



SPEAKING OF GOD: THE TRANSLATION OF LITURGICAL TEXTS

An address to the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions
October 3, 2018, Atlanta

MOST REVEREND WILTON D. GREGORY, ARCHBISHOP OF ATLANTA

The headlines today are intensely focused on a very real and enormously painful crisis in the Church in our country and well beyond. The road to healing will be difficult, but I am convinced that together we will face these problems with honesty, in a way that will result in greater accountability and a safer environment for those who are vulnerable. As serious as this situation is, however, the life of the Church must also continue, and each of us in our own circumstances should continue to strive for holiness and strive to help encourage others to holiness.

We are all here because we love the Church, and in particular because we have a special love for the Sacred Liturgy, and a desire to make our liturgical celebrations as fruitful as possible. When it comes to the Sacred Liturgy, I can think of very few things that time and time again have managed to elicit a more passionate or perceptive even heated response than does the issue of any proposed changes in the language that we use. Moreover, the history of the Church is filled with ample examples to illustrate and confirm that point of view.

We remain in a situation in which anxiety, confusion, and resistance continue to be a concern because of the language that we use in public worship. In some respects, that anxiety and resistance are unavoidable occurrences but still in many other ways, we are much better prepared to face these changes today than we might have been a generation ago.

Before all else, I would like to begin my presentation this morning by calling to mind those who were involved in the Church's liturgy – especially our priests – back when the post-Conciliar rites were promulgated (perhaps this includes many of you who are here today?). Imagine what it was like for those who were serving the Church during the mid to late 60's and who were entrusted with the task and the enormous responsibility of introducing the vernacular into the Church's worship life. There are so many examples of people who did so with such amazing success, personal generosity and skill. It certainly was not an easy undertaking and there were no reliable or tested models or examples to be followed such as we currently have available to us today. Yet they managed to achieve the introduction of the vernacular at a point in time when the Church had not witnessed such a change in language for nearly five centuries.

Of course, many of you were involved in the introduction of the current translation of the Roman Missal. It wasn't nearly as dramatic as the initial change to the vernacular, but it was still a daunting undertaking and we are so grateful to you beyond words!

During that first effort to introduce new language for the Liturgy, we sometimes had to endure the dismay and the occasional hostile response of people who had been educated, shaped and formed by the liturgy that had been standardized by decrees of the Council of Trent and been in possession for nearly 500 years. Many of these same faithful people were never catechized to understand why the celebration of the Liturgy in the vernacular was such a value or a tradition far older than the Latin language that we had used to praise God for nearly five centuries. And we still find ourselves asking our brothers and sisters to understand, accept, and embrace new changes in language that are intended to perfect and complete a process that began five decades ago.

During that first moment of change in nearly 500 years, some of these faithful people were upset that a treasure that they had come to cherish was being taken from them and to be replaced by elements that initially might have appeared far inferior to that which they were losing. Nonetheless, skillful and fruitful pastoral efforts prevailed and ultimately brought the vernacular into the Church's life of prayer with dedication, zeal, and obvious success.

It is the successful introduction of the liturgical changes of the past five decades that you have helped to achieve that is now witnessed in the homeostatic resistance on the part of some to undergoing a development in our liturgical praxis. Even in the midst of our present crisis, there remains in many respects a health and vitality in the Catholicism in the United States of America. This is a direct result of the hard work of so many priests and laity who served our people during the past half century and you all deserve an incredible expression of our gratitude and esteem.

In all humility and in candor we would at this moment have to admit that not every element or dimension of those initial endeavors at liturgical reform was excellent or even first-rate. Those earliest liturgical resources that were available to you during those transition years were often mundane if not mediocre especially in comparison to that which they were replacing. The music, the vesture, the environment, and yes even some of the vernacular language left much to be desired – especially when compared with some of the elements of worship that they supplanted.

