

The Roman Missal

On the First Sunday of Advent, 2011 (November 27, 2011) the third translation of the Roman Missal will be implemented throughout the United States. The Roman Missal is the book containing the prayers, chants, and instructions for the celebration of Mass. Published first in Latin, the text is then translated according to the principles and rules of translation established by the Congregation for Divine Worship. After a series of reviews and approval by the Congregation for Divine Worship, the Missal is then published in modern languages for use in local churches throughout the world.

The revision of the Roman Missal which will be implemented beginning on the First Sunday of Advent has gone through the above process. The *Missale Romanum* (Roman Missal) was first promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1970 as a result of the Second Vatican Council. The Latin text was translated into various languages for use throughout the world; the English edition was published in the United States in 1973. In 1975, a revised text was issued by Rome. This is the edition we currently use at Mass. In the year 2000, the Jubilee Year, Pope John Paul II commissioned a new Roman Missal.

The changes in this “new” edition include prayers for the celebration of recently canonized saints, additional prefaces for the Eucharistic Prayers, additional Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Intentions, some updated and revised rubrics (instructions) for the celebration of the Mass, and changes in the translation of the prayers in the new Missal. The Order of the Mass (the structure of the Mass) is **NOT** changing.

The process of translation was the work of several groups. The International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL), a group chartered to prepare English translations of liturgical texts on behalf of the conferences of bishops of English-speaking countries, first submitted the translations to the various Bishops Conferences. The translations were reviewed by the Conferences, ICEL revised the texts again, they were resubmitted to the Bishops, and finally were submitted to the Vatican for final approval.

What we will notice in this revision of the Roman Missal is a different type of translation. In the previous translation more poetic and common phrases were used to express the “spirit” of the prayers and responses. In the revision, the translation is an attempt to stay closer to the exact words as they appear in the Latin text. The texts of the revised translation are marked by a heightened style of English speech and a grammatical structure that closely follows the Latin text.

When the translation is used, you will notice slight changes in the prayers we hear and say at Mass. There is a saying “*lex orandi, lex credendi*”; that is, “that which we pray is that which we believe.” This is why the prayers of the Church are so important – they are what we believe as a Church and they help to form us as the Body of Christ. Change is never easy. However, trusting in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, this change will help us to grow in our understanding and appreciation of the faith we profess.

Order of the Mass continued – The Liturgy of the Eucharist

The Liturgy of the Eucharist is the second major section of the Mass. During the Liturgy of the Eucharist, four distinct actions take place – taking, blessing, breaking and sharing of the gifts of bread and wine.

The structure of the Liturgy of the Eucharist is as follows:

- The Preparation of the Gifts and of the Altar
- The Prayer over the Offerings
- The Eucharistic Prayer

The Communion Rite

The Preparation of the Gifts and the Altar, the Presentation of the Gifts, and the Prayer over the Offerings is an important part of our liturgy. The actions of this part of the Mass contain a whole world of meaning. The Christian community takes simple bread and wine, the elements used by Jesus at the Last Supper, as the means of giving thanks and praise to God. Both these elements are “fruit of the earth and work of human hands.” They represent not just basic food and drink; but more deeply they represent our whole lives. All that our lives are about – our work, our struggles, our hopes, our joys, our hungers, our satisfactions – are symbolized in these gifts. We are united in our offering, just as many grains make one loaf and many grapes make one cup. When the bread and wine are carried up the aisle to the altar, it is our lives being carried forward as well. It is our lives, in the form of this bread and wine, being placed upon the altar as our offering. Our donations of money and gifts for the poor also symbolize the gift of our lives to God. These gifts are given in response to the Word of God to support the mission of Christ through the parish community. The action of offering our simple gifts is one of the most ancient in the history of our Church. The Presider/Celebrant then prays over the gifts as a way to express our intentions and hopes for these gifts.

The purpose of this rite is to prepare the altar, the gifts, and the community for the offering to come. It has been called the “entering in” of the Eucharistic celebration.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist – continued

Our gifts have been prepared and offered. We now begin the “center and summit” of the entire celebration – the Eucharistic Prayer. This is our prayer of great thanksgiving and blessing.

