

In the Heartland
With Bishop Pates
The Catholic Mirror
November Edition

Introduction of the Roman Missal, Third Edition

On November 27th, the first Sunday of Advent and the beginning of the liturgical year, the Roman Missal, third edition, will be introduced in Catholic churches in the United States.

Because liturgy and the celebration of the Eucharist are so central in our ecclesial life, the process involved in translating the Latin text has taken some eight years. The actual translations of the texts have been worked on by two international committees representing English speaking countries. The texts have also been reviewed by the Bishops of the United States over a period of approximately four years.

We legitimately ask, why the change? What is the motivation?

Blessed Pope John Paul II in the years leading up to the celebration of 2000 invited the Church to a collective “examination of conscience” which would include its own practice with regard to the Sunday Eucharist.

Then at the close of the millennial celebration, the Holy Father wrote “In the twentieth century, especially since the council, there has been a great development in the way the Christian community celebrates the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. It is necessary to continue in this direction, and to stress particularly the Sunday Eucharist and Sunday itself experienced as a special day of faith, the day of the risen Lord and of the gift of the Spirit, the true weekly Easter.”¹ Thus, in 2000 the Missale Romanum, editio typica tertia, (The Roman Missal, Third Edition) was published.

The new missal in its English version does not extensively change the language of the peoples’ parts. The greater changes will occur in the parts the priest speaks. As with all change, even such might seem awkward and distracting at first. Overall, the language in translation, will be more literally in accord with the Latin original, thereby attempting to more closely communicate the sense of the original with its significant meaning and nuances.

Pope Benedict XVI recognized the potential challenges of the changes being introduced. In this regard, he said: “Many will find it hard to adjust to unfamiliar texts after nearly forty years of continuous use of the previous translation. The changes will need to be introduced with due sensitivity, and the opportunity for a catechesis that it presents will need to be firmly grasped. I pray in this way any risk of confusion or bewilderment will

be averted, the change will serve instead as a springboard for a renewal and deepening of Eucharistic devotion all over the English-speaking world.”²

With regard to “catechesis” in preparation for these changes in the Diocese of Des Moines, I am very grateful to Kyle Lechtenberg, Director of Worship for the Diocese, for the well planned and excellently executed opportunities that he arranged throughout the diocese in the course of the past year. Appreciation must also be extended to all those who competently and generously assisted him. Many of our liturgical ministers as well as the faithful in the pew have been presented with the actual changes. Moreover, the ministers are now prepared to introduce the changes in our parishes in a meaningful and organized way.

Mr. Lechtenberg remains available for continued guidance and instruction as changes associated with the missal are absorbed in our communities. I encourage you to be in contact with him as various issues and questions develop.

My sincere hope, as the English translation of the Missal is introduced, is that all of us take advantage of the occasion to deepen our personal involvement and appreciation of the remarkable gift of the Eucharist. As we gather each week, we pray to be initiated more profoundly in God’s life by His word and grow in this life through the nourishment of His Body and Blood.

The Second Vatican Council urged the “full, active and conscious participation”³ in the liturgy by all the faithful. Let us resolve for our personal benefit to be ever more committed to such an investment in the Mass.

Antonio Cardinal Cañizares Llovera, Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, in the Presentation of the new missal cites the challenge of opening ourselves to the redemptive realities of the Eucharist.

“The great challenge of our generation is not just to ensure correct and dignified liturgical celebration according to the approved forms, but to be open in a spirit of prayer to the great mysteries of our redemption in Christ that the liturgy makes present ever anew. Only by this authentic assimilation of the mystery will we become truly Christian and so achieve the salvation that Christ lives in our midst to bring us.”⁴

¹ Pope John Paul II, Apostolic letter, Novo Millennio Ineunte, ¶35.

² Roman Missal, Third Edition, Presentation by Cardinal Cañizares.

³ Second Vatican Council, Sacrosanctum Concilium, ¶14.

⁴ Roman Missal, Third Edition, Presentation, ¶1.