

Bishops strip the Bible of its 'booty'

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Catholic bishops have kicked the 'booty' out of the Bible.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has ordered up a new translation of the Bible, one it says is more accurate, more accessible and more poetic.

Now 'booty,' a word that sets off snickers in Sunday school, will be replaced by the 'spoils' of war when the newest edition of the New American Bible, the English-language Catholic Bible, comes out on Ash Wednesday (March 9).

'We needed a new translation because English is a living language,' says retired auxiliary bishop of Milwaukee Richard Sklba, part of the review and editing team.

A team of 50 scholars and translators, linguistics experts, theologians and five bishops spent 17 years on the project. They were immersed in original manuscripts, the Dead Sea Scrolls and archaeological findings unearthed since the current text was published in 1970.

While Catholics may read from any of two dozen English translations, the New American Bible is the one owned by U.S. bishops for prayer and study. It can take decades for the Vatican to approve the Scriptures read during Mass.

Some of the changes:

- The word 'holocaust,' now associated with World War II genocide, has been replaced by 'burnt offering.'
- The 1970s version of the 23rd Psalm "even when I walk through a dark valley" becomes a "walk though the valley of the shadow of death."
- Leviticus 2:1 in the 1970s version says "When anyone wishes to bring a cereal offering to the Lord, his offering must consist of fine flour." The updated text is changed to "When anyone brings a grain offering to the Lord, the offering must consist of bran flour."
- Proverbs 31:10, the ode to "The Ideal Wife," is now a "Poem on the Woman of Worth."

'Women will like this: being measured by their own accomplishments, not in terms of a husband's perspective,' says Mary Elizabeth Sperry of the Bishops Conference.

One change may set off alarms with traditionalists, in a passage many Christians believe foreshadows the coming of Christ and his birth to a virgin. The 1970 version of Isaiah 7:14 says "the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel."

The new text refers to "the young woman" instead. It elaborates that the original Hebrew word, *almah*, may or may not signify a virgin.

Sklba expects no change in Catholic teaching. And Sperry predicts, "Some people will be gravely distressed and others will be absolutely ecstatic and some will just say, 'I liked it the old way.'"

[Cathy Lynn Grossman writes for *USA Today*.]

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