



THE ROMAN RITE old and new

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The Roman Rite: Old and New - VIII

The New Mass destroyed centuries of propers

In the eighth installment of Don Pietro Leone's "The Roman Rite: Old and New", the author continues the second part of his study, showing in detail how the destructive spirit of the artificial pseudo-historical committees responsible for the New Rite wiped out most of the collects of the Roman Rite - and dislocated Gospel and Epistle readings proper to each day in the West since the earliest centuries. And a brief view of a minor but consistent problem in several languages: mistranslations, here viewed mostly in the Italian version (minor, because, as this work has consistently shown, the rite itself is problematic, in Latin and in any translation).

Comparison of the Propers

We shall now compare the Propers of the Old and New Rites, namely the orations known in the Old Rite as the Collect, the Secret, and the Postcommunion; as well as the Gospel and Epistle Readings.

Fr. Anthony Cekada in his work "The Problems with the Prayers of the Modern Mass" (1991) writes that the orations date back in part as far as the fifth century, and that Tradition dates the nucleus of the Collects back to Pope St. Damasus (366-384). He shows the extent of the changes made to the orations: the Missal of the Old Rite contains 1,183 orations; 760 of these were completely abolished, and half of those remaining were altered so that now no more than 17 % of the original orations survive.

In the rest of this section we shall concentrate on the changes made to the Collects on the basis of the work *Liturgia - Memoria o Istruzioni per l'Uso?* by Lorenzo Bianchi (Piemme, 2002), although similar changes were made to the other orations as Fr. Cekada shows.

1. The Collects

Lorenzo Bianchi considers the Collects of Sundays and of the Feasts of Obligation as being those prayers most frequently heard by the faithful (p. 122). He explains (particularly on pp. 128-9) that the Collects of the Old Rite portray the human condition of sin, of the dangers coming from internal and external enemies, and of God's personal compassion and love; whereas the Collects of the New Rite have retained less than half of such themes - in the proportion of 122:57, while they have doubled references to Grace, gift, and love (*gratia, donum, dilectio, etc.*) - in the proportion of 9:17.

The result is that the New Rite no longer presents a vision of Grace and sin like the Old Rite, where man implores God's mercy in a concrete struggle between life and death; but rather presents man's life as a state of affairs, "a condition automatically given", where man is called to make a commitment (*impegno*), for which God's help is asked, so that man may attain salvation.

The New Rite is no longer concerned with dangers, enemies, and a personal response on the part of God, but merely seeks God's help as a form of "generic universalism". In effect, the creators of the New Rite separate Grace from sin, and in the final analysis (in a Pelagian move) from the human condition itself, so that it becomes no more than "an unnecessary adjunct" (un soprammobile, appunto). What has become important is "commitment" (impegno), with its social, activist, moralist thrust, and in relation to an ideal not immediately given (p. 25).

Bianchi argues this thesis in greater detail in regard to the Collects of Advent, Christmas, and Lent, and additionally in regard to the Offertory and Postcommunion prayers of Advent, in the prayer of the Blessing of the Water in the Easter vigil, and in the translations of the Collects. We shall herewith offer a brief summary of his analysis of the Collects of Advent, Christmas, and Lent (p. 131-3).

i.) Out of the seven Collects of Advent and Christmas, the New Rite has retained only the two (namely those of the Midnight and Dawn Masses of Christmas) in which "sin" or related concepts, such as "purificatis mentibus, liberet, vestusta servitus, mentis nostrae tenebras, indulgentia (: with purified minds; might free, ancient servitude, the darkness of our mind, indulgence)" are absent, substituting such concepts in the other Collects by phrases evoking commitment such as: "iustis operibus occurrentes (1st Sunday of Advent): advancing with just works"; and "in tui occorsum Filii festinantes nulla opera terreni actus impediunt (2nd Sunday of Advent): hastening to meet your Son, we are not hindered by any works of earthly action".

