

RATIO TRANSLATIONIS
FOR THE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE



CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP
AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS

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FOREWORD

The *Ratio translationis* as a genre was established by the 2001 Instruction *Liturgiam authenticam* (n. 9) an instrument to assist the process of translating liturgical texts of the Roman Rite into any given modern language. It represents a new venture whose nature will vary from one language to the next and whose precise form will undoubtedly mature over the years. What follows here is a *Ratio translationis* for the English language. As will be seen, it is an illustrative document, designed to spell out the practical implications of current requirements. Its purpose is to provide a basic guide in the English language for the Bishops and the experts they call to assist them in the pastorally crucial, technically difficult and time-consuming task of preparing English-language translations of the liturgical books.

The present text was by no means drawn up in a single session, but developed in several phases spread over a number of years. In essence, it is the fruit of extensive examination and discussion of the Instruction *Liturgiam authenticam* and of practical experience of work on the translation of the Roman Missal. Such reflection took place above all under the auspices of the *Vox Clara* Committee, a group of senior Bishops from different parts of the English-speaking world who are assisted by a range of experts. The Committee was appointed by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments in July 2002 to assist it in finding ways of ensuring a timely and sure-handed implementation of the Instruction in the English-speaking world. It goes without saying that its work, a heavy burden on Bishops in active service in their dioceses, has been invaluable.

Having received a relatively mature draft from the Committee, the Congregation then undertook a consultation of English-speaking Bishops' Conferences in search of suggestions for possible improvement. The suggestions received, though not always easy to reconcile, were in so far as possible incorporated into a text issued to Bishops Conferences in July 2005. Already at this stage of the work the development of the *Ratio translationis* text benefited formally and informally from the counsels and the ongoing work of the International

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Commission for English in the Liturgy (ICEL) in the wake of its re-establishment by the Congregation with new Statutes in 2003.

The *Ratio Translationis* in its working draft of 2005 has already demonstrated its usefulness. In its foreword to that draft the Congregation invited interested parties to suggest further improvements. To such suggestions have been added a number of points noted in the meantime by the Congregation in the course of its own work and supplemented most recently by the outcome of further deliberations of the *Vox Clara* Committee, at its Rome meeting of March 2007.

In 2005 the Congregation accepted the *Vox Clara* Committee's recommendation that the project be carried forward by means of the compilation and eventual publication of a certain number of appendices to explicate some further applications of principle. Thanks largely to the work of the Committee itself, progress has been made in this respect and some appendix material has been drawn up, even though it is planned that eventually other appendices will follow. As in 2005, there is general agreement on the usefulness of publishing without further delay the main body of the text in its latest version along with the appendix material available to date, and ICEL has made a request to this effect. Once again, the examples of translation given here, while they have been in part further revised, are not intended to be definitive, nor to condition in any way the canonical vote of the Bishops' Conferences, but simply to illustrate the points being made in the *Ratio*.

The Congregation wishes to renew its thanks to all who have worked hard over the years to develop this ongoing text of *Ratio translationis* and would be happy to receive further suggestions, especially where these emerge during the practical work of applying the requirements of *Liturgiam authenticam* to the preparation of a new generation of English-language translations. The Congregation's intention is that the present edition should remain in service for five years, till the end of March 2012.

Rome, 28 March 2007

+ Francis Card. ARINZE
Prefect

PART ONE

Presuppositions for the Authentic Translation of the Roman Rite

A. THE MEANING OF LITURGICAL LANGUAGE

1. The language of the Liturgy has a sacred character which sets it apart, since through it the whole Church, as the body of Christ, joins with one voice in praise of the Father. Moreover, liturgical language is often drawn directly from the Scriptures so that when the Church prays she is united to Christ the Word in his own prayer to the Father. Indeed, it is through the Scriptures above all that God has continually spoken to his people.¹ In both the Old and New Testaments, by means of human idioms bearing the mark of the various historical moments in which they occur, God reveals himself through the several voices of Prophet, Patriarch, Psalmist, Apostle and Evangelist, which all come together to “proclaim the one and the same mystery of Christ” in the Sacred Liturgy.² The Church’s response to this Word echoes the “Amen” that Christ, the Mediator between God and man, uttered once and for all³ as he shed his blood to seal the everlasting covenant in the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 1:20-22). By the working of this same Spirit, the Church finds her own voice in the words of the Scriptures which have become an effective response of “listening and adoring in the Spirit and in truth” (Jn 4:23). Ultimately, what is heard and spoken in the Liturgy must be carried out in a way of Christian life: “Be doers of the word and not hearers only” (Jas 1:22).

2. Made Christ’s Spouse through the mysteries of his death and Resurrection, the Church prays in the voice of a bride to her groom (Rev 22:17), filled with love and thanksgiving as she offers to Christ

1 Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 33.

