

The nature of the Church

1. We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord! We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord! And we pray that all unity may one day be restored! These are words to a very early vernacular song written after the II Vatican Council as an attempt to sing of the nature of the Church
2. Unity – *it is a governing principal* which infuses much of what we do. It is the first charge of a bishop – the first care he has, it the first “mark” of the Church (our Creed: one, holy, Catholic and apostolic). This unity does not nullify diversity – but rather calls our diversity to serve the whole.
3. Our oneness is first and foremost expressed in our gathering for worship. Based on an ancient principal “Lex orandi, lex credendi” (that is, how we pray and what we believe must always reflect each other clearly), our worship proclaims our oneness in belief. That oneness of prayer and belief, our oneness in Christ as his body, is especially visible when the bishop gathers to celebrate Eucharist with his priests, deacons and all the faithful.
4. Pentecost is our day of proclaiming that “we are one”. There is a particular irony on this feast. As we heard in the Acts of the Apostles, the disciples (all Jews) infused with the Spirit, go out into Jerusalem and proclaim Christ in the languages of all present, and all present are touched by the Spirit that they might understand! Today, in our intercessions, we will hear 4 intercessions proclaimed in various languages, reflecting the truth that what began in Jerusalem yet now continues in the proclamation of Christ to the whole world in every language on earth!

Revised Roman Missal

5. You have already heard and read about the Revised Roman Missal which we will begin to use on November 27 of this year. In the context of this day of “unity”, I want to speak to how this new translation came about, and then speak of one simple sentence we will be using come November 27.
6. The first translation of the Roman Missal from Latin into all languages of the world took place in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s. Needless to say, it was a time of breathtaking change and massive work on the part of translators. Their work was wonderful in its scope and imagination.
 - a. After 40 years of using these translations, 2 Holy Fathers noted some deficiencies in various language translations. Sometimes words or theological concepts in the original Latin prayers were not found in the translations. Sometimes scriptural allusions which were in the original Latin prayers were not found in the translations.
 - b. Now no one had tried to “exclude” any valuable truths, but the work of trying to translate the Latin texts into the various contemporary languages for the first time in centuries invited a need for a “dynamic equivalence” translation process which would make these texts more readily accessible to the hearer. And the early translators knew that a revision would one day be made, because all translations are one day improved upon.
 - c. Once the Holy Fathers noted these deficiencies, they chose to go back to the original sources and, based upon 40 years of experience and in the Spirit of the Second Vatican Council, issued a revised Latin “base text” from which all

language groups were to start a new translation process. All language groups are in the process of doing this, some more quickly, some who are waiting.

- d. Many language groups have been waiting for the final English version which we now possess. Why would that be? They have the Latin. Well, many of the smaller language groups of our world do not possess the number of scholars in both Latin and their own language to undertake such a translation. However, because of the relative universality of English, those smaller language groups can more readily create a translation from the English to their language.
 - i. Thus, the translation we have been awaiting is very important to the unity of prayer we have in the Church. For this reason, and others, the translation we will soon experience holds more closely to the Latin phrasing and sentence structure, and includes all of the theological concepts of the original Latin prayer texts and the Scriptural allusions found in the original Latin prayer texts. Some would call this a “more literal translation”; indeed it is. But its aim is first and foremost unity of prayer and belief.

And with your spirit

7. A good example of this is that short sentence I wanted to speak about today. When I was growing up and serving in Latin (I did so from 1959 through 1968), I clearly recall (as many of you here today) the opening greeting and response: Dominus vobiscum. Et cum spiritu tuo. (Now, that’s not a phone number!) Literally translated, it is: The Lord be with you. And with your spirit.
 - i. You and I have been saying “And also with you” for over 40 years now.
 - ii. However, in most language groups since the first translation into the vernacular, the more literal meaning was retained. For example, in Spanish –
El Señor este con vosotros. Y con tu espíritu.
 - iii. Beyond the literal words, the greeting is a gift which is rooted in the writings of St. Paul, where he begins or concludes his letters with specific greetings (upon which many of those used in our liturgies are based).
 - iv. This is the simplest greeting we have in our liturgies. The priest (or deacon) ***is by this greeting expressing his desire that the dynamic activity of God’s spirit be given to the people of God, enabling them to do the work of transforming the world that God has entrusted to them (an awful lot of meaning packed into a few words!)***
 - v. The response “And with your spirit” continues that exchange of the Spirit. It has been used in the liturgies of both the East and West from the earliest days of the Church. It is only ever addressed to an ordained minister. ***Some scholars have suggested that spiritu here refers to the gift of the spirit the deacon or priest received at ordination. In their response, the people assure the priest / deacon of the same divine assistance of God’s spirit and, more specifically, help for the priest / deacon to use the charismatic gifts given to him in ordination and in so doing to fulfill his prophetic function in the Church.***

Conclusion

8. This Feast of Pentecost is about how we are one in God's Spirit. We are the one body of Christ. How that is reflected in our prayer and worship is essential to our being Church. How we serve one another's faith and worship, and that of our brothers and sisters whose languages are different but whose faith is the same, is essential to our being Church.
9. When you leave today, with the bulletin you will be given a Catholic Update entitled "Changing How We Pray". It will repeat and reinforce some of what I have said; it will also go bit deeper. I encourage every household to read it, share you insights one with another, and prayerfully begin the process of receiving a "change" (something Deacon Mike discusses in his "Deacon's Corner" in this weekend's bulletins, and which is hard for all human beings!)

10. In the coming months through to next summer we will be touching upon, through short catecheses at Mass, bulletin inserts, DVD's at meetings, catechesis among our school and religious education children, and other handouts and internet links the many aspects of the way we pray and worship together in the wonderful gift of Eucharistic Liturgy, the Mass. We are being invited to a renewed interest in and understanding of this gift of our communal worship. I pray that, with enthusiasm and open mind and heart, we accept and live the invitation.