ii.) Whereas the word "Grace" is always related to the human condition of sin in the Old Rite, as in the 3rd Sunday of Advent: "mentis nostrae tenebras...gratia tuae visitationis (: the darkness of our mind... the Grace of your visitation)" and the 4th Sunday of Advent: "per auxilium gratiae tuae... nostra peccata (: with the help of Thy Grace...our sins)" this is not the case in the New Rite, as in the new version of the Collect for the 4th Sunday of Advent: "gratiam tuam, Domine, mentibus nostris infunde (: pour into our minds Thy Grace , O Lord)".

iii.) Whereas in the Old Rite the imperative is used with great insistence: "excita, veni, aurem tuam precibus nostris accomoda, illustra mentis nostrae tenebras, da, concede, succurre (: arouse, come, lend Thy ear to our prayers, illuminate the darkness of our mind, grant, concede, succour)", in the New Rite the conjunctive predominates, so that there is a shift from forceful entreaty to descriptive phrases[1].

iv.) While the Collects of the Sundays of Advent have, for the most part, been displaced into the week-day Masses, that of the 5th Sunday of Lent has been entirely eliminated. The same principles that had governed the displacement of the former govern the elimination of the latter. Out of all the Sunday collects in Lent according to the New Rite, there is a connection made between man's sin and God's mercy only on the 3rd Sunday. Otherwise all "negative"

terms appearing in the Old Rite have been suppressed: such as “peccatum, adversitates, pravae cogitationes, humiles, affligi (: sin, adversities, depraved thoughts, humble, afflicted).”

We conclude the subsection with a remarkable series of excisions concerning the ascetic life. Fr. Cekada shows in the second chapter of his book that the ideal of despising earthly things and loving heavenly things has been removed from the second Sunday of Lent, from the Feasts of St. Peter Damiani, of St Gaetano, of the Sacred Heart, of St. Angela Merici, St. Casimir, St. Paolinus of Nola, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Hedwig, St. Henry, Saints Cyril and Methodius, and St. Jeanne Francoise de Chantal, and that four other Feasts containing the phrases *terrena despicere* have been entirely abolished.

2. The Gospels and Epistles

We proceed to compare the Gospels and Epistles of Sundays and Feast Days in the Old Rite with those of the New Rite. The intention of the Second Vatican Council (SC 21) was “to set more richly the table of God’s Word.” The Consilium realized this intention by increasing the number of readings from two to three, and by increasing the one-year cycle of Gospels and Epistles to a three-year cycle. In the process, they abolished a liturgical structure of readings which dated back to the 4th and 5th centuries, manifesting again their preference for biblicity over Tradition which we have seen above in regard to the changes made to the formula of Consecration.

We shall now analyze first what has been added, then what has been excised.

What has been added is a greater quantity of Bible passages. This was done, as Mgr. Bugnini reveals in ch. 26 of the Liturgical Reform, in consultation with non-Catholics, and, as Mgr. Gamber observes, is the work of exegetes rather than liturgists[2]. It is, in short, of Protestant inspiration, and as such is mistaken first inasmuch as it presents the Mass-readings as vehicles of instruction and second in virtue of its obscurantism.

The new cycle of readings purports to instruct, whereas the old are at the service of the essence of the Mass: preparing the faithful spiritually for the Sacrifice and the Communion. For in the Gospel the same Lord Jesus Christ speaks to His people, Who will shortly become present on the altar, be sacrificed, and then be consumed by them.

As for the obscurantism of the new cycle, Romano Amerio remarks in *Iota Unum* (ch.288), the Bible “is a difficult book”, and most of the faithful lack the knowledge necessary for understanding many of the new readings.[3]

What has been excised shall be examined in detail because it pertains directly to the theme treated in this second part of the essay.

In the transition from the Old to the New Rite, a number of readings were retained, and a number eliminated; and of the readings retained, a number were abbreviated, or could be abbreviated if the celebrant so desired.