2 *Ordo lectionum Missae*, editio typica altera (1981), *praenotanda*, n. 5.

3 *Ibid.*, n. 6.

the needs of all the faithful on earth.⁴ At the same time, she is joined with those who rejoice before the Lamb and whose full voice is “like the sound of a great multitude or the sound of rushing water or mighty peals of thunder” (Rev 19:6). Just as at Pentecost the Spirit enabled the Apostles “to speak in other languages” so that those who were present “from every nation under heaven” could hear them “speaking in the language of each” (Acts 2:4-5), so too before the throne of God, the Church’s one prayer is expressed by people of every nation, race and tongue in a single voice (Rev 8:10). Joining in the one Liturgy of heaven, the Church’s full voice is heard every time the Eucharist is celebrated in any language.

3. While her prayer is expressed in human words, the Church’s liturgical language also has important non-verbal elements that are governed by the rubrics and by sound liturgical custom. These elements, too, have developed under the influence of the same Spirit who always “intercedes with sighs too deep for words” (Rom 8:26). Such non-verbal elements include well-placed periods of silence, sacred music, gestures, posture and movement, which shape the meaning of the liturgical celebration in ways that are no less significant than the words that are spoken within it.

B. SEVEN PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LANGUAGE OF THE ROMAN RITE

Liturgical language is by nature Trinitarian

4. The Roman Rite expresses itself consistently in a Trinitarian fashion, by offering prayer *through* Christ, *in* the Spirit and *to* the Father. This ancient way of formulating Christian prayer can be found throughout all the liturgical books of the Roman Rite and constitutes

⁴ Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Instruction *Liturgiam authenticam*, on the use of vernacular languages in the publication of the liturgical books of the Roman Rite, the Fifth Instruction on the orderly carrying out of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council, 28 March 2001. The official Latin version is found in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 93 (2001) 97-134, here p. 105, n. 19. Hereafter cited only as *Liturgiam authenticam*.

the first and most important characteristic of its distinctive language. So essential is this feature that it appears in some form in nearly every prayer within every rite. Typical of the Trinitarian expression of such prayers is the formula used to close most Collects: *Per Dominum nostrum Iesum Christum Filium tuum, qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitate Spiritus Sancti, Deus, per omnia saecula saeculorum* (Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever).

Prayer in the Roman Rite is eschatological in purpose

5. The liturgical language of the Roman Rite is marked by a sense of the eschatological or heavenly union between Christ and his Church. Whether the source of the prayer is biblical, patristic, conciliar or other, this important quality always informs the content of the prayer insofar as the Liturgy unites the voice of the Church both in heaven and on earth.

Biblical texts are a primary source for liturgical prayer

6. Translators must keep in mind that the great majority of prayers in the Roman Rite are either based upon biblical texts or allude to them. The first duty of every translator when considering the source of liturgical texts is to inquire into the possibility of biblical influence, discernable through specialized vocabulary, outright adoption of biblical verses or the use of phrases redolent of the Latin biblical text. The *Nova Vulgata Editio*, the revised Latin translation of the Bible, issued for use in the Liturgy and other Church documents by Pope John Paul II in 1979 with an *editio typica altera* published in 1986, is often designated simply as the “Neo-Vulgate,” and is a helpful guide for this task of the translator, as are editions of the ancient *Vulgata*, the Vulgate. The goal should be that the biblical background of the liturgical text, which becomes clearer when the text is read in conjunction with the Latin biblical text, should also be as evident as possible in view of the vernacular Lectionary texts used in the territories for which the text is destined for liturgical use.

Liturgical prayer relies upon patristic teaching

7. A further aspect of Latin liturgical language is its reliance on patristic teaching. Prayer texts of the Roman Rite “transmit the faith of the Church as received from the Fathers,” a point that has sometimes been neglected in the translation of liturgical texts. Yet it is crucial that the influence of patristic thought, vocabulary and syntax found in such prayers should be considered by the translator, in conjunction with the biblical foundation upon which such language is often built. Not infrequently, liturgical compositions reflect the way in which biblical revelation was first given expression by the Fathers of the Latin West, especially by Saints Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Leo and Gregory. Many prayers in the *Missale Romanum*, for example, represent a careful synthesis of the mysteries of the Faith, constructed by the Fathers who often articulated their understanding in language borrowed from Western philosophy, though adapted to Christian belief. While the translator’s task may be more difficult because of this added dimension, the renewal of the Liturgy is all the more resplendent when the patristic foundations of prayers are placed in evidence in the translation.⁵ Adherence to “the norm of the Fathers”⁶ in the work of translating the Liturgy can thus be considered a key element of the renewal of the Liturgy intended by the Second Vatican Council.

