

What Will We Be Doing and Why?

From One Text to the Next Text: A Bit of History

On Sunday, November 27, the First Sunday of Advent this year, we will begin using a new English translation of the *Third Edition of the Roman Missal*, the book containing prayers and instructions for the celebration of the Mass. As we have seen throughout these *What Are We Doing and Why?* articles, the different parts and prayers of the Mass we celebrate today have developed throughout the entire history of the Church, drawing on many different sources and traditions from many different times and places. The same is true of the *Roman Missal* itself. There was no *Roman Missal*, no single book containing all the prayers and instructions for the celebration of Mass, as we have today. Collections of liturgical prayers and practices for use in particular locations and situations developed only gradually. Eventually these smaller local collections were gathered into larger collections for wider distribution and use throughout the Church. In the Roman Catholic Church (as distinct from the Eastern Rite Catholics) the first *Roman Missal* to be used throughout the whole Church was issued by Pope Pius V only after the Council of Trent, in 1570. Since then and prior to the Second Vatican Council in the mid 1960s, five other editions of the *Roman Missal* were issued and used in the Roman Catholic Church. The Second Vatican Council called for a new version of the *Roman Missal*, which was also to be translated into English and other languages besides Latin. This first edition of the *Roman Missal* after Vatican II was published by Pope Paul VI in 1969, and an English translation was published relatively quickly (by Catholic Church standards) five years later, in 1974. To the surprise of many, only one year later Pope Paul issued a second edition of the *Roman Missal*. Some newly canonized saints and other new prayers were added in this second edition, but the English translation of it, issued in 1985, was largely the same as that used since 1974. Because that translation had been done quickly a revision was carried out from 1987 – 1996. This revision of the English translation of the second edition of the *Roman Missal* was never used, because in 2002 Pope John Paul II issued an entirely new *Third Edition of the Roman Missal*, and with it called for an entirely new English translation. This translation has been carried out over the past 11 years, and is the translation we will begin using next November 27th. Among other things, this most recently revised edition of the *Roman Missal* contains prayers for the observances of recently canonized saints, additional prefaces for the Eucharistic Prayers, a variety of other masses and prayers for various needs and occasions, and some updated instructions for the celebration of the Mass. This English translation of the *Roman Missal* will also include changes in the wording of some existing prayers, both those prayed by the priest and those prayed by all the people.

Please let us know what else about our faith tradition you'd like to find out more about. Contact our Council for Catechesis at tkautza@saintmaryhc.org.