

Mirabilia Dei: Style and Translation in the Prefaces of the Missale Romanum

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Liturgiam authenticam, the Vatican's new instruction on liturgical translation, indicates a sea change in official attitudes toward the typical editions of liturgical books. According to *Liturgiam authenticam*, the Latin texts set the standard not only for the theological content of vernacular translations, but also for their literary quality.¹ This represents a significant departure from the previous instruction, issued in 1969.² Liturgists in those days, following a new fashion in biblical translation, thought they could distinguish the universal message of the liturgical text from its linguistically variable form.³ Translators could be more or less indifferent to the style, syntax, and even vocabulary of the original, as long as they succeeded in conveying its essential ideas. *Liturgiam authenticam*, on the other hand, takes the view that literary form and theological content are, for the most part, inextricably united. This position better reflects the insights of rhetorical and literary criticism of religious texts since the 1960s.⁴ We now realize that style is not an accidental property of religious discourse, but endows it with a certain shape, resonance, and personality. It remains to be seen, however, how these insights can be related specifically to the texts of the Roman Missal. What about the style of the Latin prayers is truly meaningful, and how can this be brought over into modern languages such as English?

In the following pages we will examine the use of certain figures – particularly forms of direct, inverted, and concentric parallelism – in a few eucharistic prefaces of the current Roman Missal.⁵ We will see how these figures modify, reinforce, or indirectly express the “message” that the text conveys. We will also consider

how an English translation can more closely approximate this original relationship between form and content. In studies of this sort, of course, a subjective element is never lacking. Stylistics is often a matter of guessing the author's intention, and even of looking beyond it.⁶ Nevertheless, there is reason to hope that this approach will give the texts a chance to “speak for themselves,”⁷ and thereby contribute to the celebration of a more authentic liturgy.

The Character of the New Latin Prefaces

When modern scholars examined the “Tridentine” Missal of St. Pius V, they noted the relative paucity and limited scope of its eucharistic prefaces, in comparison with earlier Latin collections.⁸ Often enough, the surviving prefaces also failed to match the lyrical beauty and theological depth of the ancient and discarded texts, or of those still employed in the Oriental rites of the Church. The post-conciliar *instauratio* (liturgical “renewal”) provided an opportunity to correct these deficiencies. The first edition of the “Pauline” Missal in 1970 contained 81 prefaces; in the recently published third edition, the number has grown to 98. Some of the new texts were taken wholly or substantially intact from older missals. Many others, however, were either freshly composed or put together by centonization, that is, by combining lines and phrases from various sources. Perhaps no other aspect of the reform has a more original and innovative character than the new prefaces.

Innovation was not, however, the principal object of the *coetus* or study group that composed the new texts. Rather, it sought to restore the “authentic function” of the ancient prefaces, as later articulated by Ward and Johnson:

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In the moment when the personal-communal encounter with Christ takes place, the preface expresses and proclaims the faith of the Church, evoking the historical event which is actualized in mystery through the celebration, and this in an eschatological perspective, “donec veniat” [until he comes].⁹

In this formula, we notice a preoccupation with the concept of liturgical time. As the revisers poured over ancient and medieval prefaces, they found in many of them an unfortunate tendency toward historicism – an exclusive focus on what happened at some earlier point in the life of the Church. Other prefaces seemed too much caught up in ancient theological controversies.¹⁰ The eschatological dimension of worship, the future kingdom still celebrated in Oriental prefaces, was generally neglected in the West. Thus the *coetus* resolved to keep these perspectives in tension: the typical vantage point was to be that of the modern congregation giving thanks for “God’s wonderful deeds” (*mirabilia Dei*) in the past, and awaiting the glorious fulfillment of his plan in the future.¹¹

In practice, this decision resulted in a certain formal regularization of the liturgical text. First, each preface was clearly articulated into five parts: the introductory dialogue (including the *Sursum corda*), the protocol (*Vere dignum et iustum est . . .*), the embolism, which is the longest and most variable part of the preface, the eschatocol (*Et ideo, cum angelis . . .*), and the acclamation or *Sanctus*. One also discerns a fairly regular order in the embolism itself. First comes an expression of the occasion or motive for thanks, which is proper to the celebration. This is usually followed by a clause indicating God’s intention with respect to the Church and her eternal destiny. The motive of thanks is typically marked in Latin by a relative pronoun (*qui*, “who”), and the divine intention by a final clause with *ut* (so that). A simple example of this pattern is the first preface in honor of the Apostles:

1. QUI gregem tuum, Pastor aeternae, non deseris,
 2. sed per beatos Apostolos continua protectione custodis,
 3. UT iisdem rectoribus gubernetur,
 4. quos Filii tui vicarios eidem contulisti praeesse pastores.¹²
1. WHO do not abandon your flock, O eternal Shepherd,
 2. but through the blessed Apostles you guard it with your continual protection,

