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*Diocese of Belleville*  
*Office of the Bishop*

June 6, 2010  
Corpus Christi

Dear Priests, Deacons, Religious, and Parish Life Coordinators,  
Dear People of God:

Peace be with you!

Prayer is the fountain that sustains the life and ministry of the followers of Jesus Christ. Public and communal prayer sustains the life and ministry of the entire Church. The Mass, the Celebration of the Eucharist is the source of the renewing waters of this fountain. From the Eucharistic Celebration flow the living waters that every Catholic needs for spiritual refreshment and nourishment. One of the great liturgical, pastoral, and catechetical achievements of the Second Vatican Council was the renewal of the Mass and the translation of the prayers of the Mass into the languages of the People of God all over the world. The English translation, which Catholics in the United States have been using in the current “Sacramentary,” has been an important vehicle for our prayer and growth in holiness for more than forty years. From the long perspective of Church history, this now familiar translation is actually something quite new. However, from the perspective of many priests and people, especially those who are young, this translation is one with which they feel very much at home. It is the only translation they have ever known.

Most of the people we serve do not know that almost immediately after the English language “Sacramentary” was published, discussions about the adequacy of the translation began to take place. Parishioners, priests, bishops, Latin language experts, Post-Conciliar commentaries and the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments raised a variety of questions:

- Is the translation faithful to the Latin? (e.g., why is “*Et cum spiritu tuo*” translated as, “and also with you,” when it really means, “and with your spirit”?)
- Has the translation lost some of the dignity and formality of the original Latin text?

- Have some fundamental expressions of faith been diminished by departing from exact meaning of the Latin original?
- Does the current translation adequately convey the sense of mystery, the sacred and the transcendent?

There emerged a debate over whether the translation of Latin prayers should be rendered in a manner that approximates the Latin as closely as possible, or should the translation be more dynamic, approximating contemporary English language expressions. During the pontificate of His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, it became clear that the Holy See favored principles of translation that would result in prayers adhering closely to the full expression of the Latin text.

In 2000, the Jubilee Year, Pope John Paul II announced the preparation for the third edition (*editio typica tertia*) of the *Missale Romanum*. Two years later in 2002, it was published in Latin. Work began immediately to translate it into English as well as the many other languages used in the Church's liturgy. The Congregation for Divine Worship made it clear from the beginning that the new translation would be more faithful to the Latin. The Bishops of the United States participated in lengthy discussions on the translation of various passages of the Mass at the committee level and at the plenary level during many meetings of our Episcopal Conference. We shared representative texts with consultative bodies such as our presbyteral councils and liturgical commissions. We were very aware that, for many of our people, the new translation would come as a surprise. We also knew that the priests in our dioceses would have a variety of opinions about any change in the translation. Working with the International Commission on English in the Liturgy and communicating directly with appropriate persons in Rome, we made sure that the Holy See was aware of the conflicting responses we were hearing from our people. I was personally actively involved in this process.

Our Conference completed its work on the Mass texts at our November 2009 meeting. The final text was submitted to the Apostolic See for review and for the needed approval (*recognitio*). On March 25, 2010, His Eminence, Antonio Cardinal Cañizares Llovera, Prefect of the Congregation, released the required letter of approval. The official date for the introduction of the new English language Roman Missal (no longer a "Sacramentary") has not yet been determined. It is very possible, however, that the date will be the First Sunday of Advent 2011. This is about a year-and-a-half from now. This gives each one of us ample time for the catechetical and spiritual formation that will be needed for the effective and positive introduction of this significant change in our own liturgical lives and in the prayer lives of all Catholics who make up the Church in southern Illinois.

There are numerous valuable resources already available for our personal use and for the formation of our parishioners. The Appendix attached to this letter provides a listing of many (though not all) of the many excellent materials that are available. While a great responsibility rests on the shoulders of us who are priests, I believe everyone who participates in the faith life of the parish will benefit from studying some of the recommended materials and reflecting on the contents of this letter. I urge you to study this Appendix carefully and make note of the resources that will be most helpful to you. Mrs. Sue Huett and the Office of Worship will offer appropriate catechetical sessions in different areas of the Diocese. A portion of the September Convocation for Priests will also be devoted to the new Missal.