The beginnings of the Eucharistic Prayer are closely connected with the table prayers required at every Jewish meal. At the beginning of the meal, the presider of the community (usually the father of the family) offered a prayer of blessing, a *berakah*. First the bread was blessed, broken and shared; then the other courses of the meal were eaten; finally, another *berakah* was offered over a cup of wine. At the Last Supper, these prayers took on new meaning when Jesus offered them with the words “This is my Body” and “This is my Blood.” The whole action took on new meaning with Jesus’ command to “Do this in memory of me.

In the early Church, the presider improvised the words of the *berakah* but the prayer always included the themes of praise, thanksgiving and supplication. Over the years, other elements were added and elaborated but the basic structure remained. It was only in the 4th century that extemporization gave way to fixed forms of these prayers. In the Roman Rite, only one Eucharistic Prayer, the Roman Canon was used for centuries. Although at first the Eucharistic Prayer was spoken or sung so that all could hear, by the middle of the 9th century, the Prayer was prayed in a low voice by the presider. This reflected the understanding of the Mass as a “mystery” with only the priest entering into what was considered the holiest moments of the Mass. It was only in the 1960’s that liturgical reforms allowed and encouraged the presiding priest to say aloud the Eucharistic Prayer.

Currently there are 10 Eucharistic Prayers approved for use in the United States. Eucharistic Prayer I is the Roman Canon; Eucharistic Prayer II is very brief and simple and is based on a model attributed to Hippolytus of Rome; Eucharistic Prayer III is a 20th century composition based on the Roman Canon and Eucharistic Prayer IV draws on eastern sources and is a fourth century text of St. Basil. There are also two Eucharistic Prayers of Reconciliation (used in Lent and other appropriate occasions), three Eucharistic Prayers for Masses with Children and a Eucharistic Prayer for Masses for Various Needs and Occasions which is used for appropriate occasions.

The Eucharistic Prayer sanctifies or consecrates the offerings through the power of the Holy Spirit, so that our gifts of bread and wine (and our lives) become the Body and Blood of Christ. Regardless of which Prayer is used, the structure is the same. The elements of the Eucharistic Prayer are: 1) thanksgiving; 2) acclamation; 3) epiclesis (calling down of the Holy Spirit); 4) institution narrative and consecration; 5) anamnesis (a special kind of remembrance); 6) offering; 7) intercessions; and 8) final doxology.

Liturgy of the Eucharist – continued

The Eucharistic Prayer begins with an initial dialogue between the presider/celebrant and the congregation starting with “The Lord be with you.” The presider then prays the Preface, a statement of the special reason for praising God, especially God’s work in creation and redemption. Currently there are over 80 individual Prefaces for feast days, liturgical seasons, votive Masses and special occasions. All are concise statements of praise addressed to the Father through the Son. The Preface is concluded with our acclamation of praise, the “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord” or “Sanctus.” This text is inspired by the vision of Isaiah 6:2-3 and was generally incorporated into the Eucharistic Prayer by the mid fifth century. Through this acclamation the assembly responds to the celebrant’s invitation to join all creation in giving praise to the Father through Christ. With one voice the whole communion of saints gives glory to God.

Next, the Holy Spirit is called upon to sanctify, to make holy, the gifts that we present. The *epiclesis* has been part of the Eucharistic Prayer almost from the beginning of Christianity. The Holy Spirit is invoked through the Father. The Spirit is asked to come and “make holy” the gifts so that they may become the Body and Blood of Christ. As this invocation is made, the priest extends his hands over the bread and wine. We call upon the Spirit because it is through the power of the Spirit that not only are the bread and wine but all of us are transformed.

This then leads into what we know as the Institution Narrative, the time when we recall the words and actions of Christ at the Last Supper. The words of institution, the “consecration” are essential to the Eucharistic Prayer. According to the **General Instruction of the Roman Missal**, “...by means of words and actions of Christ, the Sacrifice is carried out which Christ himself instituted at the Last Supper, when he offered his Body and Blood under the species of bread and wine, gave them to his Apostles to eat and drink, and left them the command to perpetuate this same mystery.” All of the present Eucharistic Prayers have the same words of institution, a uniformity requested by Pope Paul VI, although the narratives in which they are framed may differ slightly.

