTIONS AT MASS

thoughts to the mystery of the season or feast, and accompany the procession of priest and ministers." (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, GIRM 25) The entrance song is the first time we pray, and we do so with a sung prayer. We say music "forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy," (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 12) and is to "be considered a normal and ordinary part of any liturgical celebration." (Liturgical Music Today, 13) Yet what takes place at Mass or does not take place at Mass often fails to match what we say about music.

The ministers in the entrance procession, including the presiding minister, sometimes come forward without the words of the entrance song on their lips and without a

worship aid in their hands. In doing so they show that singing at Mass is not really important or it is just for those in the pews.

The priest who stands at the presidential chair, impatiently waiting for the song to end so he can begin conveys a similar message about the unimportance of song. The same message is sent when a music minister abruptly brings the song to a close as the priest reaches the presidential chair. We would never think of not saying the last line of the Lord's Prayer, yet some people have little problem in leaving out the final line or two of a prayer simply because that prayer happens to be sung.

People will never learn the importance of song at liturgy and singing the parts of the

liturgy unless the priest as the leader of prayer shows that sung prayer is important by participating, by respecting the integrity of sung prayer, and by providing the assembly with competent music ministers and adequate worship aids.

STRUCTURED PARTS

Following the entrance song, the presiding minister makes the sign of the cross and the people answer "Amen." Although the Sacramentary provides for singing this "Amen," it is ordinarily the first spoken response of the people. The Mass is structured with parts for the priest and other ministers, and parts for the assembly. "All in the assembly gathered for Mass have an individual right and duty to contribute their participation in ways differing according to the diversity of their order and liturgical functions. Thus in carrying out this function, all, whether ministers or laypersons, should do all and only those parts that belong to them, so that the very arrangement of the celebration itself makes the Church stand out as being formed in a structure of different orders and ministries." (GIRM 58) Yet we all have experienced presiding ministers who say not only the words that accompany the sign of the cross but also add the "Amen" as well. They take the response of the assembly.

The same thing can happen at other times in the liturgy when, for example, a presiding minister continues with the "Amen" after singing the final doxology of the eucharistic prayer, or when he prays the people's doxology following the embolism of the Lord's Prayer. When presiding ministers take the responses of the people and make them

their own they teach the assembly that its responses are unimportant, they teach the assembly to be silent. After all, if we were in a play and another actor was continually taking our lines we would assume our role was not important. We might even walk off the stage.

Following the sign of the cross, the priest greets the assembly using one of the scripturally based formulas found in the Sacramentary. The presiding minister recognizes the people before him as the assembled body of Christ. This ritual moment is sometimes weakened by presiding ministers who fail to make eye contact with people, or who use poor gestures, or gestures that are too small for the size of the congregation before him. If the people are important, if the people are the assembled body of Christ, presiding ministers need to look at them, they need to embrace them with their gestures.

This ritual greeting is also weakened by presiding ministers who transform the greeting into a "Good Morning" or into a commentary on the weather or the events of the day. While striving to be personable and friendly, their words can convey the impression that this gathering is not very different from the gathering of a social organization where similar words or greetings would be used.

STEPPING ON SILENCE

During the penitential rite and opening prayer that follow, the presiding minister is to give the people time for silent reflection and prayer. This is the first of several times during the Mass where the Sacramentary directs the presiding minister to lead the people in observing a time of





twofold table of God's word and of the Eucharist: from the one it grows in wisdom and from the other in holiness. In the word of God the divine covenant is announced; in the Eucharist the new and everlasting covenant is renewed." (Introduction to the Lectionary for Mass, 1981, Introduction 10)

CONTRADICTING OUR WORDS

We say beautiful and solemn words about the importance of the word of God proclaimed at Mass. But often our actions during the liturgy of the word contradict what we say. For example:

