



First Sunday of Advent November 27, 2011 B

The New Roman Missal

This weekend, the First Sunday of Advent, is the official and mandated date for the introduction of the new *Roman Missal* into the parishes in English-speaking countries. Until now, the big red book from which the priest reads at daily and Sunday Masses was called a *sacramentary*. Some weeks ago, I wrote three columns explaining the reason for the new missal and a commentary on the revised translation of the Gloria and the Creed.

Briefly, the reason the Church is presenting us with a new missal is because the Vatican wants English-speaking countries to have a translation that is much closer or more faithful to the Latin text. While very few, if any of us including myself, know much about the Latin language, I thought it might be interesting to look at the Latin text of one of the prayers and compare the new translation to the old translation. Let us take the *Opening Prayer* for the first Sunday of Advent.

Latin text

*Da, quaesumus, omnipotens Deus,
hanc tuis fidelibus voluntatem,
ut, Christo tuo venienti iustis operibus occurrentes,
eius dextrae sociati, regnum mereantur possidere
caeleste, Per Dominum.*

Old translation

*All-powerful God,
increase our strength of will for doing good
that Christ may find an eager welcome
at his coming and call us to his side
in the kingdom of heaven,
where he lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen*

New translation

*Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God,
the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ
with righteous deeds at his coming,
so that, gathered at his right hand,
they may be worthy to possess
the heavenly Kingdom.*

*Through our Lord Jesus Christ,
your Son, who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen*

The first thing we may notice in the new translation is that it is longer by 15 words. Why the difference in length? The method of translation used in the outgoing sacramentary sought to get across the general thought or gist of the Latin text and was not concerned with the word-for-word translation. The old translation aimed at developing a sentence structure that was generally easier to proclaim. Clearly, the new translation has longer sentences.

Another fairly significant change in the new missal is the elimination of the *Alternative Opening Prayers*. In the old sacramentary, every Sunday and feast day had an Opening Prayer and an Alternative Opening Prayer. The latter was preferred by most presiders because of its fullness and richness. For example, the Alternative Opening Prayer for the First Sunday of Advent was:

*Father in heaven,
our hearts desire the warmth of your love
and our minds are searching for the light
of your Word.
Increase our longing for Christ our Savior
and give us the strength to grow in love,
that the dawn of his coming
may find us rejoicing in his presence
and welcoming the light of his truth.
We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord. Amen.*

I believe that these prayers are a real loss as we move to the new missal.

“And with your spirit.”

By now we know the response to “*The Lord be with you*” is “*And with your spirit*” (and no longer “*And also with you*”). This new response is the literal translation of the Latin “*Et cum spiritu tuo*” which is intended to communicate that Christ is present in the action of the priest at Mass. “*And with your spirit*” signifies that it is not solely the priest ministering to us at Mass but that he is acting for Christ in our midst, i.e., *in persona Christi* or in the person of Christ.

Eucharistic Prayer

The vast majority of the changes in the new *Roman Missal* will impact the prayers recited by the presider. *All* of the prayers in the big red book have been revised, including the Eucharistic prayers. Following are the previous and new translations of the words of consecration usually called the “institution narrative.”

Previous translation

Take this, all of you, and drink from it:
this is the **cup** of my blood,
the blood of the new and **everlasting** covenant.
It will be shed for you and for **all**
so that sins may be forgiven.
Do this in memory of me.

New translation

Take this, all of you, and drink from it,
for this is the **chalice** of my Blood,
the blood of the new and **eternal** covenant,
which will be **poured out** for you and for **many**
for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this in memory of me.

The most controversial change in the new translation of the institution narrative is the phrase “for many” which seems to imply that Jesus did not die “for all” people. Why is this? If we look at Matthew 26:28 and Mark 14:24, we see that they make specific reference to the “many” for whom the Lord is offering the sacrifice. Even though we use the words “for many,” the Church teaches that Christ died “for all” people. Commenting on these two phrases, Scripture scholar Daniel Merz writes:

The formula “for all” certainly corresponds to a correct interpretation of the Lord’s intention expressed in the scriptures. Even more, it is a dogma of faith that Christ died on the Cross for all men and women (see John 11:52; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Titus 2:11; 1 John 2:2). However, the expression “for many” is a reminder that, while salvation is offered to all, there are some who do not accept it. Salvation is not imposed in a mechanical way, against one’s free will or voluntary participation. It is freely offered to all to accept in faith, and many do indeed accept it. Some do not. As for those who apparently reject the gift, the Church entrusts them to the mercy of God. But in doing so they place themselves outside the Church’s liturgical offering. Christ’s death on the Cross was certainly intended for all, but it can only help those who respond to it freely and willingly. The holy sacrifice of the Mass may well be offered or intended for all, but it can be fruitful only for those who accept it. The Eucharistic Prayer thus refers to those who accept it, in whatever form that acceptance takes.

“The mystery of faith”

After the consecration of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, the presider would say: “*Let us proclaim the mystery of faith.*” In the new *Roman Missal*, the presider simply says: “*The mystery of faith*” (literal translation of the Latin text “*mysterium fidei*”) by which he invites the assembly to make one of the three acclamations found in the new missal.

Cycle B—Year of Mark

The First Sunday of Advent is the beginning of a new liturgical year. *Liturgical Year* is the way our Church celebrates, relives and makes present to us Christ and the main events in his life. It is the way that our Church keeps placing before us the story of Jesus.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us: “*We must continue to accomplish in ourselves the stages of Jesus’ life and his mysteries.*” So, through the ebb and flow of each liturgical year, we seek, with the guidance of our Church, to live and internalize the events of Christ’s life.

When it comes to the Scripture readings, we have the *three cycles* A, B and C. These are sometimes called the Year of Matthew (Cycle A), the Year of Mark (Cycle B), and the Year of Luke (Cycle C). Today we begin the Year of Mark. Throughout the Sundays in Ordinary Time—with a few exceptions—we will listen to excerpts from Mark’s Gospel which presents the Marcan Jesus. Like the other three Gospels, Mark has some unique features.

- ◇ Mark is the earliest of the four Gospels to be written (around 70AD). Many of the stories in Matthew and Luke are taken almost verbatim from Mark.
- ◇ It is generally believed that Mark’s Gospel was written for a **persecuted** church. Hence, there is a great deal of emphasis on the suffering and death of Christ. Chapters 1-10 lead us to the passion of Christ, and Chapters 11-16 (one-third of the Gospel) deal with Jesus’ last week before his death. Many of the stories highlight the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees.
- ◇ Mark’s Gospel shows his concern with the **identity of Jesus**. During his trial, Jewish authorities ask: “*Are you the King of the Jews?*” (15:2). The truth concerning Jesus’ identity is finally revealed when the Roman centurion at the foot of the cross finally exclaims: “*Truly, this man was the Son of God*” (15:39).

Have a blessed Advent season,