We shall now set forth the principles which governed the elimination and abbreviation of the readings, first in the Gospels and second in the Epistles, on the basis of the studies of Rudolf Kaschewsky: “ auf dasz der Tisch des Gotteswortes reicher bedeckt werde”, *Una Voce Korrespondenz* I 1982 and III 1986, respectively.

i. The Gospels

Out of 58 gospels, only 22 remain. The 36 that have been eliminated, and the passages that have been removed from the remaining Gospels, treat of the following themes: the Second Coming of the Lord, Judgment, sin and its effects, the contrast between the Kingdom of God and the World, the fact that Satan is the prince of the world, and that the world rejoices while the just man weeps; together with the earnest words, the warnings, and admonishments that the Lord spoke to His disciples, and therefore also to us.

Mgr. Klaus Gamber comments [4] that the passages removed from the remaining Gospels speak above all of “the God Who judges and punishes: vom richtenden und strafenden Gott”.

As far as the abbreviations are concerned, we may distinguish abbreviations at the beginning, at the end, or in the body of a given Gospel passage. As an example of the last we refer to the Feast of the Guardian Angels, from which vv. 6-9 of Mk. 18 have been removed, which warn of the punishments for those who give scandal to “one of these little ones”: and state that it is better to go into life maimed, lame, or with one eye, than to be cast whole into everlasting fire. We note that a synoptic parallel is only optional for the 6th Sunday in ordinary time (Year A). In this connection we note also that the Lord’s word about a place of “wailing and grinding of teeth” has been made optional each time it occurs (on the 16th, 17th, 28th, and 33rd Sundays of Year A).

ii. The Epistles

Kaschewsky demonstrates that the following themes have been suppressed in the Epistles: I. World, Sin, and Judgment; II. Putting Christianity into Practice; III. Sacred Symbolism. The first category comprises the following topics: 1) not as the Heathens; 2) the World and the Flesh; 3) Lust, Sin, and Devil; 4) Sin and Punishment; 5) Angels, Judgment and Damnation. The second category comprises: 1) Works pleasing to God; 2) Suffering for the sake of Christ.

Let us give examples of suppressed passages, according to Kaschewsky’s schema:

I.1 Not as the Heathens

In the Epistle of the 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B), that is to say Eph.4. vv.17, 20-24, the following verses (18-19) have been suppressed: “Having their understanding darkened: being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts, who, despairing, have given themselves up to lasciviousness, unto the working of all uncleanness, unto covetousness.” Fr. Georg May in his work *Der Glaube in der nachkonziliaren Kirche* (: Faith in the Postconciliar Church) Düsseldorf 1984, (p. 148), asks whether these verses have perhaps been suppressed because they are contrary to ecumenism, or to the ideology of the anonymous Christian.

I.2 The World and the Flesh

The Epistle of the 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C) consists of the Letter to the Galatians 5.13-18. The subsequent verses 19-26, which formed the Epistle of the 14th Sunday after Pentecost in the Old Rite, no longer appear. They include verse 24: “And they that are Christ’s, have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences” - the ‘foundation of any authentic Christian asceticism’ in the words of Fr. B. Deneke FSSP.

I. 3 Lust, Sin, and the Devil

Three passages on the Devil (1 Peter 5. 6-11; Eph. 4. 23-8; Eph. 6. 10-17) previously occurring on the 3rd, 19th, and 21st Sunday after Pentecost respectively, have been removed. We may observe that this corresponds to the elimination of the prayer to St. Michael after the Low Mass, and Fr. May remarks that it corresponds to a general tendency in the Postconciliar Church manifest in the elimination of the exorcisms in the New Rite of Baptism and in the New Rite of extreme Unction. The same may be said of the emasculated new benedictionale and of the new ‘exorcism’ in particular. Can we regard this tendency as anything less than irresponsible in an age where the Devil enjoys greater liberty than ever over the world? - indeed, such suppressions surely only contribute to this liberty.

I.4 Sin and Punishment

St. Paul’s warning against Holy Communion in the state of mortal sin (1 Cor. 11. 27-9, and referred to above) “...he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh judgment to himself...” has been excised from the Maundy Thursday epistle as from the Feast of Corpus Christi (Year C).

In this same subsection we mention the suppression of the account of Judas’ tragic end in the 7th Sunday of Easter (Year B) with the excision of vv. 18, 19, and 20b from Acts 1.15-20. This excision corresponds to that of the parallel passage in the Palm Sunday Gospel of the Passion according to Saint Matthew (Passion A).

