

Homily for 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time
Introduction of 3rd Edition of Roman Missal #1

In late February of this past year I found myself a patient at Roger Williams Hospital. It was an unexpected event. While there I had an interesting experience.

My room on the second floor was an ordinary hospital room. After occupying it for three days I was visited in the early morning by two interns. They came to let me know that the hospital was going to move me to another room. “Why?” I asked. They explained that they thought it would afford better treatment. “But I like this room,” was my response.

For ten minutes we battled back and forth. Finally they left more frustrated than when they arrived. Once alone, I began to muse on this event and asked myself why I reacted so negatively to what was a simple request. After a few moments of reflection the answer was obvious: I don’t like change. I simply didn’t want to change.

I think that almost all of us share that same distaste for change. We generally dislike it when there is a curve in the road and we are forced to change. It is just part of being human.

Beginning on November 27th, the First Sunday of Advent, we will begin a serious change at our celebration of Mass. This is probably

the most extensive change that has taken place since the Second Vatican Council. The change does not involve the structure of Mass. The Mass will remain the same, just the wording will be different. And I want to begin exploring it with you so that this change will not be so jarring.

In 1964 our liturgy began the journey away from Latin to English. There was a quick and immediate translation of the Roman missal from Latin to English. It was understood that this translation would be critically reexamined at a later date. And so it was.

In 1972 the Church issued a new edition of the Missal. The translation of this missal was done in such a way that it communicated the meaning of the words but not necessarily in a verbatim or direct way.

Pope John Paul II began the work of correcting this translation by issuing a Third Edition of the Roman Missal with directives that the translation should render as carefully as possible the Latin into English. It is this new translation that we will be introducing on November 27th.

Some might ask: what's wrong with what we are already using? It is important to understand that this new translation is not a question of better or worse. Rather, it is a question of being more exact, more inclusive and more reflective of the Scriptural basis of our prayers. It will also mean that every English-speaking place in our world will be using

the same translation. Presently the English speaking countries of the world use translations that are different.

Next weekend I will begin to explore the actual changes, what they mean and how they came about.

My purpose today was simply to give you a snapshot of the background to these changes. I believe that they will enhance our celebration of Mass and offer us an opportunity to explore more deeply our participation in the liturgy of our Church. I look forward to continuing this preparation next week when I will begin to explore the actual changes. I ask for your openness and willingness to see this as an opportunity to grow in our understanding and celebration of the Mass.