

difficult passage through the episcopal conference (which I take to signify a healthier level of interest among bishops on liturgical matters than hitherto). A quick and complete confirmation of the sacramentary by the Holy See will be taken to be an indication of success by those who worked on the project, by many American bishops and most liturgists. By the same token, any balking on Rome's part will be read as a sign of ecclesiastical retrogression, disrespect for the authority of episcopal conferences and insensitivity to the needs of particular regions of the church. Unfortunately, confirmation has already become highly politicized, with groups lining up behind the sacramentary as if it were a perfect document (which it is not) or in radical opposition as if it did not contain many excellent features (which it does).

It would be very surprising—in light of the lectionary experience—if Rome's confirmation of the proposed sacramentary were quick and unquestioning. The process of the confirmation of the sacramentary will, I predict, be long and complicated; but there are surely ways to make it less contentious than it promises to be. There is no need to rehearse the American interests in the new sacramentary, principally the need for a Mass book adapted to the cultural and spiritual needs of Catholicism in the United States. The arguments in this matter are well articulated among American

bishops and liturgists. There does exist, however, a need to rehearse the genuine interests and concerns of the Holy See when faced with a local liturgical initiative, principally the integrity of the Roman liturgy and the need to maintain the liturgical unity of the church. A careful review of articles 22, 39 and 40 of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy on the matter of competent authority in liturgical matters would be especially appropriate.

Perhaps what is required at this point is, first of all, a joint statement from the Holy See and the NCCB on the principles and manner by which the new sacramentary will be confirmed. Roman respect for the genius of local churches would be clearly stated and, by the same token, the legitimate concerns of the Holy See for liturgical unity and doctrinal integrity (especially in the matter of textual translation) would be recognized and advanced.

This step would overcome the mounting polarization between Rome and American liturgists. Among the lessons to be learned is that the Holy See should not be expected simply to "rubber stamp" the submissions of episcopal conferences (which is not what "confirmation" means).

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