I.5 Angels, Judgment, and Damnation

The most striking of all the suppressions must be that occurring on the 7th Sunday of Easter (Year C). Here the passage Apc. 22.12-20 has been abbreviated in the following manner: first, v.15 has been excised: “without [the Holy City] are dogs and sorcerers and unchaste and murderers and servers of idols, and every-one that loveth and maketh a lie”, then vv. 18-19 have been removed: “For I testify to every-one that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book: if any man shall add to these things, God shall add unto him the plagues written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the Holy City, and from these things that are written in this book.” Michael Davies observes (p. 151): “Clearly verse 15 had to be omitted for the negative implication that not all men will necessarily be saved, and, having omitted verse 15, verses 18 and 19 had to go, for the negative implication that those who tamper with the Scriptures will be excluded from Heaven.”

II. Putting Christianity into Practice

Here we simply refer to the suppression of the epistle on Septuagesima Sunday 1 Cor. 9. 24-7 which contains the words: “and everyone that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things” (25a) and “I chastise my body and bring it into subjection” (27a).

III. Sacred Symbolism

We conclude with the suppression of vv. 1-4, 11b, and 14-16 from the first chapter of the Apocalypse on the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel, whereby the description of the Son of man in his Divinity is diluted, to the impoverishment of the catechetical force of these verses.

In regard to the changes made in the Gospels and Epistles, we remark with Mgr. Gamber in “The Reform of the Roman Liturgy” (ch. 5), that “what is in part a fifteen-hundred-year Tradition has been interrupted without anything better being put into its place.” We conclude that if, in relation to the Council’s desire to “set the table of God’s Word more richly”, the new readings are richer quantitatively, they are poorer qualitatively: that is, in their doctrinal content. In fine Mgr. Bugnini’s criticism of the readings of the Old Rite may, as Fr. Bernward Deneke acutely observes (in an unpublished manuscript), be more readily applied to the New Rite readings: for here the Word of God has been “alterata...mancante, deformata, scheletrita: altered, represented in insufficient measure, distorted, skeletalized” (La Riforma Liturgica p. 59).

By comparing respective passages of the propers, we are beginning to form a picture of the purported new catholicism which has supplanted the old, a picture which we can see in larger dimensions in the new versions of the saints’ days, and yet more so in the liturgical year itself.

Dietrich von Hildebrandt (p.69 op.cit.) writes that the figure of the saint was ‘luminously prominent in the wonderful constitution of the whole Holy Mass: ‘(not only in the Collect and Postcommunion, as is now the case) but ‘in the text of the Introit and the Gradual, in the choice of the Epistle and the Gospel.’ He cites the examples of the Feasts of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Martin, St. Agnes, St. Andrew, and above all of the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, and the Feasts of St. Peter and St. Paul.

The elimination and substitution of propers has also played down and muted the liturgical year itself: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Septuagesima, Lent, Passion week, Easter, Ascension, the anticipation of Pentecost, and Pentecost itself, not to speak of the mechanical re-iteration of the four gospels in sequence irrespective of the liturgical feasts, and the ‘catastrophic elimination of the hierarchy of Feasts, octaves, and many great Feasts of saints.’ (p.71 ibid.)

C. Mistranslations

Before moving on, we shall make certain brief comments on the translations to be found in the New Rite. We have already noted that one of the advantages of the Latin language is its universality. Once the Mass is translated, the sense of the vernacular may not correspond exactly to the sense of the original, or it may indeed be entirely different from that sense. It is the latter case that we wish to examine here, in six different examples.

