



Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference

7 September 2011

De-Commissioning the Sacramentary

The 1ST Sunday of Advent is fast approaching – an important day in the ongoing life of the Church, Together with the rest of the English-speaking members of the Church throughout the world, we will be introducing the full edition of the newly translated 3rd edition of the Roman Missal.

Over the past few years, and particularly during this last year, we have in various ways been preparing for this event, by means of workshops, articles, Become one Body one Spirit in Christ etc. As has been pointed out by many, the publication of this new Missal is not a suggestion that the Sacramentary we have been using since the heady days which followed Vatican II is “bad” or to be rejected. Rather, this new Missal is part of an ongoing progression – we have studied, learnt, reflected, prayed the Missal, and have developed an improved text – language which is closer to the original, and at the same time more poetic.

Change can be threatening – but it does indicate that the Church is alive and open to that process rather than stagnant. This is not change for the sake of change, but rather an opportunity for renewal, revitalization and growth in appreciation of the Mass which is central to our lives.

This translation has not been undertaken lightly, but is the result of many years of work by a great many experts both academic and pastoral. The Liturgy is often described as the “official prayer of the Church gathered for worship” and as such we need to embrace this new translation – not just as new words, but as a real opportunity to renew our love for the Eucharist and our commitment to the Church.

It is fitting that, in all our parishes, we mark the occasion of the inauguration of the Missal ceremonially. This may be done in several ways. We offer the attached ceremony, as proposed by the Canadian Bishops' Conference. By “decommissioning” the Sacramentary which has been in use, and “commissioning” the new Missal, we emphasize the respect that should be shown in terms of Liturgical Books.

We propose that the De-commissioning the Sacramentary take place at the end of Mass on the Sunday preceding the 1st Sunday of Advent – i.e. the Feast of Christ the King (20th November), and the Blessing the New Missal at the beginning of Mass on the 1st Sunday of Advent (27th November)

In order to avoid confusion, may we suggest that in each community, people be asked to place all the old leaflets which have been in use for the past two years in a suitable container. These can then, in accordance with good conservation practice, be recycled.

De-commissioning the Sacramentary

1. *After the Prayer after Communion, the Priest pauses for a moment of silence and then reminds the faithful of the many events this book has been a part of in these or similar words:*

Dear Friends in Christ; today is the last (Sun)day in which this Sacramentary will be used. It has served our community well for many years: it has been present at baptisms, funerals, marriages, and above all at the countless Masses that have been prayed in this church. We pause to give thanks for all that God has done by means of the words contained in this book, and trust that God will continue to bless us in the years ahead.

All pray silently for a time. Then the Priest, with hands outstretched says:

Father of light and wisdom,

We praise you for your gifts:

for giving us the power to see

and the ability to write and read

and to use the arts of printing.

Bless + this book as it is taken out of service

and grant that all who have used it or heard its words

may grow in wisdom and grace

before you and all your people.

Father, we praise you through Jesus Christ your Son

in the love of your Holy Spirit,

now and always and for ever.

All: Amen.

2. *The Mass continues in the usual way with the Final Blessing. After the Dismissal, the Deacon, or in his absence the Priest closes the book for the final time, saying:*

For everything there is a season.

At the closing of this book,

we look to the opening of a new season of grace.

3. *The Sacramentary is carried out in the procession by a server or other appropriate minister.*

4. *The Sacramentary is then reserved in the sacristy, a parish library or museum, or disposed of in a dignified manner.*

Blessing the New Missal and the Advent Wreath (if latter is applicable)

1. *The new Roman Missal is carried in the Entrance Procession by a server.*

2. *After the reverence to the Altar, the Priest goes to the Advent Wreath or another convenient place, while the server stands nearby holding the new Roman Missal.*

3. *After the Opening chant, the Priest pauses for a moment of silence and then reminds the faithful of the importance of the Roman Missal in the life of the Church:*

Dear Friends in Christ: As we begin a new liturgical year on this First Sunday of Advent, we bless our Advent Wreath and at the same time receive and put into service a new book to be used at our altar. There has been a book called the Roman Missal since the year 1570, and many of the prayers contained in this book have been used since at least the fourth century. But while it is a book of tradition, it is a book for our future, for celebrations that will be held in our Church for years to come. It is right to pause for a moment to mark these beginnings: the beginning of this season and year of grace, and the first use of this book.

All pray silently for a time. Then the Priest, with hands outstretched says:

*Father of light and wisdom,
we praise you for sending your Son
to save us from our sins
and to be light in our darkness.
Bless us + as we gather in his name,
bless this wreath as a sign of his light among us, and
Bless + this Roman Missal;
grant that all who use it or hear its words
may grow in wisdom and grace
before you and all your people.
Father,
we praise you through Jesus Christ your Son
in the love of your Holy Spirit,
now and always and for ever.
All: Amen.*

4. *The first candle of the Advent Wreath is lighted.*

5. *The Priest then opens the book to the opening rites and the Mass continues in the usual way with the Sign of the Cross.*

