

Diocesan Study Days: "Falling in Love with Our Liturgy"

BY KIPLY LUKAN YAWORSKI

For two days in October, parish representatives, diocesan ministry leaders and school chaplains from across the diocese gathered together to explore liturgy in light of the Advent launch of a new English translation of the Roman Missal.

The theme of diocesan Study Days 2011 was "Falling in Love with Our Liturgy," and as with any relationship of love, the dimensions to be explored were varied and complex, passionate and profound.

Introduced by Master of Ceremonies Michael MacLean of the St. Thomas More College campus ministry team, several facilitators tackled different aspects of the liturgy, of the new English translation of the prayers of the Mass, and of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) that provides the "how to" behind celebration of the Eucharist.

Reflections on liturgy

Fr. Darryl Millette, pastor at Watson, Englefeld and St. Gregor, and Jason Cody, a teacher chaplain with Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools, launched the Oct. 26-27 Study Days at St. Patrick Parish Centre with a wide-ranging look at "The Mass and Conversion."

With personal examples, video clips and reflections on parts of the Mass, Millette and Cody explored the connection and the interaction of the celebration of Eucharist to day-to-day life – touching on everything from family meals to Rider games, from images in the Hubble telescope to Mary as our model of discipleship.

"The words of the liturgy are not just information," said Cody. Rather, like scripture, our liturgy is "meant to make us feel and think differently," to transform us and send us forth.

The celebration of Eucharist draws us in, forms us as one body, and sends us out, said Millette. "Liturgy is the heart beat of faith."

Blake Sittler, director of pastoral services, Kathy Hitchings of the diocesan Lay Formation team and Bishop Donald Bolen together gave a reflection on providing a pastoral response to concerns about the language of the new English translation of the Missal.

"The Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith. It's in the marrow of our bones, at the heart of our life. To make changes in this is going to be a bit of heart surgery for each of us," said Hitchings.

She also spoke candidly about the pain that some will feel about language that is not always inclusive or ecumenical. "We are always invited not to push the suffering



Jason Cody relates the Eucharist to every day life during a presentation about the new Roman Missal Oct. 16-27 during diocesan Study Days.

away. We have to apply principles of love and compassion to those for whom this will be difficult," she said.

The bishop encouraged a heart of dialogue, patience and understanding that recognizes there are different views about the new translation. Bolen asked pastoral leaders to put every discussion "into the larger context of the paschal mystery and what we're about as Church," in communicating the abounding depth, breadth and height of God's love.

Praying with one's body

Mona Goodman, Lay Formation program coordinator; Fr. Michael Koch, the diocesan director of Christian Initiation; and the bishop then explored the background and meaning of non-verbal gestures, postures and movements in the liturgy – walking in procession, standing, kneeling, sitting, lying prostrate, bowing, genuflecting, the liturgical kiss, praying with folded and with open hands, striking the breast, giving a sign of peace, and making the sign of the cross.

"Our Eucharistic liturgy, our Mass, is extremely rich with gestures, postures and movements," said Koch, testifying to the power of non-verbal communication. "When we do these movements with great reverence, it communicates a dimension of the divine mercy."

Full and active participation in the liturgy involves using "our whole being, hearts, minds, voices, as well as bodies," said Goodman, reflecting on how posture expresses our internal attitude and also helps to form it. "We pray with our whole person."

The bishop then "walked through" the Mass without words, using only the gestures of the celebration – which provided a profound expression of the action of liturgy.

"Language falls short in terms of expressing our relationship with God," said Bolen, describing the importance of gesture. "When we come before the living God we are coming before a God who draws intimately near to us in the incarnation in Christ, but we are also in the presence of God who is always transcendent, beyond us, beyond our understanding."

Kneeling at consecration

The bishop also provided more information about the GIRM direction to kneel at the consecration.

In light of communication between the Congregation of Divine Worship in Rome and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB), what is being recommended is that the faithful be asked to kneel starting from the "Epiclesis" – the calling down of the Holy Spirit upon the gifts – which occurs a short time after the "Sanctus" or Holy, Holy, Holy.

All those physically able to kneel would be asked to continue kneeling through the

words of consecration, until the "Mystery of Faith" or Memorial Acclamation, when they would again stand.

