



Fœderatio Internationalis *Una Voce*

Positio N. 5

**THE USE OF THE VULGATE
AND THE ANCIENT LATIN PSALTERS**

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From the General Introduction

These papers, commissioned by the International Federation *Una Voce*, are offered to stimulate and inform debate about the 1962 Missal among Catholics ‘attached to the ancient Latin liturgical tradition’, and others interested in the liturgical renewal of the Church. They are not to be taken to imply personal or moral criticism of those today or in the past who have adopted practices or advocated reforms which are subjected to criticism. In composing these papers we adopt the working assumption that our fellow Catholics act in good will, but that nevertheless a vigorous and well-informed debate is absolutely necessary if those who act in good will are to do so in light of a proper understanding of the issues.

The authors of the papers are not named, as the papers are not the product of any one person, and also because we prefer them to be judged on the basis of their content, not their authorship.

The International Federation *Una Voce* humbly submits the opinions contained in these papers to the judgement of the Church.

The Use of the Vulgate and the Ancient Latin Psalters: Abstract

The 1962 Missal predominantly uses the ancient Latin translation known as the ‘Vulgate’; for the Psalter it uses the ancient ‘Gallican’ and (in part) the ‘Roman’ Psalters. These versions make use of a distinctive ‘Christian Latin’ style, and follow, in the Old Testament, the Greek Septuagint translation. Both features have exposed them to criticism: in 1945 the ‘Pian Psalter’ was promulgated, using the style of Pagan Latinists and based on the Hebrew Masoretic text. (The ‘Neo Vulgate’, an entirely new Latin translation of the whole Bible, was published finally in 1979.) Nevertheless, Conciliar and post-conciliar documents affirm the value of these features. Most notably, the use of the Septuagint makes the ancient Latin translations part of a tradition of interpretation used by the New Testament authors and the Greek and Latin Fathers alike, which passed into the liturgical use made of key passages. The use of the ancient Latin texts is an important part of the organic integrity of the 1962 Missal, and the elements of the Pian Psalter which are found there for historical reasons should, ideally, be removed.

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FIUV POSITIO 5: THE USE OF THE VULGATE AND THE ANCIENT LATIN PSALTERS

1. One difference between the two Forms of the Roman Rite, which is at once deeply rooted and complex, is the use, in the Extraordinary Form, of the ancient Vulgate translation of the Bible, associated with St Jerome, with certain adaptations, in the Lectionary, and the 'Roman' and 'Gallican' Psalters in the Propers. While the 1974 *Graduale Romanum* uses the ancient chant texts, the Ordinary Form is otherwise based on an entirely new Latin translation, the *Nova Vulgata Editio*, the 'Neo Vulgate'.¹ It is the purpose of this paper to explain the value of the texts found in the 1962 Missal, and to what extent reform is appropriate.

Christian and Classical Latin Style

2. While this paper is not primarily concerned with the Office, the revision of Office hymns under Pope Urban VIII is worth noting. The versions published in 1629² were intended to conform to the Latin style of the Augustan age. The revised hymns are generally regarded as harder to sing, and partly for this reason the Dominicans, Benedictines, Cistercians, Calced Carmelites, and Carthusians, never adopted them.
3. The Pian Psalter (and also the Canticles used in the Office, which were revised at the same time), overseen by Fr (later, Cardinal) Augustin Bea, S.J., and authorised in 1945,³ was again modelled on the Augustan style.⁴ This Psalter was allowed as an option in the Office, and was employed in the composition of proper texts for new or revised feasts from 1945 onwards (see Appendix A).
4. Contrary to this classicising tendency, however, Christian Latin has its own value. The great Dutch classicist Christine Mohrmann⁵ observed that, in the ancient Latin translations of scripture, Latin vocabulary with pagan associations was replaced by archaic, foreign, or freshly minted terms; translations of great fidelity led to the incorporation of Greek and Semitic idioms, syntax, and even elements of grammar. The result was a Latin register with a strong identity, instantly recognisable as Christian, closely associated with Scripture, and suitable for the liturgy, in a way strikingly reminiscent of the advice of the Instruction *Liturgiam authenticam*.⁶ Particularly

¹ The Neo Vulgate Psalter was first published in 1969, the New Testament in 1971, and the complete Bible in 1979. *Liturgiam authenticam* 37 describes it as 'the point of reference as regards the delineation of the canonical text': 'Novae Vulgatae editionis esse referenda quoad textum canonicum Sacrarum Scripturarum definiendum.' Cf. para 24

² An edition of the Roman Breviary containing them was published in 1631.

