

Tridentine Community News

March 16, 2008

The Holy Father Changes the Good Friday Prayer

On February 4, 2008, our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI changed the Good Friday Prayer for the Jews in the Tridentine Missal. This action has been met with a variety of responses. Let us examine the text of the prayer in question:

The original prayer:

Orémus et pro [perfidis] Judæis: ut Deus et Dóminus noster auferat velámen de córdibus eórum; ut et ipsi agnóscant Jesum Christum Dóminum nostrum.*

Orémus.

Flectámus genua.

Leváte.

Omnípotens sempitérne Deus, qui Judæos étiam a tua misericórdia non repéllis: exáudi preces nostras, quas pro illíus pópuli obcæcacióné deférimus; ut, ágnita veritátis tuæ luce, quæ Christus est, a suis ténebris eruántur. Per eúndem Dóminum.

℞ Amen.

Let us pray also for the [unfaithful¹] Jews: that our God and Lord would remove the veil from their hearts: that they also may acknowledge our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us pray.

Let us kneel.

Arise.

Almighty and everlasting God, who drivest not away from Thy mercy even the Jews: hear our prayers, which we offer for the blindness of that people: that acknowledging the light of Thy truth, which is Christ, they may be rescued from their darkness. Through our Lord.

℞ Amen.

* This word was excised by Pope John XXIII in 1959. Although the meaning of unfaithful/perfidious was “faithless” [in Christ] in the most literal sense, modern sensibilities by that time felt the word to be pejorative, thus it was deleted. It is cited here because it is so often mentioned by people discussing this prayer. The word lingers in part because so many pre-1959 hand missals that incorporate it have been republished, and because its deletion in 1959 is not well-known.

The new version of the prayer:

Orémus et pro Judæis: ut Deus et Dóminus noster illúminet corda eórum, ut agnóscant Jesum Christum salvatórem ómnium hóminum.

Orémus.

Flectámus genua.

Leváte.

Omnípotens sempitérne Deus, qui vis ut omnes hómines salvi fiant et ad agnitiónem veritátis véniant, concéde propítius, ut plenitúdine géntium in Ecclésiám Tuam intránte omnis Israél salvus fiat. Per Christum Dóminum nostrum.

℞ Amen.

Let us pray also for the Jews: May our God and Lord enlighten their hearts, so that they may acknowledge Jesus Christ, savior of all men.

Let us pray.

Let us kneel.

Arise.

Almighty and everlasting God, who desirest that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of truth, mercifully grant that, as the fullness of the Gentiles enters into Thy Church, all Israel may be saved. Through Christ Our Lord.

℞ Amen.

Much debate has ensued in both the Catholic and mainstream press about the pros and cons of this change. Certain Jewish leaders have complained that the prayer is still offensive because it seeks to convert Jews. Some Catholics believe that the prayer wasn't broken in the first place; why fix it? Virtually no one cheered the change. And as usual, most ignored it.

In our opinion, this is a perfect example of the famous saying visible on the stained glass window behind the high altar of St. Joseph Church: “*Roma locúta, causa finíta.*” Rome has spoken; the case is closed. Nothing heretical has been published. The essence of the prayer is the same. Obey and support this great Pope.

Let us consider the side benefit of this change: By this single act, our Holy Father has unfrozen the “1962 Missal of John XXIII”. Arguably, it is now the “2008 Missal of Benedict XVI.” The Extraordinary Form Missal is not an historical artifact, but a living liturgy of Holy Mother Church.

Those who fear that this is the beginning of unwanted changes to the Classic Form of Mass ignore the fact that the Mass has evolved over the centuries exactly by small modifications just like this one. No reasonable person can accuse Pope Benedict XVI of being unsupportive of the Tridentine Mass, or an agent of excessive change. Rather, he is simply following in the footsteps of earlier Popes, organically developing the liturgy.

A Possible Typo

Careful readers will notice that unlike all of the other “Great Intercessions” in the Good Friday Liturgy, this revised Prayer for the Jews ends with an abbreviated “*Per Christum Dóminum nostrum.*” Such shorter conclusions are common in the Novus Ordo, but not in the Tridentine. The full length “*Per Jesum Christum Dóminum nostrum...*” conclusion would be contextually consistent with other Tridentine Collect-style prayers. But unless Rome issues a correction, we shall pray as directed.

Tridentine Good Friday Service

A reminder that you have an opportunity to attend an Extraordinary Form Good Friday Service at Windsor's Assumption Church this Friday, March 21 at 5:30 PM. Assumption is located on Huron Church Road and University Avenue, adjacent to the Ambassador Bridge.