

German bishops abandon controversial Missal translation



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The German bishops appear to have abandoned a controversial new German translation of the Missal that was based on Liturgiam authenticam, the Congregation for Divine Worship's 2001 document that insisted on greater fidelity to the Latin original in liturgy translations.

The conference president Cardinal Reinhard Marx has called Liturgiam authenticam, a "dead end". The Missal translation that used Liturgiam authenticam has not yet been approved and after a recent initiative by Pope Francis it is unlikely ever to see the light of day.

The bishops did not mention the new Missal translation in the final report of their autumn plenary, but Cardinal Marx was questioned about it at the press conference afterwards. He said the German bishops were "hugely relieved" and very thankful that, in his recent motu proprio Magnum principium, Pope Francis had given local bishops' conferences greater responsibility concerning liturgy translations.

Marx said he had always been of the opinion that Liturgiam authenticam had taken "too narrow a view". Such attempts to follow the document in the new English translation had been "altogether excessive" in his opinion. Several English bishops had appealed to him for help and he himself had tried to pray some of the newly translated English prayers but found the language "simply unacceptable".

The cardinal said that he was very grateful to Pope Francis for giving the local bishops' conferences more freedom. "Rome is responsible for dogmatic interpretations but not for matters of style", he underlined.

While he agreed that Missal translations should be revised every 40-50 years, he did not see any hurry for a new German translation at the moment. The present 1976 translation was not “that bad”, he said, but the bishops’ conference’s liturgy commission would discuss the subject of a possible new translation at their next session.

The most controversial translation in Germany in the new Missal was one specifically requested by Pope Benedict XVI, who asked that *pro multis* be translated “for many” rather than “for all”. The new 2013 edition of the German hymn book known as the “Gotteslob”, (Praise of the Lord”), which has the Order of the Mass in it and is used in all German-speaking countries, includes the translation Benedict requested. However a special note in the more than 3 million copies recalls that, as the new translation has not been approved, only the old translation, namely “for all”, may be used.

Another translation controversial in England – namely “and with your Spirit” rather than “and also with you”, raises no debate in Germany as the Germans, like the French, always used “and with your Spirit” anyway.

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