We who are priests have a special devotion to and responsibility for the Roman Catholic Liturgy. Because of this, it is possible for us to think of the implementation of these changes as a

burden in our lives and ministry – one more thing that we have to do. However, rather than thinking of the preparation for the new translation as a burden to be borne, I hope we will think of it as an opportunity to be embraced. It provides us the occasion to reflect and think about what we are called to do as Celebrants of the Eucharist and as Presiders at other liturgical rites. I would like to make the following suggestions for your consideration.

1. Let us begin with prayer. Let us pray to the Holy Spirit for the gifts and the guidance we will need in making the transition to the new Missal. We might pray for patience with ourselves and with others, for flexibility, humility, a spirit of openness, and a positive attitude in the face of change.
2. Carefully reread the General Instruction on the Roman Missal, which now becomes the introductory text to the Missal itself. We should be mindful that all Masses celebrated in the Diocese are to be celebrated in accord with this Instruction. If our time allows, reread the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*). This will renew and deepen our understanding of what the Church wants us to be doing when we gather for Divine Worship. We should go to workshops or seminars provided by our Office of Worship or by other nearby dioceses.
3. We should renew our “liturgical spirituality” beginning with meditation before the Blessed Sacrament. When we priests preside at the altar table of the Lord in the name of Christ, we are not only leading public prayer, we are also praying publicly in a manner that calls the whole assembly to prayer. Each of us has developed a certain style or persona in our liturgical celebrations due to our ongoing efforts “to put on the character Christ.” At the altar we are “*alter Christus*,” another Christ. Our prayerful study and “practice” of the new texts may be an occasion to deepen or even change and improve our liturgical presence in the sanctuary. Our ordination and our day-to-day servant-leadership and ministry to our people are a source of the grace we need for our liturgical spirituality. This liturgy-centered spirituality nurtures a love and respect for the Church’s public worship. It reminds us that the Mass and the prayers of the Mass are not “ours.” Nor do they belong to “our” parish. They belong to the Church. This leads to docility to the Church which orders and oversees our life of worship. Such a spirituality makes it possible to personally appropriate the timeless meaning of the expression, “The Mass is the Source and Summit of our spiritual lives.” We do well to associate ourselves with others who see the value of a liturgical spirituality.
4. We should not wait until the last minute. We must make time to study the texts of the new translations sooner rather than later. Pray them aloud in our prayer spaces. Become familiar with new words, longer sentences, and differences in cadence and pacing. We may find that the new “orations” force us to pray them at a slower pace. We might record them and play them back for ourselves. Watching videos and listening to recordings of the new translations prepared by priests who have been working with the texts for some time could be helpful. We might consider proclaiming the prayers in our support groups. We could provide assistance to one another by offering suggestions and constructive criticisms regarding style, pacing, volume, and pronunciation. Many of us might find it helpful to celebrate the Eucharist with the new translation with a small community before the first major Sunday celebration.
5. Work with our Parish Liturgy Committee (sometimes called a Liturgy Team or Liturgy Commission). In some cases there is a Liturgy Coordinator. It is desirable for every parish to

have a Parish Liturgy Committee to provide assistance to the Pastor in fostering the liturgical life of the parish. If your parish does not have one, the advent of the new Missal would be very a good time to establish one. This committee, which need not be large, could coordinate a timetable of activities that will prepare the parish community for the new Missal. They could help select informative bulletin articles on the new translation, review materials online that might be helpful to the parish, and arrange for study groups during Advent or Lent to study the new translation while appreciating the timelessness of the Mass. The Liturgy Committee might use the months before the new Missal to support renewal efforts such as encouraging the people to gather closer to the sanctuary when they arrive for Mass, assisting lectors in the effective proclamation of the Word of God, making sure the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are properly prepared, and maintaining clean and attractive liturgical vessels and vestments.

