

I mentioned in the previous issue that beginning on November 27th of this year we will begin using a new translation of the *Roman Missal*. This means that the words of the priest's prayers will be different, additionally some of the people's responses will change. In the next issue I intend to share some of those changes, but this column I want to answer the question, "Why is there a new translation?"

First let me share a brief history lesson. Until the mid 1960's the Mass was celebrated in Latin across the world. One of the results of the Vatican II council was to allow Mass to be celebrated in the vernacular language (spoken language of the people, in our case English). The council called for the texts of the Mass to be translated using language which would promote "full, conscious and active participation". Our current book entitled the "Sacramentary" was translated and put in use in 1974. Other than adding new saints and some minor corrections, the text in this book has remained the same for nearly 40 years. It was a hurried translation that lacked "poetry and dynamism".

This translation was accomplished using a process called "dynamic equivalence". This meant that the meaning of the Latin text was translated into conversational English rather than a word for word translation, a process known as "formal equivalence". Here is an example translating the German word "Kühlschrank" (refers to the place where food is kept cold in a kitchen) into English. The dynamic equivalent translation would be "refrigerator" while the formal equivalent translation would be "cold closet". In casual conversation we speak of putting the milk in a refrigerator rather than putting milk in a cold closet.

In recent years, the decision was made by the Congregation for Divine Worship, a Vatican department, and ratified by Pope John Paul II, to use the translation technique of "formal equivalence", a more faithful translation of the Latin to English, even keeping some of the content and structure of the Latin in the English translation. The desire was to move from a "marketplace" style of language to "timeless" style. In other words when you hear it you will know this is prayer.

Finally it turns out that many translations into other vernacular languages (i.e. French, Spanish, etc.) had utilized "formal equivalence" in their translations and thus our change will bring us in line with Catholics throughout the world as we pray in a more unified voice to our God. I look forward to this change and will share some of the specific changes in the next issue.

God bless, Fr. Joe