

Over the next 12-14 weeks we will be preparing for changes in the Mass resulting from changes in the Roman Missal. These short two- to three-minute presentations are intended to explain the history of the Missal, our liturgical participation as God's people, questions and answers about changes to the Mass, and some practice of the actual changes. We begin today with some history.

The Sacramentary, or Roman Missal, that we currently use is the English translation of the Latin Missale Romanum. Prior to the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) the Roman Missal contained the readings and prayers of the Mass bound together in a single volume. Now, the Scripture readings are bound separately in a Lectionary and the presider's prayers are bound in the Sacramentary.

The Missale Romanum contains all of the prayers of the Mass in their official Latin version. While rich in history, the original Latin prayers are not always as ancient as they seem. Many prayers have been edited over time for the sake of theological precision or linguistic grace. Other prayers have been written more recently, some even since the Second Vatican Council.

The Roman Missal, like every liturgical book used in the Catholic Church, is first published entirely in Latin. For centuries, Latin had been the preferred language not only of the church but also in scholarship, politics, philosophy, science and the arts. The Second Vatican Council maintained the church's preference for the Latin language, but also allowed for "a more extended use of the mother tongue within the Mass." The results of this have been overwhelmingly positive. The use of the vernacular, the common language of the people, has helped us to pray with more understanding and to deepen spiritual connections between the liturgy and everyday life.