



NewsLetter

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Volume LVI

November-December 2020

Pope Francis Announces Year of Saint Joseph for 2021

On December 8, 2020, the 150th anniversary of the proclamation of Saint Joseph as patron saint of the universal Church, Pope Francis issued the Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde* as an extended reflection of the holy foster father of Jesus and spouse of Mary. According to the Holy Father, Saint Joseph was a father in varied ways: beloved, tender and loving, obedient, accepting, creatively courageous, working, and “in the shadows.” He concluded his letter with a short prayer to Saint Joseph as a synthesis of his teachings.

The Holy See announced separately that day the Pope’s decision to celebrate a special “Year of Saint Joseph,” which takes place from December 8, 2020 to the same date in 2021. Unlike a formal Jubilee – also called a Holy Year – the Pope’s initiative is similar to other years that are given a focus for the Church’s prayers and activities. Recent special years include Marian Years (1954, 1987), the Year of the Eucharist (2005), the Year of Saint Paul (2008-09), the Year for Priests (2009-10), and the Year of Faith (1967-68, 2012-13). Nations and individual dioceses are also able to dedicate special years as the need arises.

As the universal Church embraces with renewed strength the spirituality of its patron, Saint Joseph, in the coming year, she prays for his intercession and to follow his example, along with the tenderness of his beloved Spouse, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the merciful love of our Lord Jesus Christ. *Saint Joseph, pray for us!*

Plenary Indulgences Available for the Year of Saint Joseph

The Apostolic Penitentiary issued a decree on December 8, 2020, formally announcing the decision of Pope Francis to celebrate the Year of Saint Joseph through December 8, 2021. Special opportunities to receive a plenary indulgence were also included, subject to the usual conditions: sacramental confession, reception of Holy Communion, prayer for the intentions of the Pope, and total detachment to all sin, including venial sin.

Due to the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Holy See made provision in its decree that persons who are currently unable to go to Mass or confession because of public health restrictions may defer reception of those two sacraments until they are able to do so. Those who are sick, suffering, or homebound may also receive the plenary indulgence by fulfilling as much as they are able and by offering their sorrows and sufferings to God through Saint Joseph, consoler of the sick and patron saint for receiving a good death.

The following prayers and activities have been enriched with a plenary indulgence:

- meditate for at least 30 minutes on the Lord's Prayer ("Our Father") or participate in a spiritual retreat of at least one day that includes a meditation on Saint Joseph;
- perform a corporal or spiritual work of mercy, inspired by the life and example of Saint Joseph;
- pray the Rosary together as a family or a couple, modeling the virtues of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph;
- dedicate with confidence their daily work to the protection of Saint Joseph the Worker, including the efforts of those who are unemployed, underemployed, or seeking more dignified work;
- devoutly recite the Litany of Saint Joseph (from the Latin Church; available at [USCCB.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/litanies/litany-of-saint-joseph](https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/litanies/litany-of-saint-joseph)),¹ some or all of the *Akathistos* hymn to Saint Joseph (from the Byzantine Churches), or another suitable prayer in each liturgical tradition, especially for the intentions of persecuted Catholics in the Church and around the world, and for the relief of all Christians who suffer persecution; or
- devoutly recite another approved prayer to Saint Joseph, for example the "To you, O blessed Joseph" (available at [USCCB.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/prayers/prayer-to-st-joseph-after-rosary](https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/prayers/prayer-to-st-joseph-after-rosary)),² especially on various feasts of Saint Joseph: March 19 (his solemnity), May 1 (St. Joseph the Worker), the Sunday after Christmas (Holy Family), St. Joseph's Sunday (Byzantine Catholics), or on the 19th day of each month, or each Wednesday, traditionally dedicated to honor his memory with pious devotions.

To assist the faithful, the final page of this issue of the *Newsletter* includes several prayers for Saint Joseph drawn from approved sources, including the recent Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde* by Pope Francis, and the *Roman Missal*.

CDWDS Grants Indult for Additional Christmas Time Masses

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments granted an indult for the dioceses of the United States, valid for 2020 only, permitting each Diocesan Bishop to grant the faculty to his priests to celebrate up to four Masses on both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day (Prot. n. 522/20, November 1, 2020).

