

[Letter to Bishop(s)]
February 2010

Dear Bishop,

I write this letter out of loyalty to our Church, whose mission is world-wide and is the place that, in faith, is my home. The comments expressed should therefore not be seen as those of a disaffected Catholic but rather as a statement of sincere belief and concern for the well being of our Christian Community.

Our language evolves. Usage and circumstance gives rise to change and we gradually adapt to the time we live in. We are now presented with a translation that runs counter to such natural progression. Whilst we all used Latin, there was no problem. It was a noncurrent language whose tone and sound we were familiar with and of course, in many cases, did not understand. It was, at times, a holy comfort zone in which we felt secure. With the advent of the decree on the liturgy of the Council, all this changed. At last the church was to use a living language, with all the joy and difficulty that comes with that experience. It was a decision that we welcomed, and it was a decision that is not reversible.

It would seem that the text now being offered should be criticised on three counts. It is an attempt to revert to a literal translation closer to the Latin texts of an earlier time. Yet translation is about current understanding and nuance, not just literal meaning. At a time when the age profile of those attending the Sunday Mass is steadily rising, we are effectively excluding younger generations of English speaking Catholics who will not find archaic phrases supportive of prayer.

It would appear to be a Vatican-felt need to centrally control textual experience across the church, that all must do the same. Yet those of us who speak English are acutely aware that the North American use of words is often at variance with that experienced in England, Australia, South Africa, India and other English speaking parts of the world, and vice versa.

And finally, the text is being presented to the faithful as a *fait accompli*. Those who are to experience their faith through the words of the Eucharist are the last to realise the full implications of the proposed change. How is it that it has been kept such a closely guarded secret until we almost reach the point of no return? The Website that has been set up in Seattle (What if we just said wait?) offers a small (and welcome) voice to those who are sincerely concerned for our church in these post-Vatican years. Its growing list of signatures is testimony to that concern.

We must seriously question the apparent silence of our hierarchy in so many English speaking countries. This whole issue should have been a matter of much greater discussion in our parishes long before now, led by parish priests informed on the detail and able to support examination of the text by the laity . Leadership and pastoral care

sometimes demands that a bishop leads his diocesan community by saying, on their behalf, wait, or even, dare we say it, no.

I would ask that even at this late stage that due consideration is given to the voices raised in concern out of loyalty to the Church, both lay and religious.

Yours,
Chris McDonnell
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