We do not properly train readers for their ministry. We allow poor readers to continue in their ministry. Yet we say, "the liturgical assembly truly requires readers....Proper measures must therefore be taken to ensure that there are certain suitable laypeople who have been trained to carry out this ministry." (Introduction 52) "It is necessary that those who exercise the ministry of reader...be truly suited and carefully prepared." (Introduction 55)

We supply the people with missalettes that contain the readings. We send the message that we are to read along as we listen. Yet we say that the people should "develop a warm and lively love for Scripture from listening to the reading of the sacred text." (GIRM 66) "Pastoral aids...leaflets (are) printed for the preparation of the readings by the faithful or for their personal meditation." (Introduction 37) They are not scripts to follow.

We fail to give times of reflection during the liturgy of the word. Yet we say, "The liturgy of the word must be celebrated in a way that fosters meditation; clearly,

any sort of haste that hinders recollection must be avoided. The dialogue between God and his people taking place through the Holy Spirit demands short intervals of silence, suited to the assembled congregation, as an opportunity to take the word of God to heart and to prepare a response to it in prayer." (Introduction 28)

We do not sing the responsorial psalm or use the ambo for its proclamation. Yet we say "As a rule the responsorial psalm should be sung....The singing of the psalm or even of the response alone, is a great help toward understanding and meditating on the psalm's spiritual meaning." (Introduction 20, 21) "The responsorial psalm is sung or recited by the psalmist or cantor at the ambo." (Introduction 22)

We do not use the Book of Gospels during the Sunday liturgy. Yet we say "The proclamation of the Gospel always stands as the high point of the liturgy of the word. Thus the liturgical tradition of both West and East has consistently made a certain distinction between the books for the readings. The Book of Gospels was fabricated and decorated with the utmost care and shown greater reverence than any of the other books of readings. In our times also, then, it is very desirable that...churches with a larger attendance possess a beautifully designed Book of Gospels." (Introduction 36)

THE HOMILY

At times, we replace the homily with special appeals or with announcements. Yet we say, "The purpose of the homily at Mass is that the spoken word of God and the liturgy of the eucharist may together become a

silence. "Silence should be observed at the designated times as part of the celebration. Its function depends on the time it occurs in each part of the celebration. Thus at the penitential rite and again after the invitation to pray, all recollect themselves; at the conclusion of a reading or the homily, all meditate briefly on what has been heard; after communion, all praise God in silent prayer." (GIRM 23) "Just as there should be no celebration without song, so too there should be no celebration without periods for silent prayer and reflection." (Foreword to the Sacramentary)

We say that silence is important. Presiding ministers invite people to reflect in silence, to pray in

silence, to meditate in silence. But sometimes priests give people no time, no silence to do what they have asked. Failing to give the assembly little or no time for silence during the liturgy shows people that prayer is just a matter of saying words, that silence is not important, not productive.

A presiding minister who says "let us call to mind our sins" or "let us pray" and then gives no time to do what he has asked shows the people that his instructions or directions are not really meant to be followed. He also shows them that what he has asked them to do is not very important.

The liturgy of the word follows. "The Church is nourished spiritually at the

proclamation of God's wonderful works in the history of salvation, the mystery of Christ...Any necessary announcements are to be kept separate from the homily; they must take place following the prayer after communion." (Introduction 24, 27)

We allow priests who do not have the skills to preach or who consistently fail to prepare to continue to preach. Yet we say the homily "must always lead the community of the faithful to celebrate the Eucharist actively....this demands that the homily truly be the fruit of meditation, carefully prepared, neither too long nor too short, and suited to those present, even children and the uneducated." (Introduction 24)

As is obvious, what we say about the importance of the scriptures and the liturgy of the word is often not supported by the way we celebrate this part of the liturgy. For too many congregations this part of the Mass is a series of poorly proclaimed readings that reaches its "low point" in a homily whose message is difficult to comprehend and whose connection to daily life is tenuous at best.

