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USCCB June 2012 Meeting Report

Bishops Discuss Key Social Issues -- and Scripture Translation

by Helen Hull Hitchcock and Susan Benofy

The spring meeting of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) opened with Mass on Wednesday, June 13, at the historic Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a French Romanesque church built in 1897, on Atlanta's famed Peachtree Street, only a short walk from the hotel where the meeting took place.

Archbishop Wilton Gregory of Atlanta was the homilist on this feast of Saint Anthony of Padua, who is known as the patron of lost things. Archbishop Gregory alluded to this in his homily: "Certainly here our contemporary Church ought to seek his assistance, since we seem to have lost something of our confidence and our vitality in proclaiming the gospel. Unfortunately we may have also occasionally misplaced clerical integrity." Religious life, "needs a serious renewal that Saint Anthony can perhaps help us to rediscover," he added, perhaps in reference to the recent Vatican assessment of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and related issues.

Unlike most USCCB meetings, there was only one official agenda item: a proposal by the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, presented by its chairman, Bishop Stephen Blaire (Stockton), to write a pastoral message, "Catholic Reflections on Work, Poverty and a Broken Economy," which was overwhelmingly approved (171-26).

However, the bishops' schedule on the first day-and-a-half of their June meeting was jam-packed with reports and discussions on key issues and current challenges in our country.

After New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan opened the session on Wednesday morning with the USCCB's message to the Holy Father, and an address to the bishops by the Apostolic nuncio,

Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, the bishops heard a 10-year progress report from the National Review Board on the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People; an address by Carolyn Woo, new president of Catholic Relief Services; a report by Oakland Bishop Salvatore Cordileone on the conference's promotion and defense of marriage; and a presentation by Baltimore Archbishop William Lori on crucial religious liberty issues.

A principal focus of the bishops' religious liberty efforts is the US Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) mandate that would force Catholic institutions to provide health insurance coverage to employees for procedures the Catholic Church opposes — abortion-inducing drugs, artificial contraceptives, and sterilizations. This mandate was announced August 1, 2011, as part of the rules HHS is issuing to implement the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) passed in 2010. Other serious concerns include court rulings and policy decisions that have forced Catholic institutions to cease adoption and foster care services.

After the discussion on religious liberty, the bishops affirmed by a unanimous voice vote a statement titled "United for Religious Freedom," originally issued March 14 by the USCCB Administrative Committee. The statement concludes with an appeal for prayer:

Most importantly of all, we call upon the Catholic faithful, and all people of faith, throughout our country to join us in prayer and penance for our leaders and for the complete protection of our First Freedom—religious liberty—which is not only protected in the laws and customs of our great nation, but rooted in the teachings of our great Tradition. Prayer is the ultimate source of our strength—for without God, we can do nothing; but with God, all things are possible.

(Complete statement online: usccb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty/march-14-statement-on-religious-freedom-and-hhs-mandate.cfm.)

The bishops also promoted the Fortnight for Religious Freedom, June 21-July 4, a special period of prayer, study, and public action to emphasize our Christian and American heritage of liberty.

On Thursday morning, Bishop John Wester of Salt Lake City presented a plan for improving communications from the conference.

The final item on the schedule, before the meeting was closed to the media, was a report on the New American Bible and the Lectionary. Two USCCB committees are responsible for scripture translation for the liturgy: Doctrine and Divine Worship. Cardinal Donald Wuerl (Doctrine chairman) of Washington, DC, and Archbishop Gregory Aymond (Divine Worship chairman) of New Orleans, outlined the project of re-translation of the Bible to arrive at one consistent text for all liturgical uses, as well as for personal study. Their presentation was followed by an animated discussion.

A transcription of this important discussion concerning scripture translation is presented here, as transcribed by Susan Benofy from our recordings at the USCCB meeting.

— hhh

Report on New American Bible and the Lectionary

USCCB Spring General Meeting
Thursday Morning, June 14, 2012

Cardinal Timothy Dolan: (New York, President of the USCCB) And I'm just thinking, Cardinal Wuerl, how appropriate it is that you're going to bring us up to date with a report on the New

American Bible and the Lectionary in the whole context of the New Evangelization and the Year of Faith that we've heard about. So please. Thanks for your leadership. Archbishop Aymond is joining you as well.

