

Bishops approve missal translation rejected in June

Despite some continued criticism that the translation is plagued by obscure wording and sentences that are too long, the U.S. bishops approved another lengthy section of the English translation of the third edition of the Roman Missal Nov. 11.

Needing affirmation by two-thirds of the 264 Latin-rite U.S. bishops, or 176 bishops, the heavily amended translation of the Proper of the Seasons – made up of the proper prayers for Sundays and feast days during the liturgical year – received 189 votes in favor and 30 against. During the bishops' meeting in Orlando, Fla., in June, the document had failed to get the required two-thirds majority.

Bishop Arthur J. Serratelli of Paterson, N.J., chairman of the bishops' Committee on Divine Worship, called the translation "a step forward in the continual renewal of the liturgy" and said no document was ever likely to receive the unanimous support of the bishops.

"We will never have a completely perfect translation that will meet the tastes of all of us," he said. "But it is time to recognize the great progress that has been made" since the Second Vatican Council.

The translation now goes to the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments for "recognitio," or confirmation. The first section of the missal came before the bishops in 2006 and was confirmed by the Vatican earlier this year.

The remaining sections of the missal, as translated by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy, known as ICEL, are to come before the U.S. bishops in 2009 and 2010.

Introducing the document Nov. 10, Bishop Serratelli outlined the steps his committee had taken since the June rejection of the document.

"We have been very encouraged by the participation of the body of bishops" in the amendment process, he said.

Of the more than 300 new modifications submitted to the document after the June meeting, Bishop Serratelli said, more than 90 were related to syntax, grammar and sentence structure; 14 were made to break up long sentences; 13 corrected inaccuracies in the translation; and 180 dealt with concerns about vocabulary.

At the Orlando meeting, the majority of bishops voted not to return the translation to ICEL, made up of representatives of episcopal conferences in 11 English-speaking countries. Many U.S. bishops expressed frustration that suggestions they had submitted to ICEL to clarify the sentence structure or revise archaic language had been ignored.

Two of the leading critics of the translation in Orlando - Bishops Donald W. Trautman of Erie, Pa., and Victor B. Galeone of St. Augustine, Fla. - continued to oppose the document in Baltimore.

Calling the ICEL translation "fundamentally flawed," Bishop Trautman said the document "does not communicate," in part because of "lengthy sentences that are not pronounceable."

"If we do approve this, it will confuse our people," said Bishop Galeone.

But the majority of bishops disagreed, with many citing a need to start educating Catholics about the changes to come in celebrating the Mass with the new missal.

"The sooner we start putting things together the better," said Bishop Edward K. Braxton of Belleville, Ill., adding that members of one parish in his diocese had already told him they did not approve of certain changes mandated by the Vatican-approved missal translation.

With the time needed for publishers to produce the new edition of the missal and for Catholics to receive proper catechesis about the changes in the Mass, use of the new missal is not expected before Advent of 2012, Bishop Serratelli said.

In July, the Vatican told the USCCB that it had given "recognitio" to the first section of the missal translation. Approved by the U.S. bishops in Los Angeles in June 2006, that section involves the translation of the penitential rite, Gloria, creed, eucharistic prayers, eucharistic acclamations, Our Father and other prayers and responses used

daily.