

Preaching on the New Translation

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As deacons would be aware the Australian Catholic Bishops [timeline for the implementation](#) of the new translation includes the introduction of the spoken and sung parts of the Order of Mass from June 12, 2011 (Pentecost). By November 1 the complete Order of Mass will have been introduced into regular parish worship. The Bishops will determine the timeline for introduction of the propers for each Mass as these become available. Each diocesan bishop will determine the sequence for the introduction of the Order of Mass in his diocese between June 12 and November 1.

To assist priests and deacons in preaching on the new translation and preparing congregations to receive the new words, a number of preaching outlines have been provided. One has been developed by Rev Dr Tom Elich of Brisbane and is available in the March edition of [Liturgy News editorial](#). Another guideline is available on the national [Liturgical Commission website](#).

Deacons might note that there are some slight changes to the prayers said over the deacon before proclaiming the Gospel, the greeting before the Gospel and the prayer after reading the Gospel. The penitential act also allows for the option of including the deacon in leading part of the penitential act. Prayers for the cleaning of sacred vessels have changed. A variety of new forms of the dismissal are provided and these connect the rite with the concept of sending the congregation on mission.

in the present translation so that they are ready to do their part and to develop an understanding of the role of the deacon in each part of the liturgy.

There is a great deal of misinformation and myth surrounding the new translation which deacons should become aware of and ready to respond to if necessary. Some of these are listed in the dot points below but this is not a complete list by any means.

- ❖ We are receiving a new English translation of the Mass not a new Mass.
- ❖ It was always known by liturgists and bishops and many others that a new English translation was on the way since the first one came out in 1973.
- ❖ The 1970's translation used a process whereby the Latin was translated so that it sounded more like the English language and in a simple form of the English language.
- ❖ The new English translation is made so that the English will reflect more closely the Latin language and where Scripture is concerned the Koine Greek language of the New Testament.



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- ❖ The translating commission, which included liturgists, linguists, bishops and experts from other fields, were given directions that they must opt for the more Latin sounding English.
- ❖ Unfortunately much of the work begun by ICEL on translation in preparation for the new translation (80's and 90's), which would also have taken the language in a more Latin sounding direction, was discarded and fresh work had to begin in the 2000's, which caused a much delayed appearance of the current translation.
- ❖ The process of developing the new translation has been marred by controversy and questions of authority and it could have been much more open, clear and probably more just. These remain as questions the church should address in the future and not let them slide away.
- ❖ Drafts were given to the English speaking bishops of the world (USA, England and Wales, Canada, some parts of Africa, India, Scotland, Ireland and Australia as well as a few other places) to comment on and amend.
- ❖ Some bishops circulated the drafts to clergy and laity in their diocese, their diocesan liturgical commission and experts within their own dioceses, and others did not.
- ❖ Each bishop's conference of English speaking countries and regions had to approve the text and therefore not everyone got what they wanted. (Does anyone in a committee process ever get all they want? Especially one so vast.)
- ❖ Finally the draft had to be submitted to the relevant Roman Congregations for review and the *recognitio* of the pope. Through this process further changes were made.
- ❖ One interesting fact is that an accurate English language translation is required for people translating into many of the languages of Asia. Unlike the rest of the Catholic world which works from the Latin edition of the Mass some Asian languages have to rely on English translation of the Mass, since the gap between these languages is less than that to Latin.
- ❖ Compared to the introduction of the Mass of Paul VI, following Vatican II, where there was no consultation beyond a small group of experts and bishops, when priests were given little to no support to help themselves or congregations prepare for it, and it was simply presented as a *fait accompli*, the level of consultation and [resource supports](#) is phenomenal with the new translation.
- ❖ Anyone who has participated in Mass in German, Spanish, Portuguese or French speaking countries will recognise immediately the new English translation because this is closer to the version they have prayed since the 1970's.



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- ❖ This translation is not a rejection of Vatican II or winding back any clocks or reforms. This Mass is still the Mass of Paul VI implemented after the Council. Even the language that English speakers will use has been the language most Catholics have prayed since the Mass was ever translated from Latin into the vernacular after Vatican II. That is the language shift is a uniquely English language thing and not a general Catholic or Vatican II thing.
- ❖ Some of the prayers will be much richer in theological content because some of the prayers in the 1973 version (which was amended in 1975) simplified expressions and lost something in translation as a result. This is not something experienced by non-English speaking Catholics.
- ❖ In some prayers in English there will be gender specific terms which some refer to as non-inclusive language e.g. the use of “man” when text means men and women. Strangely enough the more the prayers are translated close to the Greek and Latin originals they will use more inclusive English language and the more they are made to sound like English the more gender exclusive they will sound. That is because Latin and Greek are already gender inclusive languages and they do not have the problems experienced by English. Catholic Church documents are always written in inclusive language in the original, only the translation to English (and some other languages introduce the problem.)
- ❖ Some of the prayers will have beautiful poetic images and cadences and sound richer as well as be richer in content.
- ❖ Some of the prayers will be clumsy, awkward and perhaps even poor English because translators may have tried to squeeze “round” Latin and Greek into “square” English holes. We can only hope that like the 1973 edition in a few years (as happened in 1975) some revisions and adjustments will be made and we might smooth out these rough parts.
- ❖ Now that the new translation is upon us there is only one response possible from deacons, priests, bishops and the laity-we receive it, pray it and enrich our faith with it. Vatican II taught that it is for the bishop alone to regulate the worship and sacramental life of the diocese (local church) and that no one may, by his or her own volition, change any element of the Catholic liturgy.
- ❖ We receive the Church, we receive our faith and we receive our liturgy-all of these are antecedent to our own personal faith experience and these shape us into the community which is the Body of Christ.
- ❖ If we use this opportunity properly we can really do some good work on the liturgical formation of the laity and clergy and of liturgy preparation committees, which we missed the first time around in the 70’s. We may be able to make a contribution toward forming laity and clergy for that full, active and conscious participation that Vatican II called for in our celebration of the liturgy. But this happy prospect will only be realised if we honestly take up the opportunity and not see the new translation as a threat.