



The 1962 Roman Missal and Catholic-Jewish Relations - Updated August 8, 2007

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Documentation, news, commentary, and analyses of current issues and events in Jewish-Christian relations.

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Commentary Links
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INTRODU CTION

In early July 2007, Pope Benedict XVI issued a papal executive order (known as a *motu proprio*), as well as an explanatory "cover letter" addressed to the world's Catholic bishops. As expressed in the letter, the purpose of

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the motu proprio was to promote "an interior reconciliation in the heart of the Church." It was intended for those Catholics whose devotion to the liturgy from the Council of Trent (the Tridentine Rite) had prompted some of them, in the wake of the liturgical renewal of the Second Vatican Council, to separate themselves from the Catholic community. The motu proprio makes it easier for the most recent version of the Tridentine Mass, the 1962 Roman Missal promulgated by Pope John XXIII, to be used in communities "where there is a stable group of faithful who adhere to

[that] earlier liturgical tradition" (art. 5.1), rather than the post-Vatican II 1970 Roman Missal of Pope Paul VI. The latter is the form of the Mass used by the overwhelming majority of Catholics, whether in Latin or vernacular languages. The motu proprio's more liberal permission to use the 1962 Roman Missal is expected to be employed by a relatively small number of Catholics.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CATHOLIC-JEWISH RELATIONS

In the months preceding the issuance of the motu

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proprio, a number of individuals and groups involved in Christian-Jewish relations expressed concerns over the prospect of fewer restrictions on the use of the 1962 Roman Missal. This is because that missal was prepared without being informed by the reforms inaugurated by [Nostra Aetate](#) in 1965.

Two principle issues were raised: the Good Friday intercessions in the 1962 Roman Missal ask God for "the conversion of the Jews" from their "blindness" and the "veil [upon] their hearts." This is strikingly different in tone from the intercession in the post-[Nostra Aetate](#) 1970 Roman

Missal that prays that the Jewish people "will grow in the love of [God"s] name and faithfulness to his covenant." In addition, the 1962 Good Friday intercessions pray for other Christians ("heretics and schismatics") and adherents of other religions ("pagans," *infidelium*) in disrespectful terms.

It should be noted that an earlier version of the Good Friday intercessions prayed for "the perfidious Jews," but that adjective was removed by the order of Pope John XXIII in 1959. That phrase is not present in the 1962 Missal and is not an issue in regard to the current *motu proprio*.

A second concern was that the lectionary for the 1962 Roman Missal contains very few scriptural readings from the Old Testament, a quasi-Marcionite difference from the 1970 Missal. The dialogue group "Jews and Christians" of the Central Committee of German Catholics raised both concerns in an April 4, 2007 public statement.

CONTRADICTORY CONSTRUCTIONS

After the publication of the motu proprio on July 7, 2007, it quickly became clear that its article 2 lent itself to two conflicting interpretations.

Its reads:

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Art.
2. In
Mass
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John
XXIII
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1962,
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Pope
Paul
VI in
1970,
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priest
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Some comm
entators,
focusing on
the words
"with the
exception of
the Easter
Triduum,"

concluded that the motu proprio excluded the use of the 1962 Good Friday prayers. Others concentrated on the opening phrase, "In Masses celebrated without the people," understanding it to mean that the 1962 Missal was excluded on Good Friday only in the case of "private masses," but could be used in Triduum liturgies when congregations are present (which is now the norm for the Easter Triduum).

The Anti-Defamation League interpreted article 2 in the latter way, calling the motu proprio a "body blow to Catholic-Jewish relations."
Richard John

Neuhaus felt that article 2 excluded the use of the 1962 Good Friday prayers, calling the ADL's reaction "a mix of bellicosity and ignorance."

He seemed to feel that the ADL's criticism was because the prayer referred to "the perfidious Jews." If so, Neuhaus misread the ADL statements. Neuhaus also opined that the 1970 prayer that Jews will "arrive at the fullness of redemption" refers to faith in Jesus Christ and that Jews who take offense at that are offended by Christianity itself.

A message to the Jewish community from the Archdiocese of Boston's c

ommunicatio
ns office
stated that
Cardinal
Seán
O'Malley
understood
"that the
elements of
the Good
Friday
services
which are un
derstandably
objectionable
to our Jewish
and
ecumenical
brothers and
sisters are
not permitted
to be used in
the
celebration
of the
Tridentine
Rite."
However, in
its answers
to "Twenty
Questions on
the Apostolic
Letter
*Summorum
Pontificum*,"
the
Committee
on the
Liturgy of the
U.S.
Conference
of Catholic
Bishops
indicated that
that 1962
Missal's
prayer for the
conversion of
the Jews
could be
prayed, but
insisted that
Pope
Benedict

"remains committed to the need to overcome past prejudices, misunderstandings, indifference and the language of contempt and hostility [and to continue] the Jewish-Christian dialogue...to enrich and deepen the bonds of friendship which have developed" (no. 14).

The International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations, the American Jewish Committee, and the International Council of Christians and Jews all requested that the Vatican clarify the confusion.