3. SO THAT it may be governed by the same men
4. that you have provided, as vicars of your Son, to be its shepherds.¹³

In addition to this fundamental bipartite arrangement, we also notice a tendency toward internal parallelism and antithesis. In this preface, the first two lines juxtapose the phrases *gregem . . . non deseris* and *continua protectione custodis*; the idea of God’s continual protection in line 2 reinforces the view of God as eternal Shepherd in line 1. In the next two lines, *rectoribus* corresponds to *vicarios . . . praeesse pastores*. The point seems to be that the rule of the Apostles is actually a vicarious exercise of Christ’s pastoral authority. These are examples of what we may call direct parallelism, and they help to focus on and emphasize the main themes of the prayer. The new texts also, however, show a strong tendency to center or concentrate on one or two unifying themes. As a result, the entire embolism arranges itself into a kind of inverted or concentric parallelism, which is also commonly found in the New Testament.¹⁴ Structures of this type are sometimes marked by formal devices such as end-rhyme, rhythm, and parallel syntax, but they depend primarily on our recognition of semantically related terms – “echo words,” to borrow the felicitous expression of Fr. Jeremy Driscoll.¹⁵ To return to our example, we notice that the inner elements (lines 2 and 3) refer to men who occupy an ecclesiastical office (*apostolos, rectores*); the outer elements (1 and 4) indicate their sacramental role as vicarious pastors of God’s spiritual flock (*qui gregem tuum, PASTOR aeternae, non deseris . . . quos Filii tui vicarios eidem contulisti praeesse PASTORES*). In this repetition of the pastor theme, there is also a development. Just as Christ tended his *grex* (flock) on behalf of the Father (note that the Father, not the Son, is addressed here as *Pastor aeternae* or eternal Pastor), so the Apostles act in Jesus’ place as good shepherds of the Church. Likewise, there is a shift in our understanding of the apostolic office. In line 2, we suppose that God protects the Church merely through the intercession of the twelve Apostles, who are commemorated in this Mass. In the third line, however, mention of their rule and government of the Church suggests the authority they continue to exercise through their successors, who are also vicars of Christ. Thus the shape of the preface is not entirely circular, but moves in a spiraling or “helical” motion,¹⁶ corresponding to the unfolding of God’s economy in time:

1. God (the Father) is a trusty SHEPHERD of his flock;
2. he protects it through the APOSTLES,

3. who are RULERS of the Church (even now)
4. in Jesus' place as SHEPHERDS.

The helical structure of the preface reflects the tendency of salvation history to repeat itself in new and often surprising ways.

This broad historical and theological perspective, which the *coetus* regarded as normative, results in prayers that are more dense, complex, and allusive than many of their ancient models. Sometimes, indeed, they amount to meditations in miniature. When this happens, structural parallelism and its attendant figures do not merely adorn the text; they also signpost the conceptual transitions and thematic relationships that make sense of the prayer.

Parallelism and *Eucharistia*

To illustrate the point with a more complex composition, we may turn to the preface for the first Sunday in Lent:

1. Qui quadraginta diebus, terrenis abstinens alimentis,
 2. formam huius observantiae ieiunio dedicavit,
 3. et, omnes evertens antiqui serpentis insidias,
 4. fermentum malitiae nos docuit superare,
 5. ut, paschale mysterium dignis mentibus celebrantes,
 6. ad pascha demum perpetuum transeamus.¹⁷
1. Who, throughout forty days, (by) abstaining from earthly nourishment,
 2. established by fasting the form of this observance,
 3. and (by) overturning all the stratagems of the ancient serpent,
 4. has taught us to overcome the leaven of malice:
 5. that (by) observing the Paschal mystery with worthy minds,
 6. we may at length pass over to the eternal *Pascha*.

In this, one of the most beautiful and original of the new prefaces,¹⁸ we note various ways of dividing the text. The most basic division, mentioned earlier, distinguishes the motive of thanks proper to the celebration (lines 1-4) from the divine intention, expressed as a final or purpose clause (5-6). The preface

can also be divided into three thematic segments of two lines each. The first two lines introduce the motif of fasting and link our modern observance of Lent to the forty days Jesus abstained in the desert (the subject of the day's Gospel reading). The next two lines allude to the temptation of Jesus, viewed from a typological and moral perspective. By resisting the threefold invitation of the devil, Jesus overturned the stratagems of the ancient serpent, which had worked so well on Adam and Eve, and thus enabled all men to rid themselves of the leaven of malice (cf. 1 Cor 5:7-8). The last two lines relate the Paschal mystery fulfilled by Christ and commemorated in the liturgical year to the everlasting *pascha*, into which we will one day pass over (*transeamus*). Thus the preface concludes, as often, on an eschatological note, and the worshiper is left to ponder the connection between the discipline of self-denial, the perennial struggle against sin, and the Church's anticipation of final beatitude in the Paschal celebration.

This is indeed a meditation in miniature, in which we can even discern the requisite three points. But subject matter as broad as this requires some organizing principle. How, indeed, are we to link these three themes? The answer is provided, less obviously, by parallel structures within the prayer. For example, in each of the three sections marked above, the first line (1, 3, and 5) contains a reference to the mysteries of Christ: his fast in the desert, his overcoming of temptation, and his mystical Passover through death. The second line of each group (2, 4, and 6) relates these events to the Church: Jesus established the form of this (that is, our) observance, he taught us to overcome the leaven of malice, that we might pass over to his eternal Paschal feast. This effects a threefold alternation between him and us, and more specifically between his past and our present and future. This presentation underscores an important Lenten theme: just as Christ identified himself with our fallen human condition, we must identify with the mystery of his life – indeed, retrace his steps – if we are to “pass over” into eternity. We do this both individually by fasting, and collectively by our common celebration of the liturgy. Thus the three themes of the preface are unified by the motif of *imitatio Christi* (imitation of Christ).

We have not yet, however, exhausted the rhetorical perspectives furnished by this single prayer. We can also read it, so to speak, from the inside out, according to the type of concentric parallelism mentioned above. The outer elements, in lines 1 and 6, contain the idea of time (*quadraginta diebus . . . perpetuum*), which Christ sanctified as a preparation for the eternal celebration of the redeemed. Lines 2 and 5 focus more narrowly on the liturgy: the discipline of the Lenten fast (*formam*

huius observantiae) is a necessary prelude to the Paschal celebration (*paschale mysterium celebrantes*). The inner elements, in lines 3 and 4, specify the theme of this celebration: the eventual conquest of sin in Jesus Christ, the new Adam. The structure of the preface, viewed this way, becomes a helix of related themes:

1. Time
2. The Lenten fast
3. Jesus overcomes the devil
4. Man overcomes evil
5. The Paschal celebration
6. Eternity

This is another good example of the way that some prefaces, while not losing sight of a particular celebration, manage to convey the “shape” of salvation history. The divine economy is a historical drama, a “Passover” from the discipline of time to the joy of eternity. This is typified by the annual recurrence of the Lenten fast, in which time weighs rather heavily upon us, and the feast of the Resurrection, when liturgical time literally stands still (for in Easter week, every day is a solemnity; the result is, effectively, a week of Sundays). If we are looking for the kernel and essence of this drama, however, we find it in the life of Christ, who has both revisited the choice of Adam and prefigured the triumph of the eschaton. Thus the preface, like many others, begins and ends with history writ large, but focuses or centers on the redemptive work of Christ. The net effect is to reinforce the central theme of *imitatio* indicated earlier.

