



NewsLetter

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The Liturgical Legacy of Pope Francis

In a 2019 plenary session of the then-Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Pope Francis noted: “We know that it is not enough to change the liturgical books to improve the quality of the liturgy. To do this alone would be a deception. For life to be truly a praise pleasing to God, it is indeed necessary to change the heart.” While a significant portion of his twelve-year pontificate was dedicated to the reform of the texts of the Sacred Liturgy and the norms governing it, the late Holy Father will be especially remembered for calling the Church to a change of heart. Beyond books, prominent aspects of his liturgical legacy include: the celebration of God’s mercy in the liturgy; the promotion of the Second Vatican Council through the authentic celebration of the reformed liturgical books; and the renewal of the relationship between the Holy See and the Conferences of Bishops.

Celebrating the Mercy of God in the Liturgy

Many of Pope Francis’ liturgical initiatives are related to the proclamation of God’s merciful love, arguably one of the most significant themes of his pontificate. On the second anniversary of his election, the Holy Father announced his intention to convoke an Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy for 2016. During that same year, he elevated the memorial of St. Mary Magdalene to the rank of feast, inviting the Church “to reflect in a more profound way... on the greatness of the Mystery of Divine Mercy.” With the Apostolic Letter *Misericordia et misera* issued at the Jubilee’s close, Pope Francis invited Christian communities to set aside a Sunday of the liturgical year to the word of God, “the great story of the marvels of God’s mercy” (no. 7), and he designated the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time for this purpose in 2019. In 2020, the pope inserted three new invocations into the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, one being “Mother of mercy,” and, while every saint is a witness to the mercy of God, his inscription on the General Roman Calendar of St. Faustina Kowalska in 2020 and of St. Teresa of Calcutta in 2024 stand out.

Vatican II, the Reform of the Liturgy, and its Authentic Celebration

Pope Francis also devoted himself to handing on the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and promoting the authentic celebration of the reformed liturgical books. In this regard, he raised up the witness of those who led the Church through the Council and helped her to assimilate its teaching, adding the celebrations of Sts. John XXIII, Paul VI, and John Paul II to the General Roman Calendar.

Through two Apostolic Letters *motu proprio*, *Spiritus Domini* (January 2021) and *Antiquum ministerium* (May 2021), the Holy Father also developed the teaching and practice of the instituted ministries in the life of the Church, carrying forward the

reform initiated by Paul VI in *Ministeria quaedam*. Through *Spiritus Domini*, the Holy Father allowed the ministries of lector and acolyte to be conferred upon any qualified layperson, underlining the sacrament of Baptism as the source of these ministries. Through *Antiquum ministerium*, he established the office of catechist as an instituted ministry, a possibility foreseen by Paul VI in *Ministeria quaedam*; in December 2021 he promulgated the Latin *editio typica* of the new Institution of Catechists.

Vatican II's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy called for the reform of the Divine Office (cf. chapter IV), and the first and second typical editions of the *Liturgia Horarum* were promulgated in 1971 and 1985, respectively. Throughout the reform process, it had always been planned to incorporate psalm-prayers, a two-year cycle for the Office of Readings, and additional spiritual reading material. In late 2024 that vision became a reality, when the pope approved the promulgation of the *Supplementum* to the *Liturgia Horarum*, formally completing the reform of the Divine Office as mandated by the Council. Two other significant reforms included the addition of the name of St. Joseph to Eucharistic Prayers II, III, and IV in 2013, and the modification in 2016 of the rubrics for the washing of the feet at the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper.

The celebration of the Sacred Liturgy was addressed by the Holy Father in two Apostolic Letters, *Traditionis custodes* (2021) and *Desiderio desideravi* (2022). In the former, Pope Francis modified the conditions under which the Sacred Liturgy may be celebrated according to the liturgical books in use prior to the reforms following the Second Vatican Council, and, in an accompanying letter to bishops, expressed his intent not only to unify the liturgical books of the Roman Rite but also to foster faithful and dignified celebrations. A year later, the Holy Father addressed the entire Church in *Desiderio desideravi*, inviting her "to rediscover, to safeguard, and to live the truth and power of the Christian celebration" (no. 16).

