



# What is the Roman Missal?

Bulletin Insert 2 – The third typical edition of the Roman Missal  
May 8, 2011



On November 27, 2011, the English speaking Catholic Church in the United States will begin using a new translation of the prayers that are used at Mass. This bulletin insert begins the second set of announcements being published in parish bulletins to help parishes prepare for this coming change. Please check the bulletin regularly for more information.

## **The *Missale Romanum***

What exactly is the *Missale Romanum*? *Missale Romanum* is the title of the Latin book approved and published by the Vatican containing all of the texts used at Mass. The current English translation of this text in the United States is titled the *Sacramentary*. When the new translation is published, it will likely no longer be called the *Sacramentary* but will be given the title *Roman Missal*, the literal translation into English of the Latin title *Missale Romanum*.

The Latin phrase *tertio editio typica* is often associated with the latest edition of the *Missale Romanum*, meaning that this is the “third typical edition.” Why the third? Because there have already been two previous editions of this book. The first edition was published in 1970 shortly after the Council; the second appeared in 1975 and is the one in use at Mass today. The third typical edition was promulgated in Latin in 2002 and is the text currently undergoing the translation process.

What is the difference between the first, second and third editions of the *Roman Missal*? Not much, actually, but there have been a few changes to the forthcoming third edition. For example, when a new saint is added to the calendar, new prayers for his or her feast are added to the *Roman Missal*. Also, in order to provide more options, new prayers are occasionally added to the Mass. At times, more specific directions (rubrics) for the priests and ministers of the Mass are added. There were also some minor changes in translation with each edition, but not as significant as will be seen in the third edition.

Once a new text is officially created in Latin, it is up to the different conferences of bishops around the world to translate them into their own languages. It is a painstaking process, but they want to make sure it is done correctly. The initial translation into English is done by ICEL (International Commission on English in the Liturgy). The bishops of each English speaking country then review it before giving their approval and sending it to Rome for final confirmation.

Naturally, the approval of the new translation does not happen at one meeting. In the case of the *Roman Missal*, because it is so lengthy, it was reviewed in sections by the US bishops and approved one segment at a time. There are also various groups at the Vatican who have to review it before the Holy Father gives it his final approval for publication. It can easily take years from the time a new text appears in Latin until an English text is ready and available for use in the liturgy. The third typical edition of the *Roman Missal* was promulgated by Pope John Paul II in 2002, but it is not scheduled to appear in English until Fall of 2011, nine years after it was published in Latin.

## **The General Instruction of the Roman Missal**

At the beginning of the Roman Missal there is a document entitled the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM). This document provides explanations for the various parts of the Mass and gives directions as to how they are to be celebrated. Over the next seven weeks, quotes from this document will be included in the parish bulletin. Be certain to read them each week to learn about the parts of the Mass. Learning about the Mass can help to increase the people’s participation in its prayer, ritual and music.