We have seen, then, that a text that at first glance appears to be a simple résumé of festal themes turns out to be a multivalent but unified object of meditation. This effect has two principal causes. The first is the selection and recognition of Driscoll’s “echo words”: terms relating to time, liturgical practice, and passing over, create a series of resonances within the prayer. The second factor is the articulation of the text into structures that reinforce and organize this verbal interplay. Both of these devices help us to attain and coordinate different vantage points from which to view the same mystery. Here we ponder the season of Lent, traditionally styled *ieiunium quadragesimale* (the Lenten/forty-day fast), as a liturgical participation in, and a spiritual identification with, the life and triumph of Christ.

What happens, then, when translators try to convert this apparently simple, but actually complicated text into a modern idiom? There is a natural tendency

to replace apparent simplicity with the real thing, at least for the sake of a smoother rendering. Consider the current ICEL translation:

- 1-2. His fast of forty days makes this a holy season of self-denial.
3. By rejecting the devil's temptations
4. he has taught us to rid ourselves of the hidden corruption of evil,
5. and so to share his paschal meal in purity of heart,
6. until we come to its fulfillment in the promised land of heaven.¹⁹

ICEL’s rendering arguably conveys the sense of the original, but it falls short precisely because it does not pick up all of the latter’s stylistic threads. This is due in part to a tendency to gloss, rather than translate, the original Latin vocabulary. For example, *antiqui serpentis insidias* becomes “the devil’s temptations,” and *pascha perpetuum* becomes “its fulfillment in the promised land of heaven.” These changes were probably intended to make the text more intelligible. Unfortunately, they have the side effect of obscuring the biblical sources of the prayer and disturbing its parallel structures. The typological connection between the temptation of Jesus and the ancient seduction of Adam is unhappily glossed over, as is the explicit link between history and eternity in the celebration of the liturgy. Certain structural alterations have also inhibited the message of the prayer. The original *qui* clause, the motive of thanks, has been turned into a brief declaration: “His fast of forty days makes this a holy season of self-denial.” The reduction of two Latin members to one makes the prayer seem abrupt; it also obscures the pattern of alternation between Christ and us, mentioned above. Likewise the “finality” or sense of purpose in the *ut* clause (*so that* by celebrating . . . we *may* pass over . . .) has been eliminated; the English equivalent of *celebrantes* (“and so to share”) depends grammatically on “taught” and concludes with a somewhat presumptuous “until we come . . .” This not only changes the theological significance of the prayer,²⁰ but also overburdens the English equivalent of *nos docuit* with grammatical dependents. The result is that the third and fourth lines lose their status as a separate unit, and thus their stylistic centrality.

As we evaluate and revise our existing English texts, it will often help to look at official versions in other languages. These are conveniently provided for the prefaces by Ward and Johnson. Here, for example, is the French version of our text:

1. En jeûnant quarante jours au désert,
2. il consacrait le temps du carême;
3. lorsqu'il déjouait les pièges du Tentateur,
4. il nous apprenait à résister au péché,
5. pour célébrer d'un coeur pur le mystère pascal,
6. et parvenir enfin à la Pâque éternelle.²¹

1. By fasting for forty days in the desert,
2. he consecrated the season of Lent;
3. when he eluded the snares of the Tempter,
4. he taught us to resist sin,
5. in order to celebrate with a pure heart the Paschal mystery,
6. and to come at last to the eternal Pasch.²²

Like ICEL, the French translators seem oddly uncomfortable with biblical symbolism. Thus the ancient serpent is inadequately glossed as the Tempter. Likewise, *résister au péché* (to resist sin) is a rather weak rendering of *fermentum malitiae superare* (to overcome the leaven of malice). Nevertheless, the French has preserved the six-line structure of the original, and with it the varieties of parallelism we noted above. The idea of sacred time comes through very clearly (*quarant jours . . . le temps du carême . . . la Pâque éternelle*), as does the Paschal theme (*le mystère pascal . . . la Pâque éternelle*).

This gives us hope that something similar can be produced in English. Of course, certain special considerations of English style and idiom will come into play. We will not only avoid phrases that might cause priests to stutter or slur the prayer, but also expressions that seriously transgress the rules of English rhythm and euphony.²³ Nevertheless, I believe English is tolerant of a more literal version than we have seen so far. Here is a suggestion:

1. Who, by his fast of forty days from earthly nourishment,
2. established the form of our Lenten observance,
3. and by foiling the ancient serpent's intrigues,
4. has taught us to remove²⁴ the leaven of malice:
5. that by duly celebrating the Paschal mystery,
6. we may come at the end to his Passover feast.

Wordplay and Icon

So far, we have seen that figures of style help to articulate a complex message and show internal connections between its parts; in other words, they create a scheme or diagram of liturgical thought. In some contexts, however, style performs a more strictly iconic function: it helps us to visualize and interpret an event through a kind of direct imitation.²⁵ This is especially likely when the text is connected with an "emblematic" moment in Scripture, which seems to summarize the whole divine plan.

