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Ohio parishioner on new missal: 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it'

by Sharon Abercrombie

NCR Today

My group, Simply Catholic, a Columbus, Ohio, house church of 25 members that meets twice a month, will definitely not be using the new translation. Until now, we have relied on the USCCB readings as well as "Breath of the Spirit" commentaries from Dignity USA. Since the USCCB will now be supplying Catholics with the Roman Missal revisions, we will instead be accessing our own Bibles and retaining "Breath of the Spirit."

Marie Sweeney, SC's founder, is a former pastoral staff member at St. Thomas More Newman Center operated by the Paulists at Ohio State University. She launched Simply Catholic six years ago to provide women and married priests with opportunities to serve as presiders.

Since Sweeney frequently refers to the Holy One as Ama Imma (Mother God) and the Holy Spirit as Sophia, "Consubstantial with the Father," is not one of those terms we will be using.

Here are her comments concerning the Roman Missal, which she shared in a letter to the Columbus Dispatch this past October:

"A diversion of new words will not suffice. Two important pieces of history need to be understood here. First the Vatican II Council transferred power from the Roman Curia (career administrators formerly entrusted with decisions for the entire Roman Catholic Church) and returned it to the local/national gatherings of bishops so that decisions could be made with cultural and pastoral sensitivity. The curia has not relinquished power, and has pushed through the Mass changes. It has disobeyed the council. "

Sweeney also reiterated that the entire church has been horrified by priest pedophilia and Vatican financial impropriety.

"Many more members are pained by a refusal to listen to the ministerial needs of women and of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender church members," she said. "What faithful Catholics need is integrity from our leaders."

At the 10 a.m. Newman Center liturgy Sunday morning, a 25-year veteran choir member who asked that her name not be used said when Newman sponsored an educational evening last summer on the Roman Missal, only 20 parishioners showed up to hear the new musical Mass settings.

She confesses to "not doing change well. I don't understand what they're trying to do."

As a convert since the 1960s, most of the language she has grown accustomed to and thrived spiritually with was that of Vatican II.

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it," she said. "And when it comes to saying 'Come under my roof,' I'll just use the old words."

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Her husband is more philosophical: "No collection and arrangement of words can completely capture the physical, spiritual and mystical elements of the sacrifice of the Mass. This is the latest attempt. It won't be the last."

John Nash, a 25-year member of Newman, said: "They just changed a few words, that's all. I don't see what's to get upset about. It doesn't change anything that's important."

Across the aisle, though, Mike Terry said the Roman Missal is "a step backwards. This consubstantial thing -- who in the English-speaking world knows what that means? The church needs to spend its time supporting organizations like the St. Vincent de Paul Society and giving us the meaning of Gospels and how they impact upon our lives."

Bill Sparks said he thinks the church should be "moving forward, not backwards. They should be adapting the liturgy and scriptures so they're more meaningful in this modern time instead of mimicking the olden days."

Fran Welsh agreed.

"The language seems stilted and old and it's going to take me forever to learn it," she said.

Further north in the community of Worthington, Betty Arthur, a member of Our Lady of Peace parish, doesn't understand "why they had to do this. We are so used to the other Mass."

But Arthur and her neighbor, Yvonne Cosimati, both of whom live in a nearby retirement community, predict that their pastor, Fr. Kevin Kavanagh, will smooth the way with humor.

"He told us yesterday, 'it's going to be hard for me, too.' After stumbling over some of the words, the priest laughed, and made light of his mistake," she said.

Cosimati noted that "when we said, 'and also with your Spirit,' he told us, 'Oh, you responded to that very well.'"

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