PRESENTING THE GIFTS

Mass then continues with the collection and the presentation of the gifts. "The gifts are brought forward. It is desirable for the faithful to present the bread and wine.... This is also the time to receive money or other gifts for the church or the poor." (GIRM 49) The amount of bread and wine presented should be sufficient to allow those who will receive communion to receive bread and wine consecrated during that

particular liturgy. (GIRM 56)

While we say that the presentation of the gifts is one of the ways the people show the offering of themselves to God, our actions sometimes negate what we say.

At times the collection is taken up while the presentation and preparation of the bread and wine is taking place. The money, often the truest gift of the congregation, is not brought forward at all. Rather than inviting different members of the assembly to present the gifts, the same people, often the ushers, present the gifts week after week. The procession with gifts is truncated by placing the gift table just outside of the altar area. Rather than coming from the midst of the people, the gifts come from the area most associated with the presiding minister.

We should also mention that all the breads needed for communion, including that of presiding minister, should be on one plate, and all the wine, if possible, in one decanter. The host for the priest should not be on its own plate or paten. (GIRM 293) Having one plate for the bread shows the unity of the those who will receive communion, while having a separate plate for the priest demonstrates his separation from the gathered assembly.

THE CENTER AND SUMMIT

The Mass reaches its high point in the eucharistic prayer, "the center and summit of the entire celebration... a prayer of thanksgiving and sanctification. The priest invites the people to lift up their hearts to the Lord in prayer and thanks; he unites them with himself in the prayer he addresses in their name to the Father through



Jesus Christ. The meaning of the prayer is that the entire congregation joins itself to Christ in acknowledging the great things God has done and in offering the sacrifice." (GIRM 54)

While the Sacramentary rightly proclaims the eucharistic prayer as the summit of the liturgy, this is not the experience for many people. Granted most Catholics would probably describe the consecration as the high point of the Mass, but they would not think of the entire eucharistic prayer, from the preface dialogue to the great amen, in this way. Many congregations experience this part of the Mass as a long, drawn out prayer said lifelessly by the presiding minister as they kneel impassively, waiting to stand for the Lord's Prayer.

Perhaps one reason that some Catholics do not come to Mass regularly on Sunday is that they have failed to experience a presiding minister powerfully proclaiming thanks for God's marvelous deeds. Consequently the gathered faithful are not able to see their need to give thanks and praise to God.

During the communion rite of Mass the people share the sign of peace. "Before they share in the same bread, the faithful implore peace and unity for the Church, and for the whole human family and offer some sign of their love for one another." (GIRM 56b) The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (112) envisions the presiding

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LENT – TRIDUUM 1999

SCHEDULING REMINDERS

The following reminders are meant to assist you in planning your parish's liturgical calendar for Lent and the Easter Triduum.

ENVIRONMENT

In planning your environment for Lent, please be advised that statues are not to be veiled/covered. This practice is not permitted. "The National Conference of Catholic Bishops has never voted to continue the practice of covering crosses and images and so the practice, in accord with the rubric in the Sacramentary, has not been permissible for the past twenty-five years. Individual parishes are not free to reinstate this practice on their own." (Bishops Committee on the Liturgy Newsletter, April, 1995)

During Lent the altar should not be decorated with flowers, and ordinarily musical instruments should be played only to give necessary support to singing. (Ceremonial of Bishops, 252)

COMMUNAL PENANCE SERVICES

Every effort should be made to schedule communal celebrations of the sacrament of Penance during the season of Lent. **No parish may schedule general absolution.**

Although individual confessions may be scheduled in the parishes according to pastoral need, Lenten communal penance services should **not** be scheduled during the days of the Triduum, nor on the Monday of Holy Week, March 29, 1999, in order to allow priests and people to attend the Chrism Mass at the Cathedral.