6. Think of good liturgy as being similar to good drama. As we study the new translation, we will see that certain “theological” expressions in the new vocabulary remind us that the Celebration of the Eucharist is still the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Like good drama, the Mass seeks to involve the congregation in a deep experience of the meaning of life’s joys and sorrows in the light of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. The desired impact of the Mass is greater than the catharsis we might experience after a brilliant production of a Shakespearean tragedy. A goal of the Mass is to stimulate and sustain a deep interior religious conversion in the hearts of the priest and the faithful. In the theater the play comes to life anew each night, thanks to the genius of the actors. However, the script is fixed by the playwright and unchanging, like the unchanging prayers of the Mass. The “sacred space” of the sanctuary is not unlike a stage. Neither actors nor directors, no matter how distinguished, presume to change even one word in the script. They do not casually alter the costumes and stage decorations because they all contribute to the drama. Before the curtain rises technicians make sure the lighting and sound systems are functioning as they should. The same should be true for the “drama of the Lord.” The new translations of the Mass prayers are fixed by the Church and neither the Bishop nor the parish priests may presume to change these texts. Nor may they alter the vestments, vessels and sanctuary furnishings stipulated by the Church for this sacred drama. They all contribute to the powerful impact of the whole.
7. We must all remind ourselves that the People of God have the right to experience the liturgy as the Church wants them to experience it. If we have personal opinions and criticisms of the translation, it will not be helpful if we spread those criticisms from the pulpit and in our informal comments. This will only make the process of adjusting to the new translation more difficult for our people. Once the official date for the use of the new Missal is determined, we must all introduce it at the same time, neither early nor late. If we depart from this, the Christian faithful will be the first to express their concern to the Chancery. The Diocese will not be in a position to defend any priest, parish, or institution that does not prepare the People of God for the new translation in a timely manner and begin its use on the day determined by the Church. I ask for the complete cooperation of everyone with this important liturgical and pastoral initiative.

On the day of our ordination to the priesthood, we who are priests each solemnly promised to the Bishop who ordained us that we resolved “to celebrate faithfully and reverently, in accord with the Church’s tradition, the mysteries of Christ, especially the sacrifice of the Eucharist...for the Glory of God and the sanctification of the Christian people.” I join with every priest who has faculties to celebrate the sacraments in the Diocese of Belleville in demonstrating

that resolve by the commitment to prepare well for the use of the new English translation of the *Missale Romanum*. We will do this for our good and for the good of our people. If any priest in the Diocese has been departing from the rubrics and prayers of the Mass in the Roman Rite in the parish where you serve, the implementation of the new translation is the appropriate opportunity to begin anew by praying in union with the whole Church without departing from the rubrics or the texts. Anything to the contrary will no longer be permitted after the initiation of the new Missal. It will not be acceptable for any priest or any parish to refrain from using the new prayers due to their personal preference. I am sure that you understand that this is essential for the unity and spiritual welfare of our Catholic people, whose full, active and conscious participation in the Divine Liturgy we all seek.

The revised translation of the prayers of the Mass that we will soon be using is the most significant change in the public worship of the Catholic Church in the United States since the years immediately after the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican. It will take effect just before the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the erection of the Diocese on January 7, 2012. Let us pray anew the prayer that graces the cover of our Diocesan Directory.

“May we approach our Year of Jubilee with renewed faith. May we be blessed with an increase in vocations to the Priesthood, to the Diaconate, to the Religious Life, and to Lay Ecclesial Ministry! May we imitate the firm faith of Saint Peter, the Rock, on which Jesus Christ built His Church and the Patron Saint of our Diocese. May God grant us a renewed dedication to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. May we all love one another and all people as Christ loves us. Amen.”

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward K. Braxton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton  
Bishop of Belleville