Regard and Respect for the Received Liturgical Texts

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* notes clearly in its very first chapter the importance and dignity of the Eucharistic Celebration. “In it is found the high point both of the action by which God sanctifies the world in Christ and of the worship that the human race offers to the Father, adoring him through Christ, the Son of God, in the Holy Spirit.” (GIRM, 16) In this light, the Instruction reminds us of the tremendous care which must be exercised in assuring an abundantly fruitful celebration of the Eucharist. (GIRM, 16) To this end, the Instruction notes the need to foster a full, conscious and active participation among the faithful in keeping with the nature of the Eucharistic Liturgy and the identity of the baptized Christian. (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 14, GIRM, 18) One particular way that this is fostered, is for all the Christian Faithful (bishops, priests, deacons and laity) to “grasp ever more deeply the genuine meaning of the rites and liturgical texts.” (GIRM, 22)

On August 31, 2006, Pope Benedict XVI addressed the priests of the Diocese of Albano in Italy and offered some insights which bear upon our present reflection. He noted that the liturgy at its most basic understanding is “prayer and a conversation with God.” We listen to the Word of God, and the texts of the Mass, the prayers, are the means by which the priest and the faithful speak to God. As already noted above, this is no ordinary conversation, but a conversation rooted in the saving actions of God throughout history and specifically in the Last Supper as the memorial of Christ’s Passion, Death and Resurrection, in which he commanded his disciples to “Do this in memory of me.” By means of this conversation, God sanctifies his people and we offer to him praise and thanksgiving. This brings us to perhaps one of the greatest challenges inherent in the conversation that is the liturgy: that the words of the conversation are already given to us.

In the face of this challenge, it is important for us to remember that the texts which we will be receiving shortly are re-translations of ancient prayers which “contain riches which have preserved and expressed the faith and experience of the People of God over its
two-thousand year history.” (*Sacramentum Caritatis*, 40) Thus, the translation which we will be receiving is a means by which we may join our voices to the voice of the Church as she prays. This dynamic is very important. In his address to the priests of Albano, Pope Benedict XVI reminded us of the importance of accepting this challenge and encouraged us to seek to assimilate the words of the liturgy and to harmonize our minds and hearts with that of the voice of the Church. In this way, our participation in the Eucharist becomes a celebration with Church.

By faithfully receiving and using the revised English translation of the new Roman Missal, ordained ministers and faithful humbly submit themselves to the selfless challenge of entering into the prayer of the Church and thus opening themselves to this sacred conversation with God. By adhering faithfully to the liturgical texts, priests show themselves to be humble servants of the Sacred Liturgy. (*GIRM*, 24) By using the words given to us by the Church, we allow the rites and texts to speak for themselves and impart their meaning. In faithfully using the prayers given to us, the conversation progresses unconfused and undiminished. By allowing the Church to speak with her own words, we, her ordained ministers and laity, allow the prayers of previous generations to wash over us and incorporate us into the one hymn of praise offered to the Father, through the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit.

**Reflection Questions:**

1. How will a deeper understanding of the liturgical texts help me renew my understanding and appreciation of both the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist?
2. Do I approach the Sacred Liturgy as a prayer and conversation with God?
3. How can the prayers I offer at Mass become a conversation with God?

**Prayer:**

Father,
You have brought to fulfillment the work of our redemption through the Easter mystery of Christ your Son.
May we who faithfully proclaim his death and resurrection in these sacramental signs, experience the constant growth of your salvation in our lives.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.