We could cite many new vernacular musical compositions that were far-from-worthy replacements for some of the elegant sacred music to which we had grown accustomed to in the liturgy. The splendors of some of the artistic trappings of ecclesial life at the time of the enactment of the liturgical renewal were not equaled by the sometimes humdrum elements that substituted for them. And the issue of personal tastes and preferences are always factors to be considered in this process. But during the past five decades we have continued to provide for new and more beautiful works of all the liturgical arts that have brought the worship life of our Church into a new realm of excellence of which we can all rightfully now be very proud. Each dimension of our liturgy has gradually undergone the improvements that can only come with time and with the lived spiritual journey of a people who are in love with God.

While many may not have admitted the requirement, we needed to live with the renewed liturgy for a period of time allowing it to undergo the embellishments and the developments that would eventually and have resulted in truly beautiful artistic expressions and forms.

The ongoing examination of liturgical language is but another dimension of the continuing renewal that is both necessary and realistic in reflecting the wisdom and the experience that we have acquired during the past generation of using the Liturgy in response to the reforms called for by the Second Vatican Council. Improvement in liturgical form demands the seasoning that only time can provide.

Immediately after the Council, the entire Church was faced with the challenge of promptly translating our liturgical texts into the vernacular of the many nations within the Church. Never before in Church history were we asked to respond so quickly to such a vast and complex demand for liturgical texts. We managed to complete a swiftly conceived script that has served us adequately but with regular modifications that were needed to address

inaccuracies that only became evident once we began to use the texts. We are nonetheless indebted to those who provided us with the first examples of a vernacular text.

In the first forty years after the Council, we all witnessed a number of quiet alterations to the original vernacular manuscripts. We have witnessed these changes that were intended to allow our English translation to be a more exact rendition of the Latin original. One of those examples of such a change was the revision that occurred in the Preface of the Fourth Eucharistic Prayer which initially asked the Church to pray *You alone are God* as a translation of the Latin *Tu solus Deus*. The Latin text itself was changed in 1981 to *Tu unus Deus* thereby requiring a retranslation of the English to *You are the One God*.

I could give other examples, but the obvious point is that these kinds of adjustments are important because our Liturgical language must always accurately express the Faith of the Church – *lex orandi lex credendi*.

As all of you undoubtedly know, the first four centuries of the Church were filled with constant, intense, widespread and celebrated debates over the doctrine of the Trinity and the nature and the person of Christ and how we might express those truths appropriately in language that both captured the truths and expressed them in ways that could be appropriated by mere human beings; these debates resulted in the officially sanctioned theological language that is an indispensable expression of the faith that the Church has regarding the unity and the equality of the Three distinct Persons of the Trinity. This simple example calls attention to how important it is to allow one language to capture the meaning of the original texts.

The first efforts at the preparation of vernacular texts for use in the liturgy incorporated and accepted some principles that highlighted certain dimensions of the art of translation while not stressing or accentuating other principles of the art of translation. You will note that I refer to the *art* of translation since this effort is not scientific in the sense of being an exact process. Any effort at language translation is a constant balancing act between meaning, the prosaic value and structure of the original text, and the structure and capacity of the receptive language to fully embrace and accommodate the meaning, syntax, and poetic structure of another language. Perhaps the one great challenge that we must currently face is to acknowledge that the translation of ancient liturgical texts is also the art of taking a text from a language that may be fundamentally a fixed reality and then rendering it into a language that is constantly changing. While those who are expert Latinists would insist that even Latin continues to undergo modification as new words are even now introduced to accommodate new realities and objects that the world of ancient Rome never envisioned. Nonetheless, the texts of the Liturgy are for the most part a fixed reality.

English and the other modern languages are living tongues and subject to many and frequent changes as they seek to accommodate themselves to the reality of a developing world. Words, phrases, syntax, and contexts are in almost constant flux in each of these modern languages. And yet, the language of worship must also acknowledge a requirement for stability and even a resistance to too rapid a change and introduction of new terms in the same way that ordinary and day-to-day language shifts so constantly.

