

A brief history of the development of the Roman Missal, from Vatican II to the today.

Sacrosanctum Concilium - 1963

Dec. 4, 1963

Second Vatican Council promulgates “*Sacrosanctum Concilium*” (“Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy”).

This text, the first official text of the Council, called for the renewal of the liturgy and the reform of the liturgical books in order to promote the “full, conscious, and active participation” of the faithful in the liturgy of the Church. The fathers of the Council invited consideration of the use of the vernacular (the local language of the people), and in the years leading up to a new Roman Missal, it was determined that the vernacular could be used for the entire liturgy.

The *Consilium* is Formed - 1964

Jan. 25, 1964

Pope Paul VI issues *Motu Proprio* letter, “*Sacram Liturgiam*”; the *Consilium* is formed.

To facilitate the implementation of the reform of the Liturgy, Pope Paul VI established the *Consilium*, a task group of bishops and scholars, to undertake the work of implementing the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. He stated: “[I]t seems evident that many prescriptions of the Constitution cannot be applied in a short period of time, especially since some rites must first be revised and new liturgical books prepared. In order that this work may be carried out with the necessary wisdom and prudence, we are establishing a special commission whose principal task will be to implement in the best possible way the prescriptions of the Constitution on Sacred Liturgy itself.”

ICEL Takes Shape - 1964

April 1964

International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) takes shape.

In October 1963, during one of the sessions of the Second Vatican Council, the bishops of 10 English-speaking countries (including the United States) agreed to form a mixed commission to aid in the work of the liturgical reform, the International Commission on English in the Liturgy. Other language groups, including French and German, form similar commissions. ICEL is formally established with the formation of its mandate as a commission for the preparation of English translations of liturgical texts.

Comme le Prévoit - 1969

January 25, 1969

Comme le Prévoit, Instruction on the translation of liturgical texts for celebrations with a congregation.

The Concilium, to prepare for the promulgation of the new Roman Missal, issued this text which contained guidelines for translators. The guiding principle of the document was “dynamic equivalency,” which means to translate basic thoughts rather than words. Those who use this principle say that they are aiming for a transfer of the same meaning from the original to the receptor language. The original words and form are important only as a vehicle for the meaning; therefore, it is the meaning alone that is truly important in the translation.

Missale Romanum Promulgated - 1969

April 3, 1969

Missale Romanum, editio typica promulgated by Pope Paul VI.

Liturgical books are issued by the Holy See (the Vatican) as “typical editions,” the authoritative Latin texts which are used for the celebration of the Liturgy in Latin, or as the basis for translation into local (vernacular) languages, which must then be approved by the Holy See.

Order of Mass Approved - 1969

Nov. 13, 1969

U.S. bishops approve English translation of the Order of Mass.

Eight months after the promulgation of the *Missale Romanum*, the bishops of the United States approve the translation of the Order of Mass which had been prepared by ICEL. The Order of Mass contains the “fixed” texts of the Mass: the basic outline and structure of the Mass, the people’s responses and acclamations, the Eucharistic Prayers, and the other prayers of the priest that remain the same in every Mass.

Order of Mass Confirmed – 1970

Jan. 5, 1970

Holy See confirms English translation of Order of Mass for the Dioceses of the United States

After a translation of a liturgical text is approved by a Conference of Bishops, it must be confirmed by decree (called a *recognitio*) from the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. Once a text receives the *recognitio*, the Conference of Bishops establishes a date when the text can be used in the Liturgy.

U.S. *Sacramentary* Approved – 1973

November 12, 1973

Complete text of the *Sacramentary* (The Roman Missal) approved by the U.S. Bishops.

After completing the text of the Order of Mass, ICEL and the Conferences of Bishops began translating the other prayers of the Roman Missal. After consultation on a draft in 1971, a provisional text containing prayers for Sundays and other feast days had been approved and published in 1972.

U.S. *Sacramentary* Confirmed – 1974

Feb. 4, 1974

Sacramentary (The Roman Missal) confirmed by the Holy See; text published in the United States.

The *Sacramentary* is the large book, used by the priest at the celebrant’s chair and at the altar, containing all the prayers of the Mass.

Missale Romanum Reissued – 1975

March 27, 1975

Missale Romanum, editio typica altera promulgated by Pope Paul VI.

Only one year after the publication of the U.S. edition of the Roman Missal, the Holy See issued a revised authoritative Latin edition, the “second typical edition,” containing additional prayers and modifications of existing prayers and rubrics.

U.S. *Sacramentary* Second Edition – 1985

March 1, 1985

Revised Sacramentary (The Roman Missal) published in the U.S.

