

Frequently Asked Questions

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want to have one or two posted every month.

What is the Roman Missal?

The Roman Missal is a book containing the ritual text for the celebration of the Mass. From the time of the Council of Trent to Vatican II, there was one book that contained both the readings and prayers for the Mass, called the *Missale Romanum* (Roman Missal). After Vatican II, the cycle of readings was expanded into a three-year cycle and the readings were separated from the ritual text for Mass. We called this book the Sacramentary. With the revised translation the name of the book, in Latin *Missale Romanum*, will be translated as the Roman Missal.

I've heard this translation will sound different than the one we have now, why?

Shortly after the 3rd edition of the Roman Missal was issued, the principles for translation were revised. *Liturgiam Authenticam* is the fifth instruction on translation issued by the Holy See and was approved by Pope John Paul II on March 20, 2001. This new instruction is why much of what we hear and say will sound different. The principle used to translate the 2nd edition of the Roman Missal (the one currently in use) is called *dynamic equivalence*. *Dynamic equivalence* means to translate basic thoughts rather than individual words. Those who use this principle say that they are aiming for a transfer of the same meaning from the original to the receptor language. The original words and form are important only as a vehicle for the meaning; therefore, it is the meaning alone that is truly important in the translation. The principle used to translate the upcoming 3rd edition is called *formal equivalence*. *Formal equivalence* means to render the translation literally – almost word for word. It is allowable to change the arrangement and style of the words, but the original text must be translated integrally without changes in terms of content.

Are the texts available for us to see now?

Many of them are. The complete *Order of Mass* (the texts that do not change from Mass to Mass) is available online at <http://www.usccb.com/romanmissal/>. Included are all of the people's parts and many of the priest's parts, including the four primary Eucharistic Prayers. Not yet publicly available are all of the *Proper texts and antiphons* (the texts and prayers that are different at every Mass). These include the *collects* (a.k.a. the opening prayers), the prayers after communion, chant texts, and other prayers said by the priest.

When is this translation coming? Can we start to use the texts that have been approved now?

Not yet. Right now is a time for study and preparation. All Catholics can learn about the changes and begin to become familiar with the texts. Priests can practice them; composers can arrange new musical settings; publishers can prepare new books for publication. **The exact date when we will begin to use the texts will be the weekend of November 26/27th, the First Sunday of Advent 2011.**

Why the response, “And with your spirit?”

Simply, the Latin text—*et cum spiritu tuo*—translates literally in English as “And with your spirit.” In the complete exchange, the priest or deacon says, “The Lord be with you” (or another slightly longer greeting), and the people reply “And with your spirit.” While this response might sound strange given our modern understanding of the word “spirit”, this exchange has a long tradition. It can be traced to various scriptural passages (Ruth 2:4, Gal 6:18, 2 Tim 4:22) and liturgical texts dating back at least to the 3rd or 4th century A.D. Using the more literal translation “And with your spirit” places English-speaking Catholics firmly in this rich scriptural and liturgical tradition. Through this exchange, both the gathered assembly and the priest or deacon affirm and acknowledge the presence of God in one another.

Will we have to buy new hymnals?

With this new translation brings a change in some of the musical texts we use during the Mass. The Gloria has changed, along with the Holy, Holy and Memorial Acclamations. We will no longer be able to sing, “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.” These changes will result in having to learn new Mass settings. Composers and publishing companies have been working very hard to set the new texts to music. It may be time for your parish to purchase a new hymnal, or you may purchase a supplement put out by your hymnal’s publisher.

Do the new texts incorporate inclusive language?

The new texts are intended to be more literal translations of the original Latin texts than the current texts. In some cases, this means the language of the new texts will be less explicitly masculine. For example, we currently say, “It is right to give him thanks and praise,” but the new translation will be “It is right and just.” The priest will still have the option to say “Brothers and sisters” at various points during the Mass. However, in other instances, masculine words will be translated literally as “men”, “brothers”, and “fathers.” Though some prayers will begin with “God” instead of “Father,” other texts that refer to God as “Father” will not be changed. The focus has been on ensuring that the texts are *literal* translations of the Latin. Therefore, some texts may incorporate language that sounds more inclusive, while other texts will not.

Do other countries have to change their translations too?

This new translation is primarily the work of ICEL, the International Commission on English in the Liturgy. The bishops' conferences of eleven English-speaking countries are full members of ICEL, and all eleven of these countries—including the United States—will adopt the new translation. Countries that speak other languages, including French, Spanish, Italian, and German, will need to translate this new edition of the Roman Missal too. There are some debates surrounding those translations as well.

Why do we need one translation for all English speakers? Can't each country have its own translation?

Having one translation of the Mass for all English speakers reflects the common faith of the Church and the shared beliefs of English-speaking Catholics throughout the English-speaking world. However, even in the midst of this unity, conferences of bishops from individual countries may request specific adaptations for the translations of texts used in their countries. These adaptations range from changes in spelling (e.g. *honor* and *honour*) to the inclusion of prayers for specific local saints to other textual modifications. Generally speaking, though, even if such requests are granted, the new translation will be standardized throughout the English-speaking world.

What will happen to the texts for funerals/weddings/baptisms/other rites?

While some prayers for various sacraments (baptism, confirmation, marriage, holy orders), the RCIA rites, and funerals are included in the *Roman Missal*, not all of them are. Thus, the new translation of the *Roman Missal* does not include translations for all of those liturgies. As of now, there is no timeline for creating a new translation of those ritual texts.

Will the readings at Mass be changing?

The ritual prayers for Mass, i.e., the Order of Mass, Collects, Prefaces, etc., will be affected by this new translation. As of right now, the translation of the readings at Mass will remain the same. There are plans in the future to revise the translation of the Lectionary, but we do not know when that will be done.