

Personal Notes
0140 Missal Christmas Midnight Mass (111225)
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Raymond J. Jirran, Ph.D.

Roman Missal¹

I. Introduction

Were Pope Benedict XVI serious when he spoke to the New York bishops, “that this new translation of the Roman Missal will inspire an ongoing catechesis,”² he would not have forced the 2011 illiterate Missal upon the Faithful in the United States of America. The revised prayers, below, are my translation of the Bible-babble in the Missal into standard American English as heard on EWTN (Eternal Word Television Network), the Weather Channel, and the evening news.

II. Prayer before reading Sacred Scripture (Collect)³

A. Missal: O God, who have made this most sacred night radiant with the splendor of the true light, grant, we pray, that we, who have known the mysteries of his light on earth, may also delight in his gladness in heaven. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever [*forever* is one word] and ever.

B. Italian Latin:⁴ Deus, qui hanc sacratissimam noctem veri lúminis fecisti illustratióne claréscere, da, quaesumus, ut, cuius in terra mystéria

¹ n.a., The Roman Missal: Renewed by Decree of the Most Holy Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Promulgated by Authority of Pope Paul VI and Revised at the Direction of Pope John Paul II: English Translation According to the Third Typical Edition: For Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America: Approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Confirmed by the Apostolic See (Washington, DC, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011) 216-219.

² Benedict XVI, “Benedict XVI to the Bishops of the United States on their ‘ad limina’ visit: Evangelization and conversion priorities of the Church,” L’Osservatore Romano: Weekly Edition in English, Vol. 44, No. 48 (Wednesday, 30 November 2011) page 3, column 4.

³ *Collect* is the technical term for this prayer.

⁴ The English Missal translates this Latin Missale. I name the Missale *Italian Latin*, because of the accent marks, which do not appear elsewhere. Pagina 155 at <http://www.clerus.org/bibliaclerusonline/en/exw.htm#bsr> The Holy See, Congregation for the Clergy runs this website. (accessed December 6, 2011).

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lucis agnóvimus, eius quoque gáudiis perfruámur in caelo. Qui tecum.

C. Revised: **O God, you have made this sacred night radiant with the splendor of heavenly light. Grant that we accept the mysteries of the light of the Baby Jesus on earth and enjoy his light in heaven. The Baby Jesus, God, your Son, now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit forever as one God.**

D. Comment: The Missal Collect has an 11.4 Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Readability. The revised Collect has a 7.6 Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Readability. Readability is a test of how well-written the prayers are.

The argument that the English is to stay close to the Latin does not hold up. The English has *O God*. The Latin has only *Deus*, without the *O*. *O* is a Latin word.⁵

O God, who have lacks subject-verb agreement. The subject, *O God*, is singular and monotheistic. The verb, *have made*, is plural. The Little, Brown Handbook handles so-called *Black English vernacular* or *Ebonics* delicately as “non-standard.”⁶

If your first language or dialect is not standard American English, subject-verb agreement may be problematic, especially for these reasons: Some English dialects follow different rules for subject-verb agreement, such as omitting the –s ending for singular verbs or using the –s ending for plural verbs.

O God and *we pray* are two interjections in one forty-two word sentence. Some advice from The Little, Brown Handbook on wordiness, “Don’t try to cram too much into your introduction. Focus on engaging the audience and quickly previewing your talk.”⁷

⁵ Cassell’s Latin Dictionary: Latin-English and English-Latin, revised by J. R. V. Marchant, M.A. and Joseph F. Charles, B.A. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1952) 371.

⁶ H. Ramsey Fowler and Jane E. Aaron, Eleventh Edition: The Little, Brown Handbook (New York: Longman, 2010) 302.

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There is no corresponding noun for the pronoun at *his light on earth* and *his gladness in heaven*. If the English *his* refers to the light of *O God*, as the Latin may imply, then, the appropriate pronoun would be in the second (*your*), rather than the third (*his*) person. The revision provides that noun with *the Baby Jesus*. The Little, Brown Handbook has a whole section “19. Pronoun Reference,” with the following admonition. “A pronoun . . . derives its meaning from its antecedent, the noun it substitutes for. Therefore, a pronoun must refer clearly and unmistakably to its antecedent in order for the meaning to be clear.”⁸

There is nothing to correspond to *also delight*. *Also* is a conjunctive adverb. The Little, Brown Handbook explains, “. . . called a conjunctive adverb, [*also*] relates only main clauses, not words, phrases, or subordinate clauses.”⁹

As written *Who lives . . .* is a question, rather than a declarative statement. The sense of *who lives . . .* refers back to *his*. The revision, therefore, refers to *the Baby Jesus*.

At the end of the prayer, *the unity* is confusing. A dictionary definition for the word *the*: “1 c:-- used as a function word to indicate that a following noun or noun equivalent refers to someone or something that is unique or is thought of as unique or exists as only one at a time <the Lord><the Messiah>”¹⁰ *Unity* is a noun meaning “1a: the quality of stage of being or consisting of one.”¹¹ Because the Faithful have not challenged *the unity* since Vatican II, the now traditional silly (*unique unity*) phraseology remains.

