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# German bishops table new Mass translation

Thomas Reese | Oct. 3, 2013 NCR Today

The German bishops have tabled a controversial new translation of the Mass that had been a bone of contention between them and the Vatican under the papacies of John Paul II and Benedict XVI, according to the liturgical website Pray Tell [1].*

The new German translation was done according to the norms set by the 2001 Vatican document *Liturgiam authenticam* [2], the same document that guided the English translation currently used in the United States.

The president of the liturgy commission, Cardinal Joachim Meisner (Cologne), presented the concluding report of the episcopal commission *Ecclesia celebrans*. Like its English equivalent *Vox Clara*, *Ecclesia celebrans* was created by the Congregation for Divine Worship in 2004 to devise a more literal translation of the Latin missal.

The report said, "In comparison to the current German-language missal, whose high textual quality stands without question, the translation of the commission is marked by a style that can be designated as tighter, more sober and concentrated." The report said the translators fulfilled their task "in accord with their understanding of the Latin text and their sense of the German language" but noted the negative reactions to the translation from Swiss, Austrian and German bishops.

The report notes that the bishops' permanent council advised in June against making a decision of approval at this fall plenary session. "At the present time there is no further information on the timeframe." In other words, the translation is dead unless the German-speaking bishops' conferences want to bring it up again.

The dispute over the German translation had been festering for years. In 2010, the president of the German Bishops' Conference, Archbishop Robert Zollitsch, said the current text was adequate for the Roman requirements for an authentic translation of the Latin text. He said he saw no need for a new translation.

For example, the bishops opposed changing the words of consecration from "for all" to "for many." Like the International Commission on English in the Liturgy, the Germans had been working on a better translation in the 1990s, but the English and German translations were put aside when the Vatican insisted on more literal translations.

While many English-speaking liturgist had the same objections to the new English translation as did the German bishops, Bishop Donald Trautman [3]of Erie, Pa., was often a lonely voice of opposition among the American bishops. Conference presidents like Cardinal Francis George of Chicago strongly supported the new translation.

If the American bishops, like the Germans, had objected and moved more slowly, the new translation could have been prevented.

**An earlier version of this story incorrectly listed when the new Mass translation was supposed to take effect.*

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