FURTHER MODIFICA TIONS?

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Rev. Dr.
Norbert
Hofmann,
secretary to
the Pontifical
Commission
for Religious
Relations
with the
Jews, issued
a
communiqué
on July 21,
2007,
offering "a
provisional
response" to
the many
inquiries the
commssion
has received.
It explained
that Catholic
congregation
s under the
authority of
the Vatican"s
*Ecclesia
Dei*
commission
"have been
using the
1962 Missal
also for the
Good Friday
Liturgy [since
1988] and
will continue
to do so." Fr.
Hofmann
added that,
"it is
expected
that an
adaptation of
the 1962
Missal will be
needed, and
this could

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provide a way forward," and that the "Commission for the Religious Relations with the Jews is committed to the search for an appropriate solution."

The mention of a possibility of refining the motu proprio was also voiced by the Holy See's Secretary of State, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone. According to a July 18 Reuters news story published in *The Jerusalem Post* , "Bertone said the prayer that many Jews have found offensive could be substituted with one introduced into church rituals in the 1970s and which makes no reference to the conversion of

Jews. "This could be decided and this would resolve all the problems." said Bertone. "We could simply study" the possibility."

In response to the Reuters story, the ADL stated that it "was pleased that the Vatican is listening to our concerns," while the AJC said, "We appreciate the statement by Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Vatican Secretary of State, making it clear that efforts will be made to replace the disturbing Good Friday prayer for Jewish conversion found in the 1962 version of the Latin Tridentine mass."

It might be noted that

Cardinal Bertone, while recognizing the problem, only suggested the replacement as a subject worthy of study, a study that could take several years. In addition, the related question of how the 1962 Good Friday prayers characterizes other Christians and Muslims (among others) has not received much public discussion.

On August 8, 2007, the Executive of the ICCJ sent a letter to Cardinal Bertone expressing the hope that a positive resolution to the issue of the Good Friday prayer could be achieved by Holy Week of 2008. The letter asked Cardinal Bertone to

recommend
to Pope
Benedict that
he substitute
the 1970
prayer by
papal
decree, as
indeed Pope
John XXIII
had done in
1959 with his
removal of
"perfidious"
from the then
existing form
of the
Roman
Missal.

**A 1965
VERSION
OF THE
GOOD
FRIDAY INT
ERCESSION
S** •

Charles
Chotkowski
of the
National
Polish Ameri
can-Jewish
Council and
Ombretta
Pisano of
SIDIC Roma
have recently
brought to
light the
existence of
a March
1965 revision
by Pope Paul
VI of the
1962 Good
Friday
intercession

"for the Jews." This was published shortly before the beginning of Holy Week in 1965 as a separate booklet in order to revise the Good Friday prayer from that point forward.

In Latin, the March 1965 prayer reads:

*Pro I
udaei
s.*

*Orem
us et
pro Iu
daeis
: ut
Deus
et Do
minu
s nos
ter fa
ciem
suam
super
eos ill
umin
are di
gnetu
r; ut
et ipsi
agno
scant
omni
um R
edem
ptore
m, le*

*sum
Christ
um D
omin
um n
ostru
m.*

*Omni
poten
s se
mpite
rne
Deus,
qui pr
omiss
iones
tuas
Abra
hae
et se
mini
eius c
ontuli
sti: E
cclesi
ae
tuae
prece
s cle
ment
er ex
audi;
ut po
pulus
acqui
sitioni
s anti
quae
ad R
edem
ptioni
s mer
eatur
plenit
udine
m per
venir
e.*

Press article
of March 31,
1965
rendered the
prayer into
English (with
a correction)
as follows:

Prayer
for
the
Jews.

Let
us
pray
for
the
Jews:
Our
Lord
God
deign
to let
your
face
shine
upon
them,
so
that
even
they
may recognize
the redeemer
of
all,
our
Lord
Jesus
Christ
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O al
mighty
y and
eternal
al

God
who
has
made
his pr
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the p
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of Ab
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God,
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Chur
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attain
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grace
in the
rede
mptio
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Two
comments
are in order
about this
1965
modification
by Pope Paul

VI. First, very noteworthy is the change in the introductory line, "For the conversion of the Jews" to simply "for the Jews" and the removal of references to Jewish blindness and being veiled. Only a few months earlier this same subject of "the conversion of the Jews" had been deliberated upon during the Second Vatican Council's Sept. 28-29, 1964 consideration of a draft of *Nostra Aetate*. Ought the declaration express the hope for the conversion of Jews to Christianity? The Council Fathers who addressed the topic mostly shared the views of Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro of Bologna, who argued,

"Only an eschatological turn of events will bring [Jews and Christians] to the common messianic meal of the eternal Pasch."

Thus, on Nov. 18, 1964, the Council voted its approval of language that would ultimately be included in the final form of the declaration:

"the Church awaits that day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and "serve Him shoulder to shoulder" (Zeph. 3:9)."

