

Roman Missal, 3rd Edition

Looking at the text

Why a New Translation?

Why can't things just stay the same?

Why is everything always the same?

Human beings both like and dislike change at the same time. We are comfortable with what is familiar but at the same time if nothing changes we become frustrated. This tension spills from everyday things even into the spiritual life and our being Christians.

Many of us are so familiar with Mass that we can just about say it with our eyes shut. Change, therefore, is bound to be a bit of a shock to the system. This is not necessarily a bad thing; it can provide growth and new life. Also, it is easy to forget there was a time that we celebrated Mass in a very different way and over the years we have used different translations of what are originally Latin prayers.

Sometimes translations aim to produce a close 'word for word' version. This is a good way of doing it but sometimes the language can feel quite different to the way we normally speak or write. Another way of translating is to express the gist of the meaning in more everyday English.

So here we are with a new translation and we have to ask ourselves 'why?' Why a new translation? Why don't we just stick with what we know?

The present translation was not intended to be permanent. As they worked on it the scholars wrote a version that aimed to provide a good sense of the original Latin without giving a word for word exactness. It was understood that it would have to be looked at again. As



time passed, it was felt that some ideas found in the original prayers have not come across as well as could be hoped. There are some lovely expressions in our present version yet there are some profound and beautiful ideas that remain hidden. There are lots of quotations from the scriptures woven into the words of the Mass that can be easily missed. It would be wrong to dismiss what we have been using but at the same time we must acknowledge that it is not perfect.

Work on a new translation has gone on for many years. In that time there has been a change in approach to the project. Now the aim is to produce something as close as possible to the original Latin and try to hang on to more of the rich insights hidden there. It will seem very different and this gives us an opportunity to look again at what we are really saying at Mass. It opens to us ideas that can help our faith grow. It is hoped that as we think about the changes our understanding will deepen and that our prayer at Mass will take on even more meaning.

Being open in our minds and hearts can help us draw ever closer to God.

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