

The Pre- and Post-Vatican II Collects of the Dominican Doctors of the Church

The post-Vatican II reform of the Sacred Liturgy brought the Church a great many blessings. This does not dispense us, however, from the scholarly duty of carefully reviewing and evaluating specific revision decisions made by those charged with carrying out the reform. Those who produced the new liturgical books did not simply select time-tested and well-prayed prayers from earlier liturgical books and incorporate them into the new ones. They revised a great many of the older prayers in order better to accommodate them to what they described as the needs and sensibilities of modern persons.¹ And when it seemed necessary, they composed new prayers.² Inevitably the editors brought to these revisions and new compositions both the insights and limitations of their own times. Moreover, the revisers did a huge amount of work in a relatively short span of time and, as one of them put it, “material failures” cannot be lacking.³ In December 2003, we celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the promulgation of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. The milestone reminds us of the blessings which the reform as a whole has brought to the Church and invites us to review its various aspects with the objectivity afforded by the distance and experience of the intervening decades.

¹ C. Braga, Il ‘*Proprium de Sanctis*,’ *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 84 (1970) pp. 399, 405-406; Antoine Dumas, ‘Les oraisons du nouveau Missel’ *Questions Liturgiques* 25 (1971) pp. 263-270 passim. An English translation of Dumas’s essay is available in Lauren Pristas, ‘The Orations of the Vatican II Missal: Policies for Revision,’ *Communio* 30 (Winter, 2003) pp. 621-653 at 629-639.

² Antoine Dumas, ‘Les oraisons du nouveau Missel,’ pp. 268-69.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

This essay examines the old and new versions of the collects for the three Dominican saints who are also Doctors of the Church: Saint Thomas Aquinas, Saint Albert the Great, and Saint Catherine of Siena. The order of consideration follows the order in which they were named Doctors of the Church.

Saint Thomas Aquinas⁴

The collect for Saint Thomas that appears in both Roman and Dominican missals prior to Vatican II is typographically arranged below in a manner designed to exhibit the parallel structure of the prayer.⁵ The lines of the English translation given here⁶ do not correspond exactly to those of the Latin, however, because the principal objective is to present the parallelism in a natural English rendering.

Deus, qui Ecclesiam tuam
 beati Thomae Confessoris tui [atque Doctoris]⁷
 mira eruditione clarificas,
 et
 sancta operatione fecundas:
 da nobis, quaesumus,
 et quae docuit intellectu conspicere,
 et quae egit imitatione complere.

O God, who give your Church
 light through the wonderful instruction of blessed Thomas,
 your Confessor [and Doctor],
 and

⁴Saint Thomas lived from 1224/25-1274. He was canonized in 1323 and declared a Doctor of the Church in 1567.

⁵Robert Lippe, *Missale Romanum Mediolani, 1474: A Collation with Other Editions Printed before 1570*, vol. 2, Henry Bradshaw Society XXXIII (London: Harrison and Sons, 1907) p. 181 has exactly the same collect for Saint Thomas as does the *Missale Romanum* (1962).

⁶The translations in this article are my own.

⁷“Atque Doctoris” is found only in Dominican missals.

fruitfulness through [his] holy labor:
 grant us, we beseech you,
 both to contemplate with understanding what he taught
 and to fill up by imitation what he did.

The collect has two main parts. The first, the invocation, praises God for what he does, and the second, the petition properly so-called, begs particular gifts. The two parts are parallel because what we seek from God corresponds to what we confess him to do in an on-going way. Further, in the first part we praise God not for one thing but two, and the two are expressed in a form that is grammatically parallel. The second part of the collect duplicates this internal parallelism in its own way.

The collect begins by praising God for giving light to his Church through Saint Thomas's *eruditio* – a word whose principle meaning is “instruction,” but which can also be translated “learning” – and making her fruitful through his holy labor. We then ask to contemplate with understanding what Saint Thomas taught and to fill up⁸ by imitation what he did.

The correspondence between the parallel praises and petitions may be depicted as follows:

Ecclesiam tuam...mira eruditione clarificas,
 //da nobis ...quae docuit intellectu conspicerere;
 Ecclesiam tuam...sancta operatione fecundas,
 //da nobis...quae egit imitatione complere.

who give light to your Church through the wonderful instruction [of Saint
 Thomas],
 //grant us... to contemplate what he taught with understanding;
 who make your Church fruitful though the holy labor [of Saint Thomas],
 //grant us...to fill up what he did by imitation.

⁸“*Complere*” means to fill up, perfect, finish, or complete. The Vulgate translation of Saint Paul’s “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church” (Colossians 1.24, RSV) uses the verb “*adimplere*.” *Complere* and *adimplere* have the same root (*plere* = to fill, to fulfill). Although *complere* and *adimplere* do not have the same range of meanings, both can mean “to fill up.”

