

Last week we began with the history of the Roman Missal. Today, we complete the brief history and begin the Liturgical Participation of God's People.

While the church allowed for the use of the vernacular language, the prayers themselves still needed to be translated from the original Latin to English. The first edition of the English-language Sacramentary was published in 1974. Nearly 30 years later, Pope John Paul II (who himself had participated as a young bishop in the Second Vatican Council) issued the Missal that we will use in our parishes beginning the First Sunday of Advent. Promulgated in 2000 and first available in Latin in 2002, there are few changes in the Latin texts of the new Missal. However, because of new principles of translation, the changes for English-speaking parishes throughout the world will be noticeable.

Translation is an art. A simple glance at any dictionary shows the multiple definitions that exist for any one word within any one language. The translations currently in use, based on the principles of dynamic equivalency, have helped generations of Catholics pray in their own language. The issuance of the third edition of the Roman Missal reflects a new understanding of translation principles known as formal equivalency. The desire is to provide a more beautiful and more exacting language of prayer. The goal, for those who pray as members of the body of Christ, is that the prayer be "to the greater Glory of God."

The Mass as we celebrate it today was carefully crafted in the 1960s following the principles outlined in the Second Vatican Council. However, the impetus to begin this transformation started much earlier. More than 50 years before the Council there was a movement throughout Europe to renew the liturgy of the church. This movement reached its culmination with the proclamation of the first document of the Council entitled the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, which we will refer to as the CSL.

If the goals of the liturgical movement and the message of the CSL could be summed up in two words, it would be these: "active participation." Chapter 14 of the CSL says, "In the reform and promotion of the liturgy ... full and active participation of all the people is the aim to be considered before all else." This strong statement is as true today as it was 40 years ago.