

THE NEW TRANSLATION OF THE ROMAN MISSAL

Final Reflections at Christmas

Christus natus est nobis! Christ is born unto us! The liturgical observance of Christmas actually provides many opportunities to reflect on the fruits of the new Missal, because some key texts (including the opening lines of the *Gloria*) come from the Scriptural account of the Nativity.

We shall compare one more set of proper prayers here. The following is the old version of the “Prayer over the Offerings” for the Christmas Mass at Dawn, said by the celebrant after the gifts of bread and wine are brought forward before the Eucharistic Prayer:

<p style="text-align: center;">Previous Translation Prayer over the Offerings Christmas Mass at Dawn</p>

<p>Father, may we follow the example of your Son who became man and lived among us. May we receive the gift of divine life through these offerings here on earth.</p>

And here is the new version, heard by those who attended early Masses this Christmas morning:

<p style="text-align: center;">New Translation Prayer over the Offerings Christmas Mass at Dawn</p>
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<p>May our offerings be worthy, we pray, O Lord, of the mysteries of the Nativity this day, that, just as Christ was born a man and also shone forth as God, so these earthly gifts may confer on us what is divine.</p>
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The new translation makes explicit reference to the day of Christ’s birth, and the entire prayer flows much more poetically. In addition, it maintains the imagery of light that characterizes all the prayers of the Christmas Mass at Dawn. Light not only corresponds to the hour of daybreak at which this Mass is celebrated, but is also a revered symbol for Christ. In saying Christ “shone forth as God,” it calls to mind the prologue of the

Gospel of John, wherein the Word who “was God” became man “and made his dwelling among us” as the light that “shines in the darkness.”

Closing Thoughts

There is never such a thing as a perfect translation, for each language has its own unique character. But in a very real way, this new Missal should help foster the full, active, and conscious participation of the faithful – especially with respect to renewed interior participation at Mass. The new words require priests and laity alike to be more attentive to the deep meaning of the prayers.

Through the new Missal, we can maintain a distinctive Catholic identity and achieve greater unity with Mass translations in other languages. But perhaps most significantly, our new translation of the Mass will help set us apart from the culture at large. Particularly as people today find themselves having to combat radical secularism at every turn, it is of tremendous benefit to worship in a manner that is meant to radiate reverence, truth, and beauty unambiguously and abundantly.

The new Missal represents an effort to foster a “sacred vernacular” – an elevated style of speech that is suitable for divine worship. As Pope Paul VI urged in 1969, the language of the sacred liturgy “should always be worthy of the noble realities it signifies, set apart from the everyday speech of the street and the marketplace.”

A renewed expression of the magnitude of what happens at the sacred liturgy is essential to inspire more seekers of truth to recognize their home in Christ’s Church. Therefore, especially during this Christmas Season, we should welcome this new translation with joy, supporting our priests wholeheartedly as we help them pray the new texts.

This series was prepared by the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. For more Roman Missal resources, please visit <http://www.diocesefwsb.org/diocesan-offices/worship-office/roman-missal/>