

What Is *The Roman Missal*?

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The Roman Missal is the book that contains the prayers of the Mass. The English prayers we use at Mass are translated from the Latin originals, some of which date back more than a thousand years. When the first English translations were prepared following the Second Vatican Council, they were based on a translation principle known as *dynamic equivalence*: the goal was to capture the spirit of each text, not to translate each word literally. In 2001, the Vatican published new guidelines for liturgical translation, calling for *formal equivalence*, that is, a literal rendering of the Latin originals. In order to adhere to these new guidelines, a new English translation was needed. In the United States, we will begin to use the new translation on November 27, 2011.

There is an old axiom, *lex orandi, lex credendi*: the law of prayer is the law of faith. In other words, the way we pray shapes what we believe. *The Roman Missal* affects us all, because the words of our prayers express what we believe as a Church, and form us as the Body of Christ.

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