Considering the present health and safety requirements in most jurisdictions related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic – particularly the need for social distancing and reduced capacity in churches at this time – Archbishop José H. Gomez, USCCB President, requested the indult as a special concession to help meet the needs of the faithful during a sacred and sentimental time of year. In his letter to Robert Cardinal Sarah, Prefect of the Congregation, Archbishop Gomez wrote:

Your Eminence, I am well aware of the burden such a request can place upon priests. For this reason, I do not make this request lightly. However, my brother bishops consider it to be a necessary temporary solution for this calendar year to enable their faithful to celebrate the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ in their local communities.

In receiving the requested indult, bishops were given the option to increase the number of Christmas Masses in their parishes. In places where the number of faithful permitted to congregate is limited, this concession was viewed as a way to assist more people to participate in Christmas Mass.

Soon after granting that original indult to the USCCB, the Congregation also decided to grant similar and even more expansive permissions to the bishops of the entire world. For the duration of the pandemic, bishops may grant their priests the faculty to offer up to four Masses not only on Christmas, but also on the Solemnities of Mary, the Holy Mother of God and of the Epiphany of the Lord (Prot. n. 597/20, December 16, 2020).

¹ See *Manual of Indulgences*, concession 22; usually a partial indulgence.

² See *Manual of Indulgences*, concession 19; usually a partial indulgence.

In ordinary circumstances a priest is encouraged to celebrate Mass once a day (canons 276 §2, 2° and 904). However, under prescribed circumstances, canon 905 §2 of the *Code of Canon Law* permits local ordinaries to allow priests to celebrate Mass twice daily (bination) and, “if pastoral necessity requires it,” to allow them to celebrate up to three Masses on Sundays and holy days of obligation (trination).

In a related development, the Committee on Divine Worship addressed an October 26 memorandum to the body of bishops about the timing of evening vigil and anticipated Masses, and particularly the timing of Christmas Eve Masses this year. Issued after consultation with the Committee on Canonical Affairs and Church Governance, the memorandum reminded the bishops that the more common canonical interpretation of “evening” is “4:00 PM or later.” However, based on principles outlined in the Instruction *Eucharisticum mysterium* (May 25, 1967) and on various private responses of the Holy See, the bishops of that Committee suggested that due to the exceptional circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, including local restrictions on public gatherings, Diocesan Bishops could give a broad interpretation to the definition of “evening” and therefore permit Masses to begin in the afternoon. They did not, however, attempt to define an “earliest” time at which a vigil or anticipated Mass might begin.

Taken together, the indult permitting more Masses and the suggestion that a bishop could permit Christmas Eve Masses to begin earlier than usual were both intended to allow as many of the faithful as possible to take part in person at Mass on the Nativity of the Lord in a safe manner. English translations of the Holy See’s two indult decrees – the first for the United States and the second for all bishops around the world – are provided for the benefit of our readers:

CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS

Prot. n. 522/20

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

At the request of His Excellency the Most Reverend José Horacio Gomez, Archbishop of Los Angeles, President of the Conference of Bishops of the United States of America, in a letter dated October 29, 2020, by virtue of the faculty granted to this Congregation by the Supreme Pontiff FRANCIS, and after due consideration, we gladly concede that, while cases of the COVID-19 pandemic continue, local Ordinaries may permit Priests residing in their Dioceses to celebrate four Masses on the Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord and on the day of the Nativity of the Lord, as often as will seem necessary for the good of the faithful, and observing always the requirements of law, in particular with the prescriptions in canon 951.

This permission is granted only for the Nativity of the Lord in 2020.

All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

From the offices of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, November 1, 2020, the Solemnity of All Saints.

Robert Card. Sarah
Prefect

✠ Arthur Roche
Archbishop Secretary

CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS

Prot. n. 597/20

DECREE

Mindful of the conditions caused by the worldwide pandemic, and by virtue of the faculty granted to this Congregation by the Supreme Pontiff FRANCIS, we gladly concede that, while cases of the COVID-19 pandemic continue, even during Christmas Time this year, local Ordinaries may permit Priests residing in their Dioceses to celebrate four Masses on the days of the Nativity of the Lord, of Mary, the Holy Mother of God, and of the Epiphany of the Lord, as often as will seem necessary for the good of the faithful, and observing always the requirements of law, in particular with the prescriptions in canon 951.

All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

From the offices of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, December 16, 2020.