³ AAS 37, 1945, pp65ff

⁴ Bea calls the Augustan age a 'better period of Latin' ('di quel migliore periodo della latinita') *Biblica* 26 (1945) pp203ff. Bea describes the ancient Latin texts as using 'a vulgar and later Latin' ('latino volgare e posteriore', and calls his own, Augustan-style Latin 'a Latin choiceworthy, more classical' ('un latino piu scelto, piu classico').

⁵ Christine Mohrmann, *Vigiliae Christianae* I (1947) pp114-128 and 168-182; see also her 'Liturgical Latin'

⁶ *Liturgiam authenticam* 27: 1. archaisms, 'seeming inelegant expressions' ('vocabula aut locutiones specie inelegantes continentu') deriving from a literal rendering, and other factors, can contribute to 'a sacred style that will come to be recognised as proper to liturgical language.' ('stylum sacrum, qui et tamquam sermo proprie liturgicus agnoscatur.') Cf. para 40 on avoiding the 'manner of speech' used in non-Catholic or non-Christian religious language ('loquendi consuetudine communitatum ecclesialium non catholicarum, aut aliarum religionum'). Cf. the Instruction *Varietates legitimate* (1994) 53: 'certain words in current Latin use (memoria, sacramentum) took on a new meaning in the Christian faith.'

noteworthy is the fact that the Latin Psalters which emerged from this tradition imitated the rhythmic construction of Hebrew poetry, and are well suited to Chant.

5. The value of Christian Latin was decisively vindicated in the Constitution on the Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. On hymns it says simply

To whatever extent may seem desirable, the hymns are to be restored to their original form.⁷

On the Psalter, the Constitution says that revision of the Psalter is to take into account the style of Christian Latin, the liturgical use of psalms, also when sung, and the entire tradition of the Latin Church.⁸

The Septuagint and the Tradition of Interpretation

6. While the Old Testament of the Neo Vulgate is based on the Masoretic Hebrew text, the Vulgate and the ancient Latin Psalters depend upon the Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament. The Instruction *Varietates legitimate* (1994) describes the Septuagint's production as 'an enrichment of the Scriptures' 'under divine inspiration',⁹ a judgment which reflects the consensus of the Fathers.¹⁰ It reflects both a more ancient Hebrew manuscript tradition and a more developed theological understanding, than the Hebrew versions directly available to us. It is noteworthy that it is used in the New Testament, in some cases precisely because of its variance with the Hebrew.¹¹ It was the Septuagint which was the basis of Scriptural commentary and exegesis by the Greek Fathers, and by using Latin translations based on the Septuagint, Latin Fathers and Doctors were able to work in continuity with them.
7. In short, the Septuagint translators' own reading of the Old Testament forms a key link in a tradition of interpretation adopted and developed further by the New Testament authors and the Fathers, Doctors, and scholars of the Church right up to modern times. It is this tradition of interpretation which is reflected in the liturgical use made of the Old Testament, especially the Psalms, in the ancient Latin liturgical tradition.

⁷ Sacrosanctum Concilium 93: 'Hymni, quantum expedire videtur, ad pristinam formam restituantur'

⁸ Sacrosanctum Concilium 91: 'respectu habito latinatis christianae, usus liturgici etiam in cantu, necnon totius traditionis latinae Ecclesiae.'

⁹ Instruction *Varietates legitimate* (1994) 9: '...the translation of the Bible into Greek introduced the word of God into a world which had been closed to it and caused, under divine inspiration, an enrichment of the Scriptures.' ('Versio librorum sacrorum in graecam linguam verbum Dei immisit in mundum, qui ei clausus erat, atque, Deo inspirante, ad Scripturas ipsas locupletandas induxit.')

