NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Vatican lifts suspension of priest who altered prayers at Mass

Tim Townsend St. Louis Post-Dispatch | Sep. 27, 2012

An Illinois priest who was forced out of his parish by his bishop for improvising prayers during Mass has had his suspension reversed by the Vatican.

The Vatican decided in favor of Fr. William Rowe on one of three counts, saying Bishop Edward Braxton of Belleville, Ill., had not followed the proper procedure.

The Vatican's reversal means he can celebrate Mass in another diocese, Rowe said, as long as he has the local bishop's approval. Others, however, disputed that interpretation of the decree.

In a letter that accompanied the document, Msgr. Antonio Neri, an undersecretary of the Vatican's Congregation for the Clergy, said Rowe could only return to celebrating Mass "when you shall have acknowledged your error and formally promise to dispose yourself to adhere to the rights and rubrics of the sacred liturgy set down by the lawful ecclesiastical authorities."

The Vatican sided with the bishop on two counts: upholding his removal from the parish, and agreeing with the bishop's withdrawal of the priest's "faculties" -- or his license to practice ministry under church law.

Rowe, 73, clashed with Braxton over altering the liturgical prayers of the Roman Missal -- the book of approved prayers, chants and responses used during Mass.

The "liturgical texts themselves are not only a rich source of spiritual nourishment for the faithful but ... they express the Communion of the church in a profound manner," wrote Cardinal Mauro Piacenza, the prefect for the Congregation for the Clergy, in the decree.

"Any departure from these liturgical norms and the approved liturgical texts constitutes an injury to ... the life of the Church."

Braxton did not respond to a request for comment.

In the decree, Piacenza referenced Pope John Paul II's 2003 encyclical, "Ecclesia de Eucharistia," in which the late pope cited the apostle Paul, who "had to address fiery words to the community of Corinth because of grave shortcomings in their celebration of the Eucharist."

The ruling can be appealed to the Vatican's supreme court, and Braxton indicated in a letter that he would appeal the reversal of Rowe's suspension, Rowe said. Rowe said he would not appeal the rulings against him.

[Tim Townsend writes for *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*.]

Source URL (retrieved on *12/19/2013 - 11:08*): http://ncronline.org/news/people/vatican-lifts-suspension-priest-who-altered-prayers-mass