Robert Card. Sarah
Prefect

✠ Arthur Roche
Archbishop Secretary

CDWDS Issues Note on the Sunday of the Word of God

On December 17, 2020, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments issued a Note regarding the Sunday of the Word of God, observed yearly on the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, between January 21-27 (Prot. n. 602/20). We republish the Note for the benefit of our readers:

The Sunday of the Word of God, instituted by Pope Francis and to be held every year on the third Sunday of Ordinary Time,¹ reminds us, pastors and faithful alike, of the importance and value of Sacred Scripture for the Christian life, as well as the relationship between the word of God and the liturgy: “As Christians, we are one people, making our pilgrim way through history, sustained by the Lord, present in our midst, who speaks to us and nourishes us. A day devoted to the Bible should not be seen as a yearly event but rather a year-long event, for we urgently need to grow in our knowledge and love of the Scriptures and of the Risen Lord, who continues to speak his word and to break bread in the community of believers. For this reason, we need to develop a closer relationship with Sacred Scripture; otherwise, our hearts will remain cold and our eyes shut, inflicted as we are by so many forms of blindness.”²

This Sunday, therefore, presents an ideal opportunity to reread some of the Church’s documents³ and especially the *Prænotanda* of the *Ordo Lectionum Missæ*, which present a synthesis of the theological, ritual and pastoral principles surrounding the word of God proclaimed at Mass, but which is also valid in every other liturgical celebration (Sacraments, Sacramentals, Liturgy of the Hours).

¹ Cf. FRANCIS, Apostolic Letter *Motu proprio Aperuit illis*, November 30, 2019.

² FRANCIS, *Aperuit illis*, n. 8; VATICAN COUNCIL II, Constitution *Dei Verbum*, n. 25: “Therefore, all the clergy must hold fast to the Sacred Scriptures through diligent sacred reading and careful study, especially the priests of Christ and others, such as deacons and catechists who are legitimately active in the ministry of the word. This is to be done so that none of them will become ‘an empty preacher of the word of God outwardly, who is not a listener to it inwardly’ since they must share the abundant wealth of the divine word with the faithful committed to them, especially in the sacred liturgy. The sacred synod also earnestly and especially urges all the Christian faithful, especially Religious, to learn by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures the ‘excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ’ (Phil. 3:8). ‘For ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.’”

³ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Constitution *Dei Verbum*; BENEDICT XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*.

1. Through the proclaimed biblical readings in the liturgy, God speaks to his people and Christ himself proclaims his Gospel;⁴ Christ is the center and fullness of all Scripture, both the Old and New Testaments.⁵ Listening to the Gospel, the high point of the Liturgy of the Word,⁶ is characterized by a special veneration,⁷ expressed not only by gestures and acclamations, but by the Book of the Gospels itself.⁸ One of the ritual possibilities suitable for this Sunday could be the entrance procession with the Book of the Gospels⁹ or simply placing the Book of the Gospels on the altar.¹⁰
2. The arrangement of the biblical readings laid down by the Church in the Lectionary opens the way to understanding the entirety of God's word.¹¹ It is therefore necessary to respect the readings indicated, without replacing or removing them, and using only versions of the Bible approved for liturgical use.¹² The proclamation of the texts of the Lectionary constitutes a bond of unity between all the faithful who hear them. An understanding of the structure and purpose of the Liturgy of the Word helps the assembly to receive God's saving word.¹³
3. The singing of the Responsorial Psalm, which is the response of the Church at prayer, is recommended;¹⁴ the psalmist's function in every community, therefore, should be enhanced.¹⁵
4. In the homily, beginning with the biblical readings, the mysteries of faith and the norms of the Christian life are explained throughout the liturgical year.¹⁶ "Pastors are primarily responsible for explaining Sacred Scripture and helping everyone to understand it. Since it is the people's book, those called to be ministers of the word must feel an urgent need to make it accessible to their community."¹⁷ Bishops, priests and deacons must develop a commitment to carry out this ministry with special dedication, making use of the means proposed by the Church.¹⁸
5. Particular importance is attached to silence which, by favoring meditation, allows the word of God to be received inwardly by the listener.¹⁹
6. The Church has always paid particular attention to those who proclaim the word of God in the assembly: priests, deacons and readers. This ministry requires specific interior and exterior preparation, familiarity with the text to be proclaimed and the necessary practice in the way of proclaiming it clearly, avoiding all improvisation.²⁰ It is possible to preface the readings with appropriate and short introductions.²¹
7. Because of the importance of the word of God, the Church invites us to pay special attention to the ambo

⁴ Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nn. 7, 33; *Institutio generalis Missalis Romani* (IGMR), n. 29; *Ordo lectionum Missæ* (OLM), n. 12.

