



Newsletter

Committee on Divine Worship

Volume LXII
March 2026

DDWDS Promulgates Latin Third Edition of *Martyrologium Romanum*

On January 6, 2026, the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments promulgated the Latin third typical edition of the *Martyrologium Romanum* (Prot. n. 10/26), expanding the entries of saints and blessed since its last edition in 2004 and making other adjustments for greater ease of liturgical use.

The contents of the third edition were originally approved by Pope Francis in December 2024, but it was subsequently decided also to add the saints and blessed proclaimed during the Jubilee Year 2025, resulting in the final book being approved for promulgation by Pope Leo XIV last November. On All Saints Day, the Holy Father recalled,

The lives of the saints teach us that it is possible to live passionately amidst the complexity of the present, without neglecting the apostolic mandate to ‘shine like stars in the world’ (Phil 2:15). [...] Life shines brightly... when we discover within ourselves the truth that we are called by God, have a vocation, have a mission, that our lives serve something greater than ourselves.

Each day’s order of entries has been reorganized slightly from the first and second editions: saints in the General Roman Calendar are given first, followed by saints in chronological order, and ending with blessed in chronological order. The three categories are separated by red lines, facilitating easier reference; while the first two categories are always proclaimed, only blessed from the final category who have been inscribed on particular calendars at the national, diocesan, or parish levels are proclaimed, omitting the others. Finally, the end of every entry in the *Martyrologium* now includes the year or century of the saint or blessed’s death.

Aside from the entries of new saints and blessed from 2004 to 2025, there is included a selection of saints celebrated in common with other Christian communities (for example,

the 21 Coptic Orthodox saints martyred in Libya in 2015, whom Pope Francis ordered added to the Martyrology in May 2023). For feasts of Christ, Mary, the apostles, and other saints associated with revelation history, Old and New Testament abbreviations—“OT” or “NT”—are added to better indicate the related Scriptural references. Entries to devotional feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary now record the date on which each title was recognized by the Popes.

While other vernacular language editions of the post-conciliar *Martyrologium Romanum* have been printed since the first edition in 2001—including in Spanish, approved for Spain and used throughout the Spanish-speaking world—a similar English *Roman Martyrology* has never appeared in print nor been used in the liturgy. As reported in the April 2023 *Newsletter*, the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) completed a first draft translation (“Green Book”) of the second edition *Martyrology* in 2022, and worked diligently to prepare the final draft (“Gray Book”) before they were notified of a pending third edition. ICEL will now work to rearrange the book as required and translate the new entries and other elements of the third edition. The canonical vote of the USCCB and confirmation by the Holy See must also take place before the *Roman Martyrology, Third Edition* can be implemented in the United States.

“Here is the endurance of the holy ones who keep God’s commandments and their faith in Jesus” (Rev 14:12). These words begin the decree of promulgation for the third *Martyrologium Romanum*. It not only summarizes the contents of the rich volume of the Church’s cloud of witnesses, it also testifies to the patience both editors and faithful have had to practice. Once published and implemented, the *Roman Martyrology* will enrich the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours and other occasions. *All holy men and women, Saints of God, pray for us!*

March 2026 Meeting of the Subcommittee on Divine Worship in Spanish

The Subcommittee on Divine Worship in Spanish met at the Holy Name Passionist Retreat Center in Houston, Texas on March 24, 2026. This was the first meeting attended by Auxiliary Bishop Pedro Bismarck Chau of Newark, appointed as a new member in November 2025 by Bishop Mario A. Avilés, CO, Subcommittee Chairman, to replace Monterey Bishop Ramón Bejarano, who ended his term. Work centered on ongoing projects and the future U.S. Spanish editions of the *Leccionario* and *Ritual de la Penitencia*.

At its March 2025 meeting, the Subcommittee approved plans for two liturgical formation projects: a compendium on Hispanic/Latino popular piety, and a more fruitful implementation of *Cantemos al Señor: La música en el culto divino* among Spanish-speaking pastoral musicians. The Secretariat reported on its progress in both projects and received feedback from members and consultants on the next steps.

As work continues on the preparation of the *Ritual de la Penitencia*, the Subcommittee agreed on a timetable for the next section of prayer texts to be reviewed and approved, discussed U.S. ritual and textual adaptations to the rite, and decided to arrange the book to match the Latin typical edition, which is already used in the English *Order of Penance*.

Finally, members and consultants thoroughly reviewed a number of proposed Responsorial Psalm refrains for the *Leccionario*, based on the *Biblia de la Iglesia en América*. Refrains for the weekdays of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter were approved, as well as for volume IV (Ritual Masses, Masses for Various Needs, Votive Masses, Masses for the Dead). Additional refrains will be presented for the Subcommittee's approval at future meetings.

The next in-person meeting of the Subcommittee is scheduled for September 9-10, 2026 in Washington, DC.

Understanding the Order of the Anointing of the Sick and of their Pastoral Care: Commendation of the Dying and Prayers after Death

With the publication of the revised edition of the *Order of the Anointing of the Sick and of their Pastoral Care* (ASPC), the *Newsletter* continues a series exploring this ritual, in particular, what is new and which aspects are in need of renewal in pastoral practice over