An acclamation of the people following the words of institution, the Memorial Acclamation, manifests our active participation in the Eucharistic Prayer. Sharing in the Eucharist by virtue of our baptismal priesthood, we express and affirm our belief that the whole mystery of the Risen Christ is present and active in the celebration.

The Eucharistic Prayer - continued

The whole Eucharistic action and especially the words of institution are a memorial, an actual making present of God’s saving deeds in Christ so that their fullness and power take effect here and now. *Anamnesis*, the Greek word for “memory” is not a “remembering” in our usual understanding; it is a making present, a re-actualization for today of something that occurred in the past. In the Eucharistic Prayer, although the precise wording may vary depending on which Prayer is used, the Church “makes memory” of the Lord’s passion, resurrection, ascension and his coming again in glory. For example, in Eucharistic Prayer III, following the consecration (the Words of Institution), the priest says “Father, calling to mind the death your Son endured for our salvation, his glorious resurrection and ascension into heaven, and ready to greet him when he comes again....” By doing what Jesus has done the Church makes “living memory” of Christ’s saving deeds. The

fullness and power of the Paschal Mystery continue to be present as an on-going reality when the Church celebrates the Eucharist. Since the Eucharist is also the pledge of future glory, Christ's coming at the end of time is also anticipated.

Characteristic of all Eucharistic Prayers is a statement of offering. Using the words from Eucharistic Prayer III again, the priest continues "...we offer you in thanksgiving this holy and living sacrifice." This offering is made by the whole Church but especially the gathered community. We then ask God's help through intercession for the Church and her members, both living and deceased, and finally we remember the saints who "have done your will throughout the ages."

The Final Doxology concludes the Eucharistic Prayer. *"At the end of the Eucharistic Prayer, the priest takes the paten with the host and the chalice and elevates them both while singing or saying the doxology (Through him, with him and in him....). At the end the people make the acclamation, Amen. "General Instruction of the Roman Missal, #151*

The Final Doxology summarizes the Eucharistic Prayer which concludes, as it began, with an explicit note of praise. The priest has proclaimed the Prayer in the name of the entire congregation and finally, we, the congregation, give our assent to this praise with an enthusiastic "Amen." Most often, this response is sung but even if it is spoken, it should be done with energy to signify the importance of our response.

The Communion Rite

Having remembered in the Eucharistic Prayer the wonderful works of God with praise and thanksgiving, the congregation now prepares for communion with and in Christ. In the Communion Rite of Mass, we fulfill Jesus' command to "Take and eat...take and drink."

The components of the Communion Rite are:

- The Lord's Prayer
- The Rite of Peace
- The Fraction Rite ("Lamb of God")
- The Act of Communion
- Prayer after Communion

"In the Lord's Prayer a petition is made for daily food, which for Christians means preeminently the Eucharistic bread, and also for purification from sin, so that what is holy may, in fact, be given to those who are holy." General Instruction of the Roman Missal #81

The Lord's Prayer enjoys a special and unique place in Christian tradition, spirituality and worship. The prayer first entered the liturgy very early. St. Ambrose mentions its use as early as the mid 4th century. The final petition of the Our Father ("*...deliver us from evil*") is followed by an expansion asking the Lord to grant perfect peace ("*Deliver us Lord, from every evil, and grant us peace in our day. In your mercy keep us free from sin and protect us from all anxiety as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.*") The embolism (from the Greek for "insertion") serves as a transition to the doxology ("*For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever.*"), our acclamation of praise.

We ask for peace and unity for the Church and for the whole human family during the Rite of Peace. We seal that desire for peace and unity by extending a sign of peace to those around us, asking that the Lord's peace be with them. This act anticipates the unity and reconciliation that are ours in our communion with Christ.

The Fraction, or the breaking of the bread, is a simple but powerful action. The original action involved the breaking of a loaf (or loaves) of bread to share with those gathered. While we no longer use a loaf of bread, the large host that the priest breaks is symbolic of that original action. During this action, we join in singing the lityny “Lamb of God” which expresses our awe and unworthiness for the gift of Jesus himself which we are about to receive.

