



**Message to all the Faithful
on the Revised Roman Missal and its Liturgical Norms
by the President of the
Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops**

The following message is intended especially for English-speaking Catholics. It is a shortened version of a pastoral letter issued by the President of the Conference to all those involved in liturgical and catechetical ministries. The complete text of the pastoral letter is available on the CCCB website, <http://www.cccb.ca>.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This coming First Sunday of Advent, 27 November 2011, English-speaking Roman Catholics in our country begin using the revised edition of the Roman Missal which has been approved for Canada. This revision includes the liturgical norms of the third “typical edition” of the Roman Missal, as well as the revised Liturgical Calendar for the Dioceses of Canada. “Typical edition” means the text is the official version to which all copies and translations are to conform. That same day, English-speaking Roman Catholics in a number of other nations will also celebrate the Liturgy using the revised translation of the Missal as approved for their specific countries.

The process of revising the Roman Missal

The present revision follows an announcement in 2000 by Pope John Paul II that there would be a third edition of the Roman Missal. The revised Latin text of the Missal was published by the Vatican in 2002, and later amended by the Holy See in 2008. However, the need for a review of all the vernacular translations of the Missal had already been announced by the Holy See in 1975. This was not only to ensure translations were accurate and complete, but also to ensure more effective use of imagery and language from the Sacred Scriptures and the writings of the early Church. In 1980, the International Commission for English in the Liturgy (ICEL) began consulting clergy and liturgists on how the translation could be improved.

The norms for celebrating the Liturgy are outlined in an official text found at the beginning of the Roman Missal and known as the “General Instruction”. The General Instruction for the third typical edition follows the principles approved by the Second Vatican Council. It also includes accommodations to meet the most current needs of the Church in its continuing response to contemporary culture. A number of these accommodations involve adaptations for a particular country, as requested and approved by its Bishops and subsequently confirmed by the Holy See.

The adaptations for Canada include the choice of music for the Liturgy; gestures for the sign of peace; movements and postures of the congregation during the Liturgy; the way Communion is to be distributed; the colours of vestments; and the designation of special days of prayer during the liturgical year (known as Rogation Days). In addition to being part of the Roman Missal, the

revised liturgical calendar is the basis as well for the annual *Ordo* also published by our Conference. (An *Ordo* is a list detailing the liturgical services to be followed each day in the year.)

At the same time as the Bishops of Canada and the rest of the world have been working on the English-language translation for each country, the translation of the third typical edition into French is also proceeding. This process involves the French-language Bishops of Canada and other countries, with the assistance of the International French-language Episcopal Commission for Liturgical Translations.

Are there many changes?

Many English-speaking Catholics will not notice much difference from the former liturgical norms or earlier translations of the Roman Missal. After all, the Mass always remains basically the same, no matter the rite, language or translation. We come together, glorifying God and confessing our unworthiness. We listen to the Word of God. We pray for all in need. We prepare the gifts of bread and wine which will become the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, so we can partake in his living Sacrifice. In the Eucharistic Prayer, we recall his death and resurrection, and pray that the Holy Spirit make us one in the Lord. We pray to Our Father in the words the Lord gave us. We deepen our faith, hope and love through communion with him and one another. We are sent forth again on God's mission, blessed, encouraged and strengthened by the life-giving Trinity.

Nevertheless, the revised liturgical norms for all of Canada do involve some changes. These are to assist the community of faith as it continues to dialogue with the contemporary world, and also to make more evident the Church's continuity in all times and places. Many Canadian congregations will experience a change as to when they stand and kneel during the Eucharistic Prayer. Obviously, we must accommodate the physical needs of individuals in the congregation, whether because of age, illness or other circumstances. At the same time, we want to encourage a harmonious, orderly and reverent response to the words of the Eucharistic Prayer. Furthermore, the principles governing the revised norms remind us that it is important for all liturgical texts to use terms and images from the Sacred Scriptures. As well, the translations of the Roman Missal are to reflect the meaning and vocabulary of its original Latin text. Roman Catholics, as distinct from Eastern Catholics, follow the liturgical tradition of the Roman or Latin Church, which has the Church of Rome as its liturgical centre. In other words, the "Latin" tradition is the common heritage of Roman Catholics.