1. The most blatant example is the translation of “Pro multis” in the Consecration of the Mass “fuer alle” in German, “per tutti” in Italian, and so forth. These words, which break with a 1,500-year tradition, have no precedent in any previous liturgical text[5], but rather derive from modern theological theories[6]. The Church teaches that Christ died with the intention of saving all men, but that not all men accept the fruit of His death. The new words conform to Church teaching if they are understood of Christ’s intention; they do not do so, if they are understood of the fruit of His death. The new words are infelicitous, first because they constitute a mistranslation, second because they may readily be understood in the non-Catholic sense.[7]

2. Another example is the French translation of “Consubstantialem Patri (:of one Being with the Father)” in the Creed with “de même nature que le Père (: of the same nature as the Father)” (see “La Nouvelle Messe”, Louis Salleron, ch.I.2). Here the formulation of the Council of Nicea in 325 is substituted by a phrase that is vague, and therefore open to heresy. Prof. Salleron compares the new phrase with the formulation of the Council of Constantinople in 360, which opened the doors to Arianism.

The new French version of this article of the Creed is infelicitous first because it is a mistranslation, second because it is vague and therefore open to heresy, and third, because as Cd. Journet remarks (as quoted in p. 25 of La Nouvelle Messe), it does not present “ce mot béni et si profondément traditionnel de consubstantiel (:this blessed and so profoundly traditional word consubstantial)” in an age where inter alia the dogma of the Divinity of Christ is bracketed

out. Indeed, Prof. Salleron goes further and suggests that the change represents a hatred for dogma itself[8].

3. Another significant mistranslation, or pair of mistranslations, concerns the prayer preceding Holy Communion: “Domine non sum dignus ut intres sub tectum meum, sed tantum dic verbo et sanabitur anima mea.[9]” This is translated into Italian with: “Signore non sono degno di partecipare alla tua mensa, ma dì soltanto la parola e io sarò salvato[10].”

Here the desacralization that we have already observed in the fact that this prayer is no longer repeated three times as it is in the Old Rite, is also manifest in the translations of anima as “I” or “io”, and in the distancing from the eucharistic dogma that in Holy Communion God Himself enters the soul, the inmost self of man. For in the Italian it is replaced by the idea of “a mere sharing at the same table, a simple friendship[11]”, where we observe, yet again, the movement towards a Protestant, meal-centred theology.

We add two examples taken from the Collects (from the book “Liturgia” quoted above) which are eloquent, even if less important.

4. On Monday of the first week of Lent in the Old Rite there is a mention of ieiunium: fasting; in the New Rite it becomes opus quadragesimale: lenten work; and in the translation (of 1983) it becomes impegno quadragesimale, lenten commitment. The suppression of the reference to fasting is typical of the new prayers. As Fr. Cekada notes, this corresponds to its effective abolition with the Apostolic Constitution Paenitemini of 1966.

5. On Good Friday the universal prayer for the government in the Old Rite contains the prayer for religionis integritas: integrity of religion (in other words, of the Catholic religion). In the New Rite it contains the prayer for populorum (gentium) prosperitas and religionis libertas: the prosperity of peoples and the liberty of religion. In the Italian translations of 1970, 1973, and 1983, this is translated as il progresso sociale e la libertà religiosa: social progress and religious liberty.

6. As a final example of mistranslation in the broader sense of the substitution of one term for another, we refer to ch.1 of Bianchi’s work where the author considers the substitution of the name Gesù Cristo (or Cristo Gesù) in the (faithful) Italian translation of the Old Rite, with the names Cristo or il Cristo (the Christ) in the vernacular of the New Rite. The frequency of the mention of Gesù Cristo, (or Cristo Gesù) in proportion to Cristo in the Old Rite is 2,235 : 180; in the 1970 translation of the New Rite it is 353 : 1,114.

The frequency of il Cristo in the Old Rite is 35. In the 1970 Italian translation of the New Rite it is 40; in the 1973 translation it is 220; in 1983 it is 308.

Here we note a remarkable decrease in the name Gesù Cristo in the later translations, and a remarkable increase in the name Cristo. From 1970 onwards, we note a further remarkable increase of the name il Cristo: this may take place either by substituting the term Cristo in the Italian edition (as in the 1970 version of the prayer Good Friday) with il Cristo (in the 1973 version), or by introducing the term il Cristo when there is no equivalent in the previous text. As an example on Good Friday in the New Rite *salus mundi* (: the Saviour of the world) is translated as *colui che è la salvezza del mondo* (: He Who is the salvation of the world) in 1970, and as *il Cristo Salvatore del mondo* (: The Christ, Saviour of the world) in 1973.

