



NEWS ARCHIVE:

## Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon

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# ***Humboldt workshop examines music ministry in light of new English translation of Missal***

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski



**Bernadett Gasslein and Rev. Geoffrey Angeles led the workshop in Humboldt.**

A detailed look at how the new translation of the Roman Missal will affect parish music ministry was presented to a receptive crowd at a “Keynotes in the New Missal” workshop Oct. 18 and 19 at St. Augustine parish in Humboldt.

Lifting up their voices in song, some 250 participants from across the Saskatoon diocese and beyond experienced first-hand how the new translation will impact sung Mass parts.

During three sessions over two days, the workshop presenters also explored the purpose and meaning of liturgy, gave an overview of the new translation of the missal to be introduced in Advent 2011, and examined the role of music ministry in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Composer, musician and parish priest Rev. Geoffrey Angeles of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg, introduced the three new musical settings for the parts of the Mass commissioned by the Canadian Catholic Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB).

Published in a new CCCB hymnal, *Celebrate in Song*, the three different settings – one written by Angeles

himself, and the other two by John Dawson and Michel Guimont – incorporate the new prayer wording into music for the Kyrie, the Gloria, the Holy, Holy, Holy, the Memorial Acclamation, the great Amen and the Lamb of God.

Practical ways in which music ministers can implement this new music in their own communities, given the wide range of parish size, musical resources and abilities, were suggested and discussed throughout the workshop.

Bernadette Gasslein, editor of the Canadian liturgy magazine *Celebrate!*, presented the history and development of the new translation of the Mass, and introduced the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), grounding it in the liturgical renewal that began with the Second Vatican Council.

“There is a need for us to raise what I call the ‘house of liturgical renewal’ and slip the foundations under it, in such a way, that as we move forward now, with a new General Instruction of the Roman Missal and the new translation of the Roman Missal, that we will have a solid foundation on which to build liturgical renewal,” she said.

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The GIRM quotes St. Augustine, saying that “singing is for lovers,” noted Gasslein. “It presumes that there is a deep and intimate relationship between God and

God’s people, and that it is out of that relationship – in which God is working to save us, to do everything for us, to be everything for us – that our response is a response of love, it is a response of intimacy, it is a response in a context. Because not only are we loved by God, but we respond in love.”

This context of “love singing back to love” is embedded in music ministry, she said. “It’s not just about music, it’s about expressing a relationship that is already established and therefore, it says, ‘great importance should be attached to the use of singing in the Mass with new consideration for the cultures of people and the ability of each liturgical assembly.’”

The GIRM is the “Church’s official ‘how-to’ and ‘why-to’ manual for celebrating the Eucharist,” described Gasslein, noting how some long-standing liturgical debates in parishes could be resolved simply by reading the document.

The previous GIRM was published separately from the Sacramentary, and like many other instruction manuals in our lives, it could easily be misplaced or overlooked, she acknowledged. “No more excuses. We need to read it now, and to honour it, and say how do we implement it.”

The context of the new GIRM is grounded in the “growing pains” of almost 50 years since the Second Vatican Council, she noted. “But in that 50 years we also saw a time of immense society change and cultural change. The world that we knew 50 years ago, is not the world that we know today.” What we understand about liturgy may also have changed – the new translation and general instructions are an attempt to ensure there is a solid foundation and clearer understanding of the liturgy, she said.

Gasslein gave an overview of the concepts stressed in the new Roman Missal and instructions, including the notion of transcendence: “liturgy isn’t just about what we do, it is what we do together with Christ, and in fact, it is Christ’s liturgy that we join.”



The notion of continuity and tradition is crucial in the new documents, she added, and the dignity, beauty and solemnity of celebrations is stressed. An elevated “sacral” language is used throughout the document. The ministerial priesthood is emphasized, as is the notion of unity.

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“People have developed a lot of fights around liturgy, and it has been a point of contention,” she noted. “When you think of it, the Eucharist, which is our sacrament of unity, being that which divides us is really an oxymoron, a contradiction of terms. And so consequently, the church has chosen to emphasize unity.”