Other than the few changes that may be noticed in the revised liturgical norms, and the enriched liturgical vocabulary which may especially strike English-speaking Catholics, the revised translation of the Roman Missal into English will include some other modifications:

1. In the dialogue involving the celebrant and the community, a few responses have been slightly altered, such as "And with your spirit" (instead of "And also with you"). This way our English-language usage will be more in keeping with the phrasing used in most other languages, while also explicitly reminding us that the spiritual dynamic is fundamental to our prayer and worship.

2. The wording of the ancient hymn *Glory to God in the highest* will now be closer to the original versions in both Greek and Latin, dating back at least to the 4th century, while the language of what is now called the Nicene Creed when used in the Liturgy will become closer to the original Greek, from the 4th and 5th centuries, as well as to the historic Latin and English translations.
3. While the choice of words used in the Liturgy will more effectively reflect the vocabulary from Scripture and our Latin tradition, there is also an effort to retain whenever possible elements traditional among all English-speaking Christians. These will be evident in the choice of some wording, and at times in how the prayers are constructed or phrased. Examples include the continued use of the traditional translation of the Our Father, and a return to the use of the word “consubstantial” in the Nicene Creed – a word dating back to William Caxton in 1483, who is credited with printing the first Bible in English. This common heritage reflects not only what Catholics have received from other Christians since the Reformation, but also what Catholics have contributed since the first Anglo-Saxon translations in the 7th and 8th centuries.

Catholic identity and unity

All the changes in the revised Roman Missal are to encourage a deeper sense of our unity in the Lord and as a community. Catholics live and worship in union with the Holy Father and our Bishops. Our identity requires us to be in living continuity with the traditions of the Sacred Scriptures and the early Church. Our communion unites all who are members of the Roman and Eastern Catholic Churches. But the members of the Roman Catholic Church also share and participate in a specific form of worship which is basically the same for all the Catholic Church of the West. “Roman Catholics” follow the liturgical rite and disciplinary practices of the Church of Rome. In addition, English-speaking and French-speaking Roman Catholics each have their own long and rich heritages, which include a vocabulary developed over the centuries with other Christians.

Being in unity with the Pope and our Bishops, and in communion with the Church throughout the world and in all ages, is reflected in the harmony and order of the worshipping community. “*God is a God not of disorder, but of peace*” (1 Corinthians 14.33). A practical application of this is that the edition published by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops will be the only new English translation of the Roman Missal approved by the Holy See and the Bishops of Canada for use in our country. A similar requirement will be in place for the revision of the French version of the Missal approved for Canada when it is later published.

Encouraging active participation in the Liturgy

The Second Vatican Council restored and promoted the sacred Liturgy, so “*that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the Liturgy*” (no. 14). These most recent changes become an invitation to each of us to deepen our understanding of and appreciation for the Liturgy, in which we are to be actively involved – body, heart and mind (no. 19).

The whole Church wishes to take full advantage of this catechetical moment, so all the People of God are “*imbued with the spirit and power of the Liturgy*” (Vatican II, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 14). All the faithful in each diocese are to collaborate closely with their own Bishop. Priests, deacons, members of religious institutes as well as societies of apostolic life and the laity should conform with their own Bishop’s specific diocesan directives for implementing the revised edition of the Roman Missal and its liturgical norms. As the Council reminds us, “*Liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations of the Church, which is the ‘sacrament of unity,’ namely, the holy people united and ordered under their Bishops*” (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 26).

A time of grace and thanksgiving

The introduction of the revised Roman Missal and its liturgical norms is an invitation to deepen our unity as the body of Christ. On behalf of the Bishops of Canada, I invite everyone to embrace the new norms and welcome the new translation. In our communal celebrations, the words, gestures and postures we use at worship are an important sign of our unity and harmony. For this reason, it is especially important that clergy and faithful in each diocese follow the direction of their Bishop on the posture they are to use in the Liturgy, especially during the Eucharistic Prayer. Similarly, when travelling to other places, one should use the posture which has been decided for that particular diocese.

Brothers and sisters, this is a moment of grace and thanksgiving, an opportunity for renewing the community of faith through our renewed appreciation for the gift of the Liturgy. With the assistance of the revised Roman Missal and its norms, may our eyes and ears be fully opened, our hearts and minds turned, to that eternal moment in which with every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and sea, we sing in adoration and worship

*To the One seated on the Throne
and to the Lamb
... blessing and honour and glory and might
forever and ever. (Revelation 5.13)*

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+ Pierre Morissette
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