In such phenomena we witness a movement from a personal name of the Saviour to a less personal and more abstract name, and then to an even less personal and even more abstract name. This distancing from Our Lord Jesus Christ in the readings corresponds to the distancing from Him in His Real Presence that we have noted above. We have seen a similar tendency in the shift from the name of God the Father to that of the Dio dell'Universo.

We do not claim that all the mistranslations that there may be have the same ideological bias, but we simply wish to observe that all the above examples show a dislike for that which is proper to Catholicism: dogma; the Person of Jesus Christ; the Divinity of Jesus Christ; the limited number of the elect; and sin and mortification. They express “the general drift towards subjectivism and detachment from any fixed point of reference” (Iota Unum 280 p.618) in favour of humanist, materialistic values.

In summary then, in this second part of the essay we have seen in the general features of the Mass a process of desacralization on the one hand and of elevation of man on the other; in the Propers we have seen a corresponding tendency to eliminate the sense of God as King, as Judge, and as the executor of His Judgements on the one hand, and man's sinfulness and his need to mortify himself on the other. The six mistranslations that we have considered manifest a similar ideology. All of these changes present the faithful with a “bland and superficial religion” (Fr. Cekada). Taken as a whole, they represent an abandonment of the cult of God in favour of the cult of man[12].

Notes

[1] In addition, as Romano Amerio remarks (280 p.618): “There is certainly a tendency in modern languages to avoid organizing one's thought in a strongly synthetic structure, and to break up thoughts into a string of short statements instead. But this mode of expression also reflects a distaste for ontological or metaphysical theories of causation: a real connection between one thing and another is replaced by a mere succession of one thing after another.”

[2] “Die neue Ordnung ist ganz deutlich von Exegeten und nicht von Liturgikern gemacht.” Die Reform der roemischen Liturgie: Weitere kritische Bemerkungen zum neuen Meszordo und zur Lektionsordnung.

[3] “den meisten Glaebigen das Verstaendnis fuer derartige Bibelabschnitte fehlt...wird auch die Mehrzahl der Werktagslesungen aus dem Alten Testament in der neuen Lektionsordnung ueber die Koepfe der anwesenden Glaebigen hinweg vorgetragen...”(ibid.)

[4] in Neuer und alter Meszritus, Regensburg, 1983

[5] except for Martin Luther’s Meal Service where pro multis no longer appears (see Fr. Léon Cristiani op.cit.)

[6] see Mgr. Gamber Weitere kritische Bemerkungen zum neuen Meszordo, ch.5 of Die Reform der Roemischen Liturgie (op. cit).

[7] As Romano Amerio states in Iota Unum ch.281, p.620: “ Since...the two versions are meant to be saying the same thing, it is obvious that there would have been no reason for introducing the unwonted and unhelpful change, if the translators had not been intending to get rid of even the slightest hint of the Catholic doctrine of predestination, and to insinuate the idea of universal salvation instead.”

[8] Romano Amerio refers (in Iota Unum 282 p.623) to a detailed analysis of the “Missel Romain” in which this mistranslation appeared: Missale Romanum et Missel Romain, J. Renié, Paris 1975, and comments: “This shows how the heterodox nuances of the French version reflect the heterodox beliefs of the French bishops, 20% of whom do not accept the divinity of Christ.”

[9] “Lord, I am not worthy to receive Thee under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed”

[10] Lord, I am not worthy to share at your table, but only say the word and I shall be healed

[11] Iota Unum ch.282, p.622.

[12] see Le Balcon du Ciel by the convert from Judaism Judith Cabaud (p.144): “Jusqu’en 1970 la messe traditionnelle réchauffait et nourrissait nos ames – le nouvel ordo nous conduit à nous regarder dans un miroir comme autant de Narcisses, et nous ne pouvons plus adorer que notre propre image jusqu’à ce qu’elle nous détruise : Up until 1970 the traditional Mass warmed and nourished our souls – the new order leads us to look at ourselves in a mirror like so many Narcissi, and we are no longer able to adore anything aother than our own reflection until it destroys us.”