

What's a Catholic to Do?

by Jack Conley, C.P.

Self-Criticism and Prophecy

Have you noticed lately that a lot of us are using a novel rhetoric in daily conversations? Suddenly phrases like “Culture Wars” and “Tea Party” have crept into our everyday language; and for those of us who often speak “church jargon,” our sentences are suddenly peppered with words like clericalism, polarization, and triumphalism. With this article I’d like to address some of the tension and conflict in the Church today, a little bit of history, and ask you to journey with me in discerning where it seems the Spirit is leading us.

The ancient Israelites lived a faith unlike any other religion in the distant past. It wasn’t the fact that they embraced monotheism, or a particular code of morality, because others shared those beliefs and values. Our ancestors in faith were unique *in filling their sacred writing with self-criticism*. We call this **the prophetic Word**. Other cultures simply did not have the searing condemnation of injustice from an Amos, or the personal denunciation of corrupt leadership from someone like Isaiah to help form their identity.

Sometimes when a person or group criticizes the accepted values of the establishment (the empire) they are considered traitors. Yet we know from history that all reform begins with the courage of those calling us to critical reflection. Joan of Arc and Francis of Assisi were initially ridiculed and condemned, yet the next generations canonized them saints.

How is the Spirit working in the Church today? Do we recognize that same Spirit moving within current Church criticism (the [Boston Globe](#)), the voices of today’s prophets? Are you willing to share in that prophetic ministry yourself?

Let’s glance at some “hot button” issues that seem to be dividing our Catholic faith community at this time. We hear about them in the media every day: 1) the apostolic visitation of women religious by Franc Cardinal Rodé, *Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life*, 2) the Vatican’s handling of worldwide sex abuse by church ministers, and the roles that bishops and priests have played in this crime, 3) the proposed implementation of the third edition of the Roman Missal.

Just Say ‘Wait’

In this short essay it is possible to address only one of these concerns, so let’s begin with the Roman Missal as an example of the conflict, and the subsequent discernment required of us. Just a week ago Thursday, Pope Benedict signed the *recognitio*, approving a new ritual text containing prayers and instructions for the celebration of the Mass (e.g., acclamations, Glory to God, Prayer over the Gifts). Dioceses and publishers have already begun making plans for the implementation, probably starting in Advent of 2011... (workshops, new texts, song lyrics).

But many theologians and pastoral ministers, those immersed in the history and development of liturgy, are asking that we run a trial balloon first (to better understand this “grassroots” review, see [www.whatifwejustsaidwait.org](#)), a sort of pilot study, before printing costly volumes. After serious study, our St. Agnes Pastoral

Council, along with several other local parishes, considered the decisions were made without having adequately consulted the laity or priests, and several weeks ago, mailed letters to each pastor and council chair in the archdiocese, promoting the postponement.

History and Context

In December 1963 Pope Paul VI and his brother bishops presented the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, which the Second Vatican Council had just approved and which the pope officially promulgated. The Constitution (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*) had passed overwhelmingly: 2,147 to 4. It was not the product of a small group of “hijackers” who had somehow won over a bare majority of unsuspecting council fathers. On the contrary, the Constitution had virtually unanimous support.

By 1970 the new translations were being promulgated. Scripture scholars acknowledged that it was a hurried affair, but there was a desire to get something into the hands of the faithful as quickly as possible. Pope Paul soon formed the *International Commission on English in the Liturgy* (ICEL) to further the work of the eleven English-speaking countries. By 1997 they completed a more refined and poetically dynamic translation of the official liturgical texts, and although the translation had over 2/3 of the bishops’ votes, it sat on a shelf in the Vatican, only to be later rejected by the Congregation. The long labor of countless specialists — biblical scholars, linguists, poets, liturgical experts — was abruptly ended and dismissed. Eventually, ICEL was dismantled, and Pope John Paul II appointed *Vox Clara*, focusing on a more literal translation of the original Latin text.

“...and no longer are American Catholics willing to pay, pray and obey...”

Dominican theologian Paul Phlibert states, “a type of clericalism has been revived over the last 20 or 25 years that is subduing the apostolic vision of the church sketched by Vatican II. It is overemphasizing the part played by the ordained in the life of the church. There are many symptoms, from cardinals unpacking their 15-foot trains of scarlet silk - *cappa magnas* (ceremonial capes) — to seminarians and young priests living full time in cassocks; from the disappearance of inclusive language in church texts and preaching, to the nearly exclusive focus upon clerical vocations in diocesan letters.” (National Catholic Reporter)

The strong resistance to proposed liturgical changes of the Second Vatican Council was centered above all in the Roman Curia. That opposition has not ceased. Since the Council, the Congregation for Divine Worship has sought to maintain strict control of the liturgy.