¹⁰ St Augustine wrote 'With regard to whatever is in the Septuagint that is not in the Hebrew manuscripts, we can say that the one Spirit wished to say them through the writers of the former rather than the latter in order to show that both the one and the other were inspired.' (*De Civitate Dei* 18.43). See Richard Smith SJ "Inspiration and Inerrancy" in Brown et al. 'Jerome Biblical Commentary' (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1969) pp499-514, pp511-12.

¹¹ The most famous example is that of Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 7:14) that 'a Virgin shall conceive', in which the Septuagint translators look forward to the Virgin birth with a clarity lacking in the Hebrew text. The Vulgate 'virgo' follows the Septuagint 'hē parthenos'; the Hebrew 'almâh' could equally be translated 'a young woman'. See Richard Smith op. cit. p511: 'Frequently in the [New Testament], the [Septuagint] is cited rather than a [Greek] translation based directly on the [Masoretic Text]. Moreover, at times the [Septuagint] is cited in support of basic Christian doctrines precisely because the Hebr[ew] text does not support the doctrine in question.'

8. The importance of the ‘entire tradition of the Latin Church’ is referred to in the passage of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* quoted above, and is reaffirmed emphatically in *Liturgiam authenticam*:

The effort should be made to ensure that the translations be conformed to that understanding of biblical passages which has been handed down by liturgical use and by the tradition of the Fathers of the Church, especially as regards very important texts such as the Psalms and the readings used for the principal celebrations of the liturgical year; in these cases the greatest care is to be taken so that the translation express the traditional Christological, typological and spiritual sense, and manifest the unity and the inter-relatedness of the two Testaments.¹²

The preservation of this tradition of interpretation in the texts of the 1962 Missal, by contrast with the Neo Vulgate, is illustrated in Appendix C.¹³

9. The restoration of ancient liturgical texts by Pope St Pius V,¹⁴ Pope Clement VIII,¹⁵ and Pope St Pius X,¹⁶ demonstrates a profound respect for the authentic and ancient texts (see Appendix B), and raises the issue, related to that of the tradition of interpretation, of continuity of worship. When we use the *ipsissima verba* of countless generations of our Catholic predecessors, we respond to the same liturgical occasions by reflecting upon the same texts.¹⁷ As Pope Benedict XVI has expressed it:

The diachronic aspect, praying with the Fathers and the apostles, is part of what we mean by rite, ... Rites are ... forms of the apostolic Tradition and of its unfolding in the great places of the Tradition. ... Because of the historical character of God’s action, the ‘Divine Liturgy’ ... has been fashioned, in a way similar to Scripture, by human beings and their capacities. ... The authority of the liturgy can certainly be compared to that of the great confessions of faith of the early Church.¹⁸

10. While the Pian Psalter¹⁹ and the Neo Vulgate²⁰ were prepared with accuracy in mind, they inevitably reflect the scholarly consensus of their own day. In general, profound

¹² *Liturgiam authenticam* 41: ‘Opera detur, ut translationes ad intellectum locorum biblicorum ab usu liturgico ac traditione Patrum Ecclesiae transmissum conformentur, praesertim cum de textibus magni momenti agitur, sicut psalmi et lectiones in praecipuis celebrationibus anni liturgici adhibitae; his in casibus diligentissime curetur oportet, ut translatio traditum sensum christologicum, typologicum aut spiritualem exprimat atque unitatem et nexum inter utrumque Testamentum manifestet.’ Again: ‘translators are strongly encouraged to pay close attention to the history of interpretation’.¹² And again: ‘Certain expressions that belong to the heritage of the whole or of a great part of the ancient Church, as well as others that have become part of the general human patrimony, are to be respected’.

¹³ Cf. Peter Jeffery ‘Translating Tradition: a chant historian reads *Liturgiam authenticam*’ (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005) pp33-39

¹⁴ Leading to the 1570 *Missale Romanum*.

