

Pope Benedict XIV Changes Latin Mass Prayer for the Jews

Keeps Demand for the Jews' Salvation to Come Only Through Jesus Christ

For a facsimile of the report issue on February 4, 2008 from L'Osservatore Romano, click here:

http://newcatholic.googlepages.com/OR_20080206_prima.pdf

The article at the bottom of *L'Osservatore Romano* reads:

In reference to the dispositions contained in the Motu proprio *Summorum Pontificum*, of July 7, 2007, on the possibility of using the last edition of the *Missale Romanum* prior to the Vatican II Council, published in 1962 with the authority of Blessed John XXIII, the Holy Father Benedict XVI has ordered that the "Oremus et pro Iudaeis" of the Liturgy of Good Friday in the aforesaid *Missale Romanum* be replaced with the following text:

Oremus et pro Iudaeis. Ut Deus et Dominus noster illuminet corda eorum, ut agnoscant Iesum Christum salvatorem omnium hominum. Oremus. Flectamus genua. Levate.

[Translation: Let us pray also for the Jews. May our God and Lord illuminate their hearts, so that they may acknowledge Jesus Christ, savior of all men. Let us pray. Let us kneel. Arise.]

Omnipotens sempiternus Deus, qui vis ut omnes homines salvi fiant et ad agnitionem veritatis veniant, concede propitius, ut plenitudine gentium in Ecclesiam Tuam intrante omnis Israel salvus fiat. Per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

[Translation: Almighty and everlasting God, who desires that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of truth, mercifully grant that, as the fullness of the Gentiles enters into your Church, all Israel may be saved. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.]

This text is to be used, beginning in the current year, in all Celebrations of the Liturgy of Good Friday with the aforementioned *Missale Romanum*.

Commentary by Robert Sungenis:

Pope Benedict XVI has once again acted as a faithful Pontiff of the Catholic Church. The most important dimension of the traditional Latin Mass prayer was the demand for the Jews to recognize Jesus Christ and become saved by Him. This demand was preserved by Pope Benedict XVI. This move is especially significant in light of the fact that many Jewish leaders today claim that the Jews do not need to accept Jesus Christ as He is taught by the Christian faith or that they have their own covenant with God apart from the New Covenant in Jesus Christ and can be saved outside of Christianity.

All the previous descriptions contained in the old Latin Mass prayer of Pope John XXIII that have been eliminated by Pope Benedict XVI (e.g., reference to the “blindness” of the Jews or their living in “darkness”) can be considered superfluous, since: (a) many adjectives and adverbs could be used to describe someone outside the Christian faith but they are not necessary when we are praying for their conversion, and (b) the descriptions of being in “darkness” and “blindness” apply to everyone in the human race who has not received the redemption in Jesus Christ, and thus the Jews are not unique in that aspect.

Although the pope eliminated the word “conversion” from the 1962 missal, it is unmistakable that his reiteration of the “prayer for the Jews,” since it is placed in a context of receiving salvation from Jesus Christ, is making the same demand on the Jews that Catholic tradition has required of them – that their salvation can only come from Jesus Christ and that they must submit to Him in order to become saved.

I would also point out that the pope’s allusion to Romans 11:26: “as the fullness of the Gentiles enters into your Church, all Israel may be saved” from the Latin: “ut plenitudine gentium in Ecclesiam Tuam intrante omnis Israel salvus fiat,” does not make the mistake of confining the salvation of “all Israel” to a singular ambiguous event in the future (e.g., an event that occurs, as some erroneously claim, “at the return of Christ”). The pope left the allusion to the salvation of Israel in Romans 11:26 as general as the 1994 Catholic Catechism leaves it in Paragraph 674:

“The glorious Messiah’s coming is suspended at every moment of history until his recognition by ‘all Israel’....The ‘full inclusion’ of the Jews in the Messiah’s salvation, in the wake of ‘the full number of the Gentiles,’ will enable the People of God to achieve ‘the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,’ in which ‘God may be all in all.’”

Hence, both the Latin Mass Prayer for the Jews and the Catholic Catechism leave open the interpretation that “all Israel shall be saved” and does not refer exclusively to an event in the future in which masses of Jews will be saved, but to the fact that “Israel,” the Jews, have been coming into the Church since ancient times, while at the same time, “the fullness of the

Gentiles,” by the influx of various individuals from the nations into the Catholic Church, has also been occurring. In this way, the “fullness of the Gentiles” and the saving of “all Israel” are presently occurring and both will reach their fruition at the Second Coming of Christ. All the Jews that become saved, from the time of Abraham to the return of Christ, comprise the “all Israel” that will be saved. Our hope, of course, is that there will be many more Jews that will become saved before the coming of Christ.

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