

WHY A NEW MISSAL?

What is the Roman Missal?

The Roman Missal is the book containing the prayers of the Mass: the prayers prayed by the celebrant and deacon as well as the prayers prayed by the people. Formerly called the Sacramentary, it is used by the priest at the altar and the chair and by the deacon in celebrations which he leads. In the Roman Missal may be found:

The Order of Mass, those prayers which, apart from some options such as the choice among several Eucharistic Prayers or among the three forms of the Penitential Rite, remain the same in every Mass.

The Proper of the Seasons, the prayers proper to (hence the name) the Seasons of the Lord in the Liturgical Year, for example the prayers for the Season of Lent, the Sacred Triduum, the Easter Season, Ordinary Time, etc.

The Proper of the Saints, the prayers for the celebrations of the Blessed Mother, the saints and certain events commemorated by the Church, arranged by date according to the liturgical calendar

The Common of the Saints, prayers which may be used for a particular category of celebration, for example, for the celebration of an apostle or martyr, or the anniversary of a dedication of a church. The existence of Commons prevents having to repeat a given prayer text many times in different celebrations which belong to the same category.

Ritual Masses, prayers used for the celebration of the sacraments when they are joined with Mass, for example, for the baptism of infants, or for marriage;

A Wide Variety of Prayers which may be used in Masses for special needs or occasions, for example, in Masses of thanksgiving; in Masses for peace and justice; in times of war, for refugees and exiles, and many more.

Sung Settings for the Eucharistic Prayers.

Why a new Roman Missal?

There are two principal answers to this question:

Benefiting from Experience

The Latin edition of the Roman Missal was published in 1970 and a second, slightly revised edition in 1985. The preparation for the 1985 edition involved world-wide consultation with bishops, diocesan personnel and local parishes in order that the work of revision might benefit from experience with the 1970 edition. In the end, the 1985 revision was much less extensive than originally planned, largely because it became clear that the revision required was more complex than originally anticipated and a great deal of work needed to be done on translation before a satisfactory comprehensive version could be completed. The preparation of the new Roman Missal has benefited both from the work done in preparation for the 1985 edition, and the experience of the almost twenty years since that edition was promulgated.

New Saints in the Liturgical Calendar:

Another reason which motivates the preparation of the new Roman Missal involves changes in the liturgical calendar. Since the first revised Roman Calendar was issued in 1970 and updated in 1985 second edition of the Missal, many new saints have been added to the liturgical calendar. While some of the prayers for the celebrations of these saints can be taken from the Commons, all have at least an Opening Prayer which is reflective of their life and call to holiness. The prayers for these saints, having been presented in Latin, must also be translated into the vernacular and those on the Universal Calendar incorporated into the new Roman Missal. This whole process enriches the Church with many new models in the faith, but it also takes time and effort, and is one of the reasons that the preparation of the Missal has taken so long.