Archbishop Gregory Aymond: (New Orleans; Chairman, Committee on Divine Worship) Thank you, Cardinal Dolan. My brother bishops, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you briefly in order to share the work of the Committee on Divine Worship regarding the Lectionary for Mass, and the Committee on Doctrine regarding the New American Bible.

A brief history that you will have on the slides:

In 1997 we approved Volume I of the Lectionary, and in 1999 we approved Volumes II, III, and IV. The body of bishops at that time voted to conduct a review of the text after five years in order that we could evaluate the suitability for liturgical proclamation, poetic expression, grammar, vocabulary. In June of 2004, the Committee on Liturgy was given the task to do experimental revision of selected readings. Following that, in November of 2006, the body of bishops approved changes to the selected readings in Advent. In November of 2007 the body of bishops approved changes to the readings of the Sundays of Lent. And further work by the Committee on Divine Worship included the weekdays of Lent, Sundays of Easter, and Sundays in Ordinary Time.

While this work was being done by the Committee on Divine Worship on the Lectionary, there was a separate project that was also taking place on the New American Bible. Specifically the revision of the Old Testament. And that text was published with the *imprimatur* in 2011. Then a request by the CCD to conduct the revision of the footnotes of the New American Bible New Testament. But when that went to the Administrative Committee there was a suggestion to revise not only the footnotes, but the revision of the New Testament itself.

So, as you can see, there were two projects going on at the same time. After a lot of conversation and ongoing consultation between two standing committees, it is the recommendation and desire of both the Committee on Divine Worship and the Committee on Doctrine, including its Subcommittee on the Translation of Scripture Texts, now to work toward a single translation. That is, a single text of the New American Bible that could be used for all pastoral uses: personal prayer and study; secondly, catechesis; and the proclamation of the Scriptures at Sacred Liturgy.

Some preliminary recommendations were made to the Administrative Committee in March of this year in this regard, and now we would like to outline a plan to proceed — the basic goals and the process to be followed — and to receive your support as we move forward. And Cardinal Wuerl will now delineate for us the goals and the process.

Cardinal Donald Wuerl: (Washington, DC; Chairman, Committee on Doctrine) Archbishop Aymond, thank you very much. The goal — it's a very simple goal — the goal is to produce a single translation, to arrive at a single translation.

The Synod on the Word of God and the Post-synodal exhortation *Verbum Domini* clearly articulated the central place of Sacred Scripture in the life of the Church. The goal of this project is to see that there would be one translation that would be used for devotional use, catechetical use, liturgical use. It would have all of the qualities that we would hope to find in a translation that would provide us one source of language when we speak of the Word of God. The process is a somewhat simple process; it's just that it's going to take a long time. That's just the nature, and you're going to hear in a moment why.

The authorization from the Board of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine: with that authorization the CCD, in consultation with the Subcommittee on the Translation of Scripture Texts, will undertake a revision of the New American Bible New Testament. What this will mean is, it will look at those texts to see that they are going to be able to be used for proclamation as well as for ordinary

use. This work will utilize the principles of translation that guided the recent revision of the New American Bible Old Testament, and will follow the norms of translation contained in the Instruction *Liturgiam authenticam* for the translation of Sacred Scripture that's to be used in Sacred Liturgy.

So, before the work commences, the Committee on Divine Liturgy [sic] will turn over all of the work it's already done on gathering all of the information on the Lectionary, with the recommendation that the principles that were used in the production of the most recent translations for liturgical use be used. The revised Old Testament will be revised only in light of the Committee on Divine Worship's principles regarding suitability for liturgical practice.

I know this sounds as if it's going to be an enormous amount of redoing, but it really will not be. The Old Testament — we just approved that recently — it will just be revisited now to see: those texts that are used liturgically, do they correspond to principles for liturgical proclamation?

