

Prayers of the Mass

Understanding the
Changes
Mitch Finley

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Changing the prayers

of the Mass is not something any Catholic would take lightly. Parishes throughout the English-speaking world are now in the process of adopting a new translation of those very prayers. After several years of work, the bishops of the United States in 2009 approved a brand-new English translation. A lively discussion preceded the bishops' approval of this latest translation, and a few bishops, as well as some laity and clergy, voiced objections to various aspects of it. That a new translation would evoke high feelings is testimony to just how important the words of the Mass are to so many of us. In the end, the bishops as a group overwhelmingly approved the new translation.

SOME BACKGROUND

A LITTLE HISTORY may help to give us some context for these events. Prior to the Second Vatican Council in the mid-1960s, Mass was typically celebrated in Latin throughout the world. As part of the process of liturgical renewal called for by the Council, Pope Paul VI in 1970 approved a new version of the *Roman Missal* (in Latin, *Missale Romanum*) to be used for all celebrations of the Eucharist throughout the Church. All the texts in this *Missale* were in Latin, still the official language of the universal Church.

Subsequently, translations of the *Missale Romanum* appeared in many languages, including an official English translation published in 1973. Just two years later, in 1975, a second edition of the *Roman Missal* came out, followed by yet another English translation. The English translation of the 1975 *Missal* has served English-speaking Catholics ever since, and this is the version with which we are so familiar.

Changing the prayers of the Mass is not something any Catholic would take lightly. Parishes throughout the English-speaking world are now beginning to incorporate a new translation of those very prayers. These words will be similar to what Catholics are praying in many other languages around the world, better reflecting the international character of the Church communion. This pamphlet is designed to help parishes get the most out of a change that is already under way.

Mitch Finley is the author of more than 30 books for Catholic readers. He lives in Spokane, WA, with his wife, Kathleen Finley, and together they are the parents of three grown sons. To learn more, visit www.mitchandkathyfinley.com.

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Most Rev. William Skylstad • Bishop of Spokane, WA

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