

Study finds split on new translation of Roman Missal

Colleen Dunne | Nov. 19, 2013

Clergy and lay leaders are skeptical of the newly translated Roman Missal, according to a recent study commissioned by the Diekmann Center for Patristics and Liturgical Studies at St. John's School of Theology.

Preliminary results, released Nov. 8 on the popular liturgy blog praytellig.com, indicate the missal translation has not received widespread acceptance among lay and clergy church employees. The study, conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), used questions developed by the Diekmann Center in Collegeville, Minn. CARA gave the Diekmann Center permission to release preliminary results of the study.

"Hard research shows that many priests don't like the new missal, and don't respect church officials who ran the process," Benedictine Fr. Anthony Ruff, a professor of theology at St. John's, said in an email to *NCR*. "That is very important information for U.S. bishops and Rome to respond to."

While the final results of the study won't be released until January, an early read of the poll shows employees are split on the new missal, with 46 percent saying they like the translation and the same percentage disliking it. Three-fourths of respondents said some language in the translation is awkward and distracting.

Fewer than half, 41 percent, said the new missal is an improvement over what was used before December 2011, while 51 percent said the new missal urgently needs to be revised. Preliminary results also showed that 23 percent of those asked agree that views of priests will be taken seriously in future decisions regarding the translation.

Forty-one percent said similar translations should take place with other rites, including marriage, confirmation, and liturgy of the hours. During their annual meeting in Baltimore Nov. 12, the U.S. bishops voted 212-5 to approve new rites for the Catholic celebration of marriage and 213-4 for a new text for confirmations.

The study's preliminary findings corroborate a non-representative survey of priests in 32 U.S. dioceses carried out by the Diekmann Center last year.

According to the blog, early results are based on responses from 250 representative parishes across the U.S., and although the final numbers will not be known until next year, this sampling is suggestive of what the final numbers might be. Along with the final results, CARA will break down the views of clergy and lay employees.

"I hope that the 'Francis effect' will mean that church leadership rethinks the translation and finds a process that is more consultative and has more buy-in from priests and people," Ruff also said.

Supporters of the study included the National Federation of Priests' Councils, the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests, the Church Music Association of America, the National Association of Pastoral Musicians, Oregon Catholic Press and Liturgical Press.

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