



AMERICAN NATIONAL
CATHOLIC CHURCH

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**Pastoral Letter by The Most Reverend George R. Lucey, FCM
Regarding Recent Liturgical Language Changes by the Roman Catholic Church**

Grace and peace in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

We of the American National Catholic Church (ANCC) are aware of the recent changes in the sacred liturgy implemented by our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters on the First Sunday of Advent 2011. In the short time since the implementation, my office has received numerous inquires regarding our position on the liturgical change. I am using this opportunity to address this important matter.

As a national expression of the Catholic Church, we derive our Apostolic Succession and Catholic identity from Rome through Bishop Carlos Duarte-Costa of Brazil. Similar to Bishop Duarte-Costa, we found it necessary to proclaim the ancient truth of our Catholic faith apart from the jurisdiction of the Vatican.

We inherit a rich tradition. Bishop Duarte-Costa was a prophetic herald of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. In as early as 1936, he called for the celebration of the liturgy in the vernacular while facing the people, a greater role of the laity in the liturgy including as Eucharistic ministers, and reception of the Eucharist in both bread and wine.

His foresight in founding the Apostolic Catholic Church of Brazil anticipated the liturgical reforms expressed in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosantum Consilium*) solemnly promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI and the bishops of the Second Vatican Council on December 4, 1963. With near unanimity, the College of Bishops supported the liturgical reforms by a vote of 2,147 in favor with only 4 bishops voting in opposition.

These reforms were translated into the New Order of the Mass (Novus Ordo) through the beautiful language enjoyed by Western Rite Roman Catholics for the past 45 years. The English translation was meticulously developed by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL), approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops with final approval by Pope Paul VI.

The celebration and remembrance of Christ's redemptive action in the liturgy is the central prayer of the Church. As so eloquently stated in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), the Eucharist is both "the fount and apex of the whole Christian life." Full and active participation of the laity is a forgone conclusion.

Given its centrality in the life of the Church, the liturgy must be rooted in the language and cultural expression of the community. In particular, liturgical prayer must naturally grow out of the culture of the assembly, not handed down from another time or transliterated from an ancient language. Any language that is archaic, remote, or incomprehensible does not serve this purpose. We need to look no further than the writings of the Council itself. As stated in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, paragraph #21:

"Both text and rites should be drawn so that they *express more clearly* the holy things which they signify. The Christian people, as far as possible, *should be able to understand them easily.*" (emphasis added)

And continuing in paragraph #34, we read that liturgical texts should:

"... *be short, clear, and free from useless repetition.* They should be within the people's power of comprehension and normally should not require much attention." (emphasis added)

We of the ANCC carefully reviewed the proposed changes in the third edition of the Roman Missal and concluded that they did not reflect the Council's wisdom. For us, any change in the liturgical language must assure that the text is accessible and intelligible while remaining pastorally sensitive to the assembly.

All liturgical language must work for people of the third millennium. This includes children, teens and adults with varying degrees of education and those for whom English is a second language. Further, the use of male-dominated language is anachronistic, offending the sensitivities of many while diminishing the inclusion of the entire assembly.

Based on these standards, we found the proposed changes of the Roman Missal wanting. Therefore, all ANCC liturgical celebrations will continue to follow the Novus Ordo.

The ANCC remains dedicated to the full expression of the vision of the Second Vatican Council – a vision that remains unrealized. We see in the Council’s call for liturgical reform, a greater invitation to participate in the communal prayer of the entire Church and a call to share more fully in the life of Christ.

It is our position that the liturgy of the New Order of the Mass (Novus Ordo) is a genuine expression of the all-inclusive love of God at the heart of the Catholic faith. We dedicate ourselves to preserving and continuing the reforms begun by the Holy Spirit at the Second Vatican Council.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "+ George R. Lucey, FCM". The signature is written in dark ink on a white background.

Most Reverend George R. Lucey, FCM
Presiding Bishop