The Communion Rite (continued)

Following the “Lamb of God” we are invited to receive the Lord’s Body and Blood. *“The priest next shows the faithful the Eucharistic Bread, holding it above the paten or above the chalice, and invites them to the banquet of Christ.” (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, #84)*

The words of the invitation are “This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are they who are called to his supper.” Our response expresses our reverence, confidence, and faith that we are about to receive the Lord himself (“Lord, I am not worthy...”) We then come forward to receive Communion.

For centuries, Christians participated in Communion by receiving both the bread and wine – the Body and Blood of Christ. Only under special circumstances was Communion in one form accepted. By the early 14th century however, communion under both kinds was becoming the exception rather than the rule. Several factors influenced this change including an emphasis on “seeing” the Eucharist (since the contents of the chalice could not be seen, it was considered an auxiliary and secondary element); fear of spilling the precious Blood; prevalence of disease; the change of posture from standing to kneeling to receive the sacrament (not a posture conducive to receiving from the chalice); and various doctrinal disputes within the church. The restoration of the practice of receiving both the Body and Blood of Christ took place as part of the changes after the Second Vatican Council.

The priest is always the first to receive Communion, followed by the congregation. We process to the Eucharistic table to “take and eat, take and drink.” While it may seem to be a simple action, it is one which has rich meaning. We are presented with the consecrated bread (“The Body of Christ”) and we respond “Amen.” Our “Amen” is our way of saying that we believe that the bread that we receive **IS** the Body of Christ, but it is also our way of saying “yes” to Christ’s presence not just in the host, but also in the Church (the Body of Christ) and “yes” to the fact that we are the Body of Christ in the world as we share this meal. We are then presented with the consecrated wine (“The Blood of Christ”) and we again respond “Amen.”

This action of procession is accompanied by our singing, another way of uniting ourselves with our brothers and sisters in Christ in joyful thanks.

Following a period of silence for quiet prayer and reflection, the priest stands and we offer the Prayer after Communion, asking for the spiritual gifts of the Eucharist in which we have participated.

The Concluding Rite

We have gathered together as one community; we have listened to God’s Word; we have remembered and celebrated Jesus’ gift of himself; we have received the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation. Now it is time to go forth enriched and renewed to be Christ in the world.

The Concluding Rite is all about taking what we have received and sharing it with the rest of the world. It consists of brief announcements, the priest’s greeting and blessing, the dismissal, the kissing of the altar followed by a bow by the ministers and the recessional.

The announcements should be short and of importance to the entire community. They should not unnecessarily lengthen the Concluding Rite since the purpose of this Rite is to get us out into the world. This is followed by the greeting and blessing of the people. To bless a person is an action requesting that God continue to extend his generosity. In this blessing, the priest asks that God's blessing be given to all who have gathered that they may be strengthened as we go out into the world. Immediately after the blessing, we are told "The Mass is ended, go in peace to love and serve the Lord." The dismissal sends each member out to carry out the mission of the Church – a mission of healing, justice, and proclamation of God's glory. Like the disciples who went up the mountain with Jesus at the Transfiguration, we cannot stay "on the mountain" but must leave to be Christ's presence in the world.

Finally, the priest and deacon kiss the altar, and stand with the other ministers at the foot of the altar. Together they make a profound bow and they leave. This action is usually accompanied by a song or some sort of instrumental music although silence is also an option if appropriate for the season.

A reminder that Bishop Clark's video concerning the Revised Roman Missal, "A Moment of Grace" can be found on the Diocese of Rochester website www.dor.org/index.cfm/ministries/liturgy/.

Roman Missal Series

This week we will look more closely at a few of the components of the Introductory Rites. The Introductory Rites begin with the Entrance Procession and the accompanying Entrance Song. The history behind the entrance procession and song begins as early as the 4th century when large buildings began being used for the community's Eucharistic celebrations. More than just a functional action, i.e. the priests and other ministers processing from the sacristy to the sanctuary, the Entrance Procession is a visual expression of the people becoming a community gathered in response to God's invitation. As such, the music that accompanies this action helps to create the atmosphere of celebration. It helps the gathered assembly enter into their "work" of celebrating the Mass. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* states:

Once the people have gathered, the priest and ministers, clad in the sacred vestments, go in procession to the altar in this order:

- A. *The thurifer carrying a thurible with burning incense (if used)*
- B. *The ministers who carry lighted candles, and between them an acolyte or other minister with the cross*
- C. *The acolytes and other ministers*
- D. *A lector, who may carry the Book of the Gospels*
- E. *The priest who is to celebrate the Mass*

If a Deacon is present, he will carry the Book of the Gospels and immediately precede the priest.

