

New Words for Worship Part 1

Many Catholics will be aware that a process to produce a new English language **Missal** has been underway for many years. Although the term '**Missal**' usually refers to the liturgical book with the prayers and the scripture readings for Mass, here it is used to mean the book of prayers and instructions for the celebration of *Eucharist*, or what is more usually called a '**Sacramentary**'. It does not contain any readings.

There are two main reasons why a new English translation of the Missal was needed.

Firstly, the English text we presently use is a 1973 translation of the first Latin edition produced after the second Vatican Council. When a revised version of the *Roman Missal* in Latin was published in 2002, the work of preparing vernacular translations of this official text began. This new edition contains a number of new elements including prayers for the feasts of recently canonised saints, more prefaces for the *Eucharistic Prayers*, additional *Masses & Prayers for Various Needs & Intentions*, and some revisions of the rubrics (instructions) for the celebration of the Mass.

Secondly, the Missal and all the other liturgical books were very quickly translated from Latin into English after the Second Vatican Council. It was soon recognised that there would have to be a revision at some stage. The original translators believed that simple grammar and vocabulary were necessary to make the oral texts easily understood. After 40 years of using vernacular texts, it is clear that people can understand more complex language than that used in everyday conversation.

Producing liturgical texts in English is the responsibility of ICEL, the International Commission on English in the Liturgy. Since 2002 the Vox Clara Committee, a body of English-speaking bishops, has advised the Vatican on translations and assisted in reviewing the versions approved by national bishops' conferences.

The revision process began in 1983 and after very many years of painstaking translation work by ICEL members, a new Missal was presented to the Holy See in 1998. Rome did not approve that revision and a new one was commissioned. This new version was to be based on different principles and rules of vernacular translation of the Roman liturgy as outlined in the instruction *Liturgiam Authenticam*, published by the Congregation for Divine Worship in 2001. The emphasis in *Liturgiam Authenticam* is on an accurate, even literal, translation of the Latin. It advocates a 'vernacular of a sacred style' that differs from the usual manner of speech. This means that the language of the new Missal will be markedly different from what we use now.