

## Practical Implications for Parish Life

Bishops around the world have issued guidelines and directives for applications in their own Dioceses. While the directives do not force any changes to official liturgical texts, including the continuing work of the translation of the Roman Missal (*editio typical tertia*), which should already be following the spirit of the directives, the Directives may affect the use of particular pieces of liturgical music as well as the composition of the Intercessory Prayers for the celebration of Mass and other sacraments.

In the first instance, it would mean that some changes will have to be made to the hymns currently used in parishes. Although not many hymns are affected, some of the ones that are popular amongst New Zealanders include:

- Micah's Theme by Anne Kelly
- Sing a New Song by Dan Shutte
- Strong and Constant by Frank Anderson
- You are Near by Dan Shutte
- Yahweh is the God of My Salvation by Gregory Norbet
- Love Has Come By Mike Mangan

In some countries where the publication of hymn books are centralised, the publishers are providing information on the legal adaptation of the texts of the hymns so that they conform to the new directive and to adapt to music accompaniment that are affected. Some parishes have simply replaced "Yahweh" with the word 'God' or 'Lord'.

## Guidelines for the Diocese of Christchurch

*In the Diocese of Christchurch;*

- *The official liturgical texts of the Church are to be left untouched.*
- *When it comes to composing Intercessory Prayers, avoid the use of the word "Yahweh".*
- *Some song writers have already updated their hymns to be in line with the Directive. When it comes to hymns which use the word YAHWEH, such as those listed above, please contact the publisher or composer for the revised text, but avoid using versions which include YAHWEH.*

Diocesan Liturgical Commission  
Christchurch

Newsletter N° 34 – October 2009

To: Priests and Pastoral Assistants  
Parish Liturgy Committees  
Directors of Religious Studies  
PPRE Teachers



## Directive on discontinuing the use of "Yahweh" in hymns and liturgical text

Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you', and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you'. . . this is my name for ever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations." (Exodus 3:13-15)

In revealing his mysterious name, YHWH ("I AM HE WHO IS, " "I AM WHO AM" or "I AM WHO I AM"), God says who he is and by what name he is to be called. This divine name is mysterious just as God is mystery. It is at once a name revealed and something like the refusal of a name, and hence it better expresses God as what he is - infinitely above everything that we can understand or say: he is the "hidden God, " his name is ineffable, and he is the God who makes himself close to men.

(CCC paragraphs 207-208)

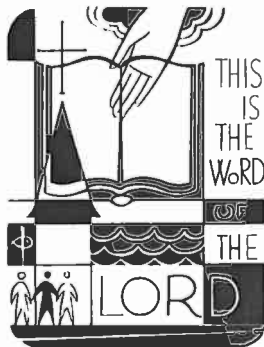
## Introduction

On 29<sup>th</sup> June 2008, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments issued a Directive on discontinuing the use of "Yahweh" in hymns and liturgical texts. This bulletin briefly explains and summarises the reasons behind the directives, and outlines its practical implications for the celebration of the liturgy of the Catholic Church.

## The Tetragrammaton YHWH and the word "Yahweh"

In the Old Testament, God's name appeared in Hebrew as a four-consonant word (יהוה) YHWH - known as the Divine Tetragrammaton. As an expression of the infinite greatness and majesty of God, God's name was held to be mysterious and unutterable by the Israelites. During the reading of sacred Scripture it was replaced by means of the use of an alternate name: *Adonai*, which means Lord. This Tradition lived on with the early Christians who regularly replaced the Tetragrammaton with the Latin word *Dominus*, which bore a correspondence both to the Hebrew *Adonai* and to the Greek *Kyrios*. The same holds for the recent neo-Vulgate which the church employs in the liturgy.

This Living Tradition has "important implications for New Testament Christology itself. When St. Paul, with regard to the crucifixion, writes that "God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name" (Phil 2:9), he does not mean any other name than Lord, for he continues by saying, "and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil 2:11); cf. IS 42:8): "I am the Lord; that is my name."). The attribution of this title to the risen Christ corresponds exactly to the proclamation of his divinity. The title in fact becomes interchangeable between the God of Israel and the Messiah of the Christian faith even though it is not in fact one of the titles used for the Messiah of Israel." <sup>1</sup>



1. Directive on discontinuing the use of "Yahweh" in hymns and liturgical text. Para.2

Originally the Divine Tetragrammaton appeared without vowels but they were added much later which means that the original Hebrew pronunciation can only be conjectured. However, "in recent years the practice has crept in of pronouncing the God of Israel's proper name..... The practice of vocalizing it is met with both in the reading of biblical texts taken from the Lectionary as well as in prayers and hymns, and it occurs in diverse written and spoken forms such as, for example, Yahweh, Yahwe, Jahweh, Jahwe, Jave, Yehovah, etc." <sup>2</sup>. When this is done, the mystery of God is dragged to a level of familiar items within a common history of religions.

## The Directives

It is for the above reasons that in 2008, by directive of Pope Benedict XVI, and in accord with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments communicated to the bishops' conferences the following directives:

1. In liturgical celebrations, in songs and prayers the name of God in the form of the Tetragrammaton YHWH is neither to be used nor pronounced.
2. For the translation of the biblical text in modern languages, destined for the liturgical usage of the church, what is already prescribed by No. 41 of the instruction *Liturgiam Authenticam* is to be followed; that is, the divine Tetragrammaton is to be rendered by the equivalent of *Adonai/Kyrios*: Lord, Signore, Seigneur, Herr, Señor, etc.
3. In translating in the liturgical context, texts in which are present, one after the other, either the Hebrew term *Adonai* or the Tetragrammaton YHWH, *Adonai* is to be translated Lord and the form God is to be used for the Tetragrammaton YHWH, similar to what happens in the Greek translation of the Septuagint and in the Latin translation of the Vulgate.

2. Directive on discontinuing the use of "Yahweh" in hymns and liturgical text. Para. 1