Maybe you feel disconnected. Or perhaps you’re one who feels engaged and nurtured. But no longer are American Catholics called or willing to simply “pay, pray and obey.” A healthy, vibrant Church requires the full, active participation of *all* its members, and all of us, as informed Catholics, must lead the way in building an inclusive, tolerant and just society. This begins with the Mass. Any directives *imposed* by the Holy See will be a hard sell, especially when many priests do not believe this translation to be of much value. Seems pretty clear to me *What a Catholic IS to do!*

What's a Catholic to Do? Part II

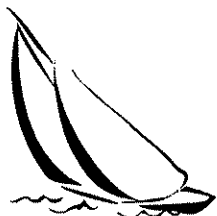
by Jack Conley, C.P.

As seminarians in the 1970's we learned that the fundamental changes of the Second Vatican Council were not cosmetic. The Council was neither about re-arranging church furniture nor the attire of religious sisters. The deeper changes were philosophical and theological. In place of a vocabulary of certitudes and triumphalism we suddenly spoke of a "pilgrim" church on journey. The *Constitution on the Church*, for example, proclaimed we are "at once holy and always in need of purification," and that we must "constantly follow the path of penance and renewal." (number 8).

Forty-five years later we are still learning the meaning of constant conversion. In a previous article, I wrote of self-criticism as an integral part of our Judeo-Christian identity. Judaism was unlike other ancient religions in that it employed the Prophet who would speak truth to the people, and even to the king. David had his Nathan.

Remember Archie Bunker, the bigoted but lovable TV comedic character? Our protagonist would sit in his arm chair, shouting violent diatribes at his Polish son-in-law, making unreasonable demands on his wife, Edith. We would slap our knees in laughter, but twenty minutes into the program we were hooked, seduced by the humor, and then indicted. **I am Archie.** Dammit! His defensiveness and his fear are mine. His unwillingness to be inclusive and transformed by the other is mine. His prejudice and anxiety about change are mine. (Or, as Nathan tells his king, David, "that man is YOU.")

Now, many voices are playing prophet to us, the Church. From the harsh and vulgar (entertainer Sinead O'Connor) to the searing and poignant (*Commonweal Magazine*) we hear the challenge for healing and reform. In a recent editorial I was stung by the author's candor: "At all levels, right down to the parish, much of the church has proven deficient in its ability to listen and interact with adult believers. But at the center of the present crisis are found members of the Roman Curia." ("Pilgrim People, Part II," *America Magazine*, May 17, 2010, page 5) Or, as Fr. Gerry O'Hanlon, former Provincial of the Jesuits in Ireland, states, "Sadly, for a multitude of reasons, the dream of the Second Vatican Council of a more collegial Church, with active lay participation, and a balancing of the power of the papacy with the influence of local Churches (episcopal conferences, informed by lay input), have for the most part not been realized. The dominant culture of our Church remains that of a dysfunctional, autocratic clericalism..." (*The Tablet*, 13 February 2010.)



And last week, en route to Portugal, Pope Benedict XVI commented on the nature of church scandal, saying, "The

greatest persecution of the church doesn't come from enemies on the outside, but is born in sin within the church. The church thus has a deep need to re-learn penance, to accept purification, to learn on one hand forgiveness, but also the necessity of justice."

Not long ago, Peggy Noonan, weekly columnist for the *Wall Street Journal* and former speech write for President Reagan, spoke these words re: the church's sex abuse scandal: "The press forced the church to admit, confront and attempt to redress what had happened. The press forced them to confess. The press forced the church to change the old regime and begin to come to terms with the abusers. The church shouldn't be saying *j'accuse* but *thank you*."

If you want to build a ship,
don't drum up the men to gather wood,
divide the work and give orders.
Instead, teach them to yearn
for the vast and endless sea.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

I grew up in a Passionist parish in Chicago. The Sisters of Providence taught in our school. Mother Theodore Guerin, foundress of the Sisters of Providence of St. Mary of the Woods, was once locked into a room in a rectory by her bishop, who was infuriated by her independent spirit. This bishop of Vincennes (Indiana) was appointing the sisters to different assignments in the diocese and even forbade Mother Theodore to visit them on location. She refused. Following her canonization on October 15, 2006, by Pope Benedict one of the sisters said, "We hope to make her known as a woman for all time, a bearer of hope, faith and deep humility. She will be a special source of courage to foster the gifts of strong women to take risks needed for mission. She is a model for dealing with conflict and division with a non-violent heart. We look to her as a model of commitment to Church and yet as one willing to speak the truth respectfully to Church officials in times of challenge and disagreement."