⁷ H. Ramsey Fowler and Jane E. Aaron, Eleventh Edition: The Little, Brown Handbook (New York: Longman, 2010) 859.

⁸ H. Ramsey Fowler and Jane E. Aaron, Eleventh Edition: The Little, Brown Handbook (New York: Longman, 2010) 345.

⁹ H. Ramsey Fowler and Jane E. Aaron, Eleventh Edition: The Little, Brown Handbook (New York: Longman, 2010) 258.

¹⁰ <http://unabridged.merriam-webster.com/cgi-bin/unabridged?va=the&x=0&y=0> (accessed December 4, 2011).

¹¹ <http://unabridged.merriam-webster.com/cgi-bin/unabridged?va=unity&x=0&y=0> (assessed December 4, 2011).

III. Prayer after Communion

- A. Missal: Grant us, we pray, O Lord our God, that we, who are gladdened by participation in the feast of our Redeemer's Nativity, may through an honorable way of life become worthy of union with him. Who lives and reigns for ever [forever is one word] and ever.
- B. Italian Latin:¹² Da nobis, quaesumus, Dómine Deus noster, ut, qui nativitátem Redemptóris nostri frequentáre gaudémus, dignis conversatió nibus ad eius mereámur perveníre consórtium. Qui vivit et regnat in saecula saeculórum.
- C. Revised: **O Lord, our God, the Christian world celebrates the feast of the birthday of our Redeemer. Grant all of us the grace to live honorable lives, worthy to share a place with the Baby Jesus. Jesus lives and reigns forever, in an age without end.**

D. Comment: The Missal Prayer after Communion has a 10.2 Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Readability. The revised Prayer after Communion has a 6.3 Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Readability.

The Missal presents a fused sentence.¹³ By placing the verb, *grant*, first, the Missal does not follow either Latin (subject-object-verb)¹⁴ or standard American English (subject-verb-object).

¹² The English Missal translates this Latin Missale. I name the Missale *Italian Latin*, because of the accent marks, which do not appear elsewhere. Pagina 157 at <http://www.clerus.org/bibliaclerusonline/en/exw.htm#bsr> The Holy See, Congregation for the Clergy runs this website. (accessed December 6, 2011).

¹³ See Chapter 18, "Comma Splices, Fused Sentences," H. Ramsey Fowler and Jane E. Aaron, Eleventh Edition: The Little, Brown Handbook (New York: Longman, 2010) 339-444.

¹⁴

<http://www.google.com/search?q=Does+the+verb+come+last+in+Latin+word+o+order%3F&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a#hl=en&client=firefox-a&hs=IXc&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&sa=X&ei=iKzVTogRPKLx0gHWxdDrAQ&ved=0CBkQvwUoAQ&q=Does+the>

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The Little, Brown Handbook has a "using appositives" subsection.¹⁵

When an appositive is not essential to the meaning of the word it refers to, it *is* set off with punctuation, usually a comma or commas [as is the case here, *O Lord, our God,*] . . .

An excess of first person pronouns, *us, we, our,* renders this thirty-seven word sentence wordy. (See above.)

In Latin, *frequentāre gaudēmus* connotes celebration in large numbers.¹⁶

In Latin, *conversatiōnibus* connotes *frequent use, a frequent sojourn in a place, intercourse, conversation.*¹⁷ In Latin, *consōrtium* connotes *fellowship.*¹⁸

In Latin, *saecula* refers to *an age, the human race living at any particular generation, the age, the times.*¹⁹

Who lives and reigns . . . see above.

IV. Blessings²⁰

[+verb+come+last+in+Latin+word+order%3F&spell=1&bav=on.2,or.r_gc.r_pw.,cf.osb&fp=c5f9ab36cd8b91fa&biw=1472&bih=754](#) (accessed November 30, 2011)

¹⁵ H. Ramsey Fowler and Jane E. Aaron, Eleventh Edition: The Little, Brown Handbook (New York: Longman, 2010) 254-255.

¹⁶ Cassell's Latin Dictionary: Latin-English and English-Latin, revised by J. R. V. Marchant, M.A. and Joseph F. Charles, B.A. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1952) 232.

¹⁷ Cassell's Latin Dictionary: Latin-English and English-Latin, revised by J. R. V. Marchant, M.A. and Joseph F. Charles, B.A. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1952) 136.

¹⁸ Cassell's Latin Dictionary: Latin-English and English-Latin, revised by J. R. V. Marchant, M.A. and Joseph F. Charles, B.A. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1952) 128.

¹⁹ Cassell's Latin Dictionary: Latin-English and English-Latin, revised by J. R. V. Marchant, M.A. and Joseph F. Charles, B.A. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1952) 496-497.