WEDDINGS

The ritual Mass for Marriage may not be used on the Sundays of Lent and the Easter Season, or on days in the Octave of Easter. The Mass of the day is to be celebrated. When the ritual Mass is not celebrated, one of the readings may be

chosen from those provided in the ritual Mass for weddings. However, on the Sundays of Lent and the Easter Season, Ash Wednesday, the weekdays of Holy Week, and the days within the Octave of Easter, only the readings of the day are permitted. (Ceremonial of Bishops, 603) The nuptial blessing is included and, if desired, the proper solemn blessing. Though the ritual Mass for Marriage is prohibited on these Solemnities, the Rite of Marriage Outside of Mass is permitted.

ASH WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1999

Ashes are blessed and imposed after the homily. The Sacramentary contains the appropriate text for the blessing and imposition of ashes during Mass. The Book of Blessings, Chapter 52, contains the appropriate texts for this rite outside of Mass.

The ordinary minister for the blessing of ashes is a priest or deacon. Where there is a need, laymen and women (for example, special ministers of communion, readers) may assist with the imposition of ashes. (Book of Blessings, 1659)

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT, FEBRUARY 21, 1999

The Rite of Election takes place at the Cathedral Basilica at 2:30 PM for Hudson and Bergen Counties, and then at 5:30 PM for Union and Essex Counties.

The Rite of Sending should be celebrated in the local parish.

"The First Sunday of Lent marks the beginning of the annual Lenten observance. In the Mass of this Sunday there should be some distinctive elements which underline this important moment, e.g. the entrance procession with the litany of the saints." (Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts, 23) The presider and people gather outside the church, as on Passion Sunday. The presider greets the people, speaks of Lent, then says a prayer, then all process into the church singing the litany of saints. The presider goes to the chair where he



prays the opening prayer of Mass, and the liturgy continues as usual. (Ceremonial of Bishops, 261)

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT, FEBRUARY 28, 1999

A penitential rite, similar to the scrutinies, may be celebrated today for candidates for reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church, and for uncatechized Catholics preparing for Confirmation and Communion. See Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults 459-472

SCRUTINIES

The scrutinies of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults are celebrated for the catechumens on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sunday of Lent, March 7, 14, 21, 1999.

On these Sundays there are special intercessions for the elect. After these are prayed and the elect are dismissed, the usual general intercessions follow then the profession of faith.

CHRISM MASS, MONDAY, MARCH 29, 1999

The Chrism Mass will be celebrated at 8:00 PM at the Cathedral Basilica.

FUNERALS DURING HOLY WEEK

Funeral Masses are **NOT** permitted on Holy Thursday morning, nor during the days of the Easter Triduum. On these days the body may be brought to the church and the Funeral Liturgy Outside of Mass may be used.

THE TRIDUUM

In planning and scheduling services "care should be taken especially during...Holy Week and the Easter Triduum not to stage the various liturgies as plays." (Lectionary for Masses with Children 52) In the liturgies of the Triduum, as in all liturgies, the proclamation of the word of God should not be replaced with media presentations. "In the celebration of Mass the biblical readings with their accompanying chants from the Sacred Scriptures may not be omitted, shortened, or worse, still, replaced by nonbiblical readings. For it is out of the word of God handed down in writing that even now God speaks to his people." (Introduction, Lectionary for Sunday Mass, 12)

HOLY THURSDAY

According to the Church's ancient tradition, all Masses without a congregation are prohibited on this day. The Mass of the

Lord's Supper is celebrated in the evening. Every effort should be made not to schedule additional Masses on this day. Only with the permission of the local ordinary may another Mass be celebrated in the evening where pastoral considerations require it; and, in the case of true necessity, even in the morning, but only for those faithful who cannot otherwise participate in the evening Mass. Care should be taken to ensure that celebrations of this kind do not take place for the benefit of private persons or of small groups, and that they are not to the detriment of the main Mass. (Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts 47)

GOOD FRIDAY

The celebration of the Lord's Passion is to take place in the afternoon, at about 3 o'clock.

