

From the Office of Liturgy and Music

Welcoming the

English Translation of the

Roman Missal

THIRD EDITION

Part 1: “Do This In Memory of Me”

On the First Sunday of Advent (November 27), the Church in the United States will implement the new English translation of the Roman Missal, Third Edition. Many of the dialogues, prayers, and acclamations which we sing or speak during the Mass have been retranslated, thus changing the words. Over the next eleven weeks, this article series will reflect on many aspects of the new translation to help Good Shepherd Parish welcome the new Missal with understanding and excitement. Before looking at the Missal and the translations themselves, we must first develop an understanding on why reform of or change in the Mass naturally occurs. The Mass is indeed in a constant state of reform: always growing, maturing and evolving. Two thousand years ago, as he celebrated the Last Supper with his disciples, our Savior gave us the command to “do this in memory of me.” Throughout the centuries, the baptized have been faithfully following this command, always trying to fully realize the essence of the “this” that Jesus commanded us to do. What exactly was the “this” which Jesus spoke of? Was it the sharing of a sacred meal: to eat and drink? Was it the offering of sacrifice? Perhaps he was commanding us to enter into service as he demonstrated when he washed his disciples’ feet before the meal or was he speaking of repeating the ritual words which he had just spoken, giving praise and thanks to God? As we move through the centuries, we see the Church emphasizing different aspects of the “this” which greatly shaped and often reshaped the Mass during different periods of Church history. Today we have come full-circle and understand the “this” that Jesus spoke of as the early Church did: a multi-dimensional Eucharistic action which includes sharing a sacred meal, eating and drinking, offering sacrifice, entering into service, participating in ritual, giving praise and thanks to God. This Eucharistic action was instituted by Christ, but placed into the hands of human beings to celebrate: human beings who have some strengths and many weaknesses, human beings, who with the help of the Spirit, grow, mature and evolve in our understanding of the “this” which Jesus commanded us to do. And so as we grow, evolve and mature in our Eucharistic theology and understanding of Jesus’ command to “do this in memory of me,” so too does the Eucharistic liturgy (Mass) grow, evolve and mature. The liturgy is a living tradition, always in a constant state of reform and will continue to evolve, mature and reform until Christ comes again. The Third edition of the Roman Missal and the English translation of that Missal are only the most recent reforms of the liturgy, there will no doubt be further reforms in the future. In next week’s article, we will look at the liturgical life of the Church and explore how words (and so translations) are essential for us to follow our Savior’s command to “do this in memory of me.”

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