Like the older prayer, the revised version contains two parallel parts each exhibiting internal parallelism. From a structural perspective the old and new collects are quite similar. Before examining the import of the revised collect, however, we note the differences between the old and the new versions and consider them from the perspective of the revisers. The differences are as follows:

Pre-Vatican II Collect	Post-Vatican II Collect
1. God is praised for what he <i>does</i> for his Church through St. Thomas's learning and labor: he gives her light and makes her fruitful.	1. God is praised for what he <i>did</i> for Saint Thomas: made him outstanding in zeal for holiness and study of sacred doctrine.
2. St. Thomas is described as God's Confessor [and Doctor].	2. Mention omitted; nothing supplied.
3. The object of our imitation is to be what Saint Thomas <i>egit</i> .	3. The object of our imitation is to be what Saint Thomas <i>gessit</i> .

For assistance in understanding the intentions of the revisers, we look to a 1970 article by Carlo Braga, assistant to Annibale Bugnini in his *Consilium* labors.¹¹ Braga's essay names, and to some extent explains and illustrates, the general principles used in the revision of the sanctoral orations.¹² Braga does not specifically mention the collect for Saint Thomas, and his general remarks on the principles applied to the invocations or

¹¹The *Consilium* is the commission established by Pope Paul VI in 1964 to carry out the reform of the Liturgy mandated by the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, and Annibale Bugnini was its General Secretary. In his book *The Reform of the Liturgy (1948-1975)*, tr. Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1990) p. 360 Bugnini describes Braga as the "assistant for studies for the *Consilium*." Braga is listed as a member of the Secretariat in *Consilium ad exsequendam Constitutionem de Sacra Liturgia, Elenchus membrorum - consultorum - consiliariorum coetuum a studiis* (Vatican: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1964), p. 8.

¹²C. Braga, 'Il *'Proprium de Sanctis,'* *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 84 (1970), pp. 399-431. Braga's is one of a series of articles published in *Ephemerides Liturgicae* shortly after the new missal appeared. Each article was written by someone within the *Consilium*, and each identifies and explains the principles that guided the particular aspect of the reform it discusses. See, for example, Henry Ashworth, 'The Prayers for the Dead in the Missal of Pope Paul VI,' *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 85 (1971) pp. 3-15; Matias Augé, 'Le Collette del Proprio del Tempo nel Nuovo Messale,' *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 84 (1970) pp. 275-298; Carlo Braga, 'Il Nuovo Messale Romano,' *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 84 (1970) pp. 249-274; Antoine Dumas, 'Les Préfaces du nouveau Missel,' *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 85 (1971) pp. 16-28; Walter Ferretti, 'Le Orazioni 'Post Communionem' de Tempore nel Nuovo Messale Romano,' *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 84 (1970) pp. 323-341; Vincenzo Raffa, 'Le Orazioni sulle Offerte del Proprio del Tempo nel Nuovo Messale Romano,' *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 84 (1970) pp. 299-322.

laudatory clauses of sanctoral collects do not shed any light on the first difference listed above. For Braga says only that prayers were simplified to contain but one laudatory expression and one superlative.¹³

Neither do Braga's comments explain the second difference, the omission of the titles "confessor and doctor." He tells us only that such titles were preserved in the collects alone – that is, the revisers did not include them in prayers over the offerings (*super oblata*) or after Communion (*postcommunem*).¹⁴ Perhaps the explanation lies in the fact that the revised liturgy does not continue the custom of giving the title "confessor" to male saints who were not martyred, and the original Roman collect contains only that title.

The third difference, the change from *egit* to *gessit*, is too particular to be addressed in Braga's treatment which is, by design, general and confined to essentials.¹⁵ Inasmuch as both words can be translated by the word "did," they are synonyms.¹⁶ It seems likely the revisers made the change for the sake of euphony, having judged *quae gessit* to sound better than *quae egit*.¹⁷

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 404.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵See *ibid.*, p. 402 and p. 402, n. 1.

¹⁶*Egit* is the perfect indicative form of *agere*, a verb that has a wide range of meanings the most basic of which is "to put into motion" or "move." The English "act" comes from its passive form. *Gessit* is the perfect indicative of *gerere*. Similarly, it has a wide range of meanings the first of which is "to bear" or "carry." It also means "to bring forth" or "produce," "to conduct oneself" or "behave," and "to accomplish" or "perform." "Gesta," which comes from the perfect passive participle of *gero*, means "deeds" or "acts."

¹⁷Another change, the revisers's choice of "*conspicuum*," so like "*conspicere*," suggests they were mindful of sound.

In the revised collect we praise God for having made Saint Thomas conspicuous, striking, remarkable, eye-catching (the Latin means visible or attention attracting)¹⁸ because of his zeal for holiness and his study of, or assiduity in, sacred doctrine. The petitions follow but the conceptual parallelism has been inverted (running a-b-b-a instead of a-b-a-b) so that zeal for holiness/imitation of deeds surrounds, as it were, study/understanding teaching. The conceptual parallelism, not the order of thoughts in the collect, is shown below:

sanctitatis zelo...conspicuum effecisti
 //da nobis...quae gessit imitatione complere;
 sacrae doctrinae studio...conspicuum effecisti
 //da nobis... quae docuit intellectu conspiciere.

who made [him] outstanding in zeal for sanctity
 //grant us...to fill up by imitation what he did;
 who made [him] outstanding in study of sacred doctrine
 //grant us...to contemplate with understanding what he taught.