The time will be chosen as will seem most appropriate for pastoral reasons in order to allow people to assemble more easily, for example, shortly after midday or in the late evening; however, not later than 9 o'clock. (Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts 63)

EASTER VIGIL

The Easter Vigil is not an anticipated Mass, but a true vigil and, therefore, it may not begin until nightfall. This means that the Easter Vigil should be scheduled 45 to 60 minutes after sunset to assure darkness. Sunset will take place at 6:23 P.M. on April 3, 1999 This means the Easter Vigil is not to begin before 7:15 PM at the earliest.

"The entire celebration of the Easter Vigil takes place at night. It should not begin before nightfall...This rule is to be taken according to its best sense." (Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts 78)

There may be only one Easter Vigil; "...it is never permitted to celebrate the entire Easter Vigil more than once in a given church or to anticipate the Mass of Easter before the vigil..." (Sacramentary, Easter Vigil 3) "The celebration of the Easter Vigil for special groups is not to be encouraged, since above all in this vigil the faithful should come together as one and should experience a sense of ecclesial community." (Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts 94)

EASTER SUNDAY

Daylight Saving Time begins April 4, 1999, Easter Sunday.



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minister exchanging the sign of peace with the ministers near him. Here is where we may meet one of two extremes. One presiding minister may over-extend the sign of peace attempting to give it to every last member of a large assembly while another may omit it all together.

DISUNITY AT COMMUNION

The distribution of holy communion then follows. Of all the parts of the Mass, the separation between what we say and what we do seems to be most evident at this point in the liturgy. When we receive the body and blood of Christ in holy communion, we become one holy communion in the Lord. Yet at this part of the Mass the congregation seems most disunited. Some members of the assembly are singing the communion song, others are not. Some members of the assembly are standing, others are kneeling, others are sitting, still others are walking, some are genuflecting before receiving the eucharist, others are not. At some Masses communion is being distributed under both forms, in other places only the consecrated bread is being offered to the people. Rather than bringing the assembly to a greater awareness of its unity in the Lord, the distribution of communion seems to be a time when individuals retreat into their private devotions during a communal ritual.

The Sacramentary envisions something different. "The uniformity in standing, kneeling, or sitting to be observed by all taking part is a sign of the community and the unity of the assembly: it

both expresses and fosters the spiritual attitude of all taking part." (GIRM 20) During the communion rite people are to stand for the Lord's Prayer and remain standing until the conclusion of the Mass. They may sit for a period of silence after communion. (GIRM 21) In this way the common posture of the assembly supports what we are saying about our unity in the Lord.

In receiving communion, people should receive the bread and wine consecrated at the Mass in which they are taking part. In this way "even through the signs communion will stand out more clearly as a sharing in the sacrifice actually being offered." (GIRM 56h)

THE COMMUNION CUP

The members of the assembly should also be given the option of responding to the Lord's invitation to "take this, all of you, and drink from it." "Holy communion has a more complete form as a sign when it is received under both kinds. For in this manner of reception a fuller light shines on the sign of the eucharistic banquet." (GIRM 24)

Since the American bishops permit communion from the cup at every liturgy, except in some very limited circumstances, such as Mass in a stadium, people should be allowed to exercise this privilege. (This Holy and Living Sacrifice, Directory for the Celebration and Reception of Communion under Both Kinds, 20, 21, 22) It is not proper for a priest to deny this option to the people because of his personal feelings or beliefs. The priest does not have the option to permit or withhold communion from the cup. It is the communicant who has the option, the option to

receive or not receive the consecrated wine. When a presiding minister refuses to allow communion from the cup, he incorrectly teaches the people that the way the rite is celebrated is the province of each presiding minister, not that of the wider Church.

After the reception of communion, the liturgy rapidly draws to a close. The Sacramentary says that any announcements are made following the prayer after communion. Making announcements during the silence after communion negates the importance of communal reflection and meditation after receiving holy communion. Of all the times of silence during the liturgy, this time could fittingly be considered the most important. If we omit this time

of reflection we teach people to disvalue silence in the liturgy and in their life.