Those who are physically unable to kneel, would be asked to sit during this portion of the prayer. All are asked to make a "profound bow" as the priest genuflects after holding up the consecrated host, and again as the priest genuflects after holding up the consecrated cup, said Bolen.

The GIRM gives permission to dioceses with a "long standing tradition" of kneeling throughout the entire Eucharistic prayer to continue that practice. However, that has not been the tradition in this diocese, Bolen noted.

All the dioceses in Saskatchewan will adopt the same practice regarding kneeling.

Eucharistic prayers

Facilitators Sr. Teresita Kambeitz, OSU, Fr. Matthew Ramsay, associate pastor at St. Philip Neri parish in Saskatoon, and Fr. Geoffrey Young, associate pastor at Holy Spirit parish, reflected on the language of the Eucharistic prayers in the new English translation.

Ramsay and Young explained the meaning of each section of the Eucharistic prayer, taking a deeper look at what the language is expressing and how. Both noted the beauty of the new translation, examining portions of the prayers which feature concrete images, stronger scriptural connections and a more elevated, transcendent language.

"It isn't just about the here and now, there's a spiritual reality," beyond time and space, Ramsay said. The liturgy is "stepping out of this time and into God's reality."

The importance of continuity in the Catholic tradition was stressed by Young. "In every age, Christ and the liturgy is celebrated in a unique way – but it's the same celebration of the Mass." He reflected how these are the prayers that saints in every generation have prayed, describing the liturgy of the church and the scriptures as "gift, a total gift," that connects us to the eternal, heavenly liturgy.

Musical settings

In another Study Days session, Fr. David Tumback, pastor of Holy Family parish in Saskatoon and director of the diocesan Liturgy Commission, reflected on the impact of the new translation on musical settings for the Mass.

Along with Ken Neitz of the diocesan choir, Tumback presented one setting as an example, but stressed that the diocese was not directing parishes to choose a particular setting, but is leaving the decision up to the local communities.

"Parishes – and even different choirs within a parish – will each have their own unique flavour," Tumback said, expressing appreciation for the pastoral leadership being shown across the diocese. "Most parishes have already made decisions with

Changes to the words of the Mass are now in place throughout the world for English-speaking Catholics as of the First Sunday of Advent.

Features of note:

- A more direct translation from the original Latin
- General instructions for the new missal emphasize transcendence, beauty, unity and silence
- The assembly will be asked to kneel from the "Epiclesis" after the Holy, Holy, Holy to the "Mystery of Faith."



Fr. David Tumback and Ken Neitz gave a presentation about music in the liturgy.

regard to Mass settings: which includes everything from a single guitar player in a community to full choirs."

A final Study Days session examined practical challenges around the implementation of the new Roman Missal and the GIRM, led by Fr. Marvin Lishchynsky, priest moderator at St. John Bosco parish, and Diane Côté, executive secretary of the Diocesan Pastoral Council.

During the two-day event, copies of the new Roman Missal were delivered to parishes by Gerry Holst of Universal Church Supplies.

"It is a beautiful book," said Bolen of the new volume produced by the CCCB. Participants also had a chance to look through several old editions of the Missal from St. Peter's Abbey, on display courtesy of Abbot Peter Novocosky.

Study Days also included a celebration of the Eucharist, using the new translation and following the new instructions about posture.

The assembly occasionally missed a new response – for instance, slipping back into saying "And also with you" rather than "And with your spirit" – proving that even with much reflection, the habits of 40 years are strongly ingrained.

In his homily, the bishop again urged pastoral leaders to keep at the centre of everything the great love of God that is precisely what the celebration of the Eucharist is about.

"This is what these Eucharistic prayers are proclaiming, this is the faith that they are shouting in every phrase, in every structure and part," Bolen said. "Nothing can separate us from the love of God made known in Jesus. Let us proclaim and rejoice in, and live out of that love. Don't let any smaller controversy side-track you from that good news at the heart of our faith."



Fr. Andrew Wychucki, pastor at Wilkie, Leipzig and Handel, (left) and Fr. Pius Schroh, pastor at Rosetown, Elrose and Beechy, were among those taking delivery of the new Roman Missal during diocesan Study Days.