

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS FROM THE FIELD

• H. J. Graf, S.V.D.

I. READINGS OF MASS

Question:

Are we allowed to take Protestant translations of the Bible in case there is no Catholic version available for the readings during Mass?

Answer:

You refer to Canon 1399 of the Code of Canon Law which states that "*ipso iure* are prohibited editions of the original text and of ancient Catholic versions . . . of Sacred Scripture . . . and also translations of the same, which have been made or published by non-Catholics . . ."

But Vatican II foresaw non-Catholics (Protestants) as co-translators and therefore also co-publishers of versions of Sacred Scripture: "Since the Word of God must be available in all ages, the Church with material solicitude takes care that suitable and correct translations be made, especially from the original texts of the Sacred Books. If on occasion, with the consent of ecclesiastical authority, such translations are produced as a common project with our separated brethren, they may be used by all Christians" (Const. on Divine Revelation, art. 22).

On June 14, 1966 a notification ("Post litteras") of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith announced that the Index of forbidden books and the censures connected with its violation no longer have the force of ecclesiastical law (ASS 58 (1966) 445). When the same Congregation was asked subsequently whether Canon 1399 still remains in force it answered in a decree of November 15, 1966 that it had been revoked.

In view of these documents bishops began to grant the "Imprimatur" to Protestant versions of Sacred Scripture. Well known are the Catholic edition of the Revised Standard Version and the Catholic edition of "Today's English Version". While

the first compromises the entire Sacred Scripture the latter, so far is available only in the New Testament and the Psalter.

From the foregoing it appears that your local Ordinary may approve a Protestant version of Sacred Scripture for use in the Church, in view especially that there does not yet exist a Catholic translation. There are, however, efforts under way to produce common versions of Sacred Scripture in the principal local languages. They are being translated from the original texts by Protestant and Catholic scholars together. This will make these common versions far superior than most of the present-day Protestant versions which have not been translated from the original text, but are frequently "translations of translations", mostly from English into the local languages.

II. CONFIRMATION

Questions:

I am an assistant in a big rural parish, in charge of the catechetical instruction of our barrio schools. Many of these children have not been confirmed in infancy, because the bishop comes only once a year to the parish for Confirmation, and plenty of people cannot come then, or simply do not get the opportunity. Even later on many of these children have only a small chance of ever being confirmed.

I have equally to prepare couples for marriage who not seldom have not been confirmed. But when asked, they are willing to receive Confirmation, if only I could give them the sacrament here and there. Can I not give them the opportunity, and give them the sacrament gratis? Therefore, I ask you:

1. *Do I have "de iure" the faculty to prepare for and administer Confirmation to these children and adults?*

Answer:

Bishops and those local Ordinaries who are not bishops have certainly the faculty. After the publication of the new rite of Confirmation the law gives the same faculty to parish priests and to those who hold equivalent positions under certain circumstances. The guidelines grant the faculty to confirm "de iure" also to you as assistant parish priest in four well-defined cases:

- a. when you baptize an adult and have prepared him from baptism;

- b. when you baptize a child, old enough for catechetical instruction, and you gave this previous, necessary instruction;
- c. when you admit a validly baptized adult (e.g., a Lutheran) into the full communion of the Church;
- d. in danger of death, provided a bishop cannot be had.

If you prepare children of grade school age for Confirmation, you do not have "de iure" the faculty, to confirm them. But the bishop may, according to article 8 of the introductory guidelines of the Ritual of Confirmation, in case of true necessity and for special reasons, associate priests with himself in the administration of this sacrament. Among the priests mentioned are also those "who have taken a special part in the catechetical preparation of the candidates."

In principle, our bishops decided to abandon infant Confirmation and celebrate this sacrament later on, e.g., at the end of the years in elementary school. Therefore, they reserve the faculty to confirm these children for themselves.

Neither have you the faculty "de iure" to confirm those people whom you prepare for marriage, since their case is not mentioned in the introductory guidelines of the ritual of Confirmation.