Therefore, it seems likely that Paul VI's decision to alter the 1962 Roman Missal's prayer in time for the next observance of Holy Week in the spring of 1965 is directly

attributable to the Council's deliberations and preliminary vote. The 1965 version reflects the Council's disavowal of interest in the collective conversion of Jews in historic time and a renewed respect for their character as "chosen people."

Second, the existence of Pope Paul VI's 1965 revision arguably supersedes the 1962 Missal's prayer and so ought to be used in its stead as a result of Pope Benedict's XVI's 2007 *motu proprio*, at least, if the superior 1970 prayer is not substituted for both of them.

ANALYSIS

It would appear that developments outlined above reflect a number of tensions. On the one hand, the motu proprio extended an olive branch to the spiritual heirs of the excommunicated Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, who rejected the Second Vatican Council as "modernist" and its liturgical reforms as destructive. By making it easier for Catholics who are most comfortable celebrating the Tridentine rite, the motu proprio intended to make them feel more at home in the Catholic Church and demonstrate that the Council was not a radical departure from the

preceeding
Catholic
tradition.

On the other
hand, when it
comes to the
question of
Catholic
teaching
about Jews
and Judaism,
Nostra
Aetate is
arguably rev
olutionary.
As many co
mmentators
have
observed,
what Jules
Isaac called
"the teaching
of contempt"
for Jews and
Judaism was
so pervasive
in Christian
history that
the authors
of *Nostra*
Aetate,
committed
after the
Shoah to
expressing a
positive
relationship
to Judaism,
found no
helpful
textual
precedents
from
centuries of
Christian
writing and
had to leap
all the way
back to New
Testament
texts for
affirmative
statements.

Nostra

Aetate, 4 is thus unique among Catholic ecclesiastical documents in that it cites only New Testament texts and no previous church councils, popes, or theologians.

In a very relevant address to the Roman curia of December 22, 2005, Pope Benedict XVI wrote that it was incorrect to regard the Second Vatican Council with a "hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture," which "risks ending in a split between the pre-conciliar Church and the post-conciliar Church" because only the Council's innovations are valued. The pope argued that the Council should be

viewed with
a
"hermeneutic
of reform, of
renewal in
the continuity
of the
[Church],
which
increases in
time and
develops, yet
always
remaining
the same,
the one
subject of the
journeying
People of
God."

Nevertheless
, Benedict ac
knowledged
that after the
Shoah and
"a
retrospective
look at a long
and difficult
history, it
was
necessary to
evaluate and
define in a
new way the
relationship
between the
Church and
the faith of
Israel" (The
phrase "faith
of Israel" is
also
noteworthy).
This
evaluation
revealed "a
discontinuity
... but in
which, after
the various
distinctions
between

concrete
historical
situations
and their
requirements
had been
made, the
continuity of
principles
proved not to
have been
abandoned.
It is easy to
miss this fact
at a first
glance. It is
precisely in
this
combination
of continuity
and
discontinuity
at different
levels that
the very
nature of true
reform
consists."

It seems that
the pope was
maintaining
that despite
the "discontin
uities" with
authentic
Catholic
belief
represented
by the
centuries-old
"teaching of
contempt" for
Jews, *Nostra
Aetate* "s
reform
actually
restored an
essential
continuity
with
authentic
Catholic
faith,

presumably
by retrieving
the New
Testament
teaching that
Jews "remain
beloved of
God" (Rom.
11: 28).

Thus, the
issue of the
1962 Roman
Missal's God
prayer "for
the
conversion of
the Jews,"
even though
a tiny
episode in
the context
of the entire
liturgical year
for a tiny
number of
Catholics,
and probably
not a
conscious
concern of
those
advocating
the motu
proprio's
outreach,
touches on
the key issue
for Catholics
alienated by
Vatican II:
was the
Council a co
ndemnable
rupture with
the past? In
the case of
eighteen
hundred
years of
constant
negative
speech
about Jews

and Judaism,
Nostra
Aetate's
positive
expressions
do indeed
seem
radically disc
ontinuous,
regardless of
its citation of
the ultimate
textual
authority, the
New
Testament.
The
contrasting
perspectives
of Lefebvre's
followers and
those
Catholics
committed to
rapprocheme
nt with Jews
(not to
mention
other
Christians
and other
religions)
create an
extremely
delicate set
of dynamics
for the
Vatican,
which is itself
not
theologically
monolithic.

Moreover,
the subject of
conversionar
y "missions
to the Jews"
has been
debated
within the
Catholic
community in
recent years,

further
complicating
the
theological
picture.

It is
impossible to
know
whether any
of these cons
iderations
have
consciously
shaped
recent devel
opments, but
they do form
a backdrop
for the
subject of the
motu proprio.
Press
comments
that
simplistically
apply the
political
labels of
"liberal" and "
conservative"
to this
complex
picture are
misleading
and
unhelpful.
They are a
manifestation
of the same
"hermeneutic
of
discontinuity
and rupture"
that Pope
Benedict
criticized
regarding the
interpretation
of the
Council.

Philip A.
Cunningham