



Praying the Mass Anew

*The New Translation of The Roman Missal
and Our Actual Participation at Mass*

The Day Has Arrived: We Pray the Mass Anew!

On this 27th day of November, in the year of our Lord 2011, we arrive at multiple new beginnings. Today's Mass celebrates the First Sunday of Advent, the beginning of a new year in the Church and the beginning of that season of the year that places us in a mindset of preparation for the coming of Christ. While our liturgy focuses on continuing to prepare, this day also contains the long awaited *arrival* of the official use of the 3rd edition of *The Roman Missal* in its English translation. Our offering of Mass today has brought to fruition several months of deliberate preparation for this new English translation of the prayers for Mass, culminating in this very day that we are invited to "pray the Mass anew."

As we offer today's Mass with the new translation, it is quite understandable that our prayer may seem a little awkward on several levels. Likely, all of us – including the clergy – will need to rely heavily on a printed text for the prayers, whether from the *Roman Missal* itself, or from a card or booklet in the pews. Such dependence on a book or card may at first cause us to question the sincerity or relevance of our prayer of the Mass for today. However, in this same moment of dependence as we pray the Mass anew on this First Sunday of Advent, we are invited to consider some "big picture" realities that can lead us through and

beyond today into a deeper, more fervent, and ultimately very beautiful participation in the Holy Mass that can last for years to come. Today's insert on this day of arrival seeks to remind us that it is reasonable for our prayer today to be a little bit unfamiliar or even difficult – as such a beginning can lead us to a deeper and more profound encounter with God. Consider the following:

1. This is *only* the first day.

Obviously, each of us has had many "first time" experiences in life: the first day of school, the first practice for a sports team, the first day of a new job, etc. It is likely that each of these "first" occasions was both memorable and filled with unexpected moments. Our first opportunity to pray the new translations may still include some accidental words from of old (e.g. "and also with you..."). Yet today is only the first time. Through each future offering of the Mass, all of us will become more comfortable and more confident in our praying of the new translation. While we may never forget this new experience, in time we will become quite comfortable and confident in our praying of the new translation of the Mass.

2. Remember Jesus' teaching on "childlike trust."

We remember how Jesus exhorts the disciples that "unless you become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). Today, might we remember that this new beginning offers us an opportunity to trust Jesus, who willingly gives himself to us in the Eucharist, even if *our words* for praying the Mass are still somewhat unfamiliar. May this moment remind us of the importance of trusting in God's will – for he has willed through the offering of the Mass in his memory the greatest spiritual benefit of communion with him.

3. We are "practicing our faith."

No child is fully successful in walking the first time he stands on his two feet; nor will we be "perfect" in our first offering of the Mass with the new translation. As God's pilgrim people who still journey in this life toward the fullness of life in heaven, we are called to "practice" our faith, that it may become perfected by God in his kingdom. Hence, today we "practice" for the first time according to the new translation, what God himself, through his grace, wills to perfect in us.

4. Repetition leads to deeper understanding.

Related to point "2," children who learn the Lord's Prayer in kindergarten may have little understanding of the words. However, these children learn the prayer with great joy at having it memorized. As these children grow, all the while praying that prayer regularly, they grow in understanding of the *meaning* of the prayer. Today, might we remember that as we pray using the new translations, we are invited to allow these words to continue to resonate in our hearts, increasing their meaning at each and every offering of the Mass.

5. Keeping the fire burning.

To prepare ourselves for the new translation, we have spent several weeks learning new prayer texts, along with hearing explanations of what the texts really mean and why we pray them. As we begin to pray the Mass anew, remember that our preparation was *not just for today*. We can see today as a *the first of many days in years to come, all* of which are meant to draw us more closely to God the Father in heaven, through Jesus Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit.

Question of the Week:

➤ ***With the arrival of the new translation, will there be any new hymns for Mass?***

Truly the new translation does not directly pertain to hymns that are sung at Mass. However, as we move forward and become more accustomed to the sacral and elevated style of the new translations, it stands to reason that new hymns will likely be written in keeping with this style. Likewise, it is also quite possible that older hymns may be revised to be more consistent with the new translation in style and wording.

Another very real possibility in the future is the increased use of the "Entrance Antiphon" and "Communion Antiphon" for singing instead of hymns. (These "antiphons" are the short verses that missalette typically print in the weekday Mass section of the book). The use of these antiphons as refrains, while a cantor or choir sings verses from a particular psalm, has always been a legitimate option for singing at the beginning of Mass and during Holy Communion. With the new translations of these antiphons, there will likely be new compositions of these antiphons that will become available.