One such event is the Transfiguration of Christ. Its importance is shown by the fact that it is commemorated twice in the Roman Missal: on the second Sunday in Lent, and as an immovable feast (August 6th). The following preface, adapted from a sermon of St. Leo the Great,²⁶ is chanted on the feast day:

1. Qui coram electis testibus suam gloriam revelavit,
2. et communem illam cum ceteris corporis formam maximo splendore perfudit,
3. ut de cordibus discipulorum crucis scandalum tolleretur,
4. et in totius Ecclesiae corpore declararet implendum
5. quod eius mirabiliter praefulsit in capite.²⁷

1. Who, before chosen witnesses, revealed his glory,
2. and suffused with the greatest splendor that form of body (which he) shared with the rest,
3. that from the hearts of his disciples might be removed the scandal of the cross,
4. and (that) in the body of the whole Church he might declare the (eventual) fulfillment of that
5. which wonderfully shone previously in her head.

This preface shows a considerable amount of wordplay. *Gloriam* and *splendore* focus on the supernatural brightness of Jesus on Mount Tabor. Later, however, the image of light is included, through an original pun, in the word *deklararet*: Jesus' glorified appearance "declares," that is, clarifies, the future state of man – just as his words elsewhere reveal (or uncover) the nature of God. This metaphorical equation of word

and image is an important theme in Christian theology, particularly in the East.²⁸ The Transfiguration story naturally lends itself to this theme, since it combines words (“This is my beloved Son”) with visual allegory (Moses and Elijah on either side of Christ) and the pure splendor of Christ himself. Indeed, we cannot read the Gospel accounts of this event without constructing a detailed mental picture, which indicates the relationship of Jesus to the Father, to the prophets, and to the entire human race. Accordingly, the style of the preface also takes an iconic turn, assisting us in the construction of this picture and helping us to interpret its significance.

As we have noted, there is emphasis throughout the text (lines 1, 2, 4, and 5) on the glory or splendor with which Christ is suffused. Nevertheless, inside this radiating glory stands a body like ours. The preface underlines this surprising fact with a phrase borrowed from St. Leo (*et communem illam cum ceteris corporis formam*). Both verbal repetition (*corporis . . . corpore*) and repetition of sound (the alliteration of “c”) iconically represent the fact that Christ’s body resembles the one possessed by “(all) the others” (*ceteris*). Thus his transfiguration pre-figures (*prae-fulsit*) our own. This doctrine, however, poses a theological problem: how exactly do creatures share in the uncreated glory of God’s Son? The answer is indicated here with a shift in the meaning of *corpus*: Christ’s physical body in line 2 is paralleled by his mystical body, the Church, in line 4. Thus the preface allegorizes the biblical event, echoing the ecclesiology of St. Paul (Gal 4:19): final transfiguration depends on sacramental “incorporation” into Christ through the Church.

The embolism ends with a strong, direct antithesis in lines 4 and 5 between the words *corpore* (body) and *capite* (head). The motif of Christ as head of the Church not only completes the Pauline doctrine (Col 1:18), but also corresponds to the verticality of the Transfiguration scene itself. In conventional representations, the illuminated Jesus stands on (or floats above) a mountaintop, between (and often slightly above) the two prophets. He is also positioned well above his chosen Apostles, symbols of the universal Church; the Church is sometimes also represented by figures clustered at the base of the mountain. Thus the Word, made flesh in Christ, descends from the Father, and is mediated through the prophets and Apostles to the Church. The preface follows this linear descent (*testibus . . . discipulorum . . . Ecclesiae*), but quickly reverses course by drawing us back to the Head (*capite*). We might say, then, that the Transfiguration is verbally represented here as analogous – in its rapid, reciprocal movement – to a bolt of lightning, the archetypal symbol of God’s glory (see Ps 29).

The preface also, however, discloses an unexpected heart, if we read it according to the concentric parallelism noted above. Lines 1 and 5 focus on the revelation of the glory of Christ, first on Mount Tabor and then as the eschatological Head of the Church. Lines 2 and 4, as we have seen, focus on the physical and mystical body which believers share with Christ. The innermost element, however, focuses on a different theme: the disciples’ hearts must be completely delivered or purified from the scandal of the Cross. Thus the entire text discloses this pattern:

1. Christ REVEALED his GLORY
2. in the BODY he shares with us,
3. to remove the scandal of the CROSS
4. and to declare the glory of the mystical BODY
5. that previously SHONE in its Head.

It may seem odd that, at the very center of this meditation on human illumination, we should be confronted by the grim reality of the Cross. Nevertheless, the prospect of his death and resurrection was clearly on Jesus’ mind as he descended from the mountain (Mt 17:9; Mk 9:9). In Luke’s version, the transfigured Jesus even discusses his passion with Moses and Elijah (Lk 9:31). Our preface reflects the picture painted by Luke; it also corresponds to the extraordinary conception of Fra Angelico, who represented the transfigured Christ with his hands extended as though crucified.²⁹ Evangelist, painter, and liturgical composer make the same point: Tabor prefigures Calvary, which the entire human race must climb with its Savior. Nevertheless, there is cause for rejoicing, for the prospect of glorification utterly removes the stigma and fear (the scandal) of even the most horrendous death.

Let us see, then, how translators have grappled with the complexities of this text. First, the current ICEL translation:

- He revealed his glory to the disciples
to strengthen them for the scandal of the
cross.
His glory shone from a body like our own,
to show that the Church,
which is the body of Christ,
would one day share his glory.³⁰

Here it is enough to note that both the vertical sweep and the concentric parallelism of the original have been replaced by a rather bland, two-point explanation of the motives of Christ’s Transfiguration.

