Why Was The Roman Missal Revised?

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For several years, bishops in English-speaking countries have been working together to produce a unified translation of the texts of the Mass. The book used by the priest at eucharistic liturgies is officially called The Roman Missal. We have been calling that “red book” The Sacramentary; however, in the future it will be called The Roman Missal. The Roman Missal contains all of the prayers of the eucharistic liturgy. The Order of Mass, prayers for a feast day, Solemn Blessings, and Eucharistic Prayers are all found in The Roman Missal.

The current prayer texts with which we are familiar are from the Missal of Pope Paul VI. At the Second Vatican Council, it was decided that liturgical texts could be prayed officially in vernacular languages. This approval came in November of 1963, when the Council issued the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. This document provides the vision for all subsequent liturgical reforms in the Roman Catholic Church. The bishops, then, reformed the liturgical books for the sacraments, including the Eucharist or Mass. The result was the 1969 Missal of Paul VI, a fully revised book though published in Latin. Subsequently, the Missal was translated into vernacular languages around the world.

In 2000, to commemorate the new millennium, Pope John Paul II established a third edition of The Roman Missal. This edition includes more ancient prayers and saints’ days that have been established since the publication of the Missal of Pope Paul VI. As with all liturgical books, this edition of The Roman Missal was first published in Latin. Thus, national bishops’ conferences have been working to translate the Missal in the local languages of the people.

One reason for this revised translation is obviously the additions to the Missal. The second is due to new norms for translating liturgical texts. The document Liturgiam authentica (Fifth Instruction for the Right Implementation of the Constitution), from the Holy See, called for a more literal translation of the Latin. A considerable amount of time has been spent trying to accurately translate the Latin texts into English in a literal manner.

After approving the revised English translation of The Roman Missal, the English-speaking bishops’ conferences sent the texts to the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments for review. Once reviewed, the translation is submitted to the Holy See for recognitio. Basically, recognitio is the Latin term for “recognizing” the translation. After the recognitio was given, the Bishops’ Committee on Divine Worship determined the changes the Congregation has made to the translation. Then the text was sent to publishers. The publishers will have to typeset and send proofs to the Bishops’ Committee on Divine Worship for final approval before printing The Roman Missal. This process will take more than a year because of the enormous amount of texts included in The Roman Missal. The new ritual edition will be available in October of 2011.

Although the Holy See approved some of the texts in 2008, they were not to be used at Mass until Rome had given recognitio to the entire translation and provided an implementation date. The wait for the approval of all of the prayers of the Mass allowed time for the composition of music for the Gloria; the Holy, Holy, Holy; and other parts of the Order of Mass. It also provided time for pastoral leadership to understand the reasons for the revisions and to begin educating their assemblies. In this time between the implementation of the revised edition of The Roman Missal and the implementation, parishes will continue to educate their communities.

As your parish studies the revised translation, you will see that many of the priest’s and people’s parts have changed. For example, when the priest celebrant proclaims, “The Lord be with you,” the people will reply, “And with your spirit.” That response is the direct translation of 2 Timothy 4:22. Other revisions, too, will help assemblies relate the prayers of the Mass to scripture. The response to the Lamb of God, for example, clearly alludes to the Centurion’s request that his servant be healed (see Matthew 8:8 and Luke 7:6).

You may find it helpful to review the information on The Roman Missal at www.RevisedRomanMissal.org. The revised prayers of the Mass will be implemented on November 27, 2011.
What is the Roman Missal?

It is the Mass Book used at the altar.
It contains the official rites and prayers of the Roman Mass.

Do all Catholics use the Roman Missal?

The Catholic Church has many different “rites.” Ours is the Roman Rite, based on the traditional liturgy of the city of Rome. Only the Roman Rite uses the Roman Missal. Other Catholic Rites – Alexandrian, Armenian, Byzantine, East Syrian, Ge’ez, Maronite, Milanese, Mozarabic, West Syrian – have their own distinct liturgical books, rites and prayers.

Have we always used the Roman Missal for Mass?

No, but we have used it for several centuries (see below).

Be sure to see [http://www.stjudefw.org/liturgy/romanmissal.htm](http://www.stjudefw.org/liturgy/romanmissal.html) for more information.

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**First 1,500 years**—There is no standard Mass book. Various local churches have their own liturgical traditions.

1570—Pope Pius V issued the first Roman Missal, the first time that all the Mass texts were gathered into one book. The Catholic Council of Trent, at the time of the Protestant Reformation, took seriously the need to reform the liturgy, to clear up liturgical abuses in some places and to impose a standard way of celebrating the Eucharist in the Latin Church. This book was used for almost 400 years, with minor changes made by several Popes.

1963—The Second Vatican Council issues the “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” calls for liturgical renewal and reform of the books, including the Roman Missal, to promote the “full, conscious, active participation” of the faithful in the liturgy, so that all might take part fully in the “source and summit” of our life as Catholic Christians.

1964—In January, Pope Paul VI forms the Concilium, a group of bishops and scholars, to implement the “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy” and reform the rites and books of the sacred liturgy. This was all done in Latin.

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In April, bishops of English-speaking countries form the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) to translate the Latin texts.

1969—The Concilium issues *Comme le prévoit*, describing the principles for translating the liturgy into other languages. The new Latin Roman Missal is promulgated by Pope Paul VI.

1970—The new English Order of Mass for the USA is confirmed by Rome.

1973—The Roman Missal in English for the USA, using the 1969 translation principles, is approved by Rome.

1975—Pope Paul VI issues a revised version of the Latin Roman Missal.


