

THE NEW TRANSLATION OF THE ROMAN MISSAL

The First Sunday of Advent

It is the First Sunday of Advent, and the new translation has finally been implemented! Today, for the first time, you are hearing the new Roman Missal being used at Mass. And how appropriate that Advent is the beginning of the Church's liturgical year, thereby offering an ideal time for such an important change, which has been four decades in the making.

Throughout this series, we have been examining texts from the Order of Mass – the prayers that are constant in every Mass. This week, we will instead examine a prayer from the Proper of the Mass. The Proper includes all the priest's prayers that change depending on the liturgical day or season (such as prayers from the "Proper of Saints").

The Opening Prayer of the Mass, traditionally called the Collect Prayer, is considered part of the Proper. It is referred to as the Collect because it "collects" all the people's prayers from the Introductory Rites of the Mass into a single prayer said by the priest. It also serves to express the character of the day or season.

The following example is the Collect from the previous translation for today's Mass, the First Sunday of Advent. This was used last November:

Previous Translation

Collect, First Sunday of Advent

All-powerful God, increase our strength of will for doing good that Christ may find an eager welcome at his coming and call us to his side in the kingdom of heaven.

And here is the revised Collect you heard today:

New Translation

Collect, First Sunday of Advent

Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God, the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ with righteous deeds at his coming, so that, gathered at his right hand, they may be worthy to possess the heavenly kingdom.

What is immediately striking about the new prayer is its eloquence. It is also longer than the old translation, because the translators who worked on the new Missal made every effort to preserve and convey the full content of the Latin (it is sometimes hard to imagine that the old and new translations were both derived from the exact same original Latin prayers!). The result is the much grander imagery of not simply waiting to welcome Christ, but actually running forth to meet Him "with righteous deeds."

This beautiful prayer is appropriate on several levels. First, it is a terrific way to begin the Advent Season, which is meant to be a penitential time during which we prepare ourselves for Christmas. We properly welcome the incarnate Messiah by repenting of our sins and seeking Him out, as did the shepherds and the Magi in the Gospels. Imitation of Christ is the goal of our entire lives as Christians, with the ultimate hope of joining the Saints in His "heavenly kingdom."

The "kingdom" also reveals an eschatological trajectory to the Church's calendar ("eschatology" is the theological focus on the "last things" – death, judgment, and eternity). At the end of the liturgical year is the Solemnity of Christ the King, which we celebrated just last Sunday. Christ is the alpha and the omega; the beginning and end.

This prayer sets a very good tone as we welcome the new English translation of the Mass and seek to draw closer to Our Lord through a renewed sense of reverence in the sacred liturgy. But such prayers also remind us that our priests will have to adapt to many more textual changes (and more difficult ones) than we laity in the pews. So, we must support and encourage our priests as they master the new Missal, that we may all enter into an ever more fruitful encounter with Jesus Christ.

This series was prepared by the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. For more Roman Missal resources, please visit <http://www.diocesefwsb.org/diocesan-offices/worship-office/roman-missal/>