Further, synonyms have been leveled or omitted (for example, *gloriam*, *splendore*, and *praefulsit* all become “glory”) and the *corpus/caput* relationship is passed over in silence. ICEL improved upon this somewhat in their proposed revision of 1997, examined by Driscoll:

He revealed his glory before Peter, James and
John to strengthen his followers against
the scandal of the cross.
His human body shone like the sun,
to show that the whole Church, which is
his Body will one day shine with the
glory of Christ, its Head.³¹

The addition of “Christ, its Head” in the last line gets us moving upward again and provides us with a better (although grammatically neutered) image of the Church. But this is too little, too late. As Driscoll has shown, the translation retains ICEL’s earlier mistake of putting the two purpose clauses (“to strengthen . . . to show . . .”) in different sentences; this gives the impression that Christ revealed his glory for one reason, and shone like the sun for another. We might add that this arrangement also displaces the centrality of the scandal of the cross; ICEL’s strategy is analogous to turning Fra Angelico’s painting into a diptych. Finally, in order to make room for “shone like the sun” (cf. Mt 17:2), ICEL converted “a body like ours” into “human body.” This is less successful than the first translation, because it has even less of the rhetorical weight we find in the original (*communem illam cum ceteris corporis formam*).

Here, as often, the Spanish version offers a somewhat better model:

1. Porque Cristo, nuestro Señor, manifestó su gloria a unos testigos predilectos,
 2. y les dió a conocer en su cuerpo, en todo semejante al nuestro, el resplandor de su divinidad.
 3. De esta forma, ante la proximidad de la pasión, fortaleció la fe de los apóstoles, para que sobrellevaran el escándalo de la cruz,
 4. y alentó la esperanza de la Iglesia, al revelar en sí mismo la claridad que brillará un día en todo el cuerpo
 5. que le reconoce como cabeza suya.³²
1. For Christ, our Lord, manifested his glory to chosen witnesses,

2. and enabled them to recognize in his body, in everything like our own, the splendor of his divinity.
3. In this manner, before the approach of his passion, he strengthened the faith of the Apostles, that they might endure the scandal of the cross,
4. and he inspired the hope of the Church, by revealing in himself the brilliance that will shine one day in the whole body
5. that acknowledges him as its head.

Here the basic structure of the Latin is preserved, with its concentric and vertical movements. The focus remains on the cross and passion – indeed, this theme receives more emphasis here than in the original Latin. The echoing of near-synonyms is reproduced here (*gloria*, *resplandor*, *claridad*), thus preserving, where it is most desirable, the specifically iconic effect of exact repetition (*su cuerpo . . . todo el cuerpo*). One may regret, however, a tendency to over-elaborate the text with additions and explications, especially in lines 3 and 4. If we want to recapture the economy of the original Latin, we might prefer to take a leaf from the Portuguese:

1. Ele manifestou sua glória perante as testemunhas que escolhera,
 2. e fez resplandecer como sol o seu corpo igual ao nosso
 3. para afastar do coração dos discípulos o escândalo da cruz
 4. e manifestar deste modo, como cabeça da Igreja,
 5. o esplendor que refulgiria em todos os seus membros.³³
1. He manifested his glory in the presence of the witnesses he had chosen,
 2. and made his body, equal to ours, shine like the sun
 3. in order to remove from the heart[s] of his disciples the scandal of the cross
 4. and to manifest in this way, as head of the Church,
 5. the splendor that would shine in all its members.

Here too, there has been a little too much retouching (e.g., *resplandecer como sol*), and the final antithesis has been modified and inverted (*corpore . . . capite* becomes *cabeça . . . membros*), but the tone and the rhythm are right. Perhaps we can combine the virtues of both Iberian versions into an English translation, such as the following:

1. who, before his chosen witnesses, revealed his glory,
2. and suffused the form of his body, common to all men, with ineffable light:
3. that he might free the hearts of his disciples from the scandal of the cross,
4. and declare that the Body of his Church would be filled one day with the glory
5. that wonderfully shone forth in her Head.

Love and the Eschaton

So far, we have seen that stylistic devices may perform a schematic function, as in the preface for the first Sunday of Lent, or an emblematic function, as in the text for the Transfiguration. In either case, they help us to see connections between specific celebrations and the whole shape of the divine economy. In some celebrations, however, we are less concerned with paradigmatic events or persons than with abstract essences and relationships. In such cases, stylistic devices may serve to concretize and assimilate realities that are otherwise difficult to grasp. A good example of this is found in the third preface for nuptial masses:

1. Qui hominem pietatis tuae dono creatum ad tantam voluisti dignitatem extolli,
2. ut in viri mulierisque consortio veram relinqueres tui amoris imaginem;
3. quem enim ex caritate creasti,
4. eum ad caritatis legem vocare non desinis,
5. ut aeternae tuae caritatis participem esse concedas.
6. Cuius connubii sancti mysterium dum tuae dilectionis signum existit,
7. amorem sacrat humanum: per Christum Dominum nostrum.³⁴

1. Who willed that Man, created by the gift of your goodness, be raised to such dignity,

2. that in the partnership of man and woman you left a true image of your love (*amor*);
3. for you created him from charity (*caritas*),
4. you do not cease to call him to the law of charity,
5. that you may grant him to be a sharer in your eternal charity.
6. The mystery of this holy marriage, while it stands as a sign of your special regard (*dilectio*),
7. makes human love sacred: through Christ our Lord.

The first thing we notice about this preface is that it expands the usual *qui . . . ut* pattern into a tripartite structure. Each of the three parts is introduced by a relative clause (*qui . . . quem . . . cuius*) and completed by a dependent *ut* clause or a main clause (*amorem sacrat humanum*). The last, because it contains an indicative verb, all the more forcefully states that marriage makes human love sacred. We also notice that, on its face, the preface juxtaposes two periods in time. The first two lines refer to the creation and original partnership of Adam and Eve, both made in the image of God (Gn 1:27). The last two lines focus on the celebration, *hic et nunc* (here and now), of holy matrimony as a sacrament of God's love. In between, we have a quick summary of the role of *caritas* (charity or love) in salvation history.

