

Embracing Change in the Liturgy

For many people, change does not come easy. Change requires us to stop doing things a certain way in order to do something else. Many of us find comfort in familiar routines and actions. Change interrupts those routines. But change is also an opportunity to stop and reflect on what we are doing and come to a better understanding of God, who does not change.

What exactly is changing?

The structure of the Mass remains unchanged in the *Roman Missal, third edition*. However, the translation of the prayer texts will change to more closely reflect the original Latin texts. In some cases, new options for prayers may be available, while some old options may no longer be present.

Will the changes be noticeable?

In the revised *Roman Missal*, almost every prayer in the Mass has been retranslated from Latin to English. Some prayers now recited by memory will need to be relearned. The familiar language of many prayers recited by the priest will also change. In preparing the new translation, the translators were asked to make the English texts conform more closely to the Latin, and to retain traditional theological vocabulary that communicates important concepts of the faith. The language that the faithful will hear and pray conveys rich theological concepts and retains biblical language and images.

How can I prepare for the change?

There are many ways in which you can prepare for the changes in the Mass:

- ✘ Make a conscious effort to participate more fully in the Mass each Sunday and holy day.
- ✘ Take advantage of any special catechetical sessions offered by your parish or diocese.
- ✘ Read the new texts of the people's parts at Mass. Begin to study them so that you will be able to pray them well when the new Roman Missal is implemented.
- ✘ Pray for a renewal of love for the Liturgy in your parish and in the Church.

What difference will these changes make in my parish?

Some of the differences will be obvious immediately. We will have to learn new musical settings for the various parts of the Mass. We will learn new words for common prayers, such as the Creed. Those of us who began saying the Mass prayers by heart long ago will need to rely on printed texts again, at least for a while. In the early months of the transition, we may find it more challenging to pray with one voice as people adjust to the new texts and gradually commit them to their hearts.

Where can I turn for help in understanding these changes?

The first stop for catechesis and formation regarding these changes is your parish and diocese. All the faithful are encouraged to take advantage of parish efforts. You can attend catechetical sessions, read articles in the parish bulletin or newsletter, listen closely to homilies that help explain the changes, and come early to Mass to practice new musical settings for the prayers. In addition, many dioceses, schools, universities, and retreat centers will offer programs to help people understand and appreciate the new translation. You can take advantage of these programs where possible.

What can I do to make the process of change a good one for my parish?

Everyone has a role to play in preparing for the new translations:

- ✘ Study the new texts with an open heart and an open mind so that you will be ready to use them in the Liturgy.
- ✘ Take advantage of opportunities to learn more about the new texts by attending catechetical programs and reading articles about the new texts.
- ✘ Offer to assist your pastor or parish director in preparing parish catechetical events.
- ✘ If you are a parent, teach your children the new prayers and help them to understand the changes.
- ✘ Be very intentional about celebrating the Liturgy each Sunday and holy day. Arrive on time (or a bit early). Pray and sing with attentiveness. Stay focused on the action of the Liturgy. Hold the Sacrament of the Eucharist in great reverence. Finally, give thanks to God in your heart for so great a gift!

Times of change are always a challenge. But from this challenge can come a deeper appreciation of who we are as the Body of Christ. If we use the time of preparation well, we will make these changes with a deeper understanding of the Liturgy and a renewed reverence for and appreciation of the Mass. Our Liturgy will be filled with new life and new spirit as we celebrate the Paschal Mystery of Christ made present for us.

*Based upon Roman Missal Formation Materials provided by the Secretariat for the Liturgy
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