Whereas the conceptual correspondence between our praise of God for making Thomas outstanding for his study of sacred doctrine and our petition to contemplate his teaching with understanding is clear enough, that between his zeal for holiness and our request to complete, perfect, or fill up by imitation what he did is less so. The problem is with the word *complere* in the new context – what, precisely, is to be filled up, perfected or completed? As we saw above, the old collect presents a very clear line: to imitate Saint Thomas is to labor in a holy way; God continues to use Saint Thomas’s holy labor

¹⁸No form of the adjective “*conspicuus*” appears in the Tridentine missal according to André Pflieger, *Liturgicae orationis concordantia verbalia prima pars Missale Romanum* (Rome: Herder, 1964) p. 115. Thaddäus A. Schnitker and Wolfgang A. Slaby, *Concordantia verbalia Missalis Romani*, (Münster: Aschendorff, 1983) p. 366 reports three occurrences of the word in the Vatican II missal. One of the three, the collect for the thirteenth Sunday *per annum*, is an exact transcription of an oration in the *Sacramentarium Bergomense*. (Cf. Johnson, ‘The Sources of the Roman Missal (1975),’ p. 91 and Angelo Paredi, *Sacramentarium Bergomense: Manoscritto del secolo IX della Biblioteca di S. Alessandro in Colonna in Bergamo*, VI (Bergamo: Edizioni Monumenta Bergomense, 1962), no. 725). The other two, the collect for Saint Thomas and the *oratio super sponsam et sponsum* (*Missale Romanum* (1975) p. 747), seem to have been introduced by the revisers.

to make his Church fruitful; we ask God to increase the fruitfulness of his Church through our holy labor. The new collect does not work in the same way because nothing that Saint Thomas did is named (no holy labor) and there is nothing (no fruitfulness) to fill up, complete, or perfect. The parallel attribute of the saint which is named, his zeal for holiness, has reached its fulfillment in the Beatific Vision and by its very nature is not something we can complete.

Grammatically, it is possible that “*gessit*” refers to what Saint Thomas produced or accomplished. It is unlikely that this is the intended meaning here, however, for it leaves the saint’s zeal for holiness without a corresponding petition and the parallelism between the praise and petition breaks down. The petitions of Roman collects characteristically seek from God graces that in some way correspond to the attributes or gifts for which he is praised in the invocation. In sanctoral collects this generally means that the invocation praises God for what he gave to, accomplished through, or – as in the case of the older collect for Saint Thomas – continues to do through the saint, and the petition begs for the Church or for the faithful graces which in some way correspond to what has been named in the invocation. Without compelling evidence to the contrary, we should suppose that the revisers intended to complete the parallelism. In this case, however, the execution went awry.

The revisers tinkered with a well-crafted text of delicate complexity and produced something that is inferior to the original with respect to both its literary quality and its comprehensibility. The teasing question is why or, rather, at what improvement did they aim?

The principal changes are in the way that God is described. In saying that God gives light to his Church through Saint Thomas's learning and makes her fruitful through his holy labor, the old collect reminds us that God continues to use Saint Thomas in these ways. Thus the collect gives implicit expression to the following:

1. Saint Paul's teaching that all gifts are given for the building up of Christ's Body the Church.
2. The continuing importance of Saint Thomas's work.
3. God providential care for the Church through the gifts that he bestows upon his saints – even those of times long past.

The new collect, which describes God as having made Saint Thomas noticeable in his zeal for holiness and study of sacred doctrine, neither gives tacit expression to the three truths listed above, nor substitutes anything comparable in their place. Rather, it simply identifies Saint Thomas's God-given strong points without any mention of their importance. In consequence the new prayer is much thinner both doctrinally and spiritually for God's gifts to Saint Thomas remain in the past and are portrayed as for him alone. By extension, then, the new collect's petition seeks graces for us without reminding us of the Church and the importance of these graces to her – both universally and locally.

Assessing the results of particular revisions is easy enough; ascertaining the motives behind them is another thing entirely. It seems unlikely that the revisers deliberately dismantled the Pauline theology of the old collect and its attendant praise of Divine Providence, or that they intentionally downplayed the value of Saint Thomas's theological contribution for the contemporary Church. It is possible that the revisers wished to produce a simpler prayer, but whether they accomplished this is debatable. In any case what they have done is most unfortunate – for they replaced a prayer of

considerable depth and artistry with an inferior composition whose sentiments are, relatively speaking, quite trite and, in the one aspect that we mentioned, unclear.