Thus the basic scheme of the preface is historical and typological. Nevertheless, its movement is not strictly linear; it too exemplifies the concentric parallelism with which we are now familiar. In the outer elements (lines 1 and 7), the emphasis is on man (*hominem . . . humanum*). In this case, anthropology frames theology; human love becomes, in holy matrimony, an image of God. But lest we think that it is only the relation of marriage that reflects the divine nature, our preface forefronts the idea of *homo* (man) as an ontological unity of persons, analogous to the trinity of God. This is indicated by the emphatic position of the singular noun *homo* at the beginning of the *qui* clause, and the use of related singular pronouns throughout the text.³⁵ Even when the preface does refer (in line 2) to the bond of man and woman, using the gender-specific words *vir* (man) and *mulier* (woman), the disjunction of the sexes is iconically minimized: man and woman are joined by the enclitic particle *-que* (*virī mulierisque*) rather than coordinated by the conjunction *et* (*virī et mulieris*). The effect of these figures is to bring us back into the thought-world of Genesis, where the unity of man is ontologically, if not actually,

prior to sexual differentiation (Gn 1:27). In Christian theology, the unity of man in the prototype, Adam, is recapitulated in the new Adam, Jesus Christ. Thus holy matrimony is not only in some sense a recovery of the Edenic Paradise, but also an identification with Christ as the true image of God's love.

As we move toward the center of the text, the next level is devoted to the theme of human love as an image (*imagimen*) or sign (*signum*) of the divine. Note that there is a progression here also, as the natural consorting of man and woman is transformed into the mystery (sacrament) of holy matrimony. In this connection, however, we should also note the complicated interplay of words expressing the idea of love. In the line 2, *virii mulierisque consortio* (the partnership of man and woman) is contrasted with *tui amoris* (your love). Here is something of an irony: *amor*, the ordinary Latin word for love of the erotic or romantic kind, is associated with God, while man and woman merely consort in a legally sanctioned relationship.³⁶ This seems to imply that the natural institution of marriage falls short of its erotic goal unless it becomes an authentic sign or image of God's intense inner communion.

This true marriage, however, requires an awareness and experience of the special kind of love that operates in God's salvific economy, which St. John, writing in Greek, called *agape*, and which is typically expressed in Latin by *dilectio* or *caritas*.³⁷ Only by sharing in *agape* does *virii mulierisque consortium* (2) truly become *amor humanus* (7), an image of the Love Divine. Thus the human experience of God's love is the theme of three parallel clauses at the center of the preface (3-5), all using the term *caritas*:

1. quem enim ex CARITATE creasti,
2. eum ad CARITATIS legem vocare non desinis,
3. ut aeternae tuae CARITATIS participem esse concedas.

The repetition of the word within the tricolon creates an image of the permanence or stability of love (ultimately qualified as "eternal") in the divine economy, here represented in its three great moments: creation, covenant, and beatitude. This supra-human love is the law (*legem*) or standard to which Christians are called (line 4). These lines suggest temporal sequence, moving from creation to eternity. There is also a logical climax, as the status of man is raised from that of creature to intelligent cooperator in the divine law, and finally to that of participant in God's eternal communion. The ascent or aggrandizement implicit in these lines is reflected stylistically by the figure of crescendo, a gradual increase in the length of successive

clauses. This figure also reflects the threefold shape of the entire embolism:

1. You willed that MAN be raised to such dignity
2. that you left the IMAGE of your love in sexual "partnership"
3. for you created him in CHARITY
4. and you call him to the law of CHARITY,
5. to make him a sharer in your eternal CHARITY.
6. thus matrimony stands as a SIGN of your love
7. and makes HUMAN love sacred.

The central idea, then, is that married love is not only an image of God's love in time, but also a foretaste of our eternal participation in the inner life of God.

A text that relies to this extent on nuances of vocabulary and intricate structures will pose a formidable challenge to any translator. Here is the current ICEL version:

1. You created man in love to share your divine life.
2. We see his high destiny in the love of husband and wife, which bears the imprint of your own divine love.
3. Love is man's origin,
4. love is his constant calling,
5. love is his fulfillment in heaven.
6. The love of man and woman is made holy in the sacrament of marriage,
7. and becomes the mirror of your everlasting love.³⁸

This version has some things to commend it. I particularly like the sequence in lines 3-5, where the original figure of crescendo is reinforced by anaphora (initial repetition of "love") to create a very strong and memorable statement. Nevertheless, there are also problems. The language of love in the original with all its nuances (*amor*, *consortium*, *dilectio*, *caritas*) has been leveled to one term, "love." One also notices other mutations of vocabulary that disturb the scriptural echoes and internal logic of the prayer. For example, "love is his constant calling" drops the crucial notion of "law" (*ad caritatis LEGEM vocare non desinis*). Likewise, the idea that Christian marriage helps to restore the ontological unity of man is obscured when *amorem sacrat humanum* is rendered "the love of man

and woman is made holy.” Problems of a specifically structural nature also occur. The English acquires a didactic tone by flatly stating the topic of divine participation in the first sentence, rather than leading us gradually to it. This leaves us to wonder exactly how and when human love becomes participation, particularly when the theologically significant concepts of image and sign have been replaced by the baffling and inconsistent metaphors “imprint” and “mirror.”

As before, we get a little further with the Portuguese:

1. De tal modo elevastes o homem, criado pela vossa bondade,
2. que deixastes na união do homem e da mulher a imagem do vosso amor.
3. E, aos que por amor criastes,
4. não cessais de chamar à lei da caridade,
5. para que possam participar de vossa eterna dileção.
6. E o sacramento do matrimônio, sendo um sinal do vosso amor,
7. santifica o amor humano . . .³⁹

1. You elevated man, created through your goodness,
2. in such fashion that you have left in the union of man and woman the image of your love.
3. And those whom you created by love,
4. you do not cease to call to the law of charity,
5. that they may participate in your eternal affection (dileção).
6. And the sacrament of matrimony, being a sign of your love,
7. sanctifies human love . . .