Example. Pope Saint Leo the Great, in his *Sermo*.25 (PL 54, 209C), says: “De magna factum est potestate, ut Dei Filius *substantiam humanam* causamque susceperit qui et *nostram naturam quam condidit reformaret*, et mortem quam non fecit aboleret” [emphasis added]. One readily sees the affinity of St. Leo’s words to the Collect of the Mass for Christmas Day, and St. Leo’s words, together with their context, should therefore be considered for any light that they might shed for the purpose of translation:

Latin Text (2002)	Draft Translation
Deus, qui humanae substantiae dignitatem	O God, who wonderfully created the dignity of human nature
et mirabiliter condidisti, et mirabilius reformasti,	and still more wonderfully renewed it,
da, quaesumus, nobis eius divinitatis esse consortes,	grant, we pray, that we may partake in the divinity of him
qui humanitatis nostrae fieri dignatus est particeps.	who humbled himself to share in our humanity.
Qui tecum vivit.	Who lives and reigns.

8. Important words and phrases from St. Leo are paralleled in the text of this prayer: (1) the word *substantia*, which is often used in the Vulgate to mean “possessions” or “wealth” (e.g., *Gen* 15:4; *Num* 16:32) but sometimes also “existence” (*Ps* 38:6) or “nature” (*Heb* 1:3), while it is this latter sense that is corroborated by the context in which St. Leo uses it; and (2) the phrase from St. Leo’s sermon “qui et *nostram naturam quam condidit reformaret*,” which characterizes the work of the redemption as a wonderful new act of creation by God. Familiarity with the sources of prayers from the *Missale Romanum* is of fundamental importance in accurate translation, since the meaning of such source texts in their original contexts is often blended into the final form of a collect, preface, antiphon, canticle or blessing.

Direct and compact expression

9. The need for the vernacular to be rendered into accessible language corresponds also with a certain native quality of much of liturgical Latin, especially its conciseness and compact manner of expression.⁷

⁵ *Liturgiam authenticam*, n. 49.

⁶ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 50; *Missale Romanum*, editio typica tertia, *Institutio Generalis*, n. 9.

⁷ *Liturgiam authenticam*, n. 57.

Historically, the Roman Rite has been viewed as one whose language is discreet, sober and unaffected. It is important to note that vernacular renderings of a Latin text must be made in a “kind of language which is easily understandable”⁸ to the faithful, without resorting to a conversational style, or expressions too closely regulated by contemporary idiom. In fact, certain mysteries of the Faith may not be translatable into commonplace vernacular terms; hence, the need for the development of new expressions distinctive to a given vernacular used in the celebration of the Roman Rite. When vernacular languages are well used in the translation of the Liturgy, they help worshipers “respond to the hunger and thirst for the living God”⁹ which fuels the Church’s desire to pray in the one voice of the Spirit (*Rev 22:17*) in a style that mirrors the best characteristics of the Latin text.

Example. The following Postcommunion Prayer for 20 December typifies the conciseness of expression frequent in the *Missale Romanum*.

<u>Latin Text (2002)</u>	<u>Draft Translation</u>
Quos munere caelesti reficis, Domine,	Shelter with divine protection, O Lord,
divino tuere praesidio,	those you refresh with this heavenly gift,
ut, tuis mysteriis perfruentes,	that you may bring all who delight in your mysteries into the joy of true peace.
in vera facias pace gaudere. Per Christum.	Through Christ our Lord.

Liturgical language is pedagogical

10. Liturgical language is also by nature pedagogical in its ability to inculcate truth found “in the elements of faith and Christian morality.”¹⁰ Translators thereby assist Bishops in their teaching responsibility when rendering texts accurately so as to emphasize how

8 *Ibid.*, n. 25.

9 *Ibid.*, n. 25.

10 *Ibid.*, n. 26.

the Liturgy is an authentic source of the Church’s self-understanding and sure teaching.¹¹

Example. The following Roman Prayer over the Offerings, taken from the Midnight Mass of Christmas, provides an example of liturgical language marked by instruction in the mystery of the Incarnation.

<u>Latin Text (2002)</u>	<u>Draft Translation</u>
Grata tibi sit, Domine, quaesumus,	May the oblation of this day’s feast
hodiernae festivitatis oblatio,	be pleasing to you, O Lord, we pray,
ut, per haec sacrosancta commercia,	that through this most holy exchange
in illius inveniamur forma,	we may be found in the likeness of him,
in quo tecum est nostra substantia.	in whom our nature is united to you.
Qui vivit et regnat in saecula saeculorum.	Through Christ our Lord.

