

Tridentine Community News

April 1, 2007

Good Friday Tridentine Service

A Tridentine Latin Good Friday service will be offered at 5:00 PM at St. Michael Church, 2153 Parkwood Ave. in Windsor. The Passion will be read, followed by Adoration of the Cross and Holy Communion. There will be no Tridentine service at St. Josaphat that day.

Directions: As you exit Customs at the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel, turn left, then left again onto Ouellette Ave., drive two miles to Tecumseh Rd., turn left, drive one mile, and two blocks after crossing the railroad tracks, turn right onto Parkwood. A map is at www.windsorlatinmass.org.

Sed, not Sic

A common misconception among many Latin Mass-goers is that the prayer before Holy Communion reads, “Dómine, non sum dignus ut intres sub tectum meum, sic tantum dic verbo, et sanábitur ánima mea.” In reality, the wording is “...sed tantum dic verbo...” The word “sed” means “but”, as in “but only say the word,” whereas “sic” means “thus”.

The Reforms of Holy Week

Once again, Holy Week is upon us. For Palm Sunday and Good Friday services, keep in mind that Holy Week was reformed in 1955. If your hand missal was published prior to 1956, it will contain somewhat different readings. As always, Latin/English handouts will be provided with the currently-in-force 1962 Tridentine Propers.

Further information about Hand Missals and the Holy Week changes may be found in the March 26, 2006 edition of this column, available on-line at www.detroitlatinmass.org.

Old English

Earlier columns have noted that some of the celebrants at St. Josaphat prefer to use the modern English translations of the Epistle and Gospel. They are provided with a copy of the 1965 Missal, which contains such translations. Those who are comfortable with old English read from the same translations provided in our weekly Latin/English Propers handouts, which primarily come from the 1963 edition of the Marian Missal.

When reading our weekly handouts, you may have noticed some quirky aspects to the English translations, such as:

- Use of a colon to separate phrases rather than a semi-colon
- Use of a lower case letter to begin a phrase immediately following a phrase ending in a question mark

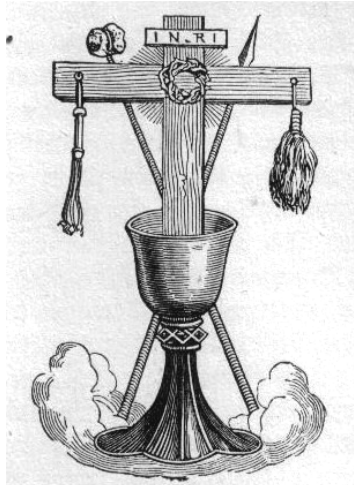
- Antiquated phraseology

These are not typographical errors. In fact, both the Latin and English are cross-checked against a number of missals for accuracy. This is the text the way you are intended to read it. So why do we use this kind of translation? The reasons are many:

These translations from the Marian Missal are either directly from, or derived from, the Douay-Rheims Bible, which served as the principal English translation for Latin Rite Catholics prior to Vatican II.

Most hand missals employ these or very similar translations. Using these translations provides the most continuity with others in the congregation who prefer to refer to hand missals rather than our handouts for their English references.

In much the same way that the Latin language provides an unchanging liturgical language, old English similarly provides a more sacred, less changing, yet still understandable expression of the Propers. We use “Thy” and “thou” in the Our Father and Hail Mary for this reason, too; we are praying the same prayer, in the same words, that our ancestors did. And others in the English-speaking world use exactly the same phraseology, even if it is not how they would ordinarily express themselves in their local English dialects.



Old English gives us useful additional pronouns: “Thee” is a formal pronoun, like German’s “Sie”, unlike the informal “You”, like German’s “Du”. We should not address the Holy Trinity informally.

We avoid the temptation to adapt the English to modern sensibilities. Already, some of the English from the New American Bible used as the source of the English readings in the Novus Ordo in the United States is starting to sound dated (to the 1960s). Likewise, slang or regional usages of English could enter their way into future translations of the Bible, dating them.

With newer translations comes a temptation for carelessness. For example, the 1957 edition of the Maryknoll hand missal uses a mixture of old and modern English in its translations. They do not capitalize pronouns and proper nouns referring to God: they print “your compassion” instead of “Thy compassion”, for instance. By keeping consistent and accurate translations in old English, we reduce the likelihood of such mistakes that detract from a full expression of our faith.

As with the architecture, music, vestments, and other elements of the Traditional Latin Mass, the usage of old English imparts a sacred character that differentiates the Mass from the rest of our lives. We experience enough modern expressions of the vernacular elsewhere, indeed likely more that we want. The Holy Mass, in contrast, should reflect the unchanging reality of our God.