2. *Do I have the duty to ask the bishop for a permanent and general permission to confirm in these cases?*

Answer:

You want to have this faculty to confirm in two well-defined cases: for grade school children who have not yet been confirmed, and for adults who want to get married. Since our bishops want to raise the Confirmation age anyhow, it does not seem advisable that you apply for the faculty to confirm these children.

There seems to exist a more urgent situation when people who want to get married have not yet been confirmed. Canon 1021, § 2 says: "Catholics who have not yet received the sacrament of Confirmation should receive it before being married, if they can do so without grave inconvenience." For most of these people a special trip to the bishop before they get married would be too great an inconvenience. To join in a public ceremony together with babies or also with grade school children

at the occasion of the annual fiesta would be for them a grave embarrassment. As the above-quoted Canon proves, the Church desires these people to receive Confirmation. The occasion of their wedding seems to be a last chance to receive this sacrament.

Unfortunately, if you ask the bishop for this permission, he cannot grant it. Outside the cases already outlined above, I know of no legal basis for the bishop to grant such a faculty to an assistant parish priest. The Decennial Faculties for the Philippines (Dec. 6, 1969) allow the bishop to grant the faculty to priests (*quatenus fieri potest*) constituted in some ecclesiastical dignity . . . but never to "simple priests."

From the wording of this faculty, it seems that the "mens est" that some dignitary from outside the parish should be the one to confirm, perhaps in order to preserve a special reverence for the sacrament. In view of the new decree on Confirmation, which allows several cases wherein a simple priest can confirm, it would also seem that this "mens" has been changed. Therefore, perhaps the Apostolic See would be willing to change the tenor of the above-quoted faculty, if the bishops of the Philippines would request it.

The same problem came up also during the meeting of the Bishops' Conference, July 4-7, 1972: "Also candidates for marriage who are not yet confirmed should be informed during premarital courses of the importance of this sacrament, but Confirmation should not be given immediately before marriage. The recommendation of the commission to delegate parish priests (*not* assistant parish priests) was not formally taken up" (*Lit. Information Bull.* 7 (1972) 114).¹

III. ANOINTING OF THE SICK

Question:

Can we ask our local Ordinary or have we to resort to the National Liturgical Commission to implement on an experimental basis the rite of the Anointing of the Sick?

¹ I am deeply grateful to Fr. Mel Brady, O.F.M. for his invaluable information concerning the problems of Canon Law connected with this question.

Answer:

Your local Ordinary may ask the Congregation for Divine Worship. "Notitiae", the official periodical of the same Congregation carries at certain intervals notices that certain dioceses obtained this faculty from Rome "ad experimentum." In 1971 the archdiocese of Washington, U.S.A. obtained this privilege (p. 263), and in 1972 the whole ecclesiastical province of Detroit, U.S.A. (p. 12).

The rite that is usually granted "ad experimentum" can easily be found in an English translation in "Amen" 42 (Dec. 1970), p. 137-142: "Anointing the Sick at Lourdes"). The same issue shows that this experimental rite has been used as early 1970 in the Philippines. I have to warn you, however: the definitive rite of the Anointing of the Sick is to be published soon (*Sunday Examiner* (Hongkong), Sept. 15, 1972, p. 4) and is not identical with the experimental rite published earlier, as is also shown in the preliminary translation of the International Committee for English in the Liturgy (ICEL) of the final rite, for some time available to our bishops.

IV. WEDDING RITES

Question:

Do we have a rite for marriage celebration for "mansibados" — those who live together without being married, but who want now to get married? Priests found out that the new marriage rite is not so appropriately applicable to them.

Answer:

Some priests were formerly content, to ask just in the sacristy for the consent of these people. This would be the bare minimum, but is certainly not the mind of the Church and also does not meet the expectations of many of these people.

In case they are ready, offer these couples the benefit of the full marriage celebration. In case they are reluctant, one may adapt the rite to some extent to the situation. Even then, the rite should not be too simple and prosaic. As a minimum I would consider the following adaptation of the marriage rite outside Mass (chapter II):

1. Service of the Word

From among the four opening prayers offered there, the first seems to be the best suited; it speaks only of the fact that "they pledge their love today." One may eventually take only one single reading, preferably one from the gospels, e.g., Mt. 22:35-40 ("This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is similar to it.") or Jn 15:9-12 ("Remain in my love."). In a few words the priest is then to prepare the couple for their consent. Good models of short wedding homilies are found in *Good Tidings-Amen*, Sept./Oct., 1971 by Fr. Mel Brady, OFM and Nov./Dec. 1971 by Fr. Carl Schafer, OFM.

