

The Deacon's Corner By Deacon Ron Desmarais

Introduction to the 3rd Edition of the Roman Missal

I would like to take a few minutes to talk about the new Roman Missal and the changes that will be taking place on November 27th when we implement the changes. Personally I am looking forward to the changes in the Mass.

I have read all the changes to the speaking parts for the laity (that's you) and the few minor parts for the Deacon. The majority of the changes will affect the priest. In fact a lot of the changes will affect the priest. Fr. Mike will be spending a great deal of his time reading from the Roman Missal until he becomes familiar with the wording.

I know there are people who are not looking forward to the changes who are asking, "Why are we changing things? What is wrong with the Mass the way it is?" Others who say, "I like the current Mass and I don't see a need to change it".

Well the Mass isn't changing only some of the people's prayers and the priests' prayers. We will still be doing the same kneeling, standing, sitting, and all the other actions that we are use too.

Hopefully I will be able to dispel some of the apprehension over the new edition and answer those questions. I will be addressing some of the changes in the speaking parts in my next newsletter. But I just wanted to write this introduction to the 3rd Edition before I started writing about them.

First of all I would like to say that these changes have been in the making for a long time. This isn't something that was just thought up in the last five years or so. In fact, they have been in the works since the 2nd Edition was published in 1970. Several attempts have been made to correct the bad or poor translation of the Missal since it was introduced. I am not going to go over the history of that struggle, however you have to realize the 2nd Edition was translated and introduced within a year of publication of

the new norms of the Roman Rite after Vatican II. In the church's haste to get it out they used what is called "dynamic equivalency" which means they translated the meaning and not the wording. By doing so they took shortcuts and that is where a lot of the problems cropped up.

The Church is attempting to correct some of these deficiencies. Also the Mass is scriptural and many of the current dynamic equivalence have lost its connection to scripture. That is why some of the changes will be more identifiable with scripture so that we can see (hear) where the church is getting its teaching. For example, at the invitation to communion the priest will say: *"This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are those who are called to his supper."*

The 3rd Edition becomes: *"Behold the Lamb of God; behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb."* This change now points to two scripture references that were lost using the dynamic equivalence. The first one is John the Baptist recognizing Jesus at His baptism (Jn 1:29). The double use of behold is for emphasis just as Jesus would say, "Amen, Amen I say to you".

The second reference is to Revelations 19:9 when the Angel says, *"Blessed are those called to the wedding feast of the Lamb"* and Revelation 3:20 *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, (then) I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me."* See also: Isaiah 25:6, Luke 14:15 and 22:50.

After the priest invites us we reply: *"Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed."*

The 3rd Edition now becomes: *"Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed."* This change reflects

scripture where the centurion approaches Jesus and asks him to heal his sick servant. (Mt 8:5-13) Jesus says he will come and cure him, but the centurion tells him: (Mt 8:8) *“Lord I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof; only say the word and my servant will be healed.”* As you can see this is a clearer reference to the scripture passage than before. This is how the church desires to make the Mass reflect scripture and make it more relevant.

However, scripture reference is not the only area where the Church is attempting to revive the Mass. She is also trying to bring back some of the sacredness and reverence we have lost. For example, during the Eucharistic prayers when the priest says: *“When supper was ended, he took **the cup**. **Again he gave you thanks and praise, gave the cup to his disciples, and said**”* will now become, *“**In a similar way, when supper was ended, he took **this precious chalice in his holy and venerable hands, and once more giving you thanks, he said the blessing and gave the chalice to his disciples, saying**”***

Now you can see how the Mass is changing to reflect a more sacred language when we praise the Lord during the Mass. I can say, “I’m going to have a cup of coffee or I’m going to drink a cup of wine.” That is an ordinary thing performed in an ordinary way. But during the Mass we are talking about *extraordinary* things in an *extraordinary* way. We are how we pray. Sloppy prayer does not a good disciple make.

One final note: many of you were born after Vatican II and are not familiar with the changes that took place either going from Latin to the vernacular, the changes that took place in the Mass, as well as all the other physical changes that took place. One of the major changes in the Mass was the Sign of Peace which had not even been a part of the Old Mass. The early church did have a Sign of Peace or Kiss of Peace and that is why the church re-introduced it.

However, people were very resistant to shaking someone’s hand or even turning to them and saying, “Peace be with you.” Now that simple gesture seems so natural during the Mass, but this was entirely new to everyone and caused quite a stir.

Other major changes that took place in the church during that period: the altar rails were removed; the altar was reoriented to the middle of the sanctuary; the priest now faced the people. All of these were major events and caused much anxiety and discontent. In some churches statues of the saints were taken out and destroyed. Can you believe that? What a shame.

So you can see that these changes in the 3rd Edition are an attempt to recapture some of what was lost in our haste to translate the old Mass to the New Mass. That is why the words we use in church have to have a higher meaning than that of the street. We are speaking to and honoring God, our creator and redeemer. The Holy Trinity deserves the best we can offer in our speech. We are coming to church to meet the *“King of Kings and Lord of Lords”* (Rev 19:16). We are coming to join him in the feast he offers us in the Eucharist.

These are my thoughts in regards to the introduction to the 3rd Edition of the Roman Missal. I just wanted to prepare you for what I will be discussing in the coming weeks. I look forward to sharing with you the changes that we will experience at Advent. In the meantime think about what we do when we come to Mass. Reflect on what we, each one of us, offers to God through our participation. Vatican II called everyone to a fuller participation in the Mass. This means we participate in our worship, our wording, our prayers, and raising our voices in song to honor and worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.