Why is this so? Well, the language of worship must not only convey meaning for contemporary people, it must also bring with it the creedal heritage that belongs to the legacy of the people who embrace the Faith of the Church. When the Church prays, we pray not only for this moment with these specific people, but with the entire Church that has lived and we also look forward to the completion of the Church in glory when all will be perfectly one. This means that what may be a contemporary and perfectly fashionable manner of expression may also be inadequate to capture all that has preceded the reality that it seeks to convey.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



Fifty for the Fiftieth!



Yes, I am grateful for the Federation’s past and I support its future! I wish to pledge:

\$50 \$100 \$150 \$200 \$250 \$300 \$500 Other \$ _____
Amount Enclosed: _____ Please send me a reminder in Nov Dec Jan

THANK YOU!

Name _____
Address _____
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Please make your check payable to the “FDLC.” Mail to 415 Michigan Avenue NE, Suite 70, Washington, DC 20017
The FDLC is a 501 c3 non-profit organization. Contributions are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

✂ _____

PLEASE CONSIDER A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE GIFT TO THE FDLC

During the national meeting in Atlanta, campaign Co-chairs Father Michael Balash and Ms. Laura Bertone launched the 2018-2019 Annual Appeal. Special incentives were also announced by Father Balash. “Anyone who turns in their pledge card by December 31, will be enrolled in a drawing for a \$100 gift certificate.” The winner of that drawing was Tony Varas of the Diocese of Metuchen and he generously donated that prize back into the fund.

As of February 9, we have received \$9,535 from sixty-one very generous donors. Won’t you join them? Please give this your prayerful consideration. The FDLC is a 501-c3 organization and your gift is tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. **THANK YOU!**

SAVE THE DATES!

**THE FEDERATION AT FIFTY:
PRAYER WITHOUT CEASING**

OCTOBER 9-11, 2019

SHERATON GRAND HOTEL, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

HOTEL INFORMATION



We will be gathering at the lovely Sheraton Grand Hotel on the Chicago River. We have negotiated a special rate for the hotel of \$199 per night (reg. \$269-359). Reservations to our room block must be made before September 17, 2019. The group rate will be honored three days before and after the meeting in case you plan an extended vacation. If you call the hotel (312-464-1000) directly, you must identify the “2019 National Meeting of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions” in order to receive the group rate. Even better—reserve your room online using our special Passkey Link: <https://book.passkey.com/gt/217242495?gtid=c6e1cfe322f149243d2a3b5b82558378>

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY – YOUR HELP IS NEEDED NOW

Several subcommittees are already hard at work on various elements of our fiftieth anniversary celebration. They are asking members in every region to contribute some important resources now, in February. Please respond to your regional rep on the Steering Committee or to your Board rep. They will pass on the details to the appropriate person(s).

- ★ Please name the “giants” in your diocese or region – name, diocese, why you are naming them (e.g., they founded the Office of Worship, they served on the Diocesan Liturgical Commission for decades, they wrote significant guidelines/articles/policies which were shared among the region, etc.). *Respond by March 1*
- ★ Please name the deceased FDLC members in your region –name, diocese, year of death (if known)
- ★ Please share any significant treasures you might be able to bring to the meeting (e.g., a chalice that was given to a bishop at the Second Vatican Council, an original edition of a book, etc.). Security will be provided.
- ★ Please share any wonderful mementos which you might possess (e.g. photos of FDLC events or meetings, old meeting programs or worship aids). Please identify the date of the photo, the occasion, and perhaps the people in them. A digital version of a photo would be ideal.
- ★ Many “alumni” have retired. Some remain as associate members. Perhaps they once were very active in FDLC, but have been assigned to other ministries. There are others with whom we have simply lost contact. Can you share their names and e-mails?
- ★ Exhibitor packages have already been distributed. Do you know of other companies who might be interested in exhibiting? Sue Huett (Diocese of Belleville), our exhibit chair, will be happy to follow up.
- ★ Does your company, diocese, or parish want to take out a congratulatory ad in the meeting program?