Liturgical prayer engages the whole person

11. Springing as it does from the mystery of the Incarnation, the language of the Roman Rite seeks to engage the whole person, body and spirit, who is the subject of “full, conscious and active participation”¹² in the Liturgy. For this reason, translators must leave liturgical language as multivalent in the vernacular as it is in the Latin, allowing for several levels of meaning to be grasped by the worshiper whenever possible. Whatever is implicit, for example, in a given text should not be drawn out in an overly explicit fashion, lest multiple allusions be lost.¹³

11 *Cf. Ibid.*, n. 26.

12 *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 14.

13 *Liturgiam authenticam*, n. 28.

Example. The extraordinarily expressive text of the *Exsultet* evokes many important responses from the listener: faith, joy, thanksgiving, wonder and hope. It is important that the translation of so exuberant a text correspond with the intention of the prayer within the Liturgy to engage the faithful fully.

Latin Text (2002)	Draft Translation
O mira circa nos tuae pietatis dignatio!	Oh, how wonderful your care for us!
O inestimabilis dilectio caritatis: ut servum redimeres, Filium tradidisti!	Oh, how immeasurable your love: for to rescue a slave, you gave away a Son!
O certe necessarium Adae peccatum, quod Christi morte deletum est!	Oh, how necessary Adam's sin, blotted out by Christ's death!
O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem!	Oh happy fault, which earned so great a Redeemer!

12. When faced with texts which are dense, poetic or highly connotative, translators should avoid vernacularization which explains rather than translates. Instead, the rich Latin of the Liturgy which describes heavenly realities and the mysterious acts of God's redemptive love may be left correspondingly veiled in translation and so open to more than one possible interpretation.

C. VERNACULAR TRANSLATION AS AN ORGANIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE ROMAN RITE

13. In the years immediately prior to the Council of Trent, there were some who suggested that Mass should only be celebrated in the vernacular¹⁴ and that otherwise Mass was not valid. Under such circumstances, the Council prohibited the use of vernacular languages in liturgical texts, though it recommended highly that pastors of souls have recourse to other measures "Lest Christ's flock go hungry . . . the Holy Synod commands pastors and all others having the care of souls

¹⁴ H. Denzinger-A. Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, editio XXXVI, 1976, n. 1759. Hereafter cited as "Denzinger-Schönmetzer."

to give frequent instructions during the celebration of Mass, either personally or through others, concerning what is read at Mass; among other things, they should include some explanation of the mystery of this most holy sacrifice, especially on Sundays and holy days."¹⁵ Already evident in the Council's teaching is that the celebration of Mass is of undoubted validity in any language but that the *cura animarum*, or care of souls, which is at stake in the participation of the faithful in the Liturgy, is the first responsibility of the Bishops, no matter what language may be used for the Liturgy.

14. In line with this same profound pastoral concern for the good of the faithful, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council again took up the question of vernacularization, now free of the interests which attended its consideration during the Council of Trent. The Council noted that "the use of the mother tongue frequently may be of great advantage to the people" and gave permission for its adoption.¹⁶ The use of the vernacular as the immediate language of celebration for the rites was envisioned as a possibility by the Council in accord with its desire that the "full, conscious and active participation" of the faithful be the consistent goal of all Conciliar liturgical renewal.¹⁷ It is on identical pastoral grounds, then, that these two Councils were in harmony, the one first in rejecting, and the other in finally accepting the use of the vernacular in the liturgical books. Ironically, the same pastoral interest demanded contrary courses of action at different times and places. This is the first sense in which the use of the vernacular in the Liturgy as a function of increased participation can be seen as an example of the "organic growth" favored by the Council Fathers.¹⁸

15. There is a second sense, as well, in which the adoption of the vernacular within the Liturgy is an example of this kind of "organic growth." For many centuries before Trent, the faithful heard the word

¹⁵ Denzinger-Schönmetzer, n. 1749. Cf. *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, n. 11.

¹⁶ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 36.

¹⁷ *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, nn. 10-15.

¹⁸ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 23.

of God preached and listened to homilies and catechesis in the local tongue, and probably also sang vernacular hymns at Mass, at least in some places. In effect, the Latin of the Roman Rite (itself stemming from a period in which it had become the predominant vernacular of the faithful in Rome) long provided a universal identity in which Latin Catholic in the different parts of the world shared, while vernaculars affirmed the union of the faithful in their own communities. Hence these dimensions of universality in the communion of all believers of the same Rite, and of diversity in the different regions are mirrored in the way in which liturgical languages have been used, though this has varied considerably over some sixteen hundred years. This suggests that what is new in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the use of the vernacular is not only the authoritative statement of the principle that local languages are permissible in the celebration of the Liturgy, but that also the recognition of the fact that the Roman Rite itself can be authentically celebrated when vernacular languages are used in tandem with Latin. "In preparing all translations of the liturgical books," then, "the greatest care is to be taken to maintain the identity and unitary expression of the Roman Rite, not as a sort of historical monument, but rather as a manifestation of the theological realities of ecclesial communion and unity."¹⁹

16. It is also clear that the Second Vatican Council reserved for Latin an important role in which it could not be replaced by any vernacular language: "Particular law remaining in force, the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin Rites."²⁰ In parts of the Mass such as acclamations and readings the Fathers permitted a "suitable place . . . to be allotted to the mother tongue," while also mandating that "steps should be taken so that the faithful may be able to say or sing together in Latin those parts of the Mass which pertain to the people."²¹ Indeed, the Council further acknowledged that in the Roman Liturgy,

19 *Liturgiam authenticam*, n. 5.

