

At Chicago parish, some annoyed, others OK with new missal

Heidi Schlumpf | Nov. 30, 2011 NCR Today

At St. Gertrude Parish in Chicago, parishioners stumbled along earnestly, guided by handy "cheat sheet" cards in the pews. At the 10 a.m. "family Mass," the congregation read the creed perfectly, but reverted to "And also with you" during the Eucharistic prayer.

Although the parish had held an informational workshop about the changes last month, most at Mass were unaware of the controversies around the proposed changes. A few wondered why they hadn't fixed "for us men ..." in the creed while they were at it.

Fr. Dominic Grassi, St. Gertrude's pastor, mentioned the changes at the beginning of Mass and again during the announcements, saying he hoped they wouldn't be a hindrance and would help the parish pray together. Later, in an interview, he admitted it took some getting used to.

"I grew up in an Italian family," he said, explaining that there was plenty of fighting among the children. "But when we got to the dinner table, we knew to stop. It wasn't the place. It's the same with this."

But some at the North Side parish known for inclusion were annoyed with the changes.

Ginger Carney didn't like "chalice" instead of "cup" in the Eucharistic Prayer or "consubstantiation" in the creed. "Shouldn't we be professing our faith in relatable words, instead of in a theological discourse?" she asked. "Aren't we trying to speak from our heart? God doesn't need to hear a theological treatise."

"We could probably have done better than this," said St. Gertrude parishioner Ann P. White, who has an interest in language and a master's degree in applied linguistics.

She discounts the argument that the translation should adhere more closely to the Latin.

"Latin has its beauty in its own boundaries, and I will be the first to sing to that. But any linguist knows that to make one language clone another simply never gets to its ultimate destination: the symphony of cognitive idea, poetic interpretation and mystical interpretation," she said.

"I think the English-speaking world could have benefited from the depths of its own linguistic history of verbiage and phrasing," White added. "We have an expanded poetic repertoire of English, from Welsh to Australian English to U.S. East Coast and Appalachian, Midwestern and across-the-plains to the West Coast."

Others took a more laid-back approach to the changes. Jane Elwood, a 40-year parishioner of St. Gertrude, was more interested in getting an ornament from the parish "giving tree." She remembers the change to the vernacular back in her native Scotland.

"It'll just take a while for everyone to get used to it," she said.

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