Saint Albert the Great¹⁹

We next examine the pre- and post-Vatican II collects for Saint Thomas's teacher, Saint Albert the Great. The older prayer follows:

Deus qui beatum Albertum Pontificum tuum atque Doctorem in humana sapientia divinae fidei subiicienda magnum effecisti: da nobis, quaesumus, ita eius magisterii inhaerere vestigiis ut luce perfecta fruamur in caelis.	O God, who made blessed Albert, your bishop and doctor, great in human wisdom made subject to divine faith: grant us, we beseech you, so to follow in the path of his teaching that we may enjoy perfect light in heaven.
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Saint Albert is described as God's bishop and doctor, but the more usual word for bishop, "*episcopus*," which means overseer, is not used. Instead we find the word "*pontifex*," which literally means "bridgemaker." It is used of both the Jewish high priest and the Christian bishop. The collect praises God for making Saint Albert great in a human wisdom subject to divine faith (the gerundive, literally "being subjected," denotes ongoing submission), and asks that we may follow the path of his teaching in such a way as to reach heaven. Two ideas are deftly and subtly communicated. The first concerns the proper relationship between faith and reason. Human reason is perfected, not compromised or diminished, when it submits itself to truths that God has revealed and that can only be known by faith. That is, faith elevates and transforms human wisdom. Second, the teaching of Saint Albert, doctor of the Church, charts a reliable path to heaven not because he was a man of natural human wisdom but because his human

¹⁹Saint Albert lived from 1206 to 1280. He was canonized and declared a Doctor of the Church in 1931.

wisdom was illumined by divine faith. In both his person and his teaching, the saint bridges the natural and the supernatural. It is fitting that Pope Pius XII named him patron of students and researchers of the natural sciences in 1941.

The revised collect is below.

<p>Deus qui beatum Albertum <i>episcopum</i> in humana sapientia <i>cum divina fide</i> <i>componenda</i> magnum effecisti: da nobis, quaesumus, ita eius <i>magisterii inhaerere doctrinis</i> ut <i>per scientiarum progressus</i> <i>ad profundiolem tui cognitionem et</i> <i>amorem perveniamus</i></p>	<p>O God, who made the bishop, blessed Albert, great in human wisdom <i>combined with divine</i> <i>faith</i>: grant us, we beseech you, so to cling to the doctrines of his teaching²⁰ <i>that through the advancements of the</i> <i>sciences</i> <i>we may arrive at a deeper knowledge and</i> <i>love of you.</i>²¹</p>
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The differences, italicized above, are as follows.

1. In the older collect, Albert is described as “your bishop and doctor,” and the Latin word for bishop is “*pontifex*.” In the revision he is simply “bishop,” and the word is “*episcopus*.”
2. In the older collect, Albert’s human wisdom is being subject or subordinated to divine faith; in the new collect it is being combined or united with divine faith.²²
3. The older collects asks that we might follow the path of Albert’s teaching in such a way as to reach heaven; the new that we might cling to his teaching in such a way as to reach a deeper knowledge and love of God through the advancements of the sciences.

²⁰When the verb “*inhaerere*,” to cling or cleave, appears with the word “*vestigis*,” an ablative plural that means “footsteps,” “traces” or “tracks,” it means “to follow the path.” This is why the same verb is rendered differently in the respective translations of the two collects.

²¹The ICEL translation reads: God our Father, you endowed St. Albert with the talent of combining human wisdom with divine faith. Keep us true to his teachings that the advance of human knowledge may deepen our knowledge of you.

²²The verb “*componere*,” which means to join, unite or reconcile, appears only once in the Tridentine missal (Pflieger, *Liturgicae orationis concordantia verbalia*, p. 96). It is used in the invocation of the collect for Saint John of San Facondo (June 12). The invocation praises God for having bestowed upon the saint the grace of uniting those who are divided (or of reconciling those with differences, “*dissidentes componendi gratia*”). Saint John of San Facondo does not have a day on the revised universal calendar, but the phrase “*dissidentes componendi gratia*” from his collect been incorporated into the newly minted collect for Saint Elizabeth of Portugal (July 4). The verb *componere* appears only twice in the revised missal, in the collects for Saint Elizabeth and Saint Albert (Schitcker, *Concordantia verbalia Missalis Romani*, p. 319).

For assistance in understanding why these changes were made we turn again to Carlo Braga who presents the collect for Saint Albert as the first example in the section of his essay entitled “updating theological language.” Braga says nothing of the first difference listed above. The second and third differences he does address.

In his introduction to the subject of updating, Braga observes that the revision of pre-existing texts becomes more delicate when it comes to the necessity (*necessità*) of updating content or language, and when it touches not only upon form but also upon doctrinal truth (*realtà dottrinale*).²³ The doctrinal truth that pertains to our discussion is what Braga calls the new perspective on the value of human things “considered in relation, and almost as the way, to supernatural goods” (*considerati in relazione e quasi come via ai beni soprannaturali*) which Vatican II “clearly proposes” (*propone chiaramente*).²⁴ Braga does not cite any Council document in support of his statement or give it any greater precision.