20 *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 36 § 1.

21 *Ibid.*, n. 54.

it is Gregorian chant which is to be given "pride of place,"²² directing that simpler melodies be published so even small churches would be enabled to use it in the renewed Liturgy.²³ In short, where the renewal of the Roman Rite was to consider the use of vernacular languages, there was no intention thereby to eliminate Latin.²⁴ Instead, the Council Fathers suggested that vernacular languages were meant to enhance the celebration of the Roman Rite for which Latin was to remain a privileged language.

17. Understood in this context, then, the use of the vernacular in the Roman Rite assists the faithful not simply in grasping the meaning of the prayers and the scriptural texts (which were, after all, originally written in a vernacular of their day), but also in deepening their ability to pray in the particular ways that the Roman Rite recommends, as well as in strengthening their unity with the universal Church at prayer, past and present.

18. In order for all vernacular texts to represent faithfully the Liturgy of the Roman Rite, care must be taken that no translation violate the general principle of "organic growth" required by the Council Fathers.²⁵ Any development of the Roman Rite through liturgical translation, including the adaptation of a liturgical text, must be brought about in such a way that any modifications are seen to develop organically out of the theology and constant practice of the Roman Rite over the centuries. Modifications should not merely arise out of a desire to introduce something novel or distinctive into the Liturgy. If due care is exercised, vernacular translations are harmonized as a part of the Roman Rite itself.²⁶

22 *Ibid.*, n. 116.

23 *Ibid.*, n. 117.

24 Cf. *Codex Iuris Canonici* (1983), canon 928.

25 *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nn. 4, 23.

26 Cf. *Liturgiam authenticam*, nn. 4, 5, 6, 8, 20, 47, 57 and 59.

D. ELEMENTS OF THE LANGUAGE OF THE ROMAN RITE INFLUENCED BY THE LATIN FATHERS

19. It is a fundamental principle of *Liturgiam authenticam* that translations of the Roman Rite shall not “be produced from other translations already made into other languages; rather, the new translations must be made directly from the original texts, namely the Latin, as regards the texts of ecclesiastical composition, or the Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek, as the case may be, as regards the texts of Sacred Scripture.”²⁷ As mentioned above, the prayers of the Roman Liturgy owe a great deal to the theology and expression of the Latin Fathers. Many of these, but especially Saints Ambrose, Augustine, Leo and Gregory left their imprints on local prayers which were eventually adopted for use in the modern Roman Rite. St. Jerome’s work in biblical translation also left its mark on the style of Latin that would be employed in liturgical prayer. Translators must be mindful that the “Latin liturgical texts of the Roman Rite, while drawing on centuries of ecclesial experience in transmitting the faith of the Church received from the Fathers, are themselves the fruit of liturgical renewal, just recently brought forth.”²⁸ As a result, translators must first take care to locate the biblical and patristic sources of the prayers they translate. This can be done most effectively through consultation of various scholarly studies. Such sources must be carefully examined in order to determine what role the patristic elements may play in a given prayer. In effect, the patristic context from which a word, phrase or sentence is taken can often unlock important aspects of meaning in the prayer itself. Building on sure knowledge of the sources for a given prayer, translators are often able to see how its composition can be partially or even almost completely accounted for through biblical or patristic texts, introduced and concluded with one or more liturgical formulae.

27 *Ibid.*, n. 24.

28 *Ibid.*, n. 20.

20. At an even deeper level of composition, many orations of the *Missale Romanum* (for example) reflect the ways in which the Latin Fathers resolved issues in epistemology, anthropology, soteriology, morality and the nature of the soul which had been raised in the Greco-Roman culture of their day. In this way, ancient questions received Christian answers through the Liturgy. Translators must be alert then to the vocabulary, syntax and *topoi* which the Fathers embedded in the prayers of the Roman Liturgy, often in response to heretical or separatist movements threatening to the true faith.²⁹ Very careful attention must be paid to the rendering of vocabulary from the Latin patristic heritage which constitutes so much of the language of the Roman Rite. Much of Roman liturgical language is “a coherent system of words and patterns of speech, consecrated by the books of Sacred Scripture and by ecclesiastical tradition, especially by the Fathers of the Church.”³⁰ Such a system of vocabulary, in which many elements of the Roman Rite are preserved, should be retained in translation “rather than substituting other words that are alien to it.”³¹

