

The Roman Missal of Pope Paul VI
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Roman Rite Catholics pray at the celebration of the Mass with words as old as the Church herself; some even predate her establishment by Christ. Through the centuries these texts have been gathered at first in small collections, later in Sacramentaries, and now in a book called the Missal.

1962 saw the last version of the “Tridentine” Missal, that collection of texts published at the wish of the Council of Trent. Today this last of the preconciliar editions is more properly named the 1962 *Roman Missal*, the “extraordinary form of the Roman Rite,” or the Missal of Blessed John XXIII.

Like the Council of Trent, the Second Vatican Council sought revisions in the rite of the Mass. Reformed during the papacy of Paul VI, this Missal has been called the *Novus ordo* (that is, “new order” of Mass, in comparison with that reformed according to Trent), and today is rightly called the “ordinary form of the Roman Rite” or the Missal of Paul VI.

The *Roman Missal* that we are about to use in English is the third edition since the Second Vatican Council or, said differently, the third edition of the Missal of Paul VI. But since the Council and today—nearly 50 years—an intricate and substantial history intervenes. Taking a brief glance at the English-language of the various *Roman Missals* demonstrates not only the complexity of introducing the vernacular into the Mass, but also reveals the effort exercised in its introduction.

- 1963: The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* was promulgated on December 4, 1963. About the introduction of the vernacular into the Mass, it says: “In Masses which are celebrated with the people, a suitable place may be allotted to their mother tongue. This is to apply in the first place to the readings and ‘the common prayer,’ but also, as local conditions may warrant, to those parts which pertain to the people.... Nevertheless steps should be taken so that the faithful may also be able to say or to sing together in Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass which pertain to them” (n.54).
- 1964: This directive led in 1964 to a Missal—the 1962 edition of the Missal—with people’s parts in English. Here the Prayers at the Foot of the altar are maintained (with the Confiteor said by the priest and repeated by the ministers) and there is the single Roman Canon still said in Latin. The “Lord, have mercy” is the first text said in English (yet each invocation is said three times), and the *Gloria* and the Creed are also in English.
- 1966: Containing all texts except the readings, the 1966 Sacramentary allowed all texts in the vernacular except for the Prayers at the Offertory, the Roman Canon, and the private prayers of the priest (e.g., before reading the gospel).
- 1968: Two years after the Sacramentary, the entire Mass could be said in English. Still, this Sacramentary is an adaptation of the 1962 *Roman Missal* and not yet that to be promulgated by Paul VI.
- 1970: Although announced in 1969, it wasn’t until 1970 that the first edition of the *Novus Ordo Roman Missal* appeared, but only in Latin. Also introduced in 1970 were the three additional Eucharistic Prayers for the 1966 Sacramentary.
- 1974: Eleven years after the Council and four years after the first edition of the Missal of Paul VI, the complete and approved English-language version appeared.
- 1985: The year after the English-language Missal was promulgated, the Holy See produced the second edition in Latin in 1975. The English version of the second edition followed ten years later.
- 2011: It was Pope John Paul II who, in 2000, announced the third edition of the *Roman Missal*. After a decade of translating, we expect this edition at the end of 2011.

Vernacular liturgy was, in most respects, a new experience for the Roman Church in 1963. For over 50 years the Church has developed her translation principles through experiment, matured understanding, and pastoral practice. The English-language *Roman Missal* that we are about to use is the fruit of these labors.