Here we have the original structure, with its significant juxtapositions (e.g., *homem . . . humano, imagem . . . sinal*). The translators have also succeeded in creating a richer vocabulary of love. Unfortunately, however, in lines 3-5 they use the terms *caridade, amor, and dileção* interchangeably, where the Latin insists on one term, *caritas*. This plays havoc with the way the concept is developed in Latin: it is through *caritas* that divine *amor* descends to the human level, and man participates in the divine. In the end, the Portuguese version represents no improvement upon ICEL’s strategy of translating everything as “love.” Still it points the way to a better approach, which we can attempt to follow

in English too.

It seems to me that if we wish to be faithful to the Latin we will want to reserve “love,” with its erotic overtones, for *amor*. *Consortium*, with its legal associations, can very adequately be translated as “partnership.” This leaves us with *caritas* and *dilectio*, which cannot easily be rendered in English – especially in proximity to each other. *Dilectio*, however, has overtones in Latin of a special regard or affection for something; it is one of many words derived from the verb *legere*, to “choose.” We can bring this out in our translation with something like “your regard for man.” While this may restrict the sense of *dilectio* too much (*agape* does not exist only in relation to man), it has the advantage of suggesting an analogy between holy matrimony and the relationship of Christ to the Church. This leads naturally to the theme of human love as a participation in the holiness or inner life of God, implied in the final line (*amor sacrat humanum*).

Finally, there is *caritas*. Here, I think, we must bite the bullet and reclaim “charity,” in spite of its more restricted secular uses, as an irreplaceable special term of Christian theology. Its traditional feel is especially important here, since the preface alludes to the historical unfolding of the law of charity. It is also through the specifically theological virtue of charity that natural institutions and inclinations, of which conjugal love is one, can be transformed.⁴⁰ Hence a distinction between “charity” and “love,” in spite of their ultimate unification, still serves a purpose.

Here, then, is my suggestion for an English rendering of this beautiful and difficult text:

1. Who willed that Man, created in your goodness, should be raised to such dignity,
2. that in the partnership of man and woman you left an authentic image of your love.
3. For in charity you created Man,
4. and to the law of charity you never cease to call him,
5. that he may partake of your charity, which is eternal.
6. Therefore, this sacrament of holy matrimony stands as a sign of your regard for Man,
7. and makes human love sacred, through Christ our Lord.

Conclusion

Liturgiam authenticam has charged translators with the task of integrally rendering the liturgical books of

the Roman Rite, so that the Catholic faithful may share more fully in the riches it contains. In these pages, I have tried to show that literary form can indeed shape and clarify doctrinal and devotional content, especially in texts as regular as the prefaces of the Roman Missal. As we have seen, it was the intention of the post-conciliar revisers to standardize the shape of these texts in order to reflect the connection between particular celebrations and the whole of God's economy. It is not surprising, then, that this macro-stylistic enterprise was carried out on the micro-stylistic levels of vocabulary and sentence structure. Structural parallelism and resonance of vocabulary play a large part in this enterprise. These figures reflect the movement of salvation history itself, since they combine repetition with development; the second, repeated element usually contains something familiar, but also something more. Nevertheless, parallelism in the liturgy is not merely a narrative device. It often presents us with a scheme of different but complementary perspectives, or with an image that, like the icons of Christian art, is emblematic of Christian theology. This figure can even incarnate invisible realities, such as the transformation of human love into its divine prototype through the sacrament of marriage.

Liturgiam authenticam makes the important observation that "the Sacred Liturgy engages not only man's intellect, but the whole person, who is the 'subject' of full and conscious participation in the liturgical celebration."⁴¹ Among other things, this leaves room for the aesthetic and intuitive faculty, to which style primarily speaks. Moreover, the liturgical subject is not any particular individual or congregation, but the whole Church at prayer⁴² – the *corpus Christi mysticum* (*mystical body of Christ*), prefigured on Mount Tabor. We need not hesitate, then, to appropriate for our own use the formal devices of the Church's past, provided that they are still able to engage Christians of the present. Indeed, authentic reform has always been, to some extent, a *recursus ad fontes* (return to the fonts). Let us hope and pray, then, that at the dawning of this "new era of liturgical renewal,"⁴³ Christians will discover in the patrimony of the Latin liturgy, brought alive by effective translation, "an abundant source of graces and a means for their own continual formation in the Christian mystery."⁴⁴

Notes:

¹ Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Liturgiam authenticam: Fifth Instruction on Vernacular Translation of the Roman Liturgy* [henceforth: LA]

(Washington DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2001) 57-59.

² *Comme le prévoit*, in *Enchiridion documentorum instaurationis liturgicae*, vol. 1, ed. R. Kaczynski (Rome: Marietti, 1976) 1200 ff.; English version in *Documents on the Liturgy, 1963-1979*, ed. Thomas O'Brien (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1982) 284-91; see especially §§ 8, 12, 15, 20, and 28.

³ The history of "idiomatic" biblical translation is sympathetically presented by Cecil Hargreaves, *A Translator's Freedom* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1993) esp. 40-67; for a less sympathetic appraisal, see Stephen Prickett, *Words and the Word: Language, Poetics, and Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge: University Press, 1986) 4-36.

⁴ For an overview, see Duane Watson and Alan Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible: A Comprehensive Bibliography with Notes on History and Method* (New York: Brill, 1994); in this study I am particularly indebted to the example of Fr. John Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language* (Crestwood NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994).

⁵ *Missale Romanum*, 3rd typical ed. [henceforth: MR 2002] (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2002); all the texts studied here were composed for the first typical edition of 1970.