What we have done is to examine the disjunction that is often present between what we say about the Mass and what we do during its celebration. If we want people to understand the liturgy and appreciate its importance in their lives, our words and our actions need to match. Like my parents, we need to deliver a consistent message in what we say and in what we do.+

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THE NEW LECTIONARY

STORIES FOR OUR TIME

After Mass one Sunday morning, two fourth graders came over to me as their parents chatted quietly outside Church. They said hello and one of them began telling me a story about a man who was lost in a desert; he was dying until an angel came from God with bread and water, and he was saved. The child I realized was recounting for me the story of Elijah in the desert from that Sunday's scripture readings. When their parents came over to collect them, the boy looked up at his mother and said, "We're just talking about stories."

Stories. There is something powerful about them. Whether we are looking for double meanings, happy endings, scholarly insights or divine truths, there is something captivating about a story to all people regardless of age or background. For centuries, the Church has been telling one of the most attractive stories of all time, the salvation stories of a God who is madly in love with his people which culminates in the ultimate chapter of love: Jesus Christ.

God reveals himself to us through the tradition of the Church and the scriptures of the bible. The proclamations of the scriptures at Mass manifest God's presence to us. "He (Christ) is present in the word since it is (Christ) himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the church." (The Constitution on

the Sacred Liturgy, CSL 7) Consequently, the telling of these stories is not something that can be taken lightly. The word of God needs to be understood clearly if the lives of the people attending church liturgies are to be transformed. One critical tool used to bring Christ's presence and good news to the people of God is the Lectionary for Mass.

The Lectionary for Mass is comprised of different **pericopes** or segments of scripture which were chosen in order to give congregations a significant amount of exposure to the bible and which were arranged to coincide with the seasons of the church year. According to the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, "The treasures of the bible are to be opened up more lavishly so that a richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God's word. In this way a more representative part of the Sacred Scriptures will be read to the people in the course of a prescribed number of years." (CSL 51) For Sundays and feasts, there are three readings: one each from the Old and New Testaments and a selection from one of the gospels. There is also a psalm between the first and second readings. On weekdays, there is usually one reading from the Old or New Testament, a psalm and a Gospel selection. The Sunday readings are divided up into three year cycles (A, B and C) and the weekdays are

arranged in a two year cycle (1 and 2). These cycles remain in the new lectionary.

The readings from the lectionary that are most commonly heard at Mass today are taken from the New American Bible, NAB (1970 edition), but there were also two other editions of the lectionary that were approved for liturgical use; the Revised Standard Version, RSV (1966 edition) and the New Jerusalem Bible, NJB (1969 edition). Neither of these two is in print any longer.

Obviously, the lectionaries that we use are written in the vernacular, but as most people know, the readings contained therein were not. Hebrew and Greek are the primary languages of the original biblical texts, but since these languages are not commonly understood, the texts needed to be translated into modern languages for the benefit of all people.

Translating scripture into the vernacular was affirmed at the Second Vatican Council. "Since the use of the vernacular, whether in the Mass, the administration of the sacraments or in other parts of the liturgy, may frequently be of great advantage to the people, a wider use may be made of it, especially in readings." (CSL 35, 2) The need to translate the liturgy of the Church into the language of the people reaches back to the mystery of the incarnation itself." The extent of the Church's

incarnation in various races and cultures will be the extent of Christ's universality... The church must incarnate herself in every race, as Christ incarnated himself in the Jewish race." (Anscar J. Chupungco, O.S.B., Cultural Adaptation of the Liturgy, New York: Paulist Press, 1982, 81) Today, the church, as the body of Christ, continues to make God's word incarnate to people in all cultures, languages and times.

