

The New Roman Missal

What's constant and what's changing in third edition of Roman Missal?

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By Sr. Ann Rehrauer

In his column that initiated this series on the Roman Missal, Bishop David Ricken described the General Instruction of the Roman Missal and some changes we will implement over the next months. He noted especially the kneeling posture during the eucharistic prayer and after the Lamb of God, the people's prayer posture at the Our Father, and the placement of the tabernacle in our churches.

What's new in the Missal

While the General Instruction gives the theological principles and the directives for how Mass is celebrated, the texts of the Missal are the actual prayer texts we use at Mass. The third edition of the Missal contains some added prayers and uses a new style of translation.

There will be a few new responses that all of us will need to learn, especially a new wording for the Gloria and the Creed. Most parishes will have pew cards to help us with this. It will take a little time to become comfortable with the changes, but for most of us, these changes will not be as monumental or as unsettling as the ones some of us experienced in 1969 when Mass was celebrated in English. It's our priests who will have the greatest challenge this fall. Every prayer they say has been retranslated — so they'll need to follow the book very carefully for the first year.

The reason for this new style of translation was to have the prayers we pray be a fuller and more exact expression of the Latin text, using a style that reflects the sacredness of what we do. The earlier translations were by design, simpler and easier to understand. They were shortened for clearer proclamation and sometimes omitted some concepts or scriptural allusions. This new style will sound more complex at the beginning, and we'll have to listen carefully because of the sentence length and subordinate clauses that are part of the new style.

What hasn't changed

As we begin to pray with the new Missal, we'll notice that the nature of the Mass and its structure is exactly the same as in the present Missal. After the Second Vatican Council, the church revised the Roman Missal to highlight the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. In structure and directives, there was a renewed emphasis on the communal nature of liturgical prayer, the multiple modes of Christ's presence in the Mass, and the participation of the people, both internally and externally. All of this remains the same.

Liturgical prayer, like the Mass, differs from devotional or private prayer. In private prayer we

choose the time and place, there is greater flexibility with the texts, and people pray either alone or in a group. The nature of the prayer itself is individual.

Liturgical prayer (Mass, the other sacraments, and the Liturgy of the Hours), is the public and official prayer of the church which is, of its nature, communal. We gather at a specific time and place (Sunday in church), the texts are set, and the prayer is usually led by a bishop, priest, or deacon. The exception is the Liturgy of the Hours which is led by a lay person when no ordained minister is present.

The Mass today and the Mass we will celebrate on Nov. 27 continues to be: a communal act of worship; the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary made present for us through symbol and ritual; the action of Christ and the action of the church. Christ is present during the Mass in the Scriptures proclaimed, in the priest who stands in the person of Christ, in the consecrated bread and wine which has become his body and blood, and in the liturgical assembly gathered to pray and to sing.

What hasn't changed is the importance of our participation — both external (responding, singing and ministering) and internal (paying attention, offering our lives and our prayer with that of Christ to the Father, and being open to be transformed by God's grace).

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Next

How will what we say and sing be different?