The biblical scholars responsible for the revision will be sensitive, then, to the pastoral, the doctrinal, the liturgical considerations as they produce a draft to be presented for review and preliminary approval by the Subcommittee for the Translation of Sacred Scripture. Both committees, the Committee on Divine Worship and the Committee on Doctrine, will then have an opportunity to review these texts. Ultimately it's all of us, it's the body of bishops, who'll be asked to approve the completed biblical text for liturgical use so that we can then submit this to the Holy See for the *recognitio*. Once we receive the *recognitio*, then the president of our conference can grant the imprimatur to the New American Bible, and then it will be able to be used in the Lectionary at Mass. So the end product will be one translation that we will all be using, and hearing the same words when we refer to specific texts. And that translation will be used in the liturgy, it'll be used in study, it'll be used in personal devotion, it'll be used when we're simply reading the text.

Now, as I began, obviously this isn't going to be done overnight. But we're asking simply to begin this process so that we will have all of this eventually to bring back. This isn't being said facetiously, I don't expect that I will ... be presenting this. [laughter] But it's the time to start, and we have all the pieces in place, and all of the principles in place. So we get started. The sooner we get started, the sooner *some* of you will live to see it. [laughter]

And if, Your Eminence, there are any questions I would try to answer them, or leave it to my younger colleague here.

Cardinal Dolan: When that happy day comes you will be part of a newsreel on how this all came about. [laughter] Thanks, Cardinal Wuerl. Thanks, Archbishop Aymond and your excellent staff. There may be some... I see Bishop Boyea, I see Bishop Trautman, I see Cardinal DiNardo, I see... I can't *see*... in the back there... Bishop Byrnes. Who else? Four of them. Go ahead.

Bishop Earl Boyea: (Lansing) Briefly, what's going to be the role of the Grail Psalms that we've just approved for liturgical use?

Archbishop Aymond: The Grail Psalms will be in this Bible that we're talking about. They will also be used in the revised Liturgy of the Hours, which we will be talking about in November.

Cardinal Dolan: Excellent. Bishop Trautman, and then Bishop Byrnes.

Bishop Donald Trautman: (Erie) Thank you very much. Could you identify some of the scholars that will be involved in this project?

Cardinal Wuerl: At this point we are not able to do that because we haven't even begun the process of surfacing the names. We've come here... We already have the committee that does the work of translation. We also have our own CCD committee. But we haven't reached the point yet where we've even begun to assemble them.

Cardinal Dolan: Bishop Byrnes, then Cardinal DiNardo.

Bishop Michael Byrnes: (Auxiliary, Detroit) This announcement is very welcome to me, having taught Scripture in the seminary for the last number of years. [In 2003, he earned his doctorate in Sacred Scripture from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. Returning to Detroit, he joined the faculty of Sacred Heart Major Seminary, and was named vice rector in January 2004. He was named auxiliary bishop in March 2011. - *Ed.*] Dealing with the New American Bible for study is very difficult, and so I'm grateful that study is an important priority here. I'm fully supportive of this. I hope in our working with the liturgical use of the text, that we're willing to leave the difficult passages, the difficult translations, the difficult constructions present. Our people, in order to increase their biblical literacy, need to learn how to wrestle with the Scripture. One of my big complaints about the NAB in teaching has been: It tries to remove the difficulties with some of the hard passages. And I hope we leave them in, because it forces us to exercise ourselves spiritually and intellectually in order to penetrate the Scripture. Thank you.

Cardinal Dolan: Thank you. Cardinal DiNardo and Bishop Rosazza.

