

GETTING TO KNOW THE NEW ROMAN MISSAL

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All English-speaking Catholics throughout the world – as well as other language groups - are preparing to receive the new translation of the Roman Missal in Advent of this year. The Roman Missal contains all the prayers and instructions we use at the celebration of the Eucharist. The way we celebrate Mass will not change, nor will the Readings, but many of the words we use will. The new translation will reflect a more accurate translation of Latin from which the text is taken, and it will employ language in our prayer that is dignified, solemn, and beautiful, and conveys the sacredness we celebrate.

The Roman Missal contains the prayers of the Mass, including those for different saints, funerals, weddings and so on. Surprisingly, the first Roman Missal didn't appear until 1474 - the printing press probably helped. Within fifty years, the Council of Trent, in response to the Protestant Reformation, made a number of reforms in the Catholic Church, including the Missal. Of course, there were minor revisions over the centuries, but the second edition was the work of the Second Vatican Council. We assume that meant translating the Missal into English and other modern languages. Actually, it was just another revision of the Latin. Big changes to the Mass prayers and rituals but since they came to us in English, we assumed they were one and the same. The Second Roman Missal wasn't completed in English until 1985. Pope John Paul II ordered a Third Latin Roman Missal in 2000 which was published in 2002. It includes revisions to Canon Law, changes in the calendar to accommodate new saints and other non-dogmatic changes.

Now the third edition of the Roman Missal has been translated into English. The commission charged with the English translation is composed of members from Australia, Canada, England and Wales, India, Ireland, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Scotland, South Africa and the United States - all English language groups using the one translation for the first time. In addition, the Congregation for Divine Worship was concerned that translations over the last forty-plus years have moved further and further away from the richness of the original Latin. So the new translation will reflect a more accurate translation, not just individual words, but grammar and structure too. It will look and sound quite different and yet the spirit will be the same as always.

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Whenever we gather to celebrate Mass, we gather as the people of God. Together we are the Body of Christ, and together we pray what we believe. The Introductory Rites of the Mass gather us, invite us into the journey we share, and remind us that although we are individual people, we are one body as believers. We begin in song, where our individual voices are joined together to praise God. The Sign of the Cross marks us as baptized in Christ. The Act of Penitence has us standing before God as people with human's frailties who pray first for mercy. Then in joy and gratitude to the God who loves us, we raise our voices in the Gloria. The Opening Prayer, the Collect, allows us to call to mind our own prayers, and the celebrant collects them into a prayer that he makes in the name of the whole community. All the actions of the Introductory Rites are designed to remind us that although we are many, we are one in the Lord.

For reflection

When I gather to celebrate Mass, what helps me connect to my community of believers? What attitudes do I need to assume to help me participate fully in this believing community gathered to praise God?

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

The Liturgy of the Word is the part of the Mass where we hear the Word of God proclaimed. The readings from the Old and New testaments are an opportunity for us to hear and understand more completely the Word of God. We respond to the proclamation of the Word in silence, reflecting on what we have heard and by singing or reciting a Psalm. Then, as one, we stand to hear the Gospel proclaimed. These readings from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John relate the words and deeds of our Lord. The Lectionary is not being changed so the Readings stay as they are. We sit to listen to the Homily, reflections on how the power of the Word informs and challenges us today. Then we stand together and pray the Creed, the words that express our deeply held beliefs as a community of believers. We pray this prayer together, articulating the beliefs of the whole community and claiming them as our own. Two versions of the Creed are in the new Missal – the Nicene Creed, the one we normally use but in a new translation and the Apostle Creed. Finally, we gather the Prayer of the Faithful, and ask God to hear them for our sake, for the sake of the Church and its leaders, for the sake of the world, and for the needs of its people living and dead.

For reflection

How can I enter more fully into the Word I hear proclaimed at Mass? Can I make a commitment to read the readings for the day before Mass and again after Mass, and then ask "How do the readings of the day challenge me in my everyday life"?

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

The Liturgy of the Eucharist reveals the heart of the believing community's action: the memorial of Jesus' death and resurrection. During this time we actively participate on both a meal and a sacrifice. In the Preparation of the Gifts of bread and wine, we present our lives as an offering to God. In the Eucharistic Prayer, we give thanks and praise for God's wonderful works on our behalf, especially in Christ Jesus. We also proclaim the central mystery of our faith: "When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your death, O Lord, until you come again." Our faith tells us that, at the consecration, the bread and wine on our altar become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. When we receive the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion, we respond, "Amen", which means "I believe!" The texts of the four Eucharistic Prayers are altered slightly in the new Missal. Other Eucharistic Prayers are made available. The Mystery of Faith responses are different – we shall soon learn them.

For reflection

How do I prepare myself to receive the gift of Jesus Christ into my heart and my life? What does the gift of Jesus Christ mean for me?

THE COMMUNION RITE

The Our Father is not changed but the priest's prayer which follows "Deliver us, Lord.." is newly translated. The response "For the kingdom..." is unchanged as is the Sign of Peace but with the response "and with your spirit" and the "Lamb of God."

THE RITE OF DISMISSAL

After entering into communion with Christ and one another as the Body of Christ, we prepare to go forth into the world. During the Concluding Rites, we bow our heads and receive a blessing, we make the sign of the cross, and we are sent forth in peace and live what we have celebrated. The Blessing and dismissal remain the same in the new Missal. But the response "and with your spirit" is used.

For reflection

What does it mean to take Eucharist into the world? How am I Jesus for another? How is he/she Jesus for me? What one thing can I do this week that will embody for others?