In the next article of this series, I will address the conflict around the Third Edition of the Roman Missal, scheduled for implementation at the beginning of Advent 2011. I am most grateful to our Parish Pastoral Council and Worship Committee for all their vision and research. As we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost today, we, the Faith Community of Saint Agnes, revel in the many gifts we have been given, and we praise God for bestowing them upon us! We remember, too, that as St. Paul listed the gifts or charisms, **prophecy** was second in the litany. God bless you.

What's a Catholic to Do? Part III

by Jack Conley, C.P.

I am most grateful for a letter that our Parish Pastoral Council members recently received from a fellow parishioner, responding to our PPC's correspondence to other Louisville parishes. The Council was proposing a pilot study be made on the *Third Edition of the Roman Missal* prior to its implementation November 2011. The author states, "...parishioners of St. Agnes generally view the parish as, and desire the parish to be, in concert with the teachings of the Catholic Church. Most of us don't belong here expecting this to be a rogue parish." Personally, I couldn't agree more. And while I don't want St. Agnes to be considered a deviant parish, I do hope we are considered a Gospel-centered parish, a Christ-like and welcoming parish to all, a parish known for social justice as revealed in Sacred Scripture, a parish with a reputation for creative and nourishing liturgy, good and solid faith formation, etc. As we learn from the early Church (Acts 15), how we live out these attributes usually precludes the avoidance of conflict! Nevertheless, Saint Agnes is clearly a faith community of seekers, those who choose to care, who are willing to do their inner work, always going deeper.

In this third article of a series, I (continue to) address the implementation of the *Third Edition of the Roman Missal*. I offer a cursory history of how we got here, the Holy See's rationale for its promulgation, and, hopefully, some life-giving ways to keep moving.

Many, many decades of research and reform, across the globe, paved the way for the liturgical renewal of Vatican II. Early in the first part of the century Pope Pius X realized the need for change, sensing the separation many Catholics felt, and encouraged more frequent reception of Communion; to assist, he lowered the age for First Communion. Thirty years later Pope Pius XII wrote an encyclical (*Mediator of God*) confirming the basic direction of the liturgical movement (acknowledging that Christ is present not just in the appearance of bread and wine, but in the people), then he relaxed the Eucharistic fast to encourage people to take Communion more often. Pope John XXIII reignited this dialogue by calling the Second Vatican Council, beginning October 1962.

The main avenues of the Council's reform include: (1) the understanding that *the Church is the entire people of God*; Council Fathers did not deny the hierarchical nature of the Church, but we were clearly reminded of St. Paul's teaching (*Romans 12:4-5, 1 Corinthians 12:27*) that WE are the Body of Christ. (2) The second main avenue of reform *is the restoration of Baptism (linked to Confirmation) as the essential sacrament of ministry*. Where once ministry was seen as belonging solely to the ordained (*clericalism*), the Council reminded us that it belongs to all the baptized. We are just now beginning to understand the full impact of this insight. (3) A third area of reform would be the recognition that that *local*

parishes and dioceses are not merely branches or geographic divisions; rather, they *constitute a full expression of the Church (subsidiarity)*. In this way the Council not only allowed for

but actually *encouraged the use of appropriate local customs and language in the celebration of rites*. In other words, it provided for cultural adaptation.

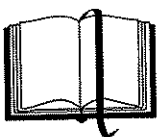
The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC), was the very first publication coming from the Council. In the opening lines we read of the four goals of the "sacred council" Vatican II: (1) to energize Catholics, (2) to update church institutions, (3) to encourage the unity of all Christians, and (4) to reach out to the whole world. These goals were then illustrated by Pope Paul VI (who was elected pope after John XXIII's death) in his opening speech at the Council's Second Session (September 29, 1963). Over a dozen times SC calls for "full, active and conscious participation" of all the faithful.

"The language chosen should be that in 'common usage', that is, suited to the greater number of the faithful who speak it in everyday use, even 'children and persons of small education.'"

Comme le Prévoit

In January 1969 the **Instruction on the Translation of Liturgical Texts for Celebrations with a Congregation** (*Comme le Prévoit*) stated, "The purpose of liturgical translations is to proclaim the message of salvation to believers and to express the prayer of the church to the Lord: 'Liturgical translations have become...the voice of the Church' (address of Paul VI to participants in the Congress on translations of liturgical texts, November 10, 1965). To achieve this end, it is not sufficient that a liturgical translation merely reproduce the expressions and ideas of the original text. Rather it must faithfully communicate to a given people, and in their own language, that which the Church by means of this given text originally intended to communicate to another people in another time. A faithful translation, therefore, cannot be judged on the basis of individual words: the total context of this specific act of communication must be kept in mind, as well as the literary form proper to the respective language.... The language chosen should be that in 'common usage, that is, suited to the greater number of the faithful who speak it in everyday use, even 'children and persons of small education.'"

