

## **Interview four: The new translation and apologetics**

**Sacrosanctum Concilium, the Vatican II Constitution on the Liturgy called for a “full, conscious and active participation” in the Mass on the part of the faithful. Does the new translation foster this or is it a rollback of the reform which the council called for?** It was Pope Pius X who first called for the active participation of the faithful in the sacred liturgy. An authentic translation of the prayers of the Holy Mass certainly provides an avenue for a deeper participation in the Sacred Liturgy. Likewise, the deepening understanding of participation in its internal as well as external dimensions will allow the Church to continue to build upon the understanding of the indispensable role of participation in the liturgy as articulated by popes and bishops throughout the years.

**What do you think about the criticism that the new translation is not “pastoral”? What do people mean by pastoral? Is the new translation “pastoral”?** I prefer the definition of pastoral offered to us by the Good Shepherd. A good shepherd knows his sheep, seeks them out when they are lost, carries them home, and protects them from the wolf and the false shepherds. This translation seeks to give the faithful access to the true meaning of the prayers of the Church, to attract them with their beauty and their truth, and to preserve the Church from imprecisions or unfortunate amplifications in previous attempts. I would suggest that such an approach is eminently pastoral.

**One critic has objected to specific examples of the new translation as “clumsy” and “precious.” He cited these as examples:**

- “and with your spirit”**
- “consubstantial with the Father”**
- “incarnate of the Virgin Mary”**
- “oblation of our service”**
- “send down your Spirit like the dewfall”**
- “He took the precious chalice”**
- “serene and kindly countenance”**

**I personally like all these. What is your take on the criticism?** Cardinal George Pell, the Chairman of the Vox Clara Committee, was recently quoted as referring to such unusual sounding expressions as “not the sort of language one would use at a barbecue.” And yet, His Eminence pointed out there are no other renderings more accurate of the original Latin texts than these. An accurate translation of a difficult concept can be explained and the faithful can grow into its use by adequate catechesis. A simpler, but less accurate translation will never lead anyone to the fullness of the truth.

**Another objection to the new translation is that the American church (priests and laity) haven’t had an opportunity to review these texts nor have they been “market tested” with us. I guess the objection is that the Church hasn’t followed a democratic process or asked for enough people’s input. Should the Church**

**consult with us over liturgical translations? What kind of consultation has gone on?** I would dare say that no action by the Church in the United States has ever undergone more consultation. Each Bishop has received draft texts on more than a dozen occasions which they have shared with pastors and scholars, offering literally thousands of suggestions. Many of these suggestions have been incorporated into the texts over the past ten years. In addition, ICEL and the Holy See have employed innumerable Latinists, poets, musicians, theologians, pastors and English experts to bring this project to a felicitous conclusion.

**Here's an odd one, but pastors will probably hear it: Isn't it wrong to produce a new translation that will require parishes to buy all new liturgical and other books. Rather than killing a bunch of trees, shouldn't this money just go to the poor?** The average liturgical book is designed to last for a minimum of five years before the pages begin to fall out! As each of us learns with approaching age, everything (and everyone) eventually needs to be replaced, including old liturgical books.

**What do you recommend pastors and those of us in the pews do to help the new translation be implemented smoothly?** A careful study of the liturgical texts and the careful formulation of effective pastoral strategies for teaching about the Sacred Liturgy are indispensable. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council called upon pastors to become imbued with the spirit and power of the sacred liturgy and to give instruction about it. Without such efforts, as the Father of Vatican II so presciently predicted, all this will be in vain.

**What is your greatest personal hope for the new English translation of the new Roman Missal?** The defining ecclesial event of our lifetime was the convening of the Second Vatican Council. In many respects, our ministry is constantly defined and judged against the vision articulated by the Council Fathers. It is my prayer that this more accurate, more beautiful and more proclaimable translation of the *Missale Romanum* will foster that full, conscious and active participation in the Sacred Liturgy which was the prime goal of the conciliar liturgical renewal.

**About Kevin Aldrich:** *Kevin Aldrich is an author and educator. He has written nine teacher editions for the high school theology DIDACHE SERIES and ghostwrites non-fiction books. He also pens novels, screenplays and TV pilots.*

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