Braga then presents the original and revised collects for Saint Albert as a classic example (*esempio... classico*) of different appraisals of human things in relation to God. Concerning the two substantial changes made by the revisers, he says:

First of all, it [the revised collect] does not speak of simply submitting human science to faith, but of coordinating the two realms, so that together they tend always to greater knowledge of the truth. And then also the sciences, each in its own realm, can and ought to carry man to God – that is, to knowledge and love of him. Creation is the way through which one can and ought to arrive at God.²⁵

²³*Proprium de Sanctis*, p. 419.

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵*Ibid.* “Anzitutto non si tratta di sottomettere semplicemente la scienza umana alla fede, ma di coordinare i due campi, in modo che insieme tendano ad una sempre maggiore conoscenza della verità. E poi anche le scienze, ciascuna nel suo campo, possono e devono portare l'uomo a Dio, cioè alla sua conoscenza e al suo amore. Il creato è la via per cui si può e si deve giungere a Dio.”

Braga identifies Saint Albert as a master in both the human and theological sciences,²⁶ which he was in fact, but the original collect does not speak of him as great in human science (*humana scientia*), but as great in human wisdom (*humana sapientia*). Therefore, the contrast that Braga draws between the original and revised versions of the collect is inaccurate in two respects. First, contrary to what Braga implies, the original collect does not speak of “simply submitting” human science to faith. It speaks of submitting human wisdom to divine faith – another thing entirely. Second, the revised collect does not speak of coordinating science and faith because the word *sapientia* has been retained in the revision. It speaks of combining or, to use Braga’s word, coordinating human wisdom and divine faith.²⁷

Braga’s second point, that science can and ought to carry man to God – that creation is the way through which one can and ought to reach God, is insufficiently nuanced. We go to God through the created order not because the created order inevitably leads to God, but because we belong to the created order and exist within it.

In the actual wording of the revised collect, however, it is not “science,” the study of the natural order created by God, which is to bring us to greater knowledge and love of God, but “advancements in the sciences” – that is, human scientific achievement. Braga, however, makes no mention of scientific advancements and discusses the collect as though the word “*progressus*” did not appear in it.

The laudatory clause of the revised collect puts human wisdom and divine faith, and therefore human reason and divine faith, on equal footing. In not subordinating

²⁶“il grande cultore delle scienze umane oltre che di quelle teologiche.”

²⁷Nowhere in his discussion of this collect does Braga use the word “wisdom” (*saggezza*). Throughout he uses the word “*scienza*.”

reason to faith, the collect obscures the proper hierarchy in our ways of knowing.²⁸ In obscuring so essential a truth, the collect also diverts attention from the deeper mystery which the older collect places before us: faith transforms reason, and, by extension, grace divinizes nature.

The new petition is a bit convoluted because we ask God to grant us to reach the desired end through two successive means: the first is the way in which we cling to Albert's teaching; the second is "through the advancements of the sciences." The expectation of the text is that, if we cling to Saint Albert's teachings in the right way, we will be led through scientific advancements to a more profound knowledge and love of God. The *ita...ut...ad* [in such a way...that...to] describes the progression and the causal relations within it. On the one hand, the collect sees Saint Albert's teaching as ensuring an approach to scientific advancements that will lead to deeper knowledge and love of God. On the other, it rather gives the impression that scientific advancements (not scientific study, but progress – that is, scientific accomplishments) can, of themselves, produce greater knowledge and love of God – and this, of course, is misleading. Only God's grace can increase our love of him.

God can, of course, use anything to bring human beings to a greater knowledge and love of himself, including science and what he permits us to accomplish scientifically. Nevertheless it remains true that there is no intrinsic connection between knowledge of nature and knowledge of God.²⁹

²⁸This is particularly unfortunate because the idea that faith gives more certain and more reliable knowledge than reason is foreign to our scientific culture and the fact is unknown or incomprehensible to countless well-meaning persons today – including many Catholic undergraduates.

²⁹This is not to deny the possibility of natural knowledge of God, but to recognize the proper domain and intrinsic limitations of natural science.

In an apparent effort to affirm the goodness of human things, the new collect for Saint Albert assigns a spiritual role to scientific advancements. The result is clumsy and full of problems. It is one thing to ask that our study of science, or even our scientific advancements, may lead us to greater knowledge and love of God; it is quite another to ask that we be brought to greater knowledge and love of God through scientific advancements. The first begs a good outcome, asking that our labors be blessed; the second stipulates a particular means, presuming unfittingly upon human achievement.

Saint Catherine of Siena³⁰

The collect for Saint Catherine of Siena in the pre-Vatican II Roman Missal is a generic prayer that does not say anything that might not be said of any saint whose feast falls on the anniversary of his or her death.³¹ It reads:

Da, quaesumus, omnipotens Deus: ut qui beatæ Catharinæ Virginis tuæ natalitia colimus; et annua solemnitate laetemur, et tantæ virtutis proficiamus exemplo.	Grant, we beseech you, Almighty God: that we who celebrate the anniversary (or birth into glory) of Catherine your Virgin, may both rejoice in her yearly festival and profit by the example of such great virtue.
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The collect for Saint Catherine that appears in both the post-Vatican II Roman Missal and the new Dominican *Proprium* is not a revised version of what is found for Saint Catherine in either the pre-Vatican II Roman or pre-Vatican II Dominican missal. Rather, the revisers created a new collect by adapting the invocation of the collect for

³⁰Saint Catherine lived from 1347 to 1380. She was canonized in 1461 and declared a Doctor of the Church in 1970.