²⁰ The full heading is: **Blessings at the End of Mass and Prayers over the People**

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A. Missal: May the God of infinite goodness, who by the Incarnation of his Son has driven darkness from the world and by that glorious Birth has illumined this most holy night (day), drive far from you the darkness of vice and illumine your hearts with the light of virtue.
R.²¹ Amen.

B. Italian Latin:²² Deus infinitae bonitatis, qui incarnatione Filii sui mundi tenebras effugavit, et eius gloriosa nativitate hanc noctem (diem) sacratissimam irradiavit, effuget a vobis tenebras vitiórum, et irradiet corda vestra luce virtutum.
R. Amen.

C. Revised: **Almighty God, the person of the Baby Jesus is infinitely good.**

The person of the Baby Jesus incorporates spiritual insight that comes from the Incarnation. Because he is both divine and human, the Baby Jesus illumines this glorious night (day).

May almighty God, therefore, repel the darkness of sin and illumine your hearts with the light of virtue.

R. Amen

D. Comment: The Missal Blessing has a 19.9 Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Readability. The revised Blessing has a 9.5 Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Readability.

Solemn Blessings

I. For Celebrations in the Different Liturgical Times

1. Advent

²¹ The Missal uses the red. The Italian Latin does not.

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In Latin, *vitiórum* refers to *habitual sins*. In English, *vice* is external, *sin* is internal. The revision, therefore, in the spirit of the Latin, would use *habitual sin*. The problem is that standard American oral English does not use *habitual sin* in that way. In the United States, *habitual sin* connotes mental illness, rather than a conscious act of the will, required for sin.

V. ICEL

Whether to include or exclude the 1998 ICEL translation is difficult. The reason to include ICEL is this is the best the American bishops could do, before the Vatican rejected the translation. The ICEL translation also deals with some of the vocabulary and grammatical problems with which the revisions deal. The reason to exclude ICEL is that the ICEL translation is not significantly better than the Missal.

- Prayer before reading Sacred Scripture (Collect)²³**
- ICEL:²⁴ God our Creator, who made this most holy night radiant with the splendour of the one true light, grant in your mercy that, as we celebrate on earth the mystery of that light, we may also rejoice in its fullness in heaven. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.
- Prayer after Communion**
- ICEL:²⁵ Lord our God, we celebrate with joy the birth of our Redeemer. Grant that through worthy and holy lives we may be welcomed into

²³ *Collect* is the technical term for this prayer.

²⁴ International Commission on English in the Liturgy: A Joint Commission of Catholics Bishops' Conferences, The Sacramentary: Volume One—Sundays and Feasts (Washington, D.C.: International Commission on English in the Liturgy, 1998), page 196, downloaded from https://rs895dt.rapidshare.com/#!/download|895|35|387089704|ICEL_Sacramentary_1998.zip|6767|R~00A3D4012C6FE19956DB84F71E5405F6|0|0 at http://misguidedmissal.com/wp/?page_id=23 (accessed December 8, 2011).

²⁵ International Commission on English in the Liturgy: A Joint Commission of Catholics Bishops' Conferences, The Sacramentary: Volume One—Sundays and Feasts (Washington, D.C.: International Commission on English in the Liturgy, 1998), page 187, downloaded from https://rs895dt.rapidshare.com/#!/download|895|35|387089704|ICEL_Sacramentary_1998.zip|6767|R~00A3D4012C6FE19956DB84F71E5405F6|0|0

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his glorious company for ever. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Blessing at the End of Mass

ICEL:²⁶

May the God of infinite goodness banish the darkness of sin from your hearts and make them radiant with the light of goodness.
R. Amen.

The respective ICEL Collect, Prayer after Communion, and Blessing have 13.7, 5.8, and 5.3 Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Readabilities.

[98 .zip|6767|R~00A3D4012C6FE19956DB84F71E5405F6|0|0](http://misguidedmissal.com/wp/?page_id=23) at
http://misguidedmissal.com/wp/?page_id=23 (accessed December 8, 2011).

²⁶ International Commission on English in the Liturgy: A Joint Commission of Catholics Bishops' Conferences, The Sacramentary: Volume One—Sundays and Feasts (Washington, D.C.: International Commission on English in the Liturgy, 1998), page 798, downloaded from
[https://rs895dt.rapidshare.com/#!download|895|35|387089704|ICEL_Sacramentary_1998 .zip|6767|R~00A3D4012C6FE19956DB84F71E5405F6|0|0](https://rs895dt.rapidshare.com/#!download|895|35|387089704|ICEL_Sacramentary_1998.zip|6767|R~00A3D4012C6FE19956DB84F71E5405F6|0|0) at
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O God, you have made this sacred night radiant with the splendor of heavenly light. Grant that we accept the mysteries of the light of the Baby Jesus on earth and enjoy his light in heaven. The Baby Jesus, God, your Son, now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit forever as one God.

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R. Amen