The following words from Fr. Schafer's homily could suffice: "As married people you belong entirely to each other; you will be one in mind, one in heart, and one in affections. Whatever sacrifices you may be required to make to preserve this common life, always make them generously. Sacrifice is hard. Only love can make it easy; and perfect love can make it a joy. We are willing to give in proportion as we love, and when love is perfect, the sacrifice is complete. God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, and his Son loved us so much that he gave himself for our salvation. 'A man have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends.'

"No greater love can come to your married life than pure love, loyal and true to the end. May this love with which you give now your consent never fail but grow deeper as the years go on."

After such a preparation one may omit the allocution and the scrutiny of the ritual, because article 14 of the introduction says: "Within the rite of the sacrament of Matrimony, the arrangement of its parts may be varied. If it seems more suitable, even the questions before the consent may be omitted as long as the priest asks for and receives the consent of the contracting parties."

2. Exchange of Consent

Only the first question needs to be asked from each of the couple since the ritual states: "In the case of validation the second and third questions are optional." The priest adds then the confirmation of the marriage bond.

If the people have no rings of their own, the blessing and giving of the rings is preferably omitted. The Constitution

of the Liturgy of Vatican II stresses the truthfulness of the liturgical signs so much that it seems to be a "pious lie" to give first the rings, and right afterwards take them back again.

3. Prayer of the Faithful and Nuptial Blessing

As can be seen in the rite (p. 36) the concluding formula of the Prayer of the Faithful is at the same time the nuptial blessing, a fact that will equally shorten and simplify the celebration. The communion rite is optional.

4. Conclusion of the Rite

The conclusion of the rite is the usual one as given in the ritual for weddings outside Mass. This whole rite as outlined here will not last longer than about ten minutes.

V. DIVINE OFFICE

Question:

How many readings are we supposed to pray on the different liturgical days, as on solemnities, feasts and memorials and with what responsories?

Answer:

According to the new Liturgy of the Hours and the "Interim Norms for the Divine Office" of Nov. 11, 1971 (*Boletin Eclesiastico* 45(1971) 762-766) all liturgical days have only two readings for the Reading Office (former Matins): one from Sacred Scripture, the other from ecclesiastical writers (or a hagiographical reading).

The Latin "Liturgy of the Hours" provides two readings for every day. For the Interim Breviaries matters are somewhat complicated concerning the patristic reading. The English Chapman edition simply states: "When the patristic or hagiographical reading is required, it will be necessary, if using this interim edition, to refer to the present (i.e., old) Roman Breviary" (p. XXVI). The American Interim Breviary offers a patristic reading on relatively many occasions. For the other days it refers to the solution offered for those who still use the old Roman Breviary (p. 28*).

For those who still say their Office according to the Roman Breviary the following interim rules are to be observed:

a. When the Office has three Nocturns (as on solemnities and feasts — the former feasts of first and second class) the biblical reading is made up of the three lessons of the first Nocturn, joined into one. The patristic reading is made up of the readings of the second Nocturn, similarly joined into one.

b. After each reading a responsory is to be said, freely to be chosen from one of the three found in each Nocturn.

c. If the Office has only *one* Nocturn, not only the biblical reading is to be recited, but also a patristic one. For the latter one may take the hagiographical reading of the saint on memorials. Otherwise one should possibly follow the permission of the general instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours: "On ferial days 'throughout the year', and, if it seems suitable even during Advent, Christmastime, Lent and Eastertide, a quasi-continuous reading may be taken from a work of one of the Fathers. This work should be in harmony with the spirit of the Bible and the Liturgy" (n. 250; cf. *Notitiae* 7 (1971) 384). The expression "patristic reading" has to be taken here in a wider sense and means sections and works "from Catholic writers outstanding for their teaching and holiness of life" (n. 162).