The Relationship of the Roman Curia and the Conferences of Bishops

Pope Francis frequently reminded the Church that she lives and works by listening and dialogue, and, through the Apostolic Letter *motu proprio Magnum principium* (2017), he sought to establish "a vigilant and creative collaboration full of reciprocal trust between the Episcopal Conferences and [the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments]." As the Holy Father noted at the same plenary session cited above, "[T]he Holy See does not replace the bishops, but works with them to serve, in the richness of the various languages and cultures, the prayerful vocation of the Church in the world." This spirit animated his reform of the Roman Curia in 2022 through the Apostolic Constitution *Prædicate Evangelium*.

Liturgical Calendar, Days of Prayer, and Special Observances

In addition to those saints noted above, the pope inscribed in the General Roman Calendar: Mary, Mother of the Church (2018); Our Lady of Loreto (2019); and Sts. Gregory of Narek, John De Avila, and Hildegard of Bingen (2021). He also added Mary of Bethany and Lazarus to the memorial of St. Martha in 2021, since recent scholarship had resolved doubts about Mary's identity as Martha's sister. For the U.S. proper calendar, he confirmed the inscriptions of St. Marianne Cope and Bl. Francis Xavier Seelos (2013 and 2014, respectively).

Several days of prayer were also established. Following the publication of the encyclical *Laudato si'* in 2015, Francis instituted the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, observed by the Orthodox Churches since 1989. The World Day of the Poor (2017) and World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly (2021) followed. In addition to the Jubilee Year of Mercy, Pope Francis celebrated the following special years: the Year of Faith (2012-2013, begun by his predecessor Pope Benedict XVI); the Year of St. Joseph (2020-2021), inserting seven new invocations in the Litany of Saint Joseph; and the current Ordinary Jubilee Year (2025).

Approval of Liturgical Books for the United States

Following the implementation of the *Roman Missal, Third Edition*, the International Commission on English in the Liturgy and the USCCB turned to the translation of various rites of the Roman Pontifical and Ritual. After approval by the USCCB, the following texts were confirmed by the Holy See during the pontificate of Pope Francis: *The Order of Confirmation* (2015); *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* (2015); *Exorcisms and Related Supplications* (2016); *The Order of the Dedication of a Church and an Altar* (2017); *The Order of Blessing the Oil of Catechumens and of the Sick and of Consecrating the Chrism* (2018); *The Order of Baptism of Children*

(2019); *Ordination of a Bishop, of Priests, and of Deacons* (2021); *The Order of Penance* (2022); *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery outside Mass* (2024); *The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults* (2024); *The Order of Religious Profession* (2024); and *The Order of the Anointing of the Sick and of their Pastoral Care* (2024). Biblical texts for use in the liturgy and portions of the *Liturgy of the Hours, Second Edition* were also approved: *The Abbey Psalms and Canticles* (2018); *The Divine Office Hymnal* (2020); and the Bible for liturgical use (2025).

A number of Spanish-language liturgical books were also confirmed: the *Misal Romano*, including the *Rito para la bendición de los óleos y la consagración del Crisma* (2016); the *Ritual de la Iniciación cristiana de adultos* (2024); and the *Ritual de la Unción de los enfermos y de su atención pastoral* (2024).

The service of Pope Francis in the Chair of Peter continues to nourish the Church in faith and communion. While his ordering and guidance of the Sacred Liturgy has ceased, it remains for believers to assimilate what he carried out and above all to surrender to that change of heart which he so ardently desired. May his soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

DDWDS Confirms Liturgical Bible in English for the United States

The Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has confirmed a new English translation of the Old and New Testaments for liturgical use in the dioceses of the United States, in a decree dated April 13, 2025 (Prot. n. 41/25). A project first announced by the USCCB in 2012, the liturgical Bible includes three elements: the *New American Bible* Old Testament approved by the USCCB Administrative Committee in September 2010; *The Abbey Psalms and Canticles* confirmed by the then-Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments on May 3, 2018; and the *New American Bible* New Testament, approved by the Administrative Committee in September 2024.