E. THE DUAL PROCESS OF INCULTURATION IN RELATION TO LITURGICAL TRANSLATION

21. The revision of vernacular translations of the Roman Rite is to be carried out in the light of the norms found in both of the Instructions, *Varietates legitimae* (1994) and *Liturgiam authenticam* (2001), respectively the Fourth and Fifth Instructions on the implementation of the Liturgy Constitution of the Second Vatican Council. In fact, one reason why *Liturgiam authenticam* was written was to address questions of vernacularization as a form of inculturation.³² This means that the entire process of vernacular translation should be understood from the beginning as a way in which the Church attempts to make “the

29 *Ibid.*, n. 49.

30 *Ibid.*

31 *Ibid.*, n. 50.

32 *Ibid.*, n. 8.

Gospel incarnate in different cultures, and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community.”³³

22. This dual movement, of the “incarnation” of the Gospel into a culture, and of the welcoming of a new culture into the community of the Church, is a complex one, especially when applied to the translation of the Liturgy into a vernacular language. For such a process to be implemented, the first responsibility of any translator is to gain a mastery of liturgical Latin and to understand the close relationship between text and rite in the Roman Liturgy. No text can be fully interpreted apart from the rite in which it is found. Consequently, translators must extend their studies to include a grounding in the liturgical theology of the renewed rites mandated by the Second Vatican Council.

23. As a part of the inculturation process, vernacular languages may well see the influence of liturgical Latin on their own development.³⁴ Important phrases from the Liturgy, as well as the syntax and rhetorical forms derived from its prayer texts, almost inevitably work their way into the general culture of a vernacular language. This can be seen, for example, in the not rare instances in which politicians and others use the term “*mea culpa*” as an expression of regret for mistakes or failings, implicitly borrowing this phrase and its meaning from the *Confiteor* in the *Ordo Missae*.

24. The reverse process may also occur, but often over a much longer period of time. Because of this important exchange, translators must use great care in the selection of words and expressions chosen for the Liturgy, since they are also thereby shaping the course of their own vernacular as it grows in its expression of the Gospel message.³⁵

33 Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Instruction *Varietates legitimæ*, on Inculturation in the Roman Liturgy, the Fourth Instruction on the orderly carrying out of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council, 25 January 1994, in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 87 (1995) 288-314 (hereafter cited simply as *Varietates legitimæ*), n. 4; Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 7 December 1990, n. 7.

34 Cf. *Liturgiam authenticam*, n. 14.

35 *Ibid.*, nn. 14, 47.

Example. The use of what is now considered a traditional formula for the exchange of wedding vows is an example of the way in which a vernacular text introduced into the Roman Rite can wield immense influence on society at large. The following exchange of consent formula, originally composed in English and apparently taken, by way of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, from the early-sixteenth century Sarum observance, has been incorporated into the marriage rites as approved for use in most English-speaking dioceses since the sixteenth century. It has been taken up in various forms as an adaptation, even within the revised *Ordo celebrandi Matrimonium* (1969 and 1991). As a result of its widespread influence, the language of “for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health” has come to define nearly all marital obligation in Western societies, and not simply Christian ones.

I, N., take you, N., for my lawful wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.

I, N., take you, N., for my lawful husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.

25. The process of inculturation also reminds translators that the Latin of the prayers of the Roman Rite maintains a privileged place in the liturgical life of the universal Church. Vernacular texts rely upon and, in very great part, derive their authenticity as liturgical language from the Latin they render. Translators must therefore really translate the Latin of the Roman Rite, and not merely allow themselves to fashion what is essentially a new composition inspired in some manner by the Latin text. It remains appropriate, in fact, that in the celebration of the Roman Rite both Latin and vernacular languages be used side-by-side as a reminder to all the faithful of this important unity. Indeed, both *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (nn. 36, 101, 116) and *Liturgiam authenticam* (n. 28) encourage the singing of the Liturgy through Gregorian chant which “the Church recognizes as proper to the Roman Liturgy, and which, all other things being equal, is to be given pride of place in liturgical celebrations.”³⁶

36 *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 116.

