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Vatican in final review of liturgy translations

by Cindy Wooden by Catholic News Service



Cardinal Antonio Canizares Llovera uses incense during a Mass at the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome Jan. 7. (CNS/Paul Haring)

VATICAN CITY -- The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments is pulling together the final version of the English translation of the complete Roman Missal, the book of prayers used at Mass.

The Vox Clara Committee, an international group of bishops established to advise the congregation about the translation of the Roman Missal into English, met in Rome Jan. 26-29.

A statement released at the end of the meeting said members "reviewed various reports on the steps being taken for editing, coordination of manuscripts and reviews for internal consistency of the English-language translation" of the Roman Missal.

Marist Father Anthony Ward, an official of the congregation for worship, said that because bishops' conferences approved the Roman Missal in sections over a period of years, a final review and minor edits were needed to ensure consistency. For instance, he said, the same Latin prayer may be used in two different Masses and may have been translated slightly differently during the bishops' approval process.

The Vox Clara statement said committee members reviewed the last two sections of the Roman Missal translation to be approved by bishops' conferences in English-speaking countries: The proper of saints, a collection of specific prayers related to each saint in the universal liturgical calendar; and the common of saints, general prayers for celebrating saints listed in the "Roman Martyrology," but not in the universal calendar.

Spanish Cardinal Antonio Canizares Llovera, prefect of the congregation, met with the committee and "expressed his hope that the coming confirmation of the Roman Missal would prove to be of great pastoral advantage to the church in the English-speaking world," the Vox Clara statement said.

Most English-speaking bishops' conferences are preparing materials to introduce and explain the new translation with the hope people will begin using it in parishes at the beginning of Advent 2011.

Ward said the congregation would finish its work long before that, although he could not give a precise date for when the Vatican will approve the entire Roman Missal in English. Individual bishops' conferences would then make arrangements for printing, binding and distributing the missal and setting a date for its introduction.

"Expressing their enthusiasm for the extraordinary pastoral opportunity provided by the publication of a translation characterized by high literary quality, theological precision and pastoral utility, the members emphasized the importance of providing pastors and people with the greatest possible support in the effective pastoral reception of this new translation," the Vox Clara statement said.

Speaking to reporters in Rome Feb. 1, Archbishop Vincent Nichols of Westminster, president of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, said people cannot judge the new translations simply by reading them because the texts are meant "for public proclamation in the solemnity of the liturgy."

"I believe we are content that even though they clearly introduce a quite different style of liturgical language and formulations of words and phrases that will not come immediately and easily," he said, the bishops of England and Wales "appreciate that these texts contain and express the richness of the Catholic liturgical tradition and prayer in a way that the texts we have been using so far fail to do."

"We see a great deal to be gained in the richness of liturgical life" from having the new translation, Archbishop Nichols said, "though we accept that the pathway ahead is not going to be that easy."

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Contributing to this story was Carol Glatz in Rome.

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