When the ministers arrive near the altar, all make a profound bow of reverence toward it. The priest and deacon then kiss the altar itself and if incense is being used, the priest also incenses the cross and the altar. The altar is a symbol of Christ as the head or center of the faithful. This act of kissing/venerating the altar is an act of greeting that recalls the sacredness of this common table where we not only remember Christ's sacrifice but we share a meal. There are relics of saints "buried" in the altar as well, and this gesture of veneration also honors these models of faith.

When we have all gathered together, united in our hearts and minds, we make the sign of the cross. This

familiar gesture, perhaps even one of the first prayers we learned as children, identifies us. We have gathered in the name of the Trinity, a baptized people redeemed by the cross of Christ.

Roman Missal Series Continued

Introductory Rites

“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” How often we say those words; how often we make the Sign of the Cross. Signing with the Cross was a gesture practiced by Christians as early as the second century. However, it only appeared as an element in the Mass during medieval times with the introduction of the prayers at the foot of the altar (private prayers said by the priest on the way to the sanctuary). Although those prayers are no longer part of our ritual, we continue to use our traditional prelude to prayer, the Sign of the Cross, as we begin our celebration of Mass. The Sign of the Cross is a form of self-blessing with strong baptismal overtones. Every Christian has been baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Since the community at worship is first and foremost a baptismal community, it is appropriate that we remember, as we begin the Mass, our baptismal roots.

Immediately following the Sign of the Cross is the Greeting. This is one of the most ancient elements of the Introductory Rites. As the priest-presider recognizes and acknowledges God’s presence among those assembled, the peoples’ response recognizes and acknowledges God’s presence in this “servant of Christ” (1 Corinthians 4:1). The priest-presider may then briefly introduce the faithful to the Mass of the day. It may focus on some special character of the celebration or upon those who are present.

Recalling our baptism and having gathered in the Lord’s presence, we immediately recognize and acknowledge our sinfulness. The Act of Penitence has a four part structure. After an invitation requesting the community to recall those times that we have not lived fully and faithfully the life of Christ, there is a short period of silent reflection. We then acknowledge our sinfulness and ask for the Lord’s mercy and finally the priest concludes with a prayer requesting forgiveness. There are ten different formulas that can be used here. There is also an option to replace the act of penitence with the blessing and sprinkling of water. This emphasizes our baptismal identity and recommits us to live it. It is most often used during the Easter season.

The Gloria, or “Glory to God” is an ancient hymn of praise. It is a series of acclamations praising God in all three persons of the Blessed Trinity. The Gloria is either sung or spoken. It is omitted during the seasons of Advent and Lent as a means of anticipating the joy that is yet to come.

The Introductory Rites conclude with the Collect. The presence of this prayer dates back to as early as the 5th century and the current structure is essentially the same. The presider invites us to pray and after a few moments of silence during which we consider our own prayer requests, he prays the Collect on behalf of the assembled congregation. This prayer “collects” together all the prayers we bring in the spirit of the Eucharistic celebration that has now begun. Our “Amen” affirms the prayer as our own.

Questions for Reflection: How well do I celebrate the Introductory Rites? How do the Introductory Rites help me to enter in the celebration of the Mass?

Roman Missal Series Continued

The Mass is divided into two major sections – the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. They are flanked by two smaller elements – the Introductory Rites and the Concluding Rites. This week we begin looking at the Liturgy of the Word.

The telling of stories is an important part of any family gathering. Stories help us to connect with our history and often give us insights into who we are. As a family of faith, our stories are the Scriptures. The Liturgy of the Word is the time during Mass when we share the stories of our ancestors, including Jesus.

