

Understanding the new English translation of the Mass



Renowned liturgist Father Anscar Chupungco, Filipino Benedictine, helped a gathering of round 300 people in Hong Kong on November 18 to understand the the new translation of the English Mass. Speaking on the occasion, he said it was more important for the faithful to "understand what it [the new traslation] is not, as it is to understand what it is,"

Father Chupungco pointed out that the new translation has departed from the concept of vernacular, which is understood as *lingua*

ge that is self-explanatory and communicates its meaning without much explanation. However, this is not true of the new translation, which seeks to introduce concepts that do not exist in English-speaking cultures and, consequently, the words or grammatical constructions to express them do not exist either.

Father Chupungco pointed to the controversial response to the greeting, "The Lord be with you," as being a prime example. The liturgist noted that the response, "And with your spirit," makes no sense in English, as it is a concept that is non-existent in the language. However, he said that the original Latin is referring to a distinction in ancient Roman and Greek culture that differentiated between soul, body and spirit in a person, and by addressing the spirit, it was referring to what is most fundamental and noble.

However, the Diocese of Hong Kong has decided that it would be better to take a little more time to prepare the faithful for the new text in terms of catechesis, and so the faithful of Hong Kong will need to wait until December 2012 before being able to say "And with your spirit".

He spoke of other areas, which need clarification, noting that without detailed explanation they will be problematic also, but with proper catechesis can help people to gain a greater appreciation of the Mass.

He added that while the new rubric demands strict reading from the prescribed text, he is sure that God would forgive a priest for expressing something of himself within the celebration. Nevertheless, he concluded that it does introduce concepts, which if unearthed, can reveal liturgical treasures that can help to give us a deeper appreciation of the liturgy of the Mass.

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