

Tridentine Community News

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Beyond the New English Ordinary Form Missal: Other Issues With Approved Translations – Part 4

English in the Roman Ritual

Some of the first efforts at establishing standard English translations for pre-Vatican II ceremonies related to the *Rituale Románum*, the book of Sacraments and Blessings. The Roman Ritual is the complement to the *Missale Románum* (the altar missal), and is used for everything from Baptism to Marriage to blessing Rosaries. In 1954, the U.S. bishops published the *Colléctio Rítuum*, an abridged version of the Ritual containing the most frequently used prayers and ceremonies. A revised *Colléctio* was published in 1961, and that is the book which is technically in force today for the Extraordinary Form. The 1961 edition granted the priest the option to say certain portions of some ceremonies in English.

The 1950 Weller edition of the complete 1925 *Rituale Románum* has been reprinted by PCP Books. *The New Sanctuary Manual*, a subset of the 1961 *Colléctio Rítuum*, has been reprinted by Roman Catholic Books. A comparison of the two is rather interesting.

The Weller Ritual provides English translations for the entire contents of the book. Latin is on the left page, English on the right. This English, however, was provided only for study purposes. At the time of publication, it was not permissible to use the vernacular for any portion of the rites. Thus, the English contained therein cannot be considered “official” and must not be used liturgically because of later permissions.

In contrast, *The New Sanctuary Manual* is very clear: English is provided alongside the Latin only when it is permissible (but optional) to use the vernacular. That English text is the official version to be used.

Fortunately or unfortunately, depending on your point of view, the 1961 English is noticeably more casual language than what Weller contains. Let us compare, for example, the prayer at the conclusion of the Rite of Marriage:

From the Weller Ritual:

Look down, we beseech thee, O Lord, upon these servants of thine, and graciously assist with thy care the institution thou didst ordain for the propagation of the human race; so that they who are bound together by thy authority may attain to perfection by thy help. Through Christ our Lord.

From *The New Sanctuary Manual*:

We beg you, Lord, to look on these your servants, and graciously to uphold the institution of marriage established by you for the continuation of the human race, so that they who have been joined together by your authority may remain faithful together by your help. Through Christ our Lord.

Interestingly, despite its more Douay Rheims-ish sounding text, the Weller version does not capitalize the Divine pronouns. In fairness, the issue of capitalization is a complex one, to be discussed at a later date.

As of today, the complete 1961 *Colléctio Rítuum* has not yet been reprinted. Used books are scarce. The best option available in print, *The New Sanctuary Manual*, is puzzlingly incomplete: For instance, it omits one of the most frequently used prayers, the Blessing of All Things, used to bless objects for which there is no specific blessing formula.

The Weller Ritual provides the Blessing of All Things, along with an English translation. However, unless a priest happens to possess an actual 1961 *Colléctio*, it is impossible to tell if one may use the vernacular for this blessing. An old copy of the 1961 book *Rites, Blessings, and Prayers*, which is a more complete version of the *Colléctio*, contains only Latin for this blessing, which tells us that English is not permissible.

What is a priest supposed to do if he does not have access to the complete 1961 *Colléctio Rítuum*? Can he use the English in the Weller Ritual? No, he cannot. First, Weller does not indicate which portions of a given rite may be said in the vernacular, since it predates those permissions. Second, Weller’s English translation is not official. Thus, if a priest does not possess a 1961 Ritual, prudence dictates that he use Latin for the entire ceremony.

The longer term solution is for the 1961 *Colléctio* to be reprinted, and possibly updated as we have suggested in earlier columns. One useful aspect of the Weller Ritual is that it includes the rubrics in English on the right-side pages. *The New Sanctuary Manual* and *Rites, Blessings, and Prayers* contain only the Latin rubrics, which can be quite confusing when a priest is called upon to perform an unfamiliar ceremony.

Indeed, the absence of vernacular rubrics is why, in charity, we must grant some leeway to priests who are new to traditional rites. Imagine if you were judged harshly the first time you played a certain sport, cooked a meal, or drove a car. Now imagine if the instructions you had been given were not in your native tongue. *Ecclésia supplet* – the Church assures the validity of a Sacrament in most cases of accidental errors.

At the same time, we live in an era in which priests need to learn the “new” traditional Ritual. Many seminaries are not yet including training for the Extraordinary Form in their curricula, thus learning tools need to be created for independent study, a key one of which is the publication of rubrics in the vernacular.

In summary: An updated assemblage of blessings, rubrics in English, and a complete Ritual incorporating approved vernacular where it is allowed would be useful, indeed. The linguistic style should be similar to the existing prayers. This is the kind of organic development of the Church’s liturgical books that it seems Pope Benedict XVI has in mind for the Extraordinary Form.