

**Pastoral Letter on the Revised Roman Missal and its Liturgical Norms
by the President of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops
Bulletin 1**

Dear Brothers and Sisters who assist in the liturgical and catechetical ministries of the Church,

This coming First Sunday of Advent, 27 November 2011, the Church in our country will implement 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 Canada and many other countries will celebrate the Liturgy using the revised translation of the Missal.

A time of grace and thanksgiving

Writing about the Eucharist almost 2,000 years ago, Saint Paul said:

“For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, he took the cup also, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

“Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves....

“So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another” (1 Corinthians 11.23-33).

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. The clergy and faithful of each diocese are to follow the direction of their Bishop on the posture they are to have during 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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The process of revising the Roman Missal

The present revision of the Missal and its liturgical norms follows the announcement in 2000 by Pope John Paul II that there would be a third edition of the Roman Missal. The revised Latin text 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 Roman 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 involve more effective use in the revised Liturgy of the imagery and language of the Sacred Scriptures and the writings of the early Church. In 1980, the international episcopal commission for liturgical translations in English consulted 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). The liturgical calendar is part of the Roman Missal. This means the revised liturgical calendar approved for the dioceses of Canada is part of the Roman Missal being published by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops for implementation this November. The calendar is the basis as well for the annual *Ordo* also published by our Conference, and the revisions of the liturgical calendar for Canada will be reflected in the 2011-2012 English and French editions of the *Ordo*.

At the same time that all the Bishops of the world have been involved in approving the translations of the General Instruction and its adaptations for their own specific countries, the Bishops of Canada and of other lands have been reviewing draft English translations of the revised Roman Missal, offering comments, and giving official approval for the new translation and its use in their individual countries. Translations into other major languages of the world are also underway, following the same intensive and lengthy process. The work is proceeding well among the French-language Bishops of Canada and other countries, with the assistance of the international episcopal commission for liturgical translations in French. The revised Roman Missal for use in French in Canada and other countries is expected within the next few years. Over the past year, our Conference has received confirmations from the Holy See for the English-language revision of the Roman Missal for use in Canada, the revised liturgical calendar for all the dioceses of Canada, and the liturgical adaptations specific to Canada. This official approval by the Holy See means only one version of the revised Missal is approved in each country for each language being used.