In both the **Liturgy Constitution (SC)** and the **Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (LC)**] there is a shift from a highly centralized governing Church to one designating greater decision-making and autonomy to the local level (episcopal conferences, consultation with the laity). On October 17, 1963, Pope Paul VI appointed the **International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL)**. Work was begun in 1981 on revising the (admittedly hurried) first English translation of the Roman Missal, promulgated in 1973. After fourteen years of work, bishops, scholars and liturgists, linguists and poets from



the eleven English speaking countries submitted a new translation which was approved by the episcopal conferences. When submitted to Rome it was as first ignored, then rejected. By 1991 the Congregation on Divine Worship (CDW) issued *Liturgiam Authenticam*, the instruction calling for a formal, or literal rather than a dynamic approach to liturgical translation. As Bishop Donald Trautman (current bishop of Erie, PA, and former chair of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy) has stated, "The non-collegial, centralizing and controlling nature of this document is evident throughout." Repeatedly the reader will find contradictions to the vision and wording of Vatican II documents. The irony is that not one of ICEL's critics was a natural English speaker; one was German and three were Spanish speakers.

Eventually, the Holy See told ICEL (CDW's Cardinal Medina's letter to ICEL'S chair, Bishop Maurice Taylor) to revise statutes and reconfigure their membership. For all practical purposes ICEL was dissolved and *Vox Clara*, a creation of CDW, was created in 2002.

It is necessary to quell rumors about the impending changes in the Mass. The Roman Missal we are preparing to implement is NOT a return to the Latin. It is an English translation that attempts to better reflect the original Latin. Some feel the language will be more noble, inspiring, and uplifting. Yet many feel the language is merely archaic, obscure, and incomprehensible. Trautman states, "Translated liturgical texts involve public proclamations and must be intelligible to the assembly on first hearing; a major defect of the translated Missal is the number of lengthy, cumbersome sentences."

I have attached examples of the different translations, that you may better understand what the controversy is about. And thank you for making St. Agnes a faith community that thunders the Gospel — justice & charity (Hand-in-Hand, Community Catholic, CLOUT), prayerful liturgy (choirs, hospitality, lectors), faith formation (Adult Faith Formation), and much more. God bless you!



1973 ICEL Our current English Sacramentary	1998 ICEL	New translation (2010)
Ash Wednesday		
Lord, protect us in our struggle against evil. As we begin the discipline of Lent, make this day holy by our self-denial.	Grant us, Lord, the grace to begin this time of Christian service with a holy fast, that, as we struggle against the spirit of evil, we may be strengthened by the practice of self-discipline.	Grant us, Lord, to begin with holy fasting this campaign of Christian service that, as we fight against spiritual evils, we may be armed with the weapons of self restraint.
Third Sunday Advent		
God of love and mercy, help us to follow the example of Mary, always ready to do your will. At the message of an angel she welcomed your eternal Son, and, filled with the light of your Spirit, she became the temple of your Word.	O God, by consenting to the message of an angel the immaculate Virgin became the dwelling of your eternal Word and was filled with the light of the Holy Spirit. Give us the grace to follow her example and devote ourselves humbly to your will.	O God, eternal majesty, whose ineffable Word the immaculate Virgin received through the message of an Angel, we pray that, following the example of her who became the dwelling place of divinity, and is filled with the light of the Holy Spirit, we may humbly hold fast to your will.

Chronology: Towards the Third Edition of the Roman Missal

- October 17, 1963 International Commission on English in the Liturgy established
- January 25, 1969 Comme le prévoit
- March 26, 1970 Roman Missal, *First Edition*
- 1998 Roman Missal, *Second Edition*
(approved by Bishops' Conferences, rejected by Congregation for Divine Worship)
- October 26, 1999 Cardinal Medina Estevez to Bishop Maurice Taylor
- March 28, 2001 *Liturgiam Authenticam* promulgated
- October 2001 Staff, Secretariat and Experts who served ICEL dismissed
- 2002 Roman Missal, *Third Edition* — English translation
- November 30, 2008 Southern African Bishops' Conference initiate use of Third Edition
- Advent, 2011 Proposed inauguration