Cardinal Daniel DiNardo: (Galveston-Houston) Cardinal Wuerl, first my condolences that you anticipate your demise before the completion of the project. Flowers and prayers are on the way! [laughter]

The second thing I wanted to mention is exactly in light of that. I'm very favorable that there be one translation. It's something devoutly to be hoped for. The question I raise — someone already answered about the Grail Psalter — but *Liturgiam authenticam* also asks that we do translations — I presume this is from the Greek, when it comes to the New Testament. And yet, apparently, according to *Liturgiam authenticam*, some eye has to be held toward the New Vulgate as well. Is that going to be part and parcel — and that's what's going to cause the complexity that goes on, in a translation that is both personal study, catechetical and also liturgical?*

Cardinal Wuerl: Your Eminence, you highlighted exactly part of the problem why it will take so long. Also you highlighted why we do need a communications person. I was really referring to not being here. I hope still on the planet! [laughter]

Cardinal Dolan: Bishop Rosazza, and then we gotta go to regional meetings. Bishop Rosazza, you were going to bring that [same question] up? Cardinal Wuerl, Archbishop Aymond, good work. Thank you. And you'll keep us posted, right?

* Editor's note — See *Liturgiam authenticam* §37:

If the biblical translation from which the Lectionary is composed exhibits readings that differ from those set forth in the Latin liturgical text, it should be borne in mind that the *Nova Vulgata Editio* is the point of reference as regards the delineation of the canonical text.

Thus, in the translation of the deuterocanonical books and wherever else there may exist varying manuscript traditions, the liturgical translation must be prepared in accordance with the same manuscript tradition that the *Nova Vulgata* has followed. If a previously prepared translation reflects a choice that departs from that which is found in the *Nova Vulgata Editio* as regards the underlying textual tradition, the order of verses, or similar factors, the discrepancy needs to be remedied in the preparation of any Lectionary so that conformity with the Latin liturgical text may be maintained. In preparing new translations, it would be helpful, though not obligatory, that the numbering of the verses also follow that of the same text as closely as possible.

Also see comments on the use of the *Nova Vulgata* in connection with scripture translations, especially for liturgical use (e.g. Lectionary) in “From the Bible to the Lectionary of the Holy Mass: Norms and Principles,” by Monsignor Michael Magee, in *Adoremus Bulletin* November 2010 - adoremus.org/1110Magee.html.

The Catholic Biblical Association (CBA) did the various translations of the New American Bible.

A letter from the CBA board to the bishops, dated August 13, 2001, strongly objected to *Liturgiam authenticam*, and argued that “there are insurmountable problems” with ascribing authority to the *Nova Vulgata*. (See “Group Demands Revision of Instruction on Translation”, AB Sept. 2001 — adoremus.org/0901CBAdemands.html). The CBA letter is online at: bible-researcher.com/liturgiam-authenticam2.html.

And see the Response to the CBA from the Congregation for Divine Worship: Notitiae Vol. 7, Nov.-Dec. 2001 (adoremus.org/0502NovaVulgata.html).

The USCCB Subcommittee on Scripture Translation (Committee on Doctrine) is responsible for approving biblical translations. Its current chairman is Little Rock Bishop Anthony Taylor.

Related articles in Adoremus Bulletin:

“Our Babel of Bibles — Scripture, Translation, and the Possibility of Spiritual Understanding” Part I & II by David Lyle Jeffrey. adoremus.org/0512BabelofBibles.html;

“Translations and Controversies” by Helen Hull Hitchcock. adoremus.org/1211Hitchcock.html;

“A New Liturgical Psalter Would Signal Progress in Reform” by Helen Hull Hitchcock, adoremus.org/1108Psalter.html;

“The Languages of Biblical Translation” by Father Paul Mankowski, SJ, adoremus.org/0607Translations.html;

“News & Views: In Pursuit of Sacred Scripture” by Helen Hull Hitchcock, adoremus.org/0307NewsViews.html;

“What Words Will We Use in God’s Word?” by Father Ralph Wright, OSB, adoremus.org/0207Translations.html;

“Bible Babel” by Father Richard John Neuhaus, adoremus.org/0306BibleTranslations.html;

“Bibles and Lectionaries” by Helen Hull Hitchcock, adoremus.org/0204BiblesLectionaries.html;

“ICEL Psalter lacks Savor — Holy See’s 1996 Order to Revoke Imprimatur” by Helen Hull Hitchcock, adoremus.org/Psalter998.html.

The above is a partial list. See also our web section on Scripture & Translation: adoremus.org/Transtoc.html. — hhh

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