F. THE GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT OF A “LITURGICAL VERNACULAR”³⁷

26. Even though, as noted above, active consideration regarding the use of the vernacular in the Roman Rite had been undertaken by the Church even before the Council of Trent,³⁸ the Roman Rite remained in most countries exclusively in Latin until the Second Vatican Council permitted a change on December 4, 1963, with the publication of its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.³⁹

27. As the history of the translation of the Roman Rite into English demonstrates, many individual terms and larger expressions could not be rendered easily or gracefully into contemporary English. As examples, terms such as “memorial acclamation” could be cited. Each vernacular, then, has been forced to develop specialized expressions to capture the more technical terms for Christian belief and worship. In many cases, it has been preferable to return to the Latin cognates of such terms (e.g., pyx, embolism, scrutiny) rather than to invent a corresponding vernacular term.⁴⁰ Indeed, the evolution of certain phrases such as “responsorial psalm,” the “great Amen” and “extraordinary minister of Holy Communion” demonstrates the need for English as a vernacular to develop a kind of speech proper to worship, otherwise known as “liturgical vernacular.”⁴¹ This specialized kind of speech is intended principally to express the heavenly mysteries⁴² as they are found in the Liturgy. It should be

distinguishable from conversational speech and may, in fact, reach into the literary past of a given vernacular for expression adequate to the challenges of translating the Roman Rite. This would be especially true of deprecatory language, for example, seen throughout the *Missale Romanum* and other sacramental formulae.

Example. In the *Hanc igitur* of the Roman Canon, a series of deprecatory phrases is found, not untypical of liturgical expression in the early Roman Liturgy. The central point of such language, however, is to convey the complete dependence of the Church, clergy and people alike, upon the mercy and love of God, avoiding at the same time any exaggerated tone of groveling or denigration that would be contrary to the human dignity that is itself God's gift.

Latin Text (2002)

Hanc igitur oblationem servitutis
nostrae,
sed et cunctae familiae tuae,
quaesumus, Domine, ut placatus
accipias:
diesque nostros in tua pace disponas,
atque ab aeterna damnatione
nos eripi
et in electorum tuorum iubeas
grege numerari.
(Per Christum Dominum nostrum.
Amen.)

Draft Translation

Therefore, Lord, we pray:
graciously accept this offering
from us, your servants,
and from your whole family;
order our days in your peace
and command that we be delivered
from eternal damnation
and counted among the flock of
those you have chosen.
(Through Christ our Lord. Amen.)

37 A very enlightening series of investigations of this theme, beginning with the development of a specifically Christian and liturgical vocabulary in the early Church and proceeding to study the development of Christian Latin from a variety of aspects, is Christine Mohrmann's four-volume collection, *Études sur le latin des chrétiens* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1961 [vol. 1-2], 1965 [vol. 3-4]). Cf., for example, “Notes sur le Latin liturgique,” in vol. II, pp. 93-108, for study of the development of a specifically liturgical Latin. The manner in which this form of Latin developed, explained by Mohrmann with an acute sense of the various anthropological and linguistic factors at work, might be seen as paradigmatic of the kind of process that can be expected and should be allowed to occur with modern vernacular languages.

38 Council of Trent, Session 22 (17 September 1562), especially chapters 8-9, *Canones de Sanctissimo missae Sacrificio*, n. 9: Denziger-Schönmetzer, nn. 1749, 1750, 1759.

39 Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 36.

40 *Liturgiam authenticam*, nn. 50, 53.

41 Cf. *Liturgiam authenticam*, nn. 27, 47.

42 Cf. *Liturgiam authenticam*, n. 27.

28. It is not only terms, but also syntax, that will need to be developed and sometimes even stretched beyond that which is encountered in other kinds of English-language texts, in order to express adequately the content of the texts of the Roman Rite. Perhaps one of the clearest examples of this need arises in the case of the relative clauses in the second person that are found in the vast majority of the Roman collects, which begin with the form *Deus, qui . . .*, or some similar formulation. Though the English language does not often use the relative clause in the second person, it is not at all incomprehensible

or awkward to do so, and such a usage would quickly become familiar in its association with the liturgical context.

Example. The version of the Our Father dating back in part at least to the time of King Henry VIII (and probably back into the fourteenth century) was included within the “English liturgical vernacular” of the Mass after the Second Vatican Council.⁴³

Latin Text	Customary Translation
Pater noster, qui es in caelis;	Our Father, who art in heaven;
sanctificetur nomen tuum;	hallowed be thy name;
adveniat regnum tuum;	thy kingdom come;
fiat voluntas tua sicut in caelo et in terra	thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Panem nostrum cotidianum da nobis hodie;	Give us this day our daily bread
et dimitte nobis debita nostra, sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris;	and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.
et ne nos inducas in tentationem;	And lead us not into temptation,
sed libera nos a malo.	but deliver us from evil.

PART TWO

⁴³ Cf., for example, H. Thurston, *Familiar Prayers: Their Origins and History* (London: Burns & Oates, 1953), pp. 22-37; C.C. Butterworth, *The English Primers (1529-1545)* (New York: Octagon, 1971), pp. 8-9, 301-303.