⁵ Cf. OLM, n. 5.

⁶ Cf. IGMR, n. 60; OLM, n. 13.

⁷ Cf. OLM, n. 17; *Cæremoniale Episcoporum*, n. 74.

⁸ Cf. OLM, nn. 36, 113.

⁹ Cf. IGMR, nn. 120, 133.

¹⁰ Cf. IGMR, n. 117.

¹¹ Cf. IGMR, n. 57; OLM, n. 60.

¹² Cf. OLM, nn. 12, 14, 37, 111.

¹³ Cf. OLM, n. 45.

¹⁴ Cf. IGMR, n. 61; OLM, n. 19-20.

¹⁵ Cf. OLM, n. 56.

¹⁶ Cf. OLM, n. 24; CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, *Homiletic Directory*, n. 16.

¹⁷ FRANCIS, *Aperuit illis*, n. 5; *Homiletic Directory*, n. 26.

¹⁸ Cf. FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, nn. 135-144; *Homiletic Directory*.

¹⁹ Cf. IGMR, n. 56; OLM, n. 28.

²⁰ Cf. OLM, nn. 14, 49.

²¹ Cf. OLM, nn. 15, 42.

from which it is proclaimed.²² It is not a functional piece of furniture, but a place that is in keeping with the dignity of the word of God, in correspondence with the altar: in fact, we speak of the table of God's word and the table of the Body of Christ, referring both to the ambo and especially to the altar.²³ The ambo is reserved for the readings, the singing of the Responsorial Psalm and the Easter Proclamation (Exsultet); the homily and the intentions of the universal prayer can be delivered from it, while it is less appropriate to use it for commentaries, announcements or for directing singing.²⁴

8. The books containing the readings from Sacred Scripture stir up in those who hear a veneration for the mystery of God speaking to his people.²⁵ For this reason, we ask that care be taken to ensure that these books are of a high quality and used properly. It is never appropriate to resort to leaflets, photocopies and other pastoral aids as a substitute for liturgical books.²⁶
9. In the run up to or in the days following the Sunday of the Word of God it is fitting to promote formation meetings in order to highlight the importance of Sacred Scripture in liturgical celebrations; it can be an opportunity to learn more about how the Church at prayer reads the Sacred Scriptures with continuous, semi-continuous and typological readings and to explain the criteria for the liturgical distribution of the various biblical books in the course of the year and its seasons, as well as what the structure is of the Sunday and weekday cycles of the readings for Mass.²⁷
10. The Sunday of the Word of God is also a fitting occasion to deepen the link between Sacred Scripture and the Liturgy of the Hours, the praying of the Psalms and Canticles of the Office, as well as the biblical readings. This can be done by promoting the community celebration of Lauds and Vespers.²⁸

Among the many Saints, all of whom witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Saint Jerome can be proposed as an example because of the great love he had for the word of God. As Pope Francis has recalled, he was a “tireless [...] scholar, translator and exegete. [He had a] profound knowledge of the Scriptures, [and] zeal for making their teaching known. [...] In his attentive listening to the Scriptures, Jerome came to know himself and to find the face of God and of his brothers and sisters. He was also confirmed in his attraction to community life.”²⁹

The purpose of this Note is to help reawaken, in the light of the Sunday of the Word of God, an awareness of the importance of Sacred Scripture for our lives as believers, beginning with its resonance in the liturgy which places us in living and permanent dialogue with God. “God's word, listened to and celebrated, above all in the Eucharist, nourishes and inwardly strengthens Christians, enabling them to offer an authentic witness to the Gospel in daily life.”³⁰

From the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, December 17, 2020.

Robert Card. Sarah
Prefect

✠ Arthur Roche
Archbishop Secretary

²² Cf. IGMR, n. 309; OLM, n. 16.

²³ Cf. OLM, n. 32.

²⁴ Cf. OLM, n. 33.

²⁵ Cf. OLM, n. 35; *Cæremoniale Episcoporum*, n. 115.

²⁶ Cf. OLM, n. 37.

²⁷ Cf. OLM, nn. 58-110; *Homiletic Directory*, nn. 37-156.

²⁸ *Institutio generalis de Liturgia Horarum*, n. 140: “Following ancient tradition, Sacred Scripture is read publicly in the liturgy not only in the celebration of the Eucharist but also in the Divine Office. The liturgical reading of scripture is of the greatest importance for all Christians because it is offered by the Church herself and not by the decision or whim of a single individual. Within the cycle of a year the mystery of Christ is unfolded by his Bride [...]. In liturgical celebrations prayer always accompanies the reading of Sacred Scripture.”

