

His Eminence Francis Cardinal George, OMI, President  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
PO Box 1979  
Chicago, IL 60690-1979

March 26, 2010

Dear Cardinal George:

*And Jesus concluded, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." Mk 2: 27*

We, the members of the parish council of the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, are writing to express our concerns about the proposed new translations of the Roman Missal. We are greatly troubled that the changes will be imposed upon both the clergy and the laity rather than being adopted by us. We fear that this will have an adverse impact on our prayer and result in further division and controversies in our parishes.

We are struggling with trying to understand why such sweeping changes are being made. The new translations suggest that there is something wrong with how we have been praying the Mass for the last forty-five years. What is at stake is the piety and beauty of the current wording of the Roman Missal.

The reasons given in support of the new translation, in our opinion, do not apply to or make sense for us as English speaking Catholics. We have read about the concern that African countries have prepared their own translations from the English translations, thus making the African translations one step further removed from the Latin texts. Rather than making sweeping changes to the current English translation, would it not make more sense to have scholars assist African countries to prepare their own translations directly from Latin?

As for the proposed new English wording, the translation of the Roman Missal direct from Latin has resulted in stilted, awkward, sometimes incomprehensible, and at times even humorous language. Our experience of the Mass will suffer, and this deeply saddens us. We feel the new language will make the Mass less approachable, and this will only result in more Catholics not attending Mass.

The Church today is dealing with many serious concerns: the shortage of priests, sexual abuse scandals, growing disenchantment of many women, declining church attendance, supporting social justice efforts, and defending the sanctity of life. With all that the Church is facing, is it wise to push forward with changes to the Roman Missal? The financial cost to train the clergy and congregations and to reprint texts and other written materials will be substantial and cannot be overlooked. Surely these resources could be used to deal with other more pressing issues.

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We humbly implore the Bishops of the United States to provide a period of time to allow the Bishops, the priests and the laity to reflect on and discuss the new translations and on the process by which they will be given to the people. Other groups have proposed instituting a pilot program by which the new translations, after a careful program of catechesis, can be introduced into some carefully selected parishes and communities throughout the English-speaking world for one liturgical year, after which the translations can be objectively evaluated. We heartily endorse this proposal.

We, as fellow members of the Body of Christ in His Church, ask for nothing more than to be given a voice in this vitally important matter.

Yours in Christ,

George Ryan  
Chairperson  
Parish Council of St. John the Evangelist

cc: Most Reverend Jerome E. Listecki  
Archbishop of Milwaukee

Most Rev. Arthur Serratelli, Chairman  
USCCB, Committee for Divine Worship