At the same time, the local autonomy of the diocesan bishop in making certain decisions about celebration of the liturgy, and the adaptations permitted at the level of national conferences of bishops also continue, Gasslein said, pointing out that some differences from country to country will still exist. What applies in Canada can be found in the documents and website of the CCCB, she noted.

Gasslein also examined the impact of translating the prayers of the Mass more closely from the Latin, using a principle of “formal equivalence,” which creates translation challenges, when it comes to phrasing, wording and syntax.

The challenge for presiders to become comfortable with all these new prayer texts – after decades of familiarity with the present translation – was acknowledged. “Fathers, your job is not going to be easy,” said Gasslein to the priests present at the workshop.

Similarly, congregations will need time to become familiar with new prayers and with new musical settings for the Mass parts, she said. To assist in the transition, one suggestion was for music ministers to select one new Mass setting and use it for the next year, and minimize all other changes – such as introducing other new hymns – for the next while, as the new translation is implemented.

Gasslein noted that memory and music are intimately connected, and that it may actually be counterproductive to use a familiar tune that has been reworked with the new words for certain Mass prayers such as the Gloria or the Holy, Holy, Holy – since it is then much easier to slip back to the old translation. “Music is a memory device, it will take you to the old text,” she said, suggesting it might be best to simply introduce one of the entirely new settings.

In the second session of the workshop, Gasslein explored the theological foundations of liturgy itself, describing how “it all starts with baptism.

Baptism enables us to offer sacrifice with Christ and to “pray for the needs of the world in and through and with Christ,” she described, citing the “royal priesthood” of the faithful.

“We are incorporated into a body,” she said of baptism, adding that this requires that we develop an “ecclesial spirituality” that involves trying to “think with the Church.” This is not always easy in a culture that values independence more than inter-dependence, she said.

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Through baptism we are brought into communion with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – that communion or “dance” of love and relationship that we call the Trinity, she added. Liturgy is all about praying with Jesus, as members of his body, in unity with the Holy Spirit, offering prayers to God the Father.

It is the role of music ministry to assist in enabling those present to participate in the action of Christ. “That’s pretty awesome work” and it goes beyond choosing hymns, she said. “You are ministers of communion.”

Using video, examples and discussion, Angeles described elements of ritual and liturgy, and discussed practical ways in which these elements can be enabled and deepened through the music ministry, through silence and in processions, in drawing together the assembly, and expressing the prayers.

“Sometimes our theology, our doctrine, is so perfectly explained through music,” he said, after the assembly sang together one powerful hymn.

Gasslein, agreed, noting “our hymn texts catechize us.” She also noted the benefit of using hymns and settings selected and screened by the bishops in such CCCB hymnals as the Catholic Book of Worship series.

Other information presented during the conference included the Canadian adaptations related to posture, which will include kneeling during the consecration, from the Holy, Holy, Holy to the Memorial Acclamation.

“Psalmody” and the role of psalms as the original music of the Judaeo-Christian tradition was examined in the conference’s final session.

“It has been wonderful and very energizing to see such a tremendous response to this workshop,” said organizer Marie-Louise Ternier-Gommers, pastoral associate at St. Augustine in Humboldt. Even though the event had to be held in the middle of the week because of the speakers’ availability, there is obviously a strong desire for resources and training, she said, reporting attendance from across the province, with one participant even coming from Le Pas, Manitoba.

Many positive comments came from participants. “This has truly helped me understand my role as choir director,” said one. “Singing the new versions together was an amazing experience! The presenters were outstanding and made us look deeply at what we sing and why.”

Another described the workshop as extremely helpful. “I go away with a much better understanding and gained much to enhance our parish music ministry.”

“This conference gave me a lot more knowledge and confidence and I now look forward to the changes,” said another. “This conference has answered a lot of questions and alleviated anxiety.”