

Open Letter to the U.S. Catholic Bishops on the Forthcoming Missal

[Anthony Ruff](#) |

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Your Eminences, Your Excellencies,

With a heavy heart, I have recently made a difficult decision concerning the new English missal. I have decided to withdraw from all my upcoming speaking engagements on the Roman Missal in dioceses across the United States. After talking with my confessor and much prayer, I have concluded that I cannot promote the new missal translation with integrity. I'm sure bishops want a speaker who can put the new missal in a positive light, and that would require me to say things I do not believe.

I love the Church, I love the sacred liturgy, I love chant in Latin and English, and I treasure being involved with all these as a monk and priest. It has been an honor to serve until recently as chairman of the music committee of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) that prepared all the chants for the new missal. But my involvement in that process, as well as my observation of the Holy See's handling of scandal, has gradually opened my eyes to the deep problems in the structures of authority of our church.

The forthcoming missal is but a part of a larger pattern of top-down impositions by a central authority that does not consider itself accountable to the larger church. When I think of how secretive the translation process was, how little consultation was done with priests or laity, how the Holy See allowed a small group to hijack the translation at the final stage, how unsatisfactory the final text is, how this text was imposed on national conferences of bishops in violation of their legitimate episcopal authority, how much deception and mischief have marked this process—and then when I think of Our Lord's teachings on service and love and unity...I weep.

I see a good deal of disillusionment with the Catholic Church among my friends and acquaintances. Some leave the Catholic Church out of conviction, some gradually drift away, some join other denominations, some remain Catholic with difficulty. My response is to stay in this church for life and do my best to serve her. This I hope to do by stating the truth as I see it, with charity and respect. I would be ready to participate in future liturgical projects under more favorable conditions.

I am sorry for the difficulties I am causing others by withdrawing, but I know this is the right thing to do. I will be praying for you and all leaders in our church.

Pax in Christo,

Fr. Anthony Ruff, O.S.B.

Anthony Ruff, O.S.B., is a Benedictine monk of Saint John's Abbey and a professor of liturgy and Gregorian chant. He was on the committee which drafted the 2007 document "Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship" for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. He is founder of the National Catholic Youth Choir and blogs at [Pray Tell](#). His letter above to the U.S. bishops is printed in its entirety.