¹⁵ Leading to the 1608 *Missale Romanum*. On Clement’s restoration of the authentic liturgical text (as opposed to the Vulgate) see Peter Jeffery ‘Translating Tradition: a chant historian reads *Liturgiam authenticam*’ (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005) pp50-52

¹⁶ Leading to the 1908 *Graduale Romanum*

¹⁷ This instinct was well articulated by Anglican scholars editing a Latin version of the Book of Common Prayer in 1865, wishing to incorporate ‘those very words which take their origin from most distinguished Doctors ... Leo ... Gregory ... which have been dear to our predecessors Bede ... King Alfred the Great ... Osmund and Anselm, and others through many centuries, in their devout dealings with heaven (in pio cum coelis commercio cordi fuere)’ W. Bright and P. G. Medd ‘Libri Precum Publicarum Ecclesiae Anglicanae Versio Latina’, (Rivington, 1865)

¹⁸ Spirit of the Liturgy p164-167. See also ‘In the history of the liturgy growth and progress are found, but not a rupture. What was sacred for prior generations, remains sacred and great for us as well.’

¹⁹ For example, the Pian Psalter was published on the eve of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which in some cases vindicated the Septuagint over the Masoretic Hebrew text, which was the basis of the Pian translation. See Raymond Brown, D.W. Johnson and Kevin O’Connell: “Texts and Versions” (in Brown

changes have taken place in Biblical scholarship since these translations were prepared. The difficulty of establishing a definitive original text is increasingly recognised,²¹ and many of the simple rules of thumb which used to guide scholars have been questioned.²² The reality is that all translations are based on scholarly judgements subject to revision in light of the accumulation of evidence and changing scholarly fashions. The need for a stable Scriptural basis for the liturgy means that we must accept that our liturgical texts will not always accord with the latest scholarly consensus.

11. On this point an important distinction is made by Pope Pius XII in his encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu*.

Hence this special authority, or, as they say, authenticity of the Vulgate was not affirmed by the Council [sc. of Trent] particularly for critical reasons, but rather because of its legitimate use in the Churches throughout so many centuries; by which use indeed the same is shown, in the sense in which the Church has understood and understands it, to be free from any error whatsoever in matters of faith and morals; so that, as the Church herself testifies and affirms, it may be quoted safely and without fear of error in disputations, in lectures and in preaching; and so its authenticity is not specified primarily as critical, but rather as juridical.²³

The Church's use of the Vulgate does not commit her to the proposition that it is the most accurate possible translation of the inspired Hebrew text; rather, it reflects the Church's own interpretation of the text, and is guaranteed as not introducing into the text any moral or doctrinal error.

Conclusion

12. The ancient texts used in the Church's liturgical tradition are a treasure. They represent a great achievement of Christian scholarship, and are the culmination of the development of a Christian style which is of immense importance in Christian culture.²⁴

et al. 'The New Jerome Biblical Commentary' (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986) pp1083-1112, p1086: in the Qumran Manuscripts 'many alternative readings and expansions for which medieval Hebrew manuscripts in the [Masoretic tradition] have no counterpart, but which were often already known Greek or Samaritan sources, are here found...'

²⁰ Again, the Neo Vulgate's New Testament was based upon the *United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament*, in its first two editions (1966 and 1968). These used a system of marking variant readings A, B, C, D, indicating their 'relative degree of certainty' in the view of the editors, which was much criticised and abandoned in later editions. Reviewing the 4th edition, Professor J. K. Elliott referred to 'the bizarre and often criticised system of allocating rating letters'; calling it 'arbitrary and fluctuating'; and concluding that 'even here the editors acknowledge that this "standard text" is in flux and may be changed'. J. K. Elliott 'New Testament Textual Criticism: the Application of thoroughgoing principles' (Leiden: Brill, 2010) pp557-558

²¹ E. J. Epp and B. R. Gaventa 'Junia: the First Woman Apostle' (Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2005) p5, on the problem of establishing a stable and precise 'original authorial text'. One of the influences here was a perception among classicists (e.g. Rosalind Thomas) and New Testament scholars (e.g. Loveday Alexander) that in dealing with an age before printing made possible definitive 'editions', study of 'Literacy' and its relationship with 'Orality' has much to teach us about the purpose, genesis and evolution of different types of text.