²⁹ Cf. FRANCIS, Apostolic Letter *Scripturæ sacræ affectus*, on the Sixteen-hundredth Anniversary of the Death of Saint Jerome, September 30, 2020.

³⁰ Cf. FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 174.

Liturgical Action Items Postponed; Committee Meeting Rescheduled

The November 2020 USCCB plenary meeting, previously scheduled as an in-person meeting in Baltimore, Maryland from November 16-19, 2020, was reformatted as two afternoon sessions on November 16-17 on an online meeting platform due to the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The plenary meeting focused on the more essential business of the Conference – including the election of Committee chairmen and chairmen-elect and of the next General Secretary, the 2021 budget, and the 2021-2024 strategic plan. Accordingly, the USCCB Administrative Committee deferred various action items proposed by other committees, including three liturgical texts from the Committee on Divine Worship, to a future plenary meeting.

In addition, due to the rescheduling of the plenary meeting, the Committee decided to postpone its own meeting from November 15 in Baltimore to January 11, 2021 via an online meeting platform.

Public Prayer after the Desecration of a Church

The Order of the Dedication of a Church and an Altar speaks of the importance and dignity of a church: “For the place where the Christian community is gathered to hear the Word of God, to offer prayers of intercession and praise to God, and above all to celebrate the sacred mysteries and where the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist is reserved is a special image of the Church, which is God’s temple built from living stones” (Decree of Promulgation). Regrettably, serious crimes are sometimes committed in sacred places, including offenses against the Holy Eucharist and acts contrary to human dignity. According to the *Code of Canon Law*:

Sacred places are violated by gravely injurious actions done in them with scandal to the faithful, actions which, in the judgment of the local ordinary, are so grave and contrary to the holiness of the place that it is not permitted to carry on worship in them until the damage is repaired by a penitential rite according to the norm of the liturgical books. (Canon 1211)

In Part VI of the *Ceremonial of Bishops*, chapter 20 provides guidance on what is to be done in these cases of desecration. Interestingly, while the *Ceremonial* refers to a rite that is to be used, the Holy See has not yet issued an official text for this purpose. However, even if specific orations and other texts are not provided, nos. 1075-1092 of the *Ceremonial* give a thorough description of what this penitential rite ought to include. Combining this guidance with appropriate texts drawn from the *Roman Missal* and the *Lectionary*, and other texts composed for the occasion, a bishop and those who assist him can plan a penitential rite, should the unfortunate need arise.

While a penitential ceremony could be done outside of Mass, the *Ceremonial* observes that churches are dedicated through the celebration of the Eucharist, and that therefore a penitential ceremony in the context of Mass is most suitable way for a church to be “restored to divine service” (no. 1075). The Mass might begin with a procession to the church with the singing of the Litany of the Saints, to which “an invocation related to the rite of reparation is added, as well as other invocations pertinent to the needs of the community” (no. 1081). The altar is bare and is not revered; after the greeting the bishop blesses water and sprinkles the people, the altar, and the church. In his homily, the bishop “explains the biblical readings, the restored dignity of the church building, and the need of the local Church to grow in holiness” (no. 1088). After the intercessions, the altar is prepared and Mass proceeds as usual. Especially if there was a desecration of the Holy Eucharist in the church, the Mass might conclude with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, a period of adoration, and benediction.

A resource on the dedication of churches and related ceremonies, *Holy People, Holy Place: The Rites for the Dedication of a Church and an Altar*, was recently published by Liturgy Training Publications. An updated edition of an earlier work, the book provides a study edition of *The Order of the Dedication of a Church and an Altar* and background information on the rites related to churches. Included in this material is a useful description of the history of the Church’s response to the desecration of a sacred place and other resources that could be helpful in planning a penitential rite for this purpose.

“Renewed by Decree of the Most Holy Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican”: Fifty Years of the *Missale Romanum* after Vatican II

This year saw the fiftieth anniversary of the Holy See’s 1970 publication of the reformed *Missale Romanum*, *editio typica* (first typical edition). Preceded by various provisional documents and, in 1969, by the promulgation of an Apostolic Constitution, a new liturgical calendar, and the *General Instruction*, this book is rightly viewed as the culmination of many years of study and preparation. To mark this occasion, the Secretariat of Divine Worship offers some brief reflections on its significance and on its translation into English.

