

OFFICE OF DIVINE WORSHIP

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Questions and Answers on the Mass Changes

On November 27, 2011, the English speaking Church in the USA will begin using a new translation of the prayers used at Mass (The *Roman Missal*). A series of Questions and Answers on this topic are posted here to help explain the thinking behind these changes.

1. Why is there a need for a new translation?

Pope John Paul II issued the third edition of the *Missale Romanum* (the Latin text of the *Roman Missal*) during the Jubilee Year in 2000. This new edition included many new texts requiring translation. In addition, the experience of the years after the Second Vatican Council gave rise to a desire for more formal and literal translations of the original Latin texts. This new translation will employ the best of what we have learned about translation and liturgical language in two generations of celebrating the Liturgy in the vernacular. It will provide an opportunity to reflect ever more deeply on the eucharistic celebration that lies at the heart of the Church's life.

2. Who is doing the work of translation?

The process of translating liturgical texts from the original Latin is a highly consultative work done by several groups. The International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) prepares English translations of liturgical texts on behalf of the conferences of bishops of English-speaking countries. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the other member conferences receive draft translations of each text and have the opportunity to offer comments and suggestions to ICEL. Then ICEL proposes a second draft, which each conference approves and submits to the Vatican for final approval. Each conference reserves the right to amend or modify a particular text.

At the Vatican, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments examines the translated texts, offers authoritative approval (*recognitio*) of the texts, and grants permission for their use. Currently the Congregation is aided by the recommendations of Vox Clara, a special committee of bishops and consultants from English-speaking countries. The translation and review process is guided by the guidelines in *Liturgiam Authenticam*, issued in 2001, an instruction from the Congregation that outlines the principles and rules for liturgical translation. In 2007, the Congregation also issued a *ratio* outlining the specific rules for translation in English.

3. What's new or different about the revised translation?

The style of the translation of the third edition is different. In accord with the rules for translation established by the Holy See, the revised translation follows the style of the original Latin texts more closely, including concrete images, repetition, parallelisms, and rhythm. The English used in the Mass texts is more formal and dignified in style. Where possible, the texts follow the language of Scripture and include many poetic images. In addition, the third edition contains prayers for the celebration of recently canonized saints, additional prefaces for the Eucharistic Prayers, additional Masses and prayers for various needs and intentions, and some updated and revised rubrics (or instructions) for the celebration of the Mass.

4. What is the timeline for the approval and implementation of the *Missal*?

After the Latin *Missale Romanum* was published in 2002, ICEL began its work of preparing a draft English translation of the text. ICEL presented the first section - the Order of Mass, which contains the fixed prayers of the Mass, including the people's parts - to the English speaking conferences of bishops in 2004. The USCCB approved the final version in 2006, and the Holy See confirmed this section in June 2008. The remaining sections were approved between 2007 and 2009. The USCCB completed its approval of the *Missal* in November 2009. The Holy See granted the final approval of the text in the spring of 2010. Cardinal Francis George, OMI, president of the USCCB, announced that parishes may begin using the revised translation on November 27, 2011.

5. Can we start using the texts approved by the bishops immediately?

The translation of the *Missale Romanum* could not be used in the celebration of the Mass until the complete text was confirmed by the Holy See. Now that the translation has received the *recognitio*, the USCCB has established the first day on which the new translation may be used. Use of the revised text requires preparation and catechesis for both priests and the faithful. When the time comes to use the texts in the celebration of the Mass, priests will be properly trained, the faithful will have an understanding and appreciation of what is being prayed, and musical settings for the liturgical texts will be readily available.

6. What will the process of implementation look like?

Now that the *recognitio* has been granted, final preparation and publication of the *Missal* will commence. Catechesis on the new translation and on the Liturgy itself will become even more important. Training for priests, music ministers, and other liturgical leaders (liturgy committees and liturgical commissions), as well as formation for all Catholics, will help to ensure the successful implementation of the new text.

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7. What will the new *Missal* mean in my parish?

In the months before the revised translation is implemented, parishes will have to do many things. The parish will have to replace liturgical books and participation aids. Priests will practice proclaiming the new texts and will prepare homilies helping the faithful to understand the new translation and to deepen their appreciation for the Liturgy. The music ministers and the people will learn new musical settings for the parts of the Mass (such as the *Gloria* and the *Sanctus*). Catechists and teachers will help parishioners learn the new prayers. Parishes may also use this opportunity to undertake a thorough reexamination of their liturgical practices.

8. If my parish likes the old translation better, can we continue using that one?

Now that the Holy See has granted the *recognitio* to the revised translation, the USCCB has established a date for first use and a date for mandatory use. No parish may continue to use the current translation after the mandatory use date. Parishes will need to use the period before the mandatory use date to help parishioners renew their love for the Sacred Liturgy, to understand the changes, and to develop an appreciation for the revised translation.

9. Do these changes mean that the old translation was not valid and orthodox?

The current translation was approved by the conferences of bishops and confirmed by the Holy See. Until the new text becomes effective, the current translation remains the valid ordinary form of the Liturgy in the Roman Rite. The revised translation attempts to address some inadequacies in the present translation by introducing a more elevated style of language and by retaining many poetic texts and scriptural allusions. The current translation fostered the faith of two generations of Catholics and retains a valid place in church history.

10. What opportunities does the new *Missal* offer the Church?

Implementing the new *Missal* will give the Church an opportunity to take a fresh look at its liturgical practice and to renew its celebration of the Sacred Liturgy, which is the “source and summit” of Christian life (Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church [Lumen Gentium]*, no. 11). The faithful, encountering the Liturgy anew in the new text, can deepen their sharing in Christ’s sacrifice, offering their lives to the Father as they worship “in Spirit and truth” (Jn 4:23).