⁶ In a traditional genre such as the liturgy, the use of certain figures can be spontaneous and unconscious as well as deliberate. This is especially true of parallelism, a universal literary device. See Breck, *Shape of Biblical Language*, 348-50.

⁷ LA 28; cf. M. Francis Mannion, "The Success of the Liturgical Reform," *Antiphon* 5.2 (2000) 2-4.

⁸ E.g., Josef Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development*, vol. 2, trans. Francis Brunner (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1955) 115-28, and P. Bruylants, "Les préfaces du Missel Romain," *Maison-Dieu* 87 (1966) 111-33, esp. 114-17. Dom Bruylants served as the first relator (chair) of the study group that revised the orations and prefaces; see Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy, 1948-1975*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegeville MI: Liturgical Press, 1990) 396-98.

⁹ Anthony Ward and Cuthbert Johnson, *The Prefaces of the Roman Missal: A Source Compendium with Concordance and Indices* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1989) 14; cf. Antoine Dumas [who succeeded Bruylants in 1966 as relator of the study group], "Les préfaces du nouveau missel," *Ephemerides liturgicae* 85 (1971) 16-28.

¹⁰ The Preface of the Holy Trinity provides an example; see Bruylants, "Les préfaces du Missel Romain," 116.

¹¹ Dumas, "Les préfaces du nouveau missel," 17-18, put it this way: "Elle est donc avant tout action de grâce; son rôle est de proclamer les motifs de l'eucharistie actuelle de l'Eglise. Pourquoi le peuple de Dieu, aujourd'hui, en ce temps liturgique, dans telles circonstances, proclame-t-il les grandeurs de son Seigneur et lui offre-t-il en eucharistie le sacrifice du Christ?"; cf. Bruylants, "Les préfaces du Missel Romain," 115.

¹² MR 2002, p. 549: the numeration of sense-units is my own; I have printed only the embolism.

¹³ This literal translation and the others found in this paper are my own, but I have consulted Martin O'Keefe, *Oremus: Speaking with God in the Words of the Roman Rite* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1993).

¹⁴ Breck, *Shape of Biblical Language*, esp. 17-19.

¹⁵ Jeremy Driscoll, "Conceiving the Translating Task: The Roman Missal and the Vernacular," in *The Voice of the Church: A Forum on Liturgical Translation* (Washington DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2001) 51.

¹⁶ Breck, *Shape of Biblical Language*, 38-58.

¹⁷ MR 2002, p. 207. Here I have followed the layout of the 2nd typical edition (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1975) 185; the arrangement in the 3rd typical edition, which ends the first line after *diebus*, seems to me to disturb the intended rhythm of the text.

¹⁸ On its sources, see Ward and Johnson, *Prefaces of the Roman Missal*, 123-28.

¹⁹ Translation as found in *The Sacramentary, Approved for Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing, 1985) preface 12, p. 397; also printed in Ward and Johnson, *Prefaces of the Roman Missal*, 128. The numeration of sense-units is my own, and corresponds to that of the Latin text.

²⁰ LA 57c.

²¹ Ward and Johnson, *Prefaces of the Roman Missal*, 128-29.

²² This translation and the subsequent translations from Spanish and Portuguese are my own.

²³ On the latter, see John B. Foley, "An Aural Basis for Oral Liturgical Prayer," *Worship* 56 (1982) 132-52.

²⁴ Cf. 1 Cor 5:7, "expurgate vetus fermentum" (purge out the old leaven), referring to the Jewish custom of purging the house of all leavened bread before Passover (Ex 12:15; 13:7). "Remove" is tolerably close both to the Pauline original and to the Consilium's adaptation, "superare" (overcome).

²⁵ See Max Nännny and Olga Fischer, eds. *Form Miming Meaning: Iconicity in Language and Literature* (Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1999) xv-xxxvi, and Stephen Beall, "Verbal Iconicity: A Problem in Liturgical Translation," *Downside Review* 117 (1999) 133-44, esp. 133-34.

²⁶ *Sermo* 51, 3, cited in Ward and Johnson, *Prefaces of the Roman Missal*, 317-18.

²⁷ MR 2002, p. 801.

²⁸ Verna Harrison, "Word as Icon in Greek Patristic Theology," *Sobornost* 10 (1988) 38-49.

²⁹ Fra Angelico, *Transfiguration of Christ*, c. 1441, Museo di San Marco (Florence, Italy), Cell 6.

³⁰ *Sacramentary*, preface 50, p. 473. In this case, the structure of the prayer has been altered to the point that correspondence with the Latin sense-units cannot be indicated.

³¹ Driscoll, "Conceiving the Translating Task," 71-74.

³² Ward and Johnson, *Prefaces of the Roman Missal*, 322.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ MR 2002, p. 1035.

³⁵ Cf. Beall, "Verbal Iconicity," 142-43.

³⁶ The connotation of a *legal* association is classical, pertaining originally to the law of inheritance; the term retains its technical flavor in canon law. Cf. Leo Stelten, *Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Latin* (Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 1995) 299-300.

³⁷ See Albert Blaise, *Le vocabulaire latin des principaux thèmes liturgiques*, rev. Antoine Dumas (Turnhout: Brepols, 1970) 275-76; Albert Blaise, *A Handbook of Christian Latin: Style, Morphology, and Syntax*, trans. Grant Roti (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1994) 29-33.

³⁸ *Sacramentary*, preface 74, p. 521.

³⁹ Ward and Johnson, *Prefaces of the Roman Missal*, 490.

⁴⁰ Cf. LA 54.

⁴¹ LA 28.

⁴² LA 27.

⁴³ LA 7.

⁴⁴ LA 1. I would like to thank Dr. Lauren Pristas, Dr. Dennis Martin, and the anonymous referees of *Antiphon*, who commented on earlier drafts of this paper.