This revised edition, based on the 1975 edition of the Missale Romanum, also included prayers for recently canonized saints such as St. Elizabeth Ann Seton (feast day Jan. 4) and St. John Neumann (Jan. 5), as well as the Eucharistic Prayers for Masses with Children and the Eucharistic Prayers for Reconciliation. Existing texts remained largely unchanged.

Sacramentary Revision Begins – 1987

Fall 1987

ICEL reports its work on a more thorough revision of the English translation of the Missale Romanum, editio typica altera.

A number of questions and observations had been made about the English translation of the Roman Missal, which had been in use for more than 10 years. Many bishops were asking for a thorough retranslation of the prayers.

U.S. *Sacramentary* Approved – 1996

November 1996

U.S. Bishops approve the revised edition of the Sacramentary.

After nearly 10 years of extensive study, consultation, and review, the texts prepared by ICEL, along with a number of particular adaptations for the Dioceses of the United States, were approved by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. The Holy See raised a number of questions about the work, but ultimately never approved the text because of its intention to promulgate a third edition of the Missale Romanum in observance of the Jubilee Year.

Missale Romanum Third Edition – 2000

April 10, 2000

Missale Romanum, editio typica tertia promulgated by Pope John Paul II.

Pope John Paul II issued the “third typical edition” of the Roman Missal during the Jubilee Year 2000. The *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani* (General Instruction of the Roman Missal) had been published in March 2000 as an introduction to the revised Missal. The ritual text would not be published until March 2002. Once the full text of the *Missale Romanum* was available, the work of translating it into various languages would begin.

Liturgiam Authenticam – 2001

March 28, 2001

Liturgiam authenticam, Instruction on the use of vernacular languages in the publication of the books of the Roman Liturgy.

To guide the work of preparing translations of the revised Roman Missal, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments issues new instructions for the translation of liturgical texts. The guiding principle for translation is expressed as “formal equivalency.” *Liturgiam authenticam* #20 states: “While it is permissible to arrange the wording, the syntax and the style in such a way as to prepare a flowing vernacular text suitable to the rhythm of popular prayer, the original text insofar as possible, must be translated integrally and in the most exact manner, without omissions or additions in terms of their content, and without paraphrases or glosses.”

Vox Clara Established – 2002

April 2002

Vox Clara Committee established.

The Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments gathered bishops and consultants from English-speaking countries to assist in the review and approval of the English translation of the Roman Missal. The *Vox Clara* (“clear voice”) Committee has been meeting several times each year to review texts submitted to the Holy See for recognitio.

General Instruction Approved - 2002

November 2002

English translation of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal approved by the USCCB; Confirmed by the Holy See March 17, 2003.

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal, containing the basic outline and instructions for the celebration of Mass, includes a number of adaptations for the Dioceses of the United States. It was published by USCCB Publishing in 2003 and is also available [here](#).

ICEL Statutes - 2003

Sept. 15, 2003

International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) formally established by the Holy See as a “mixed commission” in accord with the principles of *Liturgiam authenticam*.

ICEL had originally been established in 1963. Its statutes were revised in order to establish a formal relationship with the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

English Order of Mass Draft - 2004

February 2004

Draft translation of the Order of Mass presented to English-speaking Conferences of Bishops.

ICEL presented its first draft of the first section of the Roman Missal, the Order of Mass, for review and comments. Each section of the Missal would go through two drafts, the first of which (the “green book”) would undergo review and modification. The second draft (the “gray book”) would be presented for canonical vote by the Conferences of Bishops, and then submitted to the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments for recognition.

Order of Mass Approved - 2006

June 15, 2006

English translation of the Order of Mass approved by the USCCB.

After more than two years of review and consultation and three drafts, the English translation of the Order of Mass, along with a number of adaptations for the Dioceses of the United States, is approved. After the text of the Order of Mass was completed, each of the remaining 11 sections of the Roman Missal were presented in similar fashion.

Order of Mass Confirmed – 2008

June 23, 2008

English translation of the Order of Mass confirmed by the Holy See.

While the revised translation of the Order of Mass cannot be used in the celebration of the Mass, the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments granted the recognitio in order that catechesis on the revised texts could begin and musical settings of the texts could be prepared.

U.S. *Roman Missal* Approved – 2009

November 17, 2009

Final segments of the Roman Missal (third edition) approved by the U.S. Bishops.

Concluding a lengthy process that began with the publication of the *Missale Romanum*, editio typica tertia in 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops gives its approval to the final sections of the English translation of the third edition of the Roman Missal. (Other sections were approved in November 2008 and June 2009.) While the Holy See prepares and approves a final text, expected sometime in 2010, a remote catechetical period is underway to prepare clergy and lay faithful in the United States to receive the new translation.