³¹In actual fact, however, it is used in the pre-Vatican missal for only one other, Saint Prisca (January 18) who was a virgin martyr – but with a slight difference in the petition which has “such great faith” (*tantæ fidei*) for “such great virtue.”

Saint Catherine of Genoa, also known as Saint Catherine Flisca, who does not have a day on the universal calendar,³² and composing a new petition.³³ The collect is presented below:

<p>Deus, qui beatam Catharinam in contemplatione dominicae passionis et in Ecclesiae tuae servitio divino amore flagare fecisti, ipsius intercessione concede, ut populus tuus, Christi mysterio sociatus, in eius gloriae revelatione semper exsultet.</p>	<p>O God, who caused blessed Catherine to burn with divine love in contemplation of the Lord's passion and in service to your Church, grant, through her intercession, that your people, having been joined to mystery of Christ, may always rejoice in the revelation of his glory.³⁴</p>
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The laudatory clause praises God for having made Saint Catherine burn with a godly or divine love which manifested itself in a two-fold way: in prayer (contemplation of the Lord's passion) and in service to the Church. In this way the opening clause roots the contemplative and apostolic dimensions of Saint Catherine's life in a single source: divine love.

The petition asks that the people of God (*populus tuus* = your people) who have been united or joined to the mystery of Christ may ever rejoice in the revelation of his glory. If we read the second part of the collect in close connection to the first as we

³²Before the post-Vatican II liturgical reform, Saint Catherine of Genoa was celebrated in the dioceses of the United States on March 22. Her collect reads: *Deus, qui beatam Catharinam in contemplanda Filii tui passione divini amoris igne flagare fecisti: quaesumus ut ipsa intercedente, tuae in nobis flammam caritatis accendas, et eiusdem passionis participes dignanter efficias* [O God, who made blessed Catherine burn with the fire of divine love through contemplating the passion of your Son: we beseech you, that through her intercession you may enkindle the flame of charity within us and be pleased to make us partakers of the same passion].

³³C. Braga, '*Proprium de Sanctis*,' p. 411, n. 15.

³⁴The ICEL translation reads: Father, in meditating on the sufferings of your Son and in serving your Church, St. Catherine was filled with the fervor of your love. By her prayers, may we share in the mystery of Christ's death and rejoice in the revelation of his glory.

ought, the “mystery of Christ” is the mystery of his suffering and death (his passion).³⁵

Although rejoicing in the revelation of Christ’s glory, manifest in the resurrection and apprehended through faith, is something that begins in this life, the petition that his people may “*ever* rejoice” can only be understood as a request that they be numbered among the blessed in heaven – that is, among those who eternally behold Christ’s glory fully revealed.

In each of the collects that we have examined thus far, the parallelism of the prayer depends upon a correspondence between what we praise God for having given to his saint and what we seek for ourselves. This is not the case here. The new petition does not request any grace like that which was given to Saint Catherine beyond that God’s people may also reach heaven. It does not, for example, ask that God’s people attain glory having lovingly contemplated the passion and/or having lovingly served the Church. The prayer’s parallelism is produced by correspondence between “the Lord’s passion” of the first part and “having been joined to the mystery of Christ” of the second. But the latter phrase does not couch an indirectly worded petition. It is a description of “your people” – for in the Christian dispensation we become God’s people only by being joined in baptism to the mystery of Christ’s dying and rising. The revisers’s departure from the convention of seeking graces that in some way correspond to those given to the saint is the more noteworthy because the source text follows the customary pattern. The collect for Saint Catherine of Genoa praises God for having made the saint burn with the fire of divine love through contemplating his Son’s passion and asks him both to enkindle the flame of charity within us and to make us partakers of the same passion.

³⁵This is the view, also, of the ICEL translators. *Cf.* the preceding note.

Again we turn to Carlo Braga in order to learn the intention of the revisers. Braga presents the orations of “more noteworthy figures for whom new formularies have been selected or created” under the heading “other saints,” that is saints other than Blessed Mother and the apostles.³⁶ The first of these is the collect for Saint Catherine of Siena. Braga describes the invocation as naming “the two characteristic marks of her mission: ardent love for the Church, to which she dedicated her whole strength, and deep devotion to the passion and blood of Christ, which inspired the whole of her spirituality.”³⁷ Braga tells us nothing of the thinking of the revisers with respect to the new petition except to say that it was not possible not to give it a paschal character.³⁸ The decision to give the collect a paschal character is neither unusual nor unfitting. What gives pause, however, is Braga’s wording which rather leaves the impression the revisers simply slipped a paschal note into the end of the collect, not that they carefully crafted a composition with paschal connotations – an impression that is strengthened by the absence of the customary parallelism between the laudatory clause and the petition.