History in Parallel and in Innovation

While the new Missal was in certain respects a radical departure from its immediate predecessors, its preparation had some interesting parallels with earlier versions of the book. The Fathers of the Council of Trent (1545-1563) left to Pope Saint Pius V the task of preparing a new edition of the *Roman Missal*. The Holy Father’s collaborators studied ancient manuscripts kept in the Vatican Library as they refined the liturgical texts that would subsequently be compiled to produce the celebrated *Missale Romanum* of 1570. Minor modifications were made to this book over the years, but the initial publication was a landmark moment in the history of the Roman Rite, as that book would play a key role in shaping the celebration of the Mass in much of the Church for centuries.

Likewise, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) entrusted the Holy Father with the task of revising the liturgical books. Once again, experts examined texts from the Church’s liturgical patrimony – from both East and West – which were drawn upon in the preparation of a new Missal. Consideration was also given to the contributions of patristic and Scriptural studies and to the ecumenical movement in this work. Pope Saint Paul VI’s promulgation of the 1970 *Missale Romanum* marked another landmark in the history of the Church’s celebration of the Mass. While his successors would continue to modify the book in various ways, this publication of the Missal fifty years ago provided a new point of reference for the celebration of the Mass for much of the Church.

The changes in the 1970 Missal with respect to the preceding editions of the book were already signaled in the 1969 Apostolic Constitution *Missale Romanum*, and after fifty years of use are now well-known. Major differences include the addition of other Eucharistic Prayers, a simplification of the Order of Mass, and the expansion of the variety of Scripture readings, which were removed from the Missal and compiled in a new *Ordo Lectionum Missæ*, the Lectionary. These differences were largely intended to promote a better understanding of the rites on the part of those who participate in the Mass, and thereby make their participation more fruitful.

Another historic and groundbreaking feature of the 1970 Missal was the fact that from the beginning it was intended to be translated into the various modern languages. The Latin edition of the post-Conciliar *Missale Romanum* can itself be used for the celebration of the Mass, of course, but it serves mostly as a point of reference from which Missals in other languages can be prepared. In 1970 the then-Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship published in its official journal an article by Dom Antoine Dumas, OSB on the challenges this new mandate would bring (“Pour mieux comprendre les textes liturgiques du Missel Romain,” *Notitiæ* 6 [1970], 194-213). Father Dumas was involved in the preparation of the typical edition of the new *Missale Romanum* and was also a member of the commission that prepared the first French translation of the book.

Dom Dumas observed that liturgical translations needed to be exact and at the same time elegant. One of the difficulties in this task – a complication that requires a proficiency in language that goes beyond the basic study of Latin – is the fact that many words that existed in classical Latin came to have new or nuanced meanings when adopted by Christians. He also noted that even with vernacular translations of liturgical texts, pastors would continue to have an urgent duty to teach the faith. Modern Christians are often well-versed in all kinds of technical vocabulary, but sadly lack a developed religious vocabulary. This situation calls for better catechesis, and not for translations that gloss over or paraphrase important words and concepts.

Standing at that point in history, at the threshold of a momentous task of liturgical translation that faced the bishops of the world, Father Dumas drew attention in his article to a large number of Latin words and phrases that would need to be carefully considered by translators as they undertook their work. These included words that express essential truths about the Catholic belief in the Eucharist, as well as Latin words that might easily be mistranslated due to their similarity to common words in certain modern languages.

Translations Past and Present

This fiftieth anniversary of the promulgation of the 1970 *Missale Romanum* is a good opportunity to consider the ways the official English translations of the Missal over this period have addressed some of the challenges highlighted by Dom Dumas. Looking at only four of the difficult words he addressed, provided here are the original Latin phrases followed by the texts as they were translated in the 1973 *Sacramentary* and then as they were re-translated in the 2011 *Roman Missal*. The translators of the two versions were guided by different principles: the former by the document *Comme le prévoit* (January 25, 1969) issued by the Consilium for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, and the latter by the Instruction *Liturgiam authenticam* (March 28, 2001) issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. Naturally, therefore, the works they produced are quite distinct.

The purpose here is not to criticize either of these English translations, but rather to encourage understanding and reflection: first, to raise awareness as to the challenge inherent in liturgical translation; second, to illustrate the differing ways two generations of English translators approached this challenge; and third – and most importantly – to encourage a greater appreciation of the beauty and depth of meaning in the texts we use when we pray in the Sacred Liturgy.

