

# The Roman Missal: Changes are Coming

The Power of Words by Joe Paprocki, D. Todd Williamson

As we begin our exploration of the upcoming new Missal changes, let's take a look at a few helpful analogies. For starters, consider a draft of the Declaration of Independence, which reveals a mysterious smudge of ink that has long baffled historians. Apparently, Thomas Jefferson changed his mind about a word and erased it while the ink was still wet. Scientists recently discovered that the word he erased was "subjects," which he replaced with "citizens." This one word re-defined the people of the American colonies. Words have the power to change lives and even alter the course of history.

On a less dramatic note, think of the last time you tried to select a greeting card for a special occasion. No doubt, you pored over the words of numerous cards, looking for just the right words to express your sentiments. Words can have a profound impact - for better or for worse - on our significant relationships. In the same way, words play a very important part in our relationship with God. Catholics worship using both words and sacrament (sign, symbol, ritual). The words we use in worship - which will be affected by the new Missal changes - are chosen carefully so as to best express our understanding of and relationship with God.

Some of these words we Catholics use in worship date all the way back to the time of the Apostles. For example, the words of Jesus, at the Last Supper, have been part of our Eucharistic celebrations for 2000 years. Most of the other words that make up the prayers and texts of the Mass have been culled together over a period of as many years, including texts that are relatively new - formulated in the 20th century. In all of this, one thing remains clear - these words have power!

They have the power to form us and to shape us as Catholics. These prayers tell us what we believe - about God, about Jesus Christ and about our relationship with God. These words tell us what we believe about ourselves, about what God wants for us and from us, and about how we are to live in the world. The words with which we pray have the power to change us and to transform us.

## **New Missal changes will impact our life of worship.**

Think about it - we hear these words week after week, season after season, year after year. When you look at it, it is easy to see that these words are efficacious - that is, they have an effect on us! They have an effect on our faith! They have an effect on our lives! It is the old adage of the Church, as it is expressed in Latin: *Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi!* That is, *our prayer shapes our belief!* Thus, the words with which we pray are no small matter!

With the coming of the English translation of the 3rd edition of the Roman Missal (Advent 2011), some of the words we use at Mass will be changing. In upcoming articles, we will

continue to explore how the new Missal changes will impact our life of worship, inviting us to delve deeper into the Mystery of the Eucharist that is at the center of our lives.

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