The structure of the Liturgy of the Word is conversational. First God speaks to us through the Old Testament (the First Reading), also known as the Hebrew Scriptures. This reading might be a story from the history of Israel or a selection from one of the prophets. The exception to this is during the Easter Season when we listen to the history of the early Church recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. We then respond “Thanks be to God” as an acclamation of praise. Following a brief silence, we respond by singing the Responsorial Psalm. The Responsorial Psalm is a direct response to the first reading and its purpose is to foster meditation on the Word of God. God speaks to us again in the Second Reading, taken from one of the letters (or epistles) and other non-Gospel writings from the New Testament. We respond again with our acclamation of praise (“Thanks be to God”) and after a brief silence, we joyfully sing our Alleluia, welcoming and greeting the Lord who is about to speak through the Gospel.

Christ speaks to us through the Gospel which is proclaimed by either the deacon (if he is present) or priest. Christ continues to be revealed to us in the stories and teachings of the gospels, the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. Our response to hearing the Word that is central to our faith, we respond even more enthusiastically by proclaiming “Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!”

The homily follows the proclamation of the Gospel. Its purpose is to help us connect God’s Word with our lives today so that we may enter into a deeper relationship with God in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Following the homily and a brief period of silence to allow all we have heard to enter our hearts and minds more fully, we stand and profess our faith by reciting the Nicene Creed. The Liturgy of the Word concludes with our prayers for the Church, the world and the local community including those who are sick or deceased.

Questions for Reflection: How can I enter more fully into the Word I hear proclaimed at Mass? How do the readings I hear challenge me in everyday life?

Liturgy of the Word continued....

“When the Sacred Scriptures are read in Church, God himself speaks to his people, and Christ, present in his own word, proclaims the Gospel.” (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, #29)

The Lectionary is the book that contains the Sacred Scriptures read at Mass. It is structured as a 3 year cycle of Scripture readings for Sundays and a 2 year cycle for Weekdays. The readings we hear on any given Sunday will be the same throughout the Roman Church. This 3 year cycle was established so that we would experience a more diverse sampling of the riches of the Bible. Although there are times during the year when we hear the same “story” (e.g. the Passion of the Lord on Palm/Passion Sunday), the Gospel is taken from a different writer each year of the 3 year cycle.

The 3 year cycle consists of Years A, B, and C. During Year A, we listen primarily to the Gospel of Matthew; during Year B, it is the Gospel of Mark; and Year C is the Gospel of Luke. The Gospel of John is used intermittently throughout the various years. During the season of Lent in Year A, we listen to John’s Gospel on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Sundays. During Ordinary Time in Year B, Mark’s Gospel is interrupted by a series of weeks when we again listen to John’s Gospel. John’s Gospel is also read during the Easter season in all 3 Years.

Throughout the liturgical year, but most especially during the seasons of Lent/Easter and Advent/Christmas, the choice and sequence of the readings helps to deepen our understanding and appreciation of our faith while telling the story of our salvation. During these seasons, there is a special connection between all of the readings we hear that helps us to enter more fully into the spirit and meaning of the seasons. Throughout the rest of the year, Ordinary Time, the Gospel and the Second Reading taken from the letters (epistles) are read more or less continuously while the First Reading (from the Old Testament) is designed to complement the Gospel.

Roman Missal Series – continued

The Liturgy of the Word begins with the 1st Reading. This reading is taken primarily from the Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament. The 1st Reading is our “history lesson.” We hear the stories of our ancestors –

Adam, Abraham, Moses, the prophets – and the stories of God’s Chosen People. During the Easter Season we listen to the story of the early Christian Church as we read from the Acts of the Apostles.

The reading of the Law and the Prophets was integral to the Jewish synagogue services and this tradition continued as the early Christian Liturgy of the Word emerged. We continue this practice at our weekly Sunday Eucharist.

At the end of the 1st Reading, the lector proclaims “The Word of the Lord” and we respond “Thanks be to God” – our affirmation that God truly is present in our midst. We then pause for a few moments of silence to allow the words we have heard settle into our hearts.

