

Transitioning to the new Roman Missal

Part 1 in a series (Prepared for St. James Cathedral, Seattle by Corinna Laughlin)

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The Roman Missal: Questions & Answers

What is the Roman Missal?

The Roman Missal is the name for the book containing the prayers we use in the celebration of the Mass—the dialogues ("The Lord be with you," "Lift up your hearts") and the prayers we say or sing, like the Gloria, the Creed, and the Sanctus, and the prayers the priest prays as well - the Opening Prayer, the Eucharistic Prayer, the Prayer after Communion and concluding blessing. This book is also known as the "Sacramentary."

Why is there a new translation?

In 2001, the Vatican office in charge of liturgical matters published a document entitled *Liturgiam Authenticam*, which laid out guidelines for the translation of liturgical texts. The new guidelines were significantly different from those which were published shortly following the Second Vatican Council (in a document called *Comme le prévoit*). In a nutshell, the basic principle of translation changed from what is called *dynamic equivalence* to *formal equivalence*. "Dynamic equivalence" means that ideas are translated, rather than words. Sentence structures are rearranged, and thoughts are occasionally paraphrased, to make the resulting text as clear as possible. "Formal equivalence" demands that the Latin be translated closely, even literally. Each word and phrase in the original must be rendered in the translation, and even the word order of the original is maintained as much as possible. Dynamic equivalence puts the highest priority on a smooth and easy-to-understand translated text. With formal equivalence, the priority is the accuracy with which the translation renders the Latin.

What is going to change?

Because the principles of translation are so different, the resulting translation brings significant changes to the language of the Mass. The most noticeable changes will be in the people's responses, including the Greeting (when the priest says, "The Lord be with you," we will respond "And with your spirit"). Because some of the



A page from a Roman Missal, dating from 1320. The text is that of the Roman Canon (Eucharistic Prayer I) for Christmas: "...that most sacred night on which blessed Mary... brought forth the Savior for this world..."

changes are to prayers that are typically sung--the Gloria, the Sanctus, the Memorial Acclamation--the new edition of the Roman Missal will also have a significant impact on the music of the Mass, since we will need to use new or adapted versions of these acclamations. Probably the most dramatic changes are to the portions prayed by the priest, including the opening and closing prayers and the Eucharistic Prayers.

When will we begin using the new words?

The new translation of the Roman Missal was granted *recognitio*, that is, formal approval, by Pope Benedict XVI in April, 2010. It will be published in October of 2011. In the United States, we will begin using the new Missal on the First Sunday of Advent, **November 26-27, 2011.**

Why is there controversy about the new translation?

There has been significant controversy around the new translation. Many liturgists and theologians have objected to the translation principles because the resulting texts can be quite difficult to proclaim and to understand. There is also controversy because of the level of secrecy that surrounded the preparation of these texts, the lack of consultation, and the discovery in the spring of 2011 that the texts were substantially edited even after the bishops had approved them. These concerns make the implementation of the new Missal even more challenging.

How can I learn more about the new translation?

A weekly bulletin insert will introduce the new texts and during the coming weeks. Beginning on Tuesday, October 4, a special adult education series will explore the history of Catholic worship, from the days of the Apostles to the present. In November, a short, intensive session will be offered at a variety of times to help us experience the new responses and prepare to use them beginning on November 26-27, 2011. Visit the special page at the Cathedral's website, www.stjames-cathedral.org, for more information.