Principles of Translation for the Liturgy of the Roman Rite

A. PRINCIPLES REGARDING THE IDENTITY AND UNITARY EXPRESSION OF THE ROMAN RITE

The identity and unitary expression of the Roman Rite should be maintained

29. The history of languages spoken in the City of Rome is surprisingly complex. By about the year 200 B.C. Latin had overtaken other local languages in the area of the Italian peninsula surrounding Rome, and by 100 B.C. it was projected by Roman military power throughout the Mediterranean basin and thus had become an international means of communication. At a certain period, however, for a variety of reasons, the Greek language was favored in Roman aristocratic circles, among those who considered themselves to be the heirs of classical Greek culture, and also among Jews, who were familiar with the Septuagint Greek version of the Sacred Scriptures and had extensive contacts with Hellenistic Jewish communities throughout the Mediterranean world. As the preaching of the Gospel often began among the Jews of a given place and was at first a principally urban phenomenon, it is therefore not surprising that Greek became the habitual language of the Christian Scriptures as well as the earliest Christian liturgical celebrations in Rome. Pre-Christian Rome was one of many Hellenistic cultures in which the Apostles, Peter and Paul, preached the Gospel, thereby allowing the message of Jesus Christ to take root.

30. From the end of the first century and increasingly into the next two centuries Latin began to be promoted by Quintillian and others as having its own full literary power on a par with Greek. As for the ecclesial context, the use of Latin in the Liturgy increased, beginning with elements such as the homily, hymnody and prayers of the faithful, and eventually leading to a Liturgy that was virtually exclusively Latin at Rome by the second half of the fourth century. Certain isolated

Greek, Hebrew or Aramaic elements survived the passage or were reintroduced and have persisted even to the present time.

31. Much of pagan religious practice in Rome, despite its reliance on a diverse pantheon of gods and goddesses, already reflected belief in the rule of a supreme father-god (Zeus), whose divine will (*fas*) provided for all and whose law (*ius*) for mankind was the duty of worship (*religio*) in filial dependency, made in the hope of divine favor (*pax*). It is no surprise, then, that whatever of pagan liturgical language might still express these sentiments within Christianity, without at the same time being bound up with superstition, could become a part of the Roman Rite.⁴⁴ Many elements of the language of the Roman Rite which have been adopted from pagan Roman religious practice can be found throughout the liturgical books now in use. These features include, among others: a sacral vocabulary; specialized religious syntax; ways of addressing God with corresponding patterns of closure in prayer; various rhetorical forms; brevity and conciseness of style found in sober, practical and clear expression; and a manner of praying centered around the duty or obligation of the individual and the community to practice true religion.⁴⁵

The orations of the Roman Rite

32. Such characteristics are often seen in the language of the Roman Rite, but especially in the orations “which exhibit a capacity to transcend the limits of their original situations so as to become the prayers of Christians in any time or place.”⁴⁶ In the orations of the Roman Rite, and principally in the collects, can be seen a pattern recognizable from pagan antiquity (without denying some biblical parallels): (1) the address to God; (2) a relative clause of description, joined to the address; (3) a petition along with (4) a fuller description

44 Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 37; *Liturgiam authenticam*, n. 5.

45 An interesting example of a scholarly study along such lines is F.V. Hickson, *Roman Prayer Language: Livy and the Aeneid of Vergil* (Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner, 1993). One particularly enlightening dimension of the study is the author's examination of the language of petition in these ancient authors: cf. pp. 45-51, 138-139.

46 *Liturgiam authenticam*, n. 5.

of the petition or an expression of its motivation, followed by (5) a devout closure, expressing hope of divine action. Each element is meant to flow from the previous one, so that most orations comprise a single Latin sentence whose syntax allows each part clear expression, but carefully subordinates all of its elements to a reliance upon God. These ancient orations are often complex, but with a unity which derives from the thought of the speaker. In these and other ways, the Roman tendency to use “extended subordination” is clearly evident to the translator of liturgical texts.

Example. The following collect, taken from the Mass for the Easter Vigil, demonstrates the Roman tendency to use “extended subordination” as discussed above.

Latin Text (2002)

Deus, qui hanc sacratissimam noctem
gloria dominicae resurrectionis illustras,
excita in Ecclesia tua adoptionis spiritum,
ut, corpore et mente renovati,
puram tibi exhibeamus servitatem.
Per Dominum.

Draft Translation

O God, who illuminate this
most holy night
with the glory of the Lord's
Resurrection,
stir up in your Church the spirit
of adoption,
so that, renewed in mind and
body,
we may render you whole-
hearted service.
Through our Lord.

Roman adoption of elements from other cultures

33. Beyond these qualities assumed by the Roman Rite from pre-Christian religion is another feature that seems to have been rooted in a natural Roman ability to adopt and integrate into its own life the best of religious practice in other cultures. Indeed, “the Roman Rite is marked by a signal capacity for assimilating into itself spoken and sung texts, gestures and rites derived from the customs and genius of diverse nations