○ Back Cover	\$850	○ Half Page	\$200
○ Inside Covers	\$500	○ Quarter Page	\$100
○ Interior (full page)	\$350	○ Eighth Page	\$50

REMINDER

From February 1 to March 31, applications are being accepted for the **Forum Legacy Grant Program**. These grants – up to \$2000 -- are awarded annually to diocesan-sponsored formation programs related to Christian Initiation. Please visit our website for more information. <https://fdlc.org/forum-legacy-grant-program>

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY STEERING COMMITTEE

No one region is hosting this year. Instead, all regions have some responsibilities.
Many thanks to Todd Williamson for serving as such an organized and enthusiastic Chairperson!

Reg.	Name	Phone	E-mail
1	Rev. Peter Lenox	203-838-4171	frlenox@diobpt.org
2	Mrs. Elizabeth Simcoe	518-489-5408	Elizabeth.simcoe@rcda.org
3	Tony Varas	732-562-1990	tonyvaras@aol.com
4	Rev. Jim Kiesel	410-206-3601	JMKies4@aol.com
5	Mrs. Betty-Ann Hickey	504-861-6300	bhickey@arch-no.org
6	Rev. Duane Wachowiak	231-627-2105	duanewachowiak@gmail.com
7	Rev. Marty Dobrzynski	219-322-4505	frmartyd@stmichaelparish.life
8	Sr. Jeanne Wiest, OP	651-698-5581	jwiest@adriandominicans.org
9	Carol Mathews	816-537-6990	cmathews@holyspiritmo.org
10	Rev. Leon Strieder	713-582-1876	strieder@stthom.edu
11	Ms. Laura Bertone	415-867-9062	bertonel@sfarch.org
12	Tish Thornton	208-841-8988	tthornton@rcdb.org
13	Rev. Cliff Jacobson	307-682-6386	Cliff_Jacobson@hotmail.com
14	Sandy Dooley	407-902-3255	sldooley@live.com
CHAIR	Todd Williamson	312-534-8008	twilliamson@odw.org
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A MOMENT IN THE FEDERATION'S HISTORY



Msgr. Frederick McManus and Rev. Godfrey Diekmann, OSB, share a laugh as they look at a photo of them with Cardinal Ritter, taken during the Second Vatican Council. The occasion was the 1996 National Meeting in Minneapolis and Father Diekmann (1908-2002) was receiving the second McManus Award. The award was named in honor of Msgr. McManus (1923-2005) and he was its first recipient.

We are grateful to the members of the Board of Directors for braving cold weather and airport delays as they gathered for two long days of intense meetings in Orlando (where the temperature was a balmy 40-50 degrees). Many thanks to Bruce Croteau and to the Diocese of Orlando retreat center for their hospitality.

The Board's duty is to hold the mission of the FDLC in trust –providing fiscal oversight, maintaining and assessing goals, and providing advice and counsel. Moreover, this is a working Board, which coordinates several ongoing projects and much of the January Board meeting was dedicated to advancing the work of the Federation. They left with more work to do and much information to share with all of you in memorandums and in your region's spring meetings.

After Morning Prayer, our new Board Chair, Father James Bessert (Diocese of Saginaw) began the meeting with a reminder that our history has been focused on “leadership, scholarship, and resources” which aid the liturgical life of the United States. Our mission has never deviated from these goals. Board Treasurer, Laura Bertone, (Archdiocese of San Francisco) reported that the financial state of the Federation is healthy, including an investment account which is guided by Catholic Social Teachings. Rita Thiron, Executive Director, reported on the day-to-day operations of the Federation including membership data, publication income and expenses, resources which have been produced and shared, Fiftieth Anniversary plans and progress, the evaluation of the Atlanta meeting, and various formation efforts. The BCDW Secretariat reported on the progress of liturgical texts, the recent RCIA survey comments, and the release of *Los Santos* –a small text which provides insight into the patronal feasts which appear in the Appendix of the *Misal Romano, tercera edición*.

