



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

Special Insert: CHRISTMAS 2011

“**T**oday a light will shine upon us, for the Lord is born for us; and he will be called Wondrous God, Prince of peace, Father of future ages: and his reign will be without end.” These poetic words, drawn from the prophet Isaiah and the Gospel according to Luke are given in the prayers for the Nativity of the Lord “Mass at Dawn,” as the entrance “antiphon” or verse. The words beautifully speak of the birth of Jesus Christ who comes into the world as the true light of all nations. It is in the joy of Christ’s coming that we come to offer the Mass and celebrate Jesus Christ who is “Emmanuel,” or “God with us.”

While the greatest source of joy and renewal in our praying of the Mass this day is in the newborn Christ himself, our own experience today of offering the Mass is marked by its own newness. For, as we pray this Mass, only four weeks have passed since we fully implemented the newly translated prayers of the 3rd edition of the *Roman Missal*. During recent months we have studied these new English translations of prayers and have grown in our understanding of the Mass itself. Finally, back on November 26-27, as we began our Advent journey, we offered the Mass with these new

translations for the first time. On this day that we celebrate the birth of Christ, let us reflect momentarily on how the words of the prayers for Mass impact our celebration. First, however, some background is needed on the new prayers themselves.

In the year 2000 the most recent version of the book that is used in celebrating the Mass, called the *Roman Missal*, was issued by the Church – but only in the Latin language. Since 2000 much work has gone into translating the Latin version of the book into the various languages. In 2009 the translation of the missal into English was completed, and in 2010 it was officially approved for use.

Over the last year parishes throughout the English speaking world have been preparing to implement the English version of this latest edition of the *Roman Missal*. Here in the United States all parishes were to prepare so as to be ready to use this edition fully beginning on November 27. Today, as we celebrate Christmas, we have not only completed such preparation; we have truly begun to pray the Mass anew and are continually being renewed in our prayer.

Our Christmas Masses today illustrate what is new and beautiful in the

new English translation of the prayers. One very visible change that you may have observed are references in the missalette or parish bulletin to today's holy day as "The Nativity of the Lord." Likewise, the prayers of the Mass that directly speak of today's celebration regularly refer to Jesus' birth using this same word "nativity." You may have also noticed some different words used during Mass such as "consubstantial" and "chalice," or the phrase "and with your spirit." All of these choices of words reflect how the English translations of the original Latin prayer texts are more literal, using more elevated, sacral, and doctrinal language. Today, as we celebrate the Lord's birth, the words used in the prayers make the meaning of this

holy day even clearer. In particular, that the prayers frequently speak of Jesus as "incarnate" expresses that God has taken on the nature of man "in the flesh" in the person of Jesus Christ. The "birth" of Christ is only one moment in the truth of his being incarnate and living in the human condition.

In days to come, our prayer of the Mass will continue to be opened up to many opportunities for deeper understanding of our faith and the words that we pray. May today's celebration of the Nativity of the Lord, when Jesus is born for us as the light who shines upon us, help to illumine our path, that we might always pray the Mass in the joy that comes from Christ our Lord.

Questions of the Week:

➤ ***What will be the benefit of these new translations of the prayers?***

When considering the benefits of the new translations, some of the benefits can already be listed while others remain to be known. To this point, the preparation for the new translations has aided many people both in their understanding of the meaning of particular words and prayers used at Mass, and in their understanding of the meaning of the Mass as a whole.

A fundamental principle of how the Church worships is that "the law of prayer is the law of belief" (or in Latin, "*lex orandi, lex credendi.*") This principle means that the way that we pray (including both the words and the rituals) will inform our way of believing and living the faith. That our prayers and ritual actions have very definite meaning in light of Sacred Scripture and Tradition serves us in how we understand the truth of Catholic faith and how we live that truth. Thus, one of the greatest benefits to this new translation has already been seen in the renewed learning of the faith that has taken place in the lives of many believers, and the many more who will continue to grow in their faith *by the way we worship.*

➤ ***Where can I still learn about the new versions of the prayers?***

All of the bulletin inserts entitled "Praying the Mass Anew" are available on the website of the Diocese of Duluth, www.dioceseduluth.org. This series of bulletin inserts treats each of the people's parts of the Mass in great detail. Some of the more notable parts spoken by the priest at Mass are also given extensive explanation. In addition to explaining the prayers, all of these inserts contain explanation and teaching on the parts of the Mass as a whole.

To read or download any of the "Praying the Mass Anew" inserts, simply click on the "Office of Worship" and on "Roman Missal Resources." You will find a menu item there entitled "Praying the Mass Anew" that will give you access to all of the inserts, along with other related materials for the new translations of the *Roman Missal*.