

## "Pater Noster," No Peace. The Battle Begins Among the Translations

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"This not a good translation," Pope Francis snapped, in [commenting](#) on television last December 6 on the translation used in Italy for the phrase of the "Pater noster" that in Latin reads: "Et ne nos inducas in tentationem."

In Italy, the translation that is recited or sung during Masses is patterned on the Latin almost to the letter: "E non c'indurre in tentazione." Just like the English version used in the United States: "And lead us not into temptation."

And this is precisely the kind of version that Francis does not like. The reason - he explained in front of the cameras of TV 2000, the channel of the Italian bishops, miming the gesture of pushing and knocking down (see photo) - is that "it is not He, God, who knocks me into temptation, to see afterward how I have fallen. No, the Father does not do this, the Father helps us to get up right away. The one who leads us into temptation is Satan. The prayer that we say is: When Satan leads me into temptation, You, please, give me a hand."

Vice-versa, the pope does like - and has said so - the new translation in use since last year in France and in other French-speaking countries: "Et ne nous laisse pas entrer en tentation," which replaced the previous one: "Et ne nous soumet pas à la tentation" which in its turn is similar to the one currently in use in various Spanish-speaking countries, including Argentina: "Y no nos dejes caer en la tentación."

In Italy, the episcopal conference will meet in an extraordinary assembly from November 12 to 24 precisely to discuss whether or not to introduce into the “Our Father” in the Mass the new version that for years has been part of the official Italian translation of the Bible: “E non abbandonarci nella tentazione.”

But after the pronouncement that Francis has already made, it could be said that the outcome of the discussion has already been decided from the outset - “Roma locuta, causa finita” - with the guaranteed, upcoming insertion into the Italian missal as well of the translation that has already been put into the Bible and is surely more agreeable to the pope.

And yet no. It is not really a given that it will end up like this. Because meanwhile Rome has spoken again. And has laid out a different solution.

It was not the pope himself who spoke this time, but it was close enough. The speaking voice, in fact, is one close to him, very close and at times even one and the same: that of [“La Civiltà Cattolica.”](#)

In the magazine directed by Francis’s Jesuit confidant, Antonio Spadaro, another Jesuit, the illustrious biblicist Pietro Bovati, has published an article entirely dedicated to none other than the analysis of the “difficult” question: “Et ne nos inducas in tentationem.”

In the first half of the article, Bovati explains how in effect this prayer to the heavenly Father has raised interpretative difficulties in Christian history. And it shows how authoritative Fathers of the Church such as Ambrose, Augustine, and Jerome tended to interpret it in this sense: “Do not allow us to enter into and/or succumb to temptation,” or: “Do not abandon us to/in temptation.” That is, precisely “in the direction in which the modern translations incline.”

Except that, having come to this point, Bovati unexpectedly pivots. And he declares that he wants to propose a new translation. Which does not coincide at all with the one that in Italy would seem to be on the verge of becoming official, nor with those already in use in France, in Argentina, and in other countries.

The new translation that Bovati proposes and strongly substantiates is: “E non metterci alla prova.”

In support of this translation, he explains that the word “prova” [“test/trial”] is much more faithful than “temptation” to the original Greek “peirasmos.” This because in the New Testament “to tempt” has the malevolent meaning of wanting to make someone fall through seduction or deceit, while the “prova” or putting to the test is in the entire Bible that which God does with man, in various moments and in sometimes unfathomable ways, and is what Jesus experienced to the highest degree in the Garden of Olives before the passion, when he prayed in these words: “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me!”

“So this is not a matter,” Bovati writes, “of praying to the Father exclusively for the sake of being capable of overcoming temptations and defeating the seductions of the Evil One, something that is certainly necessary, but also of beseeching the good God that he may grant his help to one who is small and fragile, so as to make it through the night without getting lost. Let us think of all those who turn to God asking for healing, and let us also think of the many requests that we repeat on a daily basis, employing the formulas of the Psalms or of the liturgical prayers, let us

think finally of how many invocations are hidden in our hearts when we perceive a danger, or are struck with anxiety for the future, or have already been touched by some symptom of evil. So then, this variegated form of requests to the Lord is entirely summed up and as it were condensed in a single petition, that which says: “Do not put us to the test.”

Bovati’s article is worth reading in its entirety. And who knows if the Italian bishops may not take it to heart, when next November they are deciding what is to be done.

With one last observation, of a musical nature. The words: “E non metterci alla prova” would fit to perfection the classical melody of the chanted “Padre nostro.” Something that is impossible, instead, with the unwieldy “E non abbandonarci nella tentazione” that is in danger of being approved.

(English translation by [Matthew Sherry](#), Ballwin, Missouri, U.S.A.)