THE LECTIONARY FOR MASS, SECOND EDITION

In 1981, the Vatican office of the Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship issued a second Latin typical edition of the Ordo Lectionum Missae. The Latin Ordo is a book containing a list of all of the readings in the following ways:

- It provided optional readings for the B and C lectionary cycles for those occasions that currently have only one set of readings (e.g. Holy Family, Baptism of the Lord, Ascension and Pentecost).
- It provided readings for all the ritual masses contained in the Sacramentary.
- It provided readings for all the masses for various needs and occasions found in the Sacramentary.
- It provided proper Alleluia verses for weekday masses in Ordinary Time. (Alan Detscher, "The Second Edition of the

Lectionary for Mass,"
Liturgy 90, May/June
1993: 4)

In order to include these additions in our current lectionary, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy (BCL) set about making preparations for a second edition of the English lectionary based on the second Latin typical edition of the Ordo Lectionum Missae. As the BCL began this process, however, it discovered that the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) was in the process of revising the New Testament of the New American Bible (NAB), and so it was decided to wait until that project was completed before continuing so that the latest translations could be incorporated into the new Lectionary. The revisions were completed in 1986, and the committee began work on the second edition.

By 1998, after a long, interesting, and somewhat stormy process, the Holy See received all revisions and approvals and the new Lectionary for Mass was finally ready for publication. Permission was given for the new Lectionary to be used beginning the First Sunday of Advent, 1998. Unlike the current one volume Lectionary that is widely used today, the second edition will be available in two volumes. Volume I will contain all of the readings for Sundays and Volume II will contain weekday readings, ritual masses, etc. Once both volumes are published, the use of the new Lectionary will be mandated for the Church in the United States.

Other changes were approved for the new Lectionary by the NCCB. Shorter versions of Colossians 3:12-21 and

Ephesians 5:21-33 are included so as to give the options of avoiding references to wives being **submissive** to their husbands. This is being done because over the past twenty years, the BCL has "received many requests to address pastoral concerns" (Detscher, Liturgy 90, 5) about these readings. In addition, a more literal translation of the acclamation "Verbum Domini" will follow each pericope so they will now read, "The word of the Lord" and "The Gospel of the Lord" reflecting the phrases used during the distribution of communion: "The body (blood) of Christ."

PASTORAL RESPONSE

It is part of human nature to resist change in any area of life when change is being made for the sake of change. This is not the case in the new Lectionary. Change is not being made for the sake of change. Change is being made to broaden our understanding of the scriptures and to deepen our faith in the eternal word of God.

The Book of Blessings chapter 39 provides a blessing of articles for liturgical use. The introduction clearly indicates that this is an appropriate blessing for the Lectionary for Mass, and the rubrics suggest that if the item to be blessed is to be used during the Mass, it can be blessed immediately before the introductory rites. The blessing will draw people's attention to the fact that this is a new and important addition to the parish liturgy.

Pastors and ministers should not hesitate to use preaching, parish bulletins, and other means of communication to enlighten people about the new Lectionary. It will be important to explain that any

changes that they hear are not a **rewriting** of the scriptures; rather, they will be hearing the result of a careful **retranslating** of the scriptures "in such a way as to communicate their meaning in contemporary English." (Detscher, Liturgy 90, 5) People and times change, but the message of the gospels does not. If, however, people's understanding of language changes and the language of the scriptures do not adapt, then the people's understanding of the scriptures could be altered in such a way as to cloud their meaning.

The letters, instructions, songs, poems, and stories that are proclaimed during the liturgy of the word naturally attract the attention of the listener far easier than any straightforward doctrine ever could. While listening to stories, both their content and the way in which they are told mesmerize us; but these are not ordinary stories. These are inspired texts containing precious revealed truths about our God. It would be tragic then if these timeless messages from God were misunderstood because the language used to tell them was unclear or inaccurate. And so the Church responds to the pastoral need of her people to understand these messages by translating the scriptures into the language of today. The new translations found in the second edition of the Lectionary will transform the words of long ago into stories for our time. +

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