Commercium

While the Latin word *commercium* can be used to describe a close fellowship or an exchange of words, it more commonly has a mercantile sense, from which the English “commerce” is derived. The liturgy frequently draws upon the term to describe an exchange of the mundane for the sacred. Thus, the Missal uses it to describe the exchange of bread and wine for the Body and Blood of Christ, and it is widely employed in the image of the *admirabile commercium*, the wondrous exchange in which we give Christ our humanity and in return receive his divinity, a notion utilized by figures such as Saints Athanasius and Gregory the Great. Dom Dumas noted that modern languages have ways of expressing the mutuality and intimacy of this relationship between God and the faithful and suggested that the translator should not automatically settle for a vocabulary of business transaction.

Preface III of the Nativity

Per quem hodie **commercium** nostræ reparationis effulsit...

1973 Sacramentary:

Today in him a new light has dawned upon the world: **God has become one with man, and man has become one again with God...**

2011 Missal:

For through him the **holy exchange** that restores our life has shone forth today in splendor...

In the older version the translators opted to try to explain the concept of *commercium* with a longer phrase, rather than trying to find a word or two to convey the idea. The newer translation, on the other hand, uses more concise language to try to express the mystery. Perhaps attentive to the concern raised by Father Dumas, the inclusion of the adjective “holy” might be intended to avoid a merely transactional expression. Especially notable in Christmas Time, the notion of *commercium* invites meditation on the truth that the Son of God took on our humanity in order to redeem it and that we, weak and sinful as we are, are called to offer something of ourselves to our Father in heaven. While worship can never be reduced to a simple *quid pro quo*, it is precisely the disparity between what is given with what is received that reveals the endless generosity of God.

Mereri

The verb from which we get the English “merit,” *mereri* means be deserving of something, whether good or bad. Many will be familiar with its reference to the Blessed Virgin Mary in the *Regina Cæli* (*quia quem meruisti*

portare). Given the complexity of the theological sense of the term, this word must be treated carefully. In some situations, it could be translated strongly, as “merit,” “deserve,” or “be worthy of.” However, Father Dumas warned that some cases it serves in Latin as a mere auxiliary verb indicating a capability of doing something, without conveying a sense of merit or demerit.

Solemn Blessing, Celebration in Honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary (second invocation)
Eiusque semper et ubique patrocinia sentiatis, per quam auctorem vitæ **suscipere meruistis**.

1973 Sacramentary:

You received the author of life through Mary.
May you always rejoice in her loving care.

2011 Missal:

May you know always and everywhere the protection of her, through whom **you have been found worthy to receive** the author of life.

In this instance the older translation altogether avoids any notion of merit in its rendering, whereas the newer version takes a more literal approach. The difficulties described by Father Dumas are clear in this example and in the two approaches taken by the translators. Both texts invite us to ponder the blessings we are given from Almighty God, and also the truth that we have the Blessed Virgin to thank for the most important of them, the blessing that is Christ himself.

Officium

An *officium* refers to an act of service (whether obligatory or voluntary), to the responsibilities in performing such actions attached to one’s position, or to a religious ceremony or observance. Sometimes a simple and direct translation in English is warranted, as for example in reference to priests and ministers performing their “office” and in reference to the “Divine Office.” But the Missal frequently employs this word in relation to the actions of those participating in the Mass, in which case greater nuance might be preferred.

Seventh Sunday of Easter, Prayer over the Offerings
Suscipe, Domine, fidelium preces cum oblationibus hostiarum,
ut, per hæc **piæ devotionis officia**, ad cælestem gloriam transeamus.

1973 Sacramentary:

Lord, accept the prayers and gifts we offer in faith and love. May this **eucharist** bring us to your glory.

2011 Missal:

Accept, O Lord, the prayers of your faithful with the sacrificial offerings, that through these **acts of devotedness** we may pass over to the glory of heaven.

Both translations try to capture the liturgical sense of *officium* but do so in different ways. While the 1973 translation in general tends to use non-technical language, here the translators opted for a more abstract sense of “Eucharist” to convey the thanksgiving that is a part of our prayer. The newer translation in this place uses a more concrete expression to convey our religious observance. At this point in the Mass the Missal often invites us to join our minds and hearts to the gifts placed on the altar as we move into the sublimity of the Eucharistic Prayer, and an explicit awareness of this can have a tremendous impact on the way we live our faith.

