



Third Edition of the Roman Missal

In the new translation of the Roman Missal, there are virtually no changes to the English texts we use for the Liturgy of the Word, except for the Creed. (See Part IV of “Welcoming the Roman Missal 3rd Edition”). However, you may wish to know about a few matters.

The readings will conclude the same way. The reader will say, “The Word of the Lord” and your answer will be “Thanks be to God.”

The proclamation of the Gospel, however, will involve some changes to the words spoken by a deacon or priest both before and after the reading. The words they say will have a slightly different translation, although the meaning will be the same. These words are all said quietly by the priest and/or deacon.

When the priest or deacon stands at the ambo and greets you, he will still say, “The Lord be with you,” but your response will be “And with your spirit.”

When the Gospel is announced, you still say, “Glory to you, Lord.” And at the conclusion, you still say, “Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.”

The new translation will not affect the scripture readings. The scripture readings are in separate volumes entitled the Lectionary for Mass and the Book of the Gospels. A new translation for these is also under way, but it’s a separate project and it does not pertain to the changes you will soon experience.

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WELCOMING THE ROMAN MISSAL 3RD EDITION

Part V -- Overview of the Mass

The Liturgy of the Word (part b)

On November 27, 2011, English-speaking Catholics in the United States will begin using a new translation of the Roman Missal (the book containing the prescribed prayers, chants, and instructions for the celebration of Mass in the Roman Catholic Church).

Some Catholics appear to believe that they have very little to do during the Liturgy of the Word. “If God wants to speak, then all we have to do is be present and listen. Right?”

Well, yes and no. Certainly our task is one of listening, but of a very active listening. This demands that we not only pay careful attention, but that we prepare ourselves long before Mass to listen actively to the scriptures.

Preparing to Hear the Word

All of us expect our readers, musicians, and preachers to prepare themselves for their tasks in the Sunday celebration. We would be offended if they did otherwise. And yet all of us share in this necessity of preparation.

For years now, the Church has been urging us to reflect and pray with the scriptures long before the Mass begins. How much richer our experience of the Sunday readings would be if we would meditate and pray with the texts beforehand.

St. Jerome (340-420), the first person to translate the Bible into Latin used to say, “Not to know the scriptures is not to know Christ.” Hearing the scriptures proclaimed, then, is hearing Christ. They impart without change, the Council Fathers told us, “the Word of God himself and cause the voice of the Holy Spirit to be heard in the words of the apostles and prophets In the Sacred Books the Father who is in heaven lovingly comes to meet his children and speaks with them.” Our reading, proclaiming and hearing the Word of God, then, is an intimate encounter between God and his people.

Why not make room in your busy life for five or ten minutes of peace and quiet. Tell yourself: “God has something to say to me today. God is speaking to me through this bible passage.” Then slowly read one or more of the passages assigned for the following Sunday.

Let God lead you in your reading. He will certainly speak, but we must be patient. You might find it helpful to read around the passage. Or perhaps read the whole chapter. The context will give a better sense of what God is saying.

Many people, in addition to preparing privately, find it helpful to reflect on the scriptures with others. Sometimes this is called “faith sharing”. No expert knowledge is required here. The purpose here is to share what God is saying to me and to listen to what God is saying to others. We all share the scriptures, and our individual experience of the scriptures is also shared.

Another step may be to obtain a good scriptural commentary and do some “head work.” Such bible study helps us get inside the separate authors to know the intention, audience, and circumstances that each book of the bible addresses. By so doing, our understanding

of God's word is greatly enhanced and deepened.

If the bible becomes our prayer book outside of the liturgy, then our liturgical experience of the scriptures will profit. Perhaps we have the technical ability to be a reader in our parish. Perhaps we can serve as catechists or helpers for those preparing for initiation into the Church. Perhaps we can visit the sick and homebound parishioners who hunger for God's spoken word. It is through sharing our love for the scriptures that we more fully come to understand and appreciate the riches found in the Christian community's sacred book.

Visual Reminders of God's Word

It's often too easy to be distracted during Mass. In spite of the best of intentions our attention can easily wander off. We need all the help we can get to be able to concentrate on what we are about when we gather for prayer. To help focus our attention during the Liturgy of the Word, we have two visual reminders of the importance the community gives to the scriptural proclamations.

The first is the *ambo* (from a Greek word meaning a "platform"). It is also called a pulpit or lectern. What the altar is to the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the ambo is to the Liturgy of the Word. These are focal points, the places around which the Mass is celebrated. Perhaps you've noticed in your parish that the ambo is used only for proclaiming the scriptures, not for the giving of announcements. The reason for this is that the ambo is holy in the liturgical life of the community. The ambo is the place reserved for proclaiming God's sacred word.

The second visual reminder of the importance of God's word is the *lectionary* itself. The lectionary is the most important liturgical book the community possesses since it contains the written word of God. Thus it is a book to be handled with reverence. Perhaps your parish uses two books for the scriptures, one a "book of the gospels" and the other a lectionary for the other readings. This is a way of showing the unique importance of the gospels. The book of the gospels is carried in procession, incensed and venerated with a kiss. It is always given a place of honor.

Ministers of God's Word

As important as these visual reminders of God's word are, still more important are the persons who minister to us during the Liturgy of the Word. During the Liturgy of the Word we, of course, need readers, psalmists or musicians, and homilists. We also, however, need one another. We need to support one another by a shared love for the scriptures, by an attentive listening together, by a living practice of the word proclaimed. We also need to support our ministers for they need us just as much as we need them. Our prayerful attention needs to be so obvious, so intense that it encourages the reader, musician and homilist to do their ministry well. Our intent listening, our robust singing tells the ministers that we are paying attention. Then they, in turn, read, sing, and preach better. As a result, we can more fully listen to God speaking because their ministry is now more effective. And so it grows: better reading fosters better hearing fosters better reading fosters better . . .

When each one of us contributes our part to the Liturgy of the Word, then the message of God can penetrate and stir our very being. Simply put, we need one another if God's word is to take root in our hearts.

Next time we will begin our reflection on the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Discussion Questions

1. What makes someone a good listener? Are you a good listener when it comes to the scriptures proclaimed in church?
2. How did Christ speak to you in this Sunday's scriptures? When else has Christ spoken to you powerfully in the readings?
3. How is the proclamation of the Gospel different from the proclamation of the other readings?