The Board work is divided into four major committees – Governance, Pastoral Liturgy, Formation, and Member Services. The Board spent the bulk of the meeting making progress on current initiatives and setting priorities for further action. More details will be shared at your regional Spring meeting. Members are encouraged to share their gifts with the Federation, to network with your colleagues, and to share resources which you may have already produced in our own diocesan work. Please contact your regional rep for further details.

GOVERNANCE (Facilitator—Laura Bertone)

- National Meeting handbook updates
- Board Orientation and possible Committee Restructuring
- Models for Diocesan Commissions
- Sustainability Studies

PASTORAL LITURGY (Facilitator – Christopher Ferraro)

- Pastoral Companion to the Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar
- Guidelines for Adoration and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament
- Pastoral Companion for the Rite of Exorcism (for Clergy and Parish staffs)
- Guideline for the proper celebration of the rites of the Pastoral Care of the Sick

FORMATION (Facilitator – Julie Grace Males)

- Publications Handbook
- Product Analysis
- Formation for the revised OCIA
- Certification of Lay Ministers

MEMBER SERVICES (Facilitator – Rev. Cliff Jacobson)

- Website review and reorganization
- Rejuvenating regional structures and meetings
- Assisting new attendees at national meetings
- Online registration techniques for national meeting and workshop



(continued from page 3) The new translation of the Roman Missal that came into use at the end of 2011 was an effort to continue the renewal of the Liturgy that was begun 50 years ago. Is this a perfect rendition of the Latin original texts into our modern language? The simple answer would have to be no! We have been engaged and will continue to strive to improve our efforts to express the Faith of the Church in human languages that both change and yet are the indispensable linguistic vehicles that we have at our disposal to probe a Mystery that will always transcend all of our best efforts.

Quite simply the new text is not a perfect text, but I believe that it sought to be a better text because it endeavored to provide a more faithful rendition of its Latin original source – a source that links the Church to its heritage and to its doctrinal tradition. Ours is a Church that concurrently exists both in its past, its present, and even anticipates its future. Our worship of God includes our past, our present, and our awaited tomorrows.

Change is never an easy reality for any people. It often means leaving something that is comfortable and familiar for a new experience that disrupts a pattern of behavior with which we have become contented. At the introduction of a change, we all tend to remember the benefits of the old reality and we highlight the unfamiliarity and strangeness of the new. Nowhere is this truer than in our life of worship. Most people agree that the introduction of the current Missal brought some awkward expressions as well as difficult to pronounce phrases and sentences. Change is never easy.

Nonetheless, the new translation did successfully restore many of the biblical relationships that anchor our liturgical language. For example the change in the pre-Communion prayer that restored the reference of the centurion seeking the cure of a member of his household found in both Matthew and Luke's gospels to the Lord's entry under his *roof* [Matthew 8:8 and Luke 7:6]. The controversial reference in the institution narrative prayer to the *many* is a direct allusion to the Prophet Isaiah's Suffering Servant who would hand over his life for the many [Isaiah 53:12]. The current English translation seeks to draw our attention to the interconnectedness of Sacred Scripture and the liturgical texts in order that the Liturgy of the Word is more intimately joined to many of the words and references of the Liturgy.

This linkage was not always underscored or emphasized in the first generation of English translations of the Latin texts. Having used the current Missal now for almost seven years, we should always urge our people to realize how God's Word is constantly the very source of our own prayer in the language that we use in our worship of the Trinitarian Divine One. When we use the images and terms of Scripture, we bind ourselves to the ancient faith of the Church as that faith has been expressed from the beginning of our use of fixed liturgical texts.

Before the introduction of the new translation, and even to the present day, there has been a great deal of conversation and much of it negative in reference to the change of style of the English that is now part of our liturgical prayer. Many have suggested that it is extravagant and uncharacteristic of the way that we ordinarily speak and those observations may generally be correct.