²² To give just one example, the assumption that longer versions of a text were more likely to be interpolated, than shorter versions truncated, has lost favour. E. J. Epp *ibid*: 'both this simplicity and the accompanying innocence of New Testament textual criticism began to erode'.

²³ Pope Pius XII, Encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu* (1943) 21

²⁴ Cf. Pope Paul VI Apostolic Letter *Sacrificium laudis*: 'For this language [sc. Latin] is, within the Latin Church, an abundant well-spring of Christian civilisation and a very rich treasure-trove of devotion.' ('cum sit in Ecclesia Latina christiani cultus humani fons uberrimus et locupletissimus pietatis thesaurus')

Furthermore, by using them today we are able to use the very words of many of our forefathers in the Faith, and, most importantly, are able to appreciate the homiletic, exegetical, and liturgical use they made of them. The value of the diachronic continuity this represents has been emphasised by *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, *Liturgiam authenticam*, and Pope Benedict XVI. It follows that the use of the Vulgate and the ancient psalters should be preserved in the Extraordinary Form, and that any new Propers should make use of these versions.

13. The presence of elements of the Pian Psalter in the 1962 Missal clearly disturbs the 'stability' across the Missal of the Psalter, 'the fundamental prayer book of the Christian people', so desired by *Liturgiam authenticam*.²⁵ The Instruction *Il Padre, incomprendibile* (1996), addressing the Eastern Churches, expresses the matter clearly:

The first requirement of every Eastern liturgical renewal, as is also the case for liturgical reform in the West, is that of rediscovering full fidelity to their own liturgical traditions, benefiting from their riches and eliminating that which has altered their authenticity.²⁶

In light of the judgement of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* there seems no doubt that the Pian Psalter and Canticles, and the revised Office hymns of Urban VIII, amount, in another phrase of *Il Padre*, to a 'non-organic intrusion'²⁷ in the liturgical tradition represented by the 1962 Missal and associated liturgical books. All things considered, therefore, they should ideally be replaced respectively by the corresponding passages of the Gallican Psalter, the Vulgate Canticles, and the authentic Medieval Office hymns.

²⁵ *Liturgiam authenticam* 36

²⁶ *Il Padre incomprendibile* 18

²⁷ *Ibid* 58

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: THE PIAN PSALTER (AND CANTICLES) FOUND IN THE 1962 BOOKS

In the Praeparatio ad Missam: Psalms 83, 84, 85, 115 and 129

In the Gratiarum Actio post Missam: the Benedicite and Ps 150

In the reformed (1955) Holy Week: Holy Thursday: Psalm 21 (which accompanies the stripping of the altars)

Easter Vigil, in the Lauds which follows it: Benedictus

1 May, Joseph Opifex: Introit Psalm verse; Gradual response and verse; Tract; Offertory.

31 May, BMV Regina: Introit Psalm verse; Gr

15 Aug, Assumption: Gradual response and verse.

3 Sept, Pius X: Introit antiphon and psalm; Gradual response and verse; Alleluia verse; Tract; Double Alleluia for Paschaltide.

Pro aliquibus locis, 6 May, Dominic Savio: Introit psalm; Gradual, Alleluia, Tract, Offertory.

Pro aliquibus locis 6 July, Maria Goretti: Introit antiphon & psalm; Gradual response & verse; Alleluia; Tract.

(It is worth noting also that the 1962 *Breviarium Romanum* with the Vulgate psalter retains the Pian Psalter for the Office of Christmas and Easter, which have a psalter proper to them for their feast and octaves, as well as antiphons, chapters and *responsoria* used for the offices of saints composed after 1945, St. Joseph the Worker, St. Pius X, etc..)

APPENDIX B: HISTORICAL EXAMPLES OF THE RESTORATION OF AUTHENTIC LITURGICAL TEXTS

1570 Missale Romanum

3rd Sunday of Advent, Introit

Antiphon (Philippians 4:4-6): 'Gaudete in Domino semper: iterum dico, gaudete.

