

# Recovering liturgical treasure

Recent letter-writers to The Catholic Review have asked why the forthcoming new translation of the Roman Missal is necessary, especially now at a time when so many other concerns seem to deserve more immediate attention.

In his Oct. 4 column, Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien posed the rhetorical question, "Why do I have to go to Mass?"

Though it may not be readily apparent, these two very important questions actually share an answer.

Let's begin with some background: The current English translation of the Roman Missal for the Ordinary Form of Holy Mass was carried out using a method called "dynamic equivalence" - one that attempted to capture the meaning of the original Latin text apart from its form; rephrasing it in the "language of the people."

In spite of good intentions, it eventually became clear that the resulting text fails at times to fully express the faith of the church. While the language may be "approachable," it is often detached from its principal source - sacred Scripture. In some instances, the translation was so poorly done that one may consider the result to be just plain incorrect.

To assess the situation soberly, as Holy Mother Church has, we must admit that we have been paying a dear price over these last 40 years. As our liturgical language has grown more ordinary and everyday, so too has our view of the liturgy. As a result, we have increasingly relinquished our sense of the sacred at Mass, causing many of us to lose sight of what the sacred liturgy truly is.

The current Missal translation, in other words, can sometimes obscure the reality that in Mass the faithful are invited to stand at the foot of the cross to join themselves to the spotless victim who offers himself to the Father once for all, yet also at the doorway to the empty tomb where we are called to be one with the risen Lord, that he might accomplish in us the work of our redemption, fortifying us well for the work of building the Kingdom of God on earth in preparation for his glorious return.

Far from just an academic exercise of questionable value, the new translation of the Roman Missal is an attempt to recover liturgical treasure of inestimable worth. Those who approach it as such will find that it has within it the power to elevate the hearts and minds of the faithful toward God, drawing us ever more deeply into the realm of sacred mystery. In the process, it will make known the answer to Archbishop O'Brien's rhetorical question, "Why do I have to go to Mass?"

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