The collect for Saint Catherine which appears in pre-Vatican II Dominican missals is below:

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 411

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸*Ibid.*: “non poteva non portare a dare una nota pasquale al formulario.”

<p>Deus, qui beatae Catharinae, virginitatis et patientiae³⁹ speciali privilegio decoratae, malignantium spirituum certamina vincere et in amore tui nominis inconcusse permanere tribuisti: concede, quaesumus, ut eius imitatione calcata mundi nequitia et omnium hostium superatis insidiis, ad tuam secure gloriam transeamus.</p>	<p>O God, who granted blessed Catherine, graced with a particular privilege of virginity and long-suffering, to prevail in struggles against evil spirits and to remain steadfast in love of your name: we beseech you, grant that in imitation of her we may, with the wickedness of the world trampled and the snares of every enemy overcome, pass securely into your glory</p>
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Saint Catherine consecrated her virginity to Christ at the age of seven and suffered for her decision to lead a virginal life at home. Perhaps this is why the invocation describes the saint's virginity and long-suffering as two aspects of one "*speciali privilegio*" or "particular favor." To the twin gifts of virginity and long-suffering the laudatory clause adds mention of two other graces which, moreover, are conceptually and progressively parallel to the first set. The favor of virginity grows to include, as it were, the grace of remaining steadfast in love of God's name; the grace of long-suffering matures and becomes the grace of prevailing in struggles against evil spirits. Moreover the parallelism is inverted, running a-b-b-a rather than a-b-a-b, so that love (the love that begot virginal consecration and the love of God's name) surrounds the suffering and struggle. Or to put the same the other way around: suffering and struggle take place within the embrace of love.

³⁹ The Latin *patientia*, from which the English "patience" is derived, comes from the deponent verb "*pati*" which means "to suffer." The difference between "patience" and "*patientia*" is that the English word, at least as it is often used popularly, refers more especially to the virtue by which one checks one's emotions or tongue in moments of trial, whereas the Latin highlights more particularly the suffering the trial involves and the fact that one suffers it virtuously. More specifically, "*patientia*" is the quality of bearing or suffering; it can be translated "forbearance," "endurance," "long-suffering" or "patience." See Schnitker, *Concordantia verbalia Missalis Romani*, p. 1798 for the ways in which the word "*patientia*" is used in the present missal. The collect of the Mass for Palm Sunday is of particular relevance.

These four graces, ordered as they are in progressive parallel sets, suggest the following interconnections. The grace to consecrate her virginity to Christ at so tender an age was motivated and accompanied by a grace of such great love for Christ that Saint Catherine willingly suffered rather than capitulate to the desires of those who would see her married. This initial grace of forbearance matured over time so that Saint Catherine was able to struggle successfully against evil spirits. Likewise the love with which she consecrated her virginity to Christ as a child matured into a love of God's name that did not waver during the course of her life. Three spiritual truths are implicit in this sequence: graced love is strengthened, not diminished, in graced suffering and struggle; cooperation with grace fits one to receive and to cooperate with greater graces; love is both the beginning and the end of all things in God.

The petition of the collect asks that we, by imitating Catherine, may reach the glory of heaven “with the wickedness of the world having been trampled and the snares of every enemy having been overcome.” The perfect passives indicate that the trampling and overcoming are not done by us or not, anyway, by us alone. The praise of God for Saint Catherine's suffering and prevailing in the first part of the collect suggest that the trampling and overcoming of evil is a work in which we must cooperate and one which, moreover, will cost us something. Lastly, the “*secure*” or “*securely*” includes the hope that God will bring us safely to his glory – that is, without us being harmed by the evil against which we must struggle.

This collect does not maintain double parallelism between the laudatory clause and petition in the manner of the older collect for Saint Thomas, but neither does it abandon the parallelism in the way of the new collect for Saint Catherine even though the

structural similarity of two prayers may give the impression that it does. The petitions of the old Dominican and new Roman collects both contain [perfect](#) passive participles which modify those whom the petition seeks to benefit. The essential difference between the two is best appreciated when the situation each describes is assessed from a theological perspective. As we argued above, “joined to the mystery of Christ” does not express a petition in an indirect manner but is simply descriptive of the people in question – for in Baptism they were joined to Christ. The case is otherwise, however, with respect to “the wickedness of the world trampled,” or “the snares of every enemy overcome.” These things are never wholly accomplished in our own lives before we enter heaven. Since we are not in heaven yet, the phrases indirectly express a request that that we, like Catherine, may prevail [in Christ](#) in the struggle against evil.

The new collect for Saint Catherine is superior to the one in the pre-Vatican II Roman missals inasmuch as it praises God for particular gifts that he showered upon her specifically, but it is inferior to the collect in the pre-Vatican II Dominican missals with respect to literary artistry, theological profundity, and its request for a specific grace for the faithful as they make their way to heaven. Early in his essay, Braga states the revision of the sanctoral cycle began with an attentive reading of the corpus of existing orations;⁴⁰ and Antoine Dumas, who headed the study group that revised the sanctoral orations, tells us that the revisers selected worthy texts from among the Propers of the Dominican and other religious orders.⁴¹ From this it follows that the revisers did not inadvertently overlook the Dominican collect for Saint Catherine but made a deliberate

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 403.