The Responsorial Psalm follows this silence and is an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word. The purpose of the Psalm is always to help us enter into a deeper understanding and appreciation of God’s Word. The text is taken from the Book of Psalms and most often, it complements one of the other readings for the day. The Psalm response is intended to be sung. The congregation usually sings a short response with either a cantor or choir singing the verses of the Psalm, although the congregation can sing the entire Psalm if appropriate. For each Sunday during the year, there is a designated Psalm, however, during certain seasons an option exists to use the same Psalm throughout the season (e.g. Advent, Lent).

Question for Reflection: How do the 1st Reading and the Responsorial Psalm help me to reflect on my own faith journey?

Continuing with the Liturgy of the Word....

Following the First Reading and the Responsorial Psalm, we then listen to God’s Word in the Second Reading. For centuries, the word “Epistle” was used to designate the reading which preceded the Gospel. Today, the Second Reading, what is sometimes referred to as the Epistle, is always from the New Testament. We most often hear about the early Christians living their new faith such as in the letters from Paul to the various early Christian communities. The witness of these communities provides an example for us as we struggle on our own faith journeys.

Often, this Second Reading is independent of the other Scripture readings for the day but especially during certain seasons, passages are used that correspond with the other Readings to help deepen our understanding of the season. At times during the year, a particular letter may be read in a more or less continuous fashion for several weeks. Again, this may or may not connect with the message of the other Scripture passages for that particular week.

Once again, at the end of the Second Reading, we respond with “Thanks be to God,” our affirmation that we have heard God’s Word proclaimed in our midst. A brief period of silence follows the Reading.

“After the reading that immediately precedes the Gospel, the Alleluia or another chant indicated by the rubrics is sung, as required by the liturgical season. An acclamation of this kind constitutes a rite or act in itself, by which the assembly of the faithful welcomes and greets the Lord who is about to speak to them in the Gospel and professes its faith by means of the chant. It is sung by all while standing and is led by the choir or a cantor...” **General Instruction of the Roman Missal, #62**

The Gospel Acclamation – usually the Alleluia – accompanies the Gospel procession. It is our song of praise and joy as we prepare to hear the Gospel, the good news of salvation. This acclamation **must** always be sung; if it is not sung, then it is omitted. We stand to express our readiness and eagerness for the Gospel. During the

season of Lent, we refrain from singing Alleluia and instead offer a different acclamation of praise, saving our Alleluias for Easter. The Alleluia is often called the victory song of a Paschal people; in St. Augustine's words, "We are an Easter people, and alleluia is our song."

Liturgy of the Word continued.....

"The reading of the Gospel is the high point of the Liturgy of the Word. The Liturgy itself teaches that great reverence is to be shown to it by setting it off from the other readings with special marks of honor: whether on the part of the minister appointed to proclaim it, who prepares himself by a blessing or prayer; or on the part of the faithful, who stand as they listen to it being read and through their acclamations acknowledge and confess Christ present and speaking to them; or by the very marks of reverence given to the Book of the Gospels." #60, **General Instruction of the Roman Missal**

We all know the Gospel reading is different from the other readings we have just heard. We take a different posture (standing), the words of Christ we hear are read by a deacon, or in his absence, the priest; and our response is one of praise. From the earliest of times, the primacy of the Gospel has been emphasized by signs of respect and honor, different from the respect given to other Scripture readings. There is a special book, The Book of the Gospels, used to proclaim the Gospel. There is no doubt that what we hear is not only important but different and special. It is Christ speaking to us, in this time and place, giving us guidance and instruction on following His way of life. While what we hear may not always seem to make sense in the world today, the Church provides us with a vehicle for helping us to understand how these Words of Christ are applicable in our own lives. That vehicle is the homily.

In the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the importance of the homily to our celebration of Eucharist is stated. *"By means of the homily the mysteries of the faith and the guiding principles of the Christian life are expounded by the sacred text during the course of the liturgical year... it should not be omitted except for a serious reason."* (CSL, #50) The homily helps us to "make sense" of what we have just heard. It usually focuses on one aspect of the readings, especially the Gospel, and assists us in understanding how God continues to act and is present among us today, as well as guiding us in living our lives in tune with the Gospel values. The homily is always given by a priest or deacon; on occasion a qualified lay person may be invited to share their thoughts to more fully illuminate the focus of the homily.

Liturgy of the Word continued....

This week we conclude looking at the Liturgy of the Word by examining the final two components – the Profession of Faith and the Prayer of the Faithful.