The language of worship constantly seeks to express a loving association between God and His people. And when people attempt to speak to the object of their love relationship they habitually resort to language that is more poetic and loftier than anything that they might use in their ordinary rhetoric. Even the most regular type of individuals will resort to poetry and prose when attempting to express the feelings of love. People who might not typically consider themselves very poetic will attempt to use verse in order to express the emotions that fill the heart of one who loves. Love always demands poetry, the lofty expressions of a sentiment that is too exquisite to be captured by the ordinary speech that we use. The language of worship is a dialogue of love – God speaks to us and we attempt to speak to Him in words that move the soul and express the deepest feelings of the heart. Therefore I am not at all surprised that this current edition of the English language missal introduces a poetic quality of our vernacular.

We are capable of understanding a great deal when we are energized by love and what greater love can the Church ever acknowledge than the love that we must express in reference to the One who has loved us first and most perfectly. We are also capable of accommodating new language without great difficulty. Each year the American vocabulary embraces new terms and new words that were unknown only a year before. I am certain that the use of language that is more precise and even more technical does not challenge the capacity of people who are in love with the One who gives meaning to our lives and direction to our futures.

The English missal has grown in significance in comparison to the vernacular missals that are to be used in other nations of the earth. English enjoys an almost universal importance as the new *lingua franca* – the most significant language of commerce, political life, and international conversation. There are languages that are more widely used – Spanish and the great languages of the Chinese people for example. Yet English has become a language that like Greek and Latin before it commands a universal significance. As such, the English language missal will be used as a measure and even a source of exactness that other vernacular texts will not achieve. This has prompted a more exacting review of the English language texts that other vernacular texts have not had to endure.

Some of the other language texts have used our English text as a source of their own translations of the Latin original thus placing an additional burden upon our missal as a measure and standard for the exactness of other translations. I anticipate that our English missal will only continue to grow in importance as a reference point in this regard in the future. This does not make our missal superior and certainly does not suggest that the English speaking nations are superior to other peoples or nations. It merely bears the burden of being that language that is so widely used that others will look to it to see how their own translations might proceed in capturing the ancient meanings, the Scriptural heritage, and the theological precision of the earlier texts. These other language translations will face their own challenges in expressing the poetic structure of their grammatical contexts with their new translations, but they might well refer to English in helping them to bring the Latin original into their vernacular.

However, our English Missal is by no means permanently frozen in its current state. With his *motu proprio*, *Magnum Principium* our Holy Father has entrusted greater authority over liturgical translation to local episcopal Conferences. While there are a number of realistic logistical and economic reasons why translations of liturgical books cannot change too frequently, it is my sense that the time will come – if it has not already arrived – when our missal will undergo a thorough evaluation, with an eye to remedying some of its flaws.

Speaking of and to God is a delicate endeavor and one that demands all of the patience and energy that we can muster. The fury that is engendered when changing the language of our worship is not a new reality, and the seriousness of the challenges are associated with the value that we place on our ritual behavior. I anticipate that we will weather these storms and continue to find our beautiful vernacular expression as an appropriate vehicle to use as we *Speak of God* in our prayer. ■

Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Chicago on May 9, 1973. He later began graduate studies at the Pontifical Liturgical Institute (Sant' Anselmo) in Rome, where he earned his doctorate in Sacred Liturgy in 1980. He has been awarded nine honorary doctoral degrees.

He was ordained an auxiliary bishop of Chicago on December 13, 1983. In 1994, he was installed as the seventh bishop of the Diocese of Belleville, IL. On December 9, 2004, Pope John Paul II appointed Bishop Gregory as the sixth archbishop of the Archdiocese of Atlanta.

In November 2001, he was elected president of the USCCB, following three years as vice president. He has served on many USCCB committees and he currently serves as the Chair of the Bishops' Committee on Divine Worship, a role he previously held from 1991-1993.



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