⁴¹Dumas, ‘Les oraisons du nouveau Missel,’ p. 267.

decision not to adopt it. The question is why. Dumas also tells us that the revisers changed “negatives” to “a more dynamic positive,” and presents examples of orations in which phrases that mention the devil or express a cautionary attitude toward the things of this world were changed. It is likely, then, that the revisers passed over the Dominican collect for Saint Catherine because it speaks of spiritual struggle and the devil, and makes mention of “the wickedness of the world.”⁴²

Conclusion

The decision to examine the collects for the three Dominican Doctors of the Church, while very specific, actually involves considerable diversity: one woman and two men; a bishop, a priest and a member of the Third Order; feasts that fall in different months that span nearly the entire year;⁴³ and revisions of three different kinds: changes to the invocation only, changes to both the invocation and petition, and the selection of an entirely different prayer a full half of which is a new composition. And although Carlo Braga discusses two of the collects that we examine, he presents them as examples of two entirely different kinds of revision in two different sections of his essay. It is probably safe to surmise that the revision of the collects of the Dominican Doctors of the Church is in no way unique, and that the kinds of things that we observed above are widespread in the revision of the sanctoral orations as a whole. Moreover, from what we have seen,

⁴²*Ibid.*, passim. For a discussion of this and other editorial practices of the reformers see Lauren Pristas, ‘Theological Principles that Guided the Redaction of the Roman Missal (1970),’ *The Thomist* 67 (2003), pp. 157-195.

⁴³Saint Thomas, January 28; Saint Catherine, April 29; Saint Albert, November 15.

there seems to be no way to avoid the conclusion that each of these revised collects is inferior to a pre-existing counterpart in both literary and theological excellence.⁴⁴

The traditional Roman orations are highly sophisticated and remarkably concise literary compositions that overflow with meaning. This is not so much because connotation outstrips denotation, which it does, but because there is a dynamism or energy that springs from the causal relationships presented in the texts. These causal relationships are usually stated very simply; but they are not obvious, perfunctory, or superficial. They express particular and profound insights of our spiritual or theological tradition. In the collects we examined this dynamism is perhaps most evident in the invocation of the Dominican collect for Saint Catherine which succinctly describes the path of her spiritual development even as it praises God for his gifts to her. But a similar energy is observable in the collect for Saint Thomas which recognizes that the graces God gave to his saint for the good of his Church continue in our own day, and in the collect for Saint Albert which understands the saint to have forged a path for us to follow by the manner in which he submitted his reason to faith.

The insights or truths of these older collects are more often implicit than explicit. That is, a particular collect does not actually state or “teach” a particular truth, but presupposes it. The import of the collect as whole, then, is grounded in the theological or spiritual presupposition – for example, the older collect for Saint Thomas is logically grounded in such a firm belief in Divine Providence and Saint Paul’s teaching about gifts being given for the building up of the whole body that it synthesizes the two without explicitly mentioning either. On this account, the collects are neither didactic nor

⁴⁴While distinct, these two aspects are not unrelated for, in the nature of things, the complicity between form and matter is inestimable.

exhaustible. But inexhaustibility is not to be confused with incomprehensibility. The older Roman collects communicate meaning the first time they are heard or read, and yet they are capable of disclosing new levels of meaning at every new reading or hearing. This wondrous combination of refined simplicity and richly textured nuance is what suits them equally well to be prayed at Sunday Mass where the congregation is comprised of members of the faithful who are at all different levels of spiritual and intellectual development, and to be repeated as many as five times more by those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, and oftentimes to be prayed again daily at Mass and Office of Readings throughout the following week – and all of this to be repeated year after year.

Each of the revised collects that we examined falls short in some way: the prayer for Saint Thomas because of a hasty or inattentive revision of the invocation that failed to take into account the effects of the changes on the petition; the prayer for Saint Albert because of conceptual confusion; the prayer for Saint Catherine because *it* does not seek graces that would enable us to follow her in contemplation of the Passion or service to the Church.

There is a great deal of discussion today about the quality of our vernacular translations, and this is a good thing. But the more important issue is the quality of the Latin liturgical texts. Translators cannot improve upon a flawed text without departing from the original. There is, for example, nothing the translator can do so that “*comple*,” which does not make sense in the revised Latin collect, will make sense in English; and there is nothing the translator can do to correct the theological imprecision of the revised collect for Saint Albert.

The Vatican Council brought us many gains. But, as the foregoing examination shows, there is a need for us to do the careful work of scrutinizing specific decisions so that the smaller losses, the “material failures,” may be corrected in accordance with the general direction established by the Council Fathers and expressed in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. The words that we use in our liturgical prayer matter – and the fact that there are so many words, so many individual prayers, in our liturgical books ought not to lead us to suppose that the character and quality of any particular text is unimportant.