

The New Roman Missal

What prayers at Mass will change?

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By Sr. Ann Rehrauer

At every celebration of Mass, there are things we can count on:

- Jesus will be present — in the gathered assembly, in the Scriptures proclaimed, in the gift of his body and blood, and in the person of the priest;
- The sacrifice we join in offering is Christ's sacrifice on Calvary, accomplished once, but present in our time through sign and symbol;
- Even as our local parish gathers to offer praise and thanks to God, we are part of that "great cloud of witnesses" described by the author of the letter to the Hebrews (12:1). The whole church in heaven and on earth joins with us in this wondrous act of worship.

This November, as we begin to use the new edition of the Missal, the basic structure of the Mass will also remain the same. The two focal points of the Mass will still be the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. We will have the three transitional rites: the entrance rite, which helps us begin well and prepares us to hear God's word; the preparation of the altar and gifts, in readiness for the offering of Christ's sacrifice; and at the end of Mass, the dismissal rite, which sends us forth to live the transformation we have experienced.

While the nature and structure of the Mass will not change, the prayers we pray and hear will be the area in which we experience the most notable difference.

At Mass there are two kinds of prayers. The Order of Mass contains the prayer texts that are pretty much the same each time we celebrate. While there are options for various prayers, we have a greeting, a penitential rite, a Gloria and Creed for major celebrations, a preface and eucharistic prayer, the Our Father, the Lamb of God, and the blessing and dismissal. The Propers are the prayers the priest prays that are unique to each feast or Sunday. These include the collect, or opening prayer, the prayer over the gifts, and the prayer after Communion.

When we begin using the new Missal, we'll need to listen more carefully because these prayers from the Order of the Mass and from the Proper will sound different than the ones we've been using for almost 40 years. They will be longer and the sentence structure will be more complex and we only hear them once.

As an example of the difference in style, let's consider the collect for the fourth Sunday of Advent. The Gospel account that day is the story of the Angel Gabriel's Annunciation to Mary.

Last year we heard:

Lord,

Fill our hearts with your love,

and as you revealed to us by an angel the coming of your Son as man,

so lead us through his suffering and death to the glory of his resurrection,

For he lives and reigns . . .

This year we will hear:

Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the Incarnation

of Christ your Son was made known by the

message of an Angel, may by his Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of his Resurrection,

Who lives and reigns . . .

Those of us who pray the Angelus each day recognize this new collect as the closing of that prayer. The meaning of the two texts is the same: Both refer to God's invitation to Mary through the message of the Angel Gabriel, and we know of Mary's gracious response. Both ask that as we celebrate the Incarnation in the coming of feast of Christmas, we may eventually join Christ whose living and dying restored our relationship with God. But the new text is both a more direct rendering of the Latin original and carries the echoes of the traditional Angelus conclusion.

Sr. Rehrauer is the diocesan director of Evangelization, Living Justice, and Worship.

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A changed text at the heart of the Order of Mass: the eucharistic prayer.