

New missal translation subtly moves church away from Vatican II

Mario T. García | Nov. 29, 2011 NCR Today

Like my fellow bloggers, I also paid particular attention to the new changes in the liturgy at this Sunday's Mass.

Before Mass started, a woman who works in the parish explained that today, the first Sunday in Advent, we would commence these new changes. We were all provided not only with the new missals but also with prayer cards to make sure we became aware of the new word changes in our responses as well as those of the priest.

However, she did point out that there was a typo in one of the responses and brought our attention to it. This makes me wonder if similar mistakes might have occurred in other parishes throughout the country.

I noticed that some people in the pews prior to Mass examined the prayer card while others seemed lackadaisical about it. After the Mass began, only once did the priest, who was reading his homily, refer to the changes, and this was only in passing.

During the Mass, I found myself fumbling with the prayer card to see what the new responses were. I found this distracting, and possibly others did too.

Most people still responded "And also with you" rather than "And with your spirit." I think it will be a while before we become adjusted to this particular response.

In general, it seemed to me that my fellow parishioners did not seem to think it was such a big deal despite all of the hype about the new liturgy. If the word changes were aimed at inspiring a new spirit in the Mass, I don't think it accomplished this from what I observed.

In thinking about these changes, I want to share some personal reactions.

First, to me, these changes in a subtle way represent still another move away from the reforms of Vatican Council II. I think this is especially the case with Vatican II's emphasis that all of us as Catholics, clergy and laypeople, represent the church.

Symbolically, the priest now facing the congregation as well as the greater involvement of the congregation in the saying of the Mass framed this. The new response "And with your spirit," however, according to *The Catholic Voice*, published by the Diocese of Oakland, Calif., is supposed to stress the priest's ordination when the bishop confers the spirit upon him, and to remind us of his primacy.

I don't mind refreshing, in a sense, the priest's particular place in the church, but it seems to me that this ostensibly innocent new change detracts from the concept that all of us are church. The change from "you" to "spirit" represents this moving away from this significant Vatican II reform.

Secondly, the change in the response in the creed where we now are to respond "I believe" rather than the previous "We believe" is still another move away from the concept of "We are church." The new change focuses on individualism rather than the collective nature of the church that Vatican II stressed. We should not

just be going to Mass to address God as individuals but as the people of God. Thus, the use of the "I" takes us away from this and disempowers us by emphasizing that we are largely on our own before the church.

Thirdly, the insertion of the term "consubstantial" also in the creed is too academic, and rather than making the Mass more accessible through words that people can understand and meditate, instead places the primacy on the priest's interpretation of the Mass. Rather than the "people's Mass," it moves us back to the "priest's Mass." At least the priest at my Mass should have taken the time to explain to people what "consubstantial" means rather than just reading from the prepared homily.

Finally, I think the work of the church should be at this point in history less focused on liturgical changes and more on the role of the church in the modern world, another emphasis of Vatican II. As I've noted before in other of my blogs, why is it that we never hear from the priests in their homilies anything about the church in the modern world? Why are the scriptures never addressed with respect to their social meanings apart from personal ones? People are suffering in this country, with an increase in poverty and joblessness and a loss of hope for the future. We have even more suffering in other parts of the world. Why aren't we as Catholics in our coming together in church and addressing these issues? Vatican II stressed the concept of "social sin," or the idea that sin is not just a personal matter but also a social one in the form of various forms of exploitation and discrimination. Why aren't we also addressing the social sins of the world?

I don't have a problem with liturgical changes if they don't move us away from the greater role of laypeople in the church and don't take us away from also facing the responsibility of the church to renew its commitment to Catholics' social doctrine to deal with the modern world and to teach about this in our services.

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