"The purpose of the Profession of Faith, or Creed, is that the whole gathered people may respond to the word of God proclaimed in the readings taken from Sacred Scripture and explained in the homily and that they may also call to mind and confess the great mysteries of the faith by reciting the rule of faith in a formula approved for liturgical use, before these mysteries are celebrated in the Eucharist." (**General Instruction of the Roman Missal, #67**)

In short, when we recite the Creed, we profess who we are and what we believe – the faith that has just been recalled through the readings and will continue to be celebrated as we move into the Liturgy of the Eucharist. We recall the many mysteries of our faith – our belief in one God in three persons; our belief in God incarnate in Jesus Christ; our belief in the presence of the Holy Spirit; our belief in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church; our belief in eternal life. To explore these mysteries fully would take far more than what we can do here; there are entire courses offered on the history and meaning of the Creed. In brief, the Creed that we recite

each Sunday is a summary of the faith expressed by the Councils of Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381) and Chalcedon (451). Although it first entered the Mass in the east in the early part of the 6th century, its use in the Roman Mass was not universal until the reign of Charlemagne when Pope Benedict VII included it in on all Sundays and on those feasts mentioned in the Creed (e.g. Christmas). The current order of the Mass retains its use on Sundays and solemnities.

The conclusion to the Liturgy of the Word is the Prayer of the Faithful. Sometimes referred to as the General Intercessions, they are the community's prayer for the needs of the Church, the world, including public authorities, those oppressed by any need such as poverty, war, etc., the local community and the sick and deceased. They are always general in context rather than specific; they should be current to the changing events of the world and they should reflect the prayer of the entire community. They should be succinct so that it is clear exactly what we are praying for. As such, they can sometimes seem rather impersonal but rather, they reflect our connection with a world much larger than any one person, need or particular church community. The Prayer of the Faithful has the following structure: 1) the celebrant addresses the people, inviting them to pray; 2) the deacon or lector announces the intentions with the people responding after each intention; 3) the celebrant asks God to receive the prayers of His people; and 4) the congregation gives their affirmation through their "Amen."

Having listened and responded to God's Word, the Liturgy of the Eucharist begins.

Questions for Reflection: How can I enter more fully into the Liturgy of the Word? How does the Liturgy of the Word prepare me for the Liturgy of the Eucharist? For the coming week?

Roman Missal – continued

The Liturgy of the Eucharist is the second major section of the Mass. During the Liturgy of the Eucharist, four distinct actions take place – taking, blessing, breaking and sharing of the gifts of bread and wine.

"For Christ took the bread and the chalice and gave thanks; he broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take, eat, and drink; this is my Body; this is the cup of my Blood. Do this in memory of me.'"

During the Liturgy of the Eucharist, we not only remember but we participate in these very actions. At the Presentation of the Gifts, the bread and wine – the same elements that Jesus used at the Last Supper – are brought to the altar. In the Eucharistic Prayer, we give thanks to God and the offerings of bread and wine are blessed and become the Body and Blood of Christ. During the Communion Rite the Body and Blood of Christ are shared among the faithful.

The early Christian community, conscious of Jesus' command that his followers "Do this in memory of me," performed these actions in the context of a meal; a Jewish meal complete with its traditional prayers and rituals. However, as the size of the Christian community grew and Christianity began to spread among non-Jewish peoples, the actions associated with Jesus at the Last Supper, began to be celebrated apart from another, more ordinary meal. However, the four basic actions of taking, blessing, breaking and sharing always remained part of the ritual.

The structure of the Liturgy of the Eucharist is as follows:

- The Preparation of the Gifts and of the Altar

- The Prayer over the Offerings

- The Eucharistic Prayer

- The Communion Rite

There are several elements within the Eucharistic Prayer and the Communion Rite.

Question for Reflection: How do I prepare myself to participate in the actions of the Liturgy of the Eucharist?

As we continue our preparations for the implementation of the New Roman Missal in Advent 2011, consider taking a few minutes to watch the video “A Moment of Grace” presented by the Diocese and including a statement by Bishop Clark. You can access the video at www.dor.org and clicking on the link marked “Video: New Roman Missal.”