

New missal challenge not wholly unaccepted at St. Louis basilica

Cheryl Wittenauer | Nov. 29, 2011 NCR Today

At the Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis, no one in the congregation of 200-plus worshipers at noon Mass seemed to trip over "consubstantial with the Father" and other pieces of new language in the revised Roman Missal. But neither does the language "roll off the tongue," said Joe Brown, 50, an engineer at Anheuser-Busch.

"I don't know yet," he said of the newly translated text changed to more closely reflect the Latin. "It's different."

Van Moomjian, 67, a former English Benedictine brother from St. Louis Priory, said he believes the changes are long overdue, and that earlier translations gave churches too much latitude in adapting them for their use. He said he likes that the new Missal reverts more closely to the original Latin, but finds it "fragmented and jumpy."

"It will need some tweaking," he said.

The Rev. Monsignor Joseph Pins, who concelebrated the noon Mass on the first Sunday of Advent, congratulated the congregation for making a good effort, and asked for their patience, saying that the change was a challenge for older priests such as himself.

"My eyes will be on the book for a while," said Pins, who described his age as Social Security vintage. He encouraged the congregation to use the new text as the basis for their personal prayer and meditation this Advent season. He said the congregation had ample time and opportunity to prepare for the changes through discussion, readings and workshops. He said the community took the changes "in stride" and "passed right over" the trickier words such as "consubstantial," noting that the "word has been around for 1,700 years."

In his homily, the Rev. Mr. Kregg Hochhalter, a transitional deacon, told the congregation that the new translation "deeply reflects the beauty of Latin, the mother tongue of the church." But that was his only comment about the translation in a homily that focused on the meaning of Advent.

The Mass was concelebrated by Pins and Hochhalter while three altar men assisted, two holding candles over Hochhalter's reading of the Word. Pins addressed the community as "brethren" in his invitation to recall their sins at the beginning of Mass. An organist played selections from Johann Bach among other composers that were sung beautifully by a woman cantor.

Lester Calhoun, 54, a retired Texas school teacher visiting from a suburban St. Louis parish, said he attended all six weeks of preparation his parish had provided, and felt ready for the changes. He said he leans toward "tradition" and that which is "old-fashioned" in the church and isn't one to balk at changes. "I will eventually get used to it," he said.

Parishioner Denni Eggleston, 55, a customer service representative who attends school part time, said she only just learned of the change in text that first Sunday in Advent morning. "I didn't know it was being launched," she said. "What is the purpose, and why do this now?"

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