Approved by the USCCB at its November 2024 plenary meeting, the liturgical Bible will be used in the *Liturgy of the Hours, Second Edition* and a new edition of the *Lectionary for Mass* while also being incorporated into other rituals. The offices of the USCCB will carry out their usual editorial review processes before recommending a timetable for implementation to Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, USCCB President.

An unofficial English translation of the decree of confirmation is printed for the benefit of our readers:

DICASTERY FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS

Prot. n. 41/25

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

At the request of His Excellency the Most Reverend Timothy P. Broglio, Archbishop Military Ordinary and President of the Conference of Bishops of the United States of America, in a letter dated December 20, 2024, and by virtue of the faculty granted to this Dicastery by the Supreme Pontiff FRANCIS, we gladly confirm the text of the English translation of the Holy Bible of the Old and New Testaments for liturgical use, approved on November 13, 2024 by the same Conference of Bishops according to the norm of law, as found in the attached copy.

In printed editions, this decree must be printed in its entirety. Moreover, two copies of the printed text should be forwarded to this Dicastery.

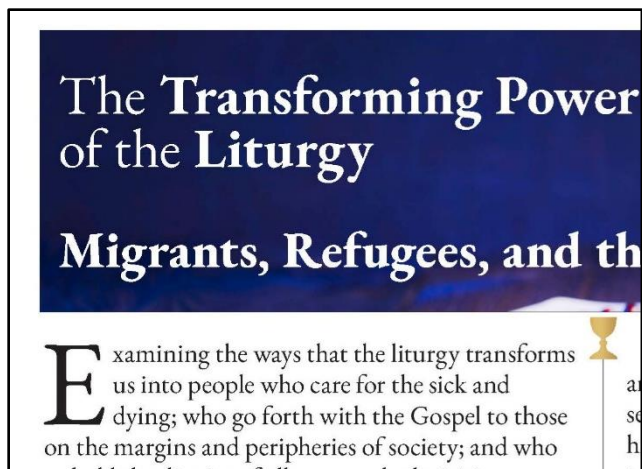
All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

From the offices of the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, April 13, 2025, Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord.

Arthur Card. Roche
Prefect

✠ Vittorio Francesco Viola, OFM
Archbishop-Secretary

“The Transforming Power of the Liturgy” Series Now Online, plus Bulletin Inserts



From February to November 2023, the *Newsletter* presented “The Transforming Power of the Liturgy,” a series of catechetical articles on the power of devoted participation in the liturgy, a participation which transforms the Christian faithful and enables them to transform the world.

In particular, these articles highlight the liturgy’s power to make us people who care for:

- migrants, refugees, and the poor;
- mission;
- our common home;
- all races and ethnicities;
- the sick and dying; and
- vocations.


Individual articles from the series have been incorporated throughout the USCCB website, and bulletin inserts for the series are available in English and Spanish at [USCCB.org/resources/transforming-power-liturgy](https://www.usccb.org/resources/transforming-power-liturgy). These resources may be reproduced free of charge in printed form, for non-commercial purposes, and in publications not for sale.

2027 Liturgical Calendar Posted to USCCB Website

The 2027 edition of the *Liturgical Calendar for the Dioceses of the United States of America* has been posted online by the Secretariat of Divine Worship for free PDF download. The latest edition is available, together with the 2025 and 2026 editions, at [USCCB.org/committees/divine-worship/liturgical-calendar](https://www.usccb.org/committees/divine-worship/liturgical-calendar). The calendar lists each day’s celebration, rank, liturgical color, Lectionary citations, and Psalter cycle. Those who wish to receive a printed copy in 8½ × 11” paperback format for \$20 per copy may contact the Secretariat through the USCCB website or the mailing address at the front of the *Newsletter*.

NOW AVAILABLE


An essential reference for all those involved in preparing the liturgy.



Ten Years of the Newsletter 2011-2020
COMMITTEE ON DIVINE WORSHIP

This third compendium of the Committee on Divine Worship’s *Newsletter* is a resource and research tool for liturgists, scholars, priests, and pastoral leaders on the liturgical developments for the Catholic Church in the United States of America from 2011 through 2020. As historical documents, the newsletters are provided as originally published.

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