



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



Father Timothy Horner, O.S.B. – Homily for First Sunday of Advent, 28 Nov 10

A good homily has one main point, makes it eloquently, and has all the other points fit gracefully into the main point. This is not going to be a good homily. There are two topics that cry out to be discussed today and I see no way of linking them gracefully.

Today is the first Sunday of Advent, The Church's liturgical New Year, and that must be addressed, and it is also the inverted first anniversary of the expected date of the introduction of the new text of the Mass, set currently for the First Sunday of Advent 2011. We have a year to prepare ourselves. I shall take this second topic first.

Two weekends ago there was a workshop in Saint Louis on this new translation. I quote substantially from it. The main point that came across to me was that it would be much more fruitful to see this as an opportunity to learn more about the text of the Mass and its deep significance, and of imbibing more and more of our Catholic culture, rather than as an occasion to focus on the translation itself, especially if the latter meant focusing on the inelegancies of the translation.

Here's how they put it: If I ask you 6 – 4 – 3, what does that mean to you? If you are part of the baseball culture you will answer immediately 'it's the description of the commonest form of D P: shortstop – 2nd base – Pujols.' How do you become part of that baseball culture? By attending ballgames, listening to broadcast commentators, reading the sports pages, and talking with one another about it.

If I ask you why are Abel, Abraham and Melchisedek mentioned in the first Eucharistic prayer, how would you answer? Just take Abel. He became a shepherd and kept flocks. A shepherd, a pastor, someone who feeds us. Oh yes, just as God fed Israel with manna in the desert, and Jesus feeds us with his body and blood, as he will in a few minutes. The changes in the new translation aim to choose words that bring out those allusions and remind us that they are part of our Catholic culture. How do we imbibe our Catholic



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culture? Very much as we imbibe the baseball culture. By coming to Mass, by attending to the readings and the prayers, and to the homilies, by reading and studying the Bible, by talking with one another about these things. The Latin text of the Mass is so rich, and the new trans. aims to bring out that richness. One other example: we shall be saying ‘The Lord be with you; And with your spirit.’ WHY? To remind us of what spirit means in the Catholic culture. It is a word of many meanings. At the beginning of Genesis the Spirit brooded over the formless waters; the Spirit overshadowed the Virgin Mary; St Paul asks the Corinthians ‘Don’t you know you are temples of the Holy Spirit?’ And if each of us is, such a temple, so is everyone else here. The new translation can serve to remind us of that, but it will do so only if we have prepared ahead of time. Many of the changes in the new translation are intended to serve us as reminders of the wealth of meaning contained in them, just as 6-4-3 might serve to remind us not only of a DP but also of Ozzie Smith or Marty Marion.

We have a year to prepare. Then perhaps we shall more fully understand that to be bored at Mass really says nothing about the Mass but much about us., about the intensity of our listening and the depth of our Catholic culture. I googled *A new translation for a new Roman Missal* – 70,000 results. I took #3 USCCB Roman Missal: examples. But there are 69,999 other possibilities. *Roman Missal new translation* will produce 214,000 results, so use that if you prefer a wider choice. The church is offering us a great opportunity for renewal and growth.

Now we can turn to our other topic: Advent, the approach of Jesus and his Birth at Christmas. Expectancy.

I think the best homily I have heard about this was at our 5 pm Mass on Christmas Eve in this church. I was celebrating the Mass but it was not my homily. It was very brief and it left out one topic which should occupy our thoughts at this time: the second coming of



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Jesus, so you must add that in. At that Mass each year, at homily time, the smallest children come out into the sanctuary and sit on little pads to listen. I asked them ‘Where is Jesus?’ and a small boy pointed to the crib, which was at the edge of the sanctuary; ‘Very good: the Word made flesh. And where else?’ He pointed upward. ‘In Heaven, Jesus is Lord; very good. And where else?’ He then he drew himself up to his full two-foot-six, and with a grand gesture swept his hand over to his heart, and said ‘HERE’.