

Archdiocesan youths take part in country's biggest sendoff of Mass translation

INDIANAPOLIS - All her life, Sara Connelly has known just one translation of the Roman Missal. On Nov. 19, she took part in perhaps the biggest goodbye to the way U.S. Catholics have celebrated the Mass since the 1960s.

The Our Lady of Mount Carmel student was one of about 280 people from the Archdiocese of Baltimore at the National Catholic Youth Conference and the event's final Mass, attended by some 25,000 people at Lucas Oil Stadium. It was a Mass filled with emotion.

"It makes it more special," Connelly said. "It was the last time you'll say those words."

Starting the first Sunday of Advent, Nov. 27, U.S. parishes will celebrate the Mass with new translations of prayers from the Roman Missal. American Catholic Masses have been in common vernacular since the Second Vatican Council, but the new translations are a "formal equivalence" following the Latin syntax. Prior to the 1960s, all Roman Catholics celebrated Mass in Latin and some prayers were abridged when Masses were translated to English. The new translation is an attempt to correct what might have been lost.

"I probably won't be comfortable until it's said a couple of times," Connelly said. "After three or four Masses, it'll happen because of repetition."

Nationally renowned musician Tom Booth led the NCYC Mass's music. It was the final time his arrangement "The Mass of Life" would be used.

"I wrote it 20 years ago and it's been published and sung for years," an emotional Booth said afterward. "I kind of waved goodbye to it when we sang the 'Amen.' I blew it a kiss."

Father Michael DeAscanis, pastor of Baltimore's St. William of York and St. Agnes of Catonsville, traveled to Indianapolis to support the youths of his parishes during NCYC. He left before the final Mass to return to his parishes, which have been preparing for the changes during the last two months with classes and a video series.

"We've been preparing for the changes, but, much more than that, we've been reexamining the prayer of the Mass," Father DeAscanis said. "It's prayer we're very comfortable with and accustomed to, but sometimes, because of that, we really don't think about what we're doing or saying. It's been a very good opportunity for our parishes."

Father DeAscanis was one of four archdiocesan pastors to travel to NCYC, including Father Charles Wible of St. Francis de Sales in Abingdon, Father Gerard Francik of St. Mark in Fallston and Father Matthew Buening of St. Paul in Ellicott City.

Father DeAscanis said the Mass changes won't be as monumental as some think. Priests making the adjustments will also be more reflective, Father DeAscanis said.

"The Mass is the central work that we do," Father DeAscanis said. "At this conference, they said prayer doesn't help your relationship with God, prayer is your relationship with God. Well, for a priest, prayer doesn't help our work, prayer is our work. "

Connelly said she hopes people across the country will come to appreciate the Mass more after the new translation.

"It is the celebration of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus," Connelly said. "It's so special, because as Catholics, it's the basis of our faith. It's celebrating the life of Jesus and everything he did for us."