

What is the Roman Missal?

Take notice of the red book the priest uses most often during the Mass. This book is called the Sacramentary, which together with the Lectionary for Mass (both the Sunday and Weekday Lectionaries) make up the Roman Missal. The missal is the collection of prayers, chants, and instructions (rubrics) used to celebrate Mass. This includes prayers such as the Sign of the Cross and opening greeting; Opening Prayers; Gloria; Creed; Eucharistic Prayers; Holy, Holy, Holy; Memorial Acclamations; and the final blessing. The majority of the prayers we recite or sing at Mass are contained in this book and it is these prayers that have been retranslated from the original Latin into English.

Where did the Roman Missal originally come from?

The earliest traditions of Christian liturgical prayer forms were not written down. In fact, in the first few centuries of the Church public prayer was often spontaneous, extemporized, and fluid. It was in the doctrinally sensitive climate of the 4th century Christological controversies, that is, the theological debates surrounding the divinity/humanity of Christ, that the fear of heresy began to place limitations around the practise of improvised public prayer. This transition from fluidity to standardization is seen in the appearance first of the libelli (“little books”) which were little liturgical pamphlets containing formularies for various Masses, selections of various orations, and the needed texts for a specific ritual or action. In many cases, the first liturgical books were simply the compilation of several libelli, formerly independent of one another. These are the ancestors of the sacramentary, the books of chant, the missal, among others, and were often used to diffuse a new Mass formulary. Throughout the ages, these compilations were handed on with modifications and additions being made along the way. Eventually, all the chants, prayers, instructions (ordos), and scriptures were organized into one book called the Missale Plenum (complete missal). After the Council of Trent (1545-1563) Pope Pius V promulgated an edition of the Missale Romanum in 1570 which was to be obligatory for the Latin Church. It was written in Latin and the texts contained in it remained relatively unchanged until the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

How has the Roman Missal developed since the Second Vatican Council?

The Missale Romanum (Roman Missal), the ritual text for the celebration of the Mass, was promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1970 as the definitive text of the reformed liturgy of the Second Vatican Council. That Latin text, the editio typica (typical edition), was translated into various languages for use around the world, including English. The Holy See issued a revised text, the editio typica altera, in 1975. Pope John Paul II promulgated the third edition (editio typica tertia) of the Missale Romanum during the Jubilee Year in 2000. Among other things, 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 (instructions) for the celebration of the Mass. To aid the process of translating the Missale Romanum, editio typica tertia (Roman Missal, 3rd Edition), the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments issued a document called Liturgiam Authenticam in 2001, an Instruction on the vernacular translation of the Roman Liturgy which outlines the principles and rules for translation. In 2007, the Congregation for Divine Worship issued the Ratio Translationis for the English Language, which outlined the specific rules for translation in English.

Why do we need a revised translation of the Roman Missal?

A revised translation of the Roman Missal is necessary for several reasons:

*After Vatican II the Church produced a revised standard Latin text of the Missal, that is, a new editio typica. The process of translating this new standard Latin text into English was an enormous venture, accomplished with haste to satisfy the desire for Mass in the vernacular language of the people. Therefore, this translation was not necessarily the best and was meant to be temporary. A revised translation was produced in 1975, the editio typica altera.

*These earlier translations used what is known as dynamic equivalence, a process which focussed on the wider meaning of what was being said; it was less formal and more conversational. The Roman Missal, 3rd Edition employs what is called formal equivalence which pays more attention to the specific words and sentence structure found in the original Latin text. Therefore, it is a more literal translation and will enable our prayer to be a better expression of our unity in prayer and faith with Catholics around the world.

*During the Jubilee Year 2000, Pope John Paul II promulgated the third edition of the Roman Missal in Latin. This was necessitated by the fact that a number of new prayers for the Mass had been written, especially associated with the canonization of many new saints in recent years.

What difference does a more formal translation make?

A more exact translation of the Roman Missal from Latin into English is important for several reasons:

*The revised translation of the Roman Missal will emphasize the Scriptural references more clearly. This will enable the worshipper to perceive and understand the connections between the Scriptures and the Mass texts more readily.

*Many of the original phrases used in the Latin were altered or lost in the English translations. The revised English translation will bring us closer to the translations used by many other language groups and will connect us linguistically to other Catholics throughout the world.

*The English versions of many of our liturgical texts are used as the base language by a number of other countries to guide their own translations. Therefore, it is important that the English translation be as precise and as close to the original as possible.

*In the liturgy, we pray what we believe, and believe what we pray (lex orandi, lex credendi). Translations need to be authentic and accurate for this reality to find expression.

What is an example of the difference between dynamic equivalence and formal equivalence?

The current Opening Prayer for the First Sunday of Advent is:

All Powerful God,
increase our strength of will for doing good
that Christ may find an eager welcome at his coming
and call us to his side in the kingdom of heaven,
where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

This is an example of dynamic equivalence. Notice the simplicity of the words which are essentially a paraphrasing of the Latin original.

The more literal translation from the new Roman Missal is:

Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God,
the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ
with righteous deeds at his coming,
so that, gathered at his right hand,
they may be worthy to possess the heavenly kingdom.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

This is an example of formal equivalence; the more exact wording renders a text which is more poetic, with fuller meaning.

Who produces the English translation of the Roman Missal?

The process of translation was the consultative work of several groups. The International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) is mandated to prepare English translations of liturgical texts on behalf of the conferences of bishops of English-speaking countries. The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCC) and the other member Conferences of Bishops received draft translations of each text from ICEL (called “Green Books”) and had the opportunity to offer comments and suggestions to ICEL. A second draft (called the “Grey Book”) was then prepared by ICEL, which each Conference of Bishops approved (a Conference reserves the right to amend or modify a particular text) and submitted to the Vatican for final approval. The Vatican’s Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments examined the texts and offered authoritative approval (recognitio) for their use. The Congregation was aided by the recommendations of Vox Clara, a special committee of bishops and consultants from English-speaking countries convened to assist with the English translation of the Missale Romanum.

What is necessary for the implementation of the revised Roman Missal?

Before use of the revised Roman Missal becomes mandatory in Canada on the First Sunday of Advent, November 27, 2011, dioceses and their parishes will need to prepare for the implementation. Liturgical books, such as the Sacramentary, will need to be replaced, and participation aids used by the people such as missalettes and music resources will need to be replaced and/or revised. Priests will need to learn and practise

the new texts. Those engaged in music ministry together with congregations will need to learn new musical settings for the parts of the Mass. Three new musical settings for the Mass have been produced and approved for use in Canada. Additionally, parishioners will have to learn the new prayers, responses, and gestures. Certainly all of this will take time so that we can all come to appreciate the revisions that have occurred and embrace their depth of meaning. The Liturgy Office of the Archdiocese of Regina will direct the process of implementation in our parishes, utilizing the resources and following the directions of the National Liturgy Office of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.