Modestia vestra nota sit omnibus hominibus: Dominus enim prope est. Nihil solliciti sitis, sed in omni oratione petitiones vestrae innotescant apud Deum.'

Psalm: (Ps 84:2) 'Benedixisti, Domine, terram tuam: avertisti captivitatem Jacob.'

1474 Missale Romanum

Psalm verse had been replaced by 'et pax Dei quae exsuperat omnem sensum custodiat corda vestra et intelligentias vestras in Christo Iesu' (Philippians 4:7, continuing the text of the epistle used in the antiphon).

4th Sunday of Advent (and Advent Ember Wednesday), Introit
Antiphon (Isaiah 45:8): ‘Rorate caeli, desuper, et nubes pluant justum: aperiatur terra, et germinet Salvatorem.’
Psalm (Ps 18:2): ‘Caeli enarrant gloriam Dei: et opera manuum eius annuntiat firmamentum.’

1474 Missale Romanum

Psalm had been replaced by ‘Et iustitia oriatur simul ego dominus creavi eum...’
(continuing the text of Isaiah used in the antiphon).

1908 Graduale Romanum

26th December, St Stephen, Introit: Psalm 118:23

‘Et enim sederunt principes, et adversum me loquebantur’ (early chant manuscripts)

1871 Graduale Romanum

Had used ‘Sederunt principes, et adversum me loquebantur’ (text changed presumably on stylistic grounds)

10th Sunday After Pentecost, Introit: Psalm 54:17

‘Dum clamarem ad Dominum...’ (early chant manuscripts)

1871 Graduale Romanum

Had used: ‘Cum clamarem ad Dominum...’ (text changed presumably on stylistic grounds)

The unrestored texts continued to be used in later editions of the Missale Romanum.

APPENDIX C: ANCIENT LATIN TEXTS AND THE NEO VULGATE

Easter Sunday Introit Ps 138 [139] v 18, Roman Psalter:

‘Resurrexi et adhuc tecum sum.’ (‘I am risen and still am with you.’)

(Gallican Psalter: ‘exsurrexi et adhuc sum tecum’: ‘I have stood up...’: this text was also interpreted as a reference to the resurrection by St Augustine, who had this reading.)

Neo Vulgate: ‘Si ad finem pervenerim, adhuc sum tecum.’ (‘If I were to have arrived at the end, still I am with you.’)

The tradition of interpretation, as referring to the Resurrection, represented in the liturgical use of this text, is excluded by the Neo Vulgate.

Feast of St Andrew: Ps.138.17,

‘Mihi autem nimis honorati sunt amici tui, Deus: nimis confortatus est principatus eorum.’ (‘To me Thy friends, O God, are made exceedingly honourable; their principality is exceedingly strengthened.’)

Neo Vulgate: ‘Mihi autem nimis pretiosae cogitationes tuae, Deus; nimis gravis summa earum.’ (‘But to me your thoughts are extremely precious, O God, extremely weighty the sum of them.’)

The tradition of interpretation, as referring to the Apostles, is excluded by the Neo Vulgate.

Liturgia Horarum Monday after Lent IV, the Office of Readings

Leviticus 16:13-14, and a passage from Origen expounding it.

Lev 16:13-14 in the Vulgate, following the Septuagint, reads: ‘he shall take some of the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it with his finger seven times upon the Mercy Seat towards the East’ The significance of the East is expounded by Origen. But the Neo Vulgate, following the Masoretic Hebrew text, reads “... and he shall sprinkle it with his finger seven times against the front of the mercy seat”.

Ps 19(18):6-7 gave the Greek and Latin Fathers, who read it in the more or less identical texts of the Septuagint and the ancient Latin psalters, a tradition of exposition according to which the Eternal Son placed his Tabernacle in the sun of the Bridal Chamber of the Virgin’s womb and comes forth as the Giant of two substances, human and divine, to run his incarnate course. The Neo Vulgate confuses this imagery, which is fundamental to three Office hymns: *Conditor alme siderum*, *Veni redemptor gentium*, and *Fit porta Christi pervia*.