

Roman Missal FAQ's

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

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; the English edition was published in the United States in 1973. 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 translation of the *Missale Romanum*, *editio typica tertia*, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments issued [*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.

2. Who completed the work of translation?

The process of translation was a highly consultative work of several groups. The International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) is chartered to prepare English translations of liturgical texts on behalf of the conferences of bishops of English-speaking countries. The

USCCB 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 “Gray 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. At the level of the Vatican (the Holy See), the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments examined texts and offered authoritative approval (*recognitio*) of texts, granting permission 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*.

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

From the *Ratio Translationis* comes this explanation:

The unique style of the Roman Rite should be maintained in translation. By “style” is meant here the distinctive way in which the prayers of the Roman Rite are expressed. The principal elements of such a style include a certain conciseness in addressing, praising and entreating God, as well as distinctive syntactical patterns, a noble tone, a variety of less complex rhetorical devices, concreteness of images, repetition, parallelism and rhythm as measured through the *cursus*, or ancient standards for stressing syllables of Latin words in prose or poetry. (no. 112)

The texts of the revised translation of the *Roman Missal* are marked by a heightened style of English speech and a grammatical structure that closely follows the Latin text. In addition, many biblical and poetic images, such as “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my

roof...” (Communion Rite) and “...from the rising of the sun to its setting” (Eucharistic Prayer III) have been restored.

4. Now that the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has received the text of the Roman Missal, what are the next steps?

The USCCB website now contains the official text of the [Order of Mass](#) for catechetical purposes only. Several changes have been made to the text of the *Ordo Missae* which had been approved by the Congregation for Divine Worship in 2008, and the entire Missal reflects changes made by the Congregation upon the recommendations of the Vox Clara Committee, many in response to concerns expressed by our Conference of Bishops (as well as by other English-language Conference of Bishops) during deliberations and votes over the past several years. The Secretariat of Divine Worship is working with the text now to begin the process of assembling an electronic text for submission to the publishers who will be involved in the publication of the Missal. The International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL), having been given the task of assisting Conferences of Bishops in bringing the Missal to publication, is also collaborating with the USCCB in its efforts. The Congregation has provided publication guidelines, which have to be analyzed and ultimately shared with the prospective publishers. A lengthy period of review of the entire text by the Secretariat and ICEL has to take place. Particular adaptations and texts that are proper to the United States approved by the Congregation will be integrated into the final text in the manner indicated by the Congregation of Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. After publishers have assembled their texts, the Secretariat will review final proofs before printing can commence.

5. What should be taking place with our catechetical efforts?

Dioceses should have a projected plan of what they intend to do to encourage preparation for implementation of the new translation in their dioceses. Parishes should, if they have not already done so, offer a basic catechesis about the text, especially about the changes in the people's responses. The *Newsletter* of the Committee on Divine Worship has already highlighted various catechetical resources which will be valuable tools for the formation process. In September, 2010, the USCCB will offer the [*Parish Guide to Implementing the Roman Missal*](#). This resource will offer a roadmap to implementing the new translation in the parish. Both the International Commission on English in the Liturgy and USCCB will offer a multi-media DVD resource entitled [*Become One Body, One Spirit in Christ*](#), an excellent catechetical resource for examining the new translation in the broader context of the history and theology of liturgy. With the final text now available, other publishers will provide catechetical materials which, among other things, will begin to look at the historical and theological aspects of the text.

6. What about music for the parts of the Mass in the new translation?

Now that a final text is available, the original chants prepared by ICEL will undergo final editing to be adapted to any changes in the texts. These will have to be prepared in a format for use by the publishers of the Missal. ICEL is doing this work and it will take some time. In addition, publishers of liturgical music are already prepared to offer musical settings for the new texts so that music directors in parishes will be ready to teach other new settings in addition to the chants contained in the Missal. These settings are not to be used for liturgical celebration until the date of implementation.

7. When will the text of the new translation be used for the first time in liturgical celebrations?

The texts of the [Order of Mass](#) have been made available for catechetical purposes, but the full text of the Missal will not be available for use in the Liturgy until the first Sunday of Advent 2011 (November 27, 2011). The bishops have asked that all wait until that day to use the text in liturgical celebrations in order to avoid unnecessary confusion and to allow the maximum amount of catechetical time available. Cards and other participation aids containing the responses of the people will be available for use during the transition, but it is hoped that within a year's time the people will become freed from the use of such cards.

8. What will happen after the texts are used in liturgical celebrations?

The long-term goal of the new translation is to foster a deeper awareness and appreciation of the mysteries being celebrated in the Liturgy. The axiom *lex orandi, lex credendi*—"what we pray is what we believe"—suggests that there is a direct relationship between the content of our prayers and the substance of our faith. It is hoped that writers will start to provide materials reflecting on the rich content of the text. These contributions might encourage priests to use the content of the prayers as a basis for their homilies or to supplement their homilies on Sundays. Those giving retreats or days of recollection can use the new texts of the missal as a resource for their presentations. All can make use of the texts for deepening their prayer life.