Sacramentum

Father Dumas observes that context is very important in the translation of *sacramentum*. Sometimes “sacrament” is the appropriate translation, but in a Eucharistic context “mystery” can sometimes be a better rendering, reflecting a usage often found in patristic literature. He also argued that when used in reference to the Church, “sign” could be a good solution. Some of the prayers in the Missal that use *sacramentum* in connection with the Church are new compositions that draw from *Lumen gentium* and other documents of the Second Vatican Council, which refer to the Church as a sign and a sacrament.

Annunciation of the Lord, Prayer after Communion
In mentibus nostris, quæsumus, Domine, veræ fidei **sacramenta** confirma...

1973 Sacramentary:
Lord, may the **sacrament** we share strengthen our
faith and hope in Jesus...

2011 Missal:
Confirm in our minds the **mysteries** of the true
faith, we pray, O Lord...

Perhaps the older translation hoped to draw a connection with the Holy Eucharist that the congregation had just received in choosing to use the singular “sacrament” in this Prayer after Communion. The 2011 Missal sometimes does the same thing (see December 22, for example). In this instance, however, Father Dumas might have preferred the newer translation’s choice of “mysteries,” which also respects the plural of the Latin text. The time immediately following Holy Communion is a privileged time of prayer for the faithful and the richness of the terminology employed by the Sacred Liturgy can draw us into a deep and profound thanksgiving for the gifts we have received.

Conclusion

For an individual, fifty years can seem like a long time. While the implementation of the revised form of the liturgy had a monumental impact on a generation of Catholics at the time, a great many Catholics today – perhaps even a majority – know no other way of celebrating the Mass, and this anniversary might seem to recall something from the distant past. And yet, fifty years is a very short time in the life of the Catholic Church, whose liturgical customs and traditions and laws develop over the course of centuries. How might the vernacular celebration of the Sacred Liturgy, and our appreciation and participation in it, continue to develop?

The end of 2021 will mark the tenth anniversary of the implementation of the current English translation of the *Roman Missal*, and the course of the last decade has seen the implementation of other liturgical books whose translation were likewise guided by the principles outlined in *Liturgiam authenticam*. That process of retranslation of the post-Conciliar books is largely drawing to a close and perhaps there will be an extended period of stability in English-language liturgical texts. Time will tell what lessons will be learned and where the next steps in liturgical development might lie.

In 1970 Father Dumas wrote of the importance of “seeking language that is sacred, worthy of the prayer of the Church” (*la recherche d’une langue sacrée, digne de la prière de l’Eglise*). This search will certainly involve growth and development in the decades and centuries ahead. By the Lord’s grace, may the Church’s pastors and her faithful continue to strive to worship Almighty God with the greatest devotion and love.



“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...”

(John 1:1)



MERRY CHRISTMAS
and a
HAPPY NEW YEAR
2021
from the Committee on
Divine Worship
and the Secretariat of
Divine Worship!

Selected Prayers
in Honor of
Saint Joseph

From the conclusion of the
Apostolic Letter Patris Corde:

Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
To you God entrusted his only Son;
in you Mary placed her trust;
with you Christ became man.

Blessed Joseph, to us too,
show yourself a father
and guide us in the path of life.
Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage,
and defend us from every evil. Amen.



Saint Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary:

Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that by Saint Joseph's intercession
your Church may constantly watch over
the unfolding of the mysteries of human salvation,
whose beginnings you entrusted to his faithful care.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Votive Mass of Saint Joseph:

O God, who in your inexpressible providence
were pleased to choose Saint Joseph
as spouse of the most holy Mother of your Son,
grant, we pray,
that we, who revere him as our protector on earth,
may be worthy of his heavenly intercession.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Saint Joseph the Worker:

O God, Creator of all things,
who laid down for the human race the law of work,
graciously grant
that by the example of Saint Joseph
and under his patronage
we may complete the works you set us to do
and attain the rewards you promise.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph:

O God, who were pleased to give us
the shining example of the Holy Family,
graciously grant that we may imitate them
in practicing the virtues of family life and in the bonds
of charity,
and so, in the joy of your house,
delight one day in eternal rewards.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

For Various Needs: For the Family:

O God, in whose eternal design
family life has its firm foundation,
look with compassion on the prayers of your servants
and grant that, following the example
of the Holy Family of your Only Begotten Son
in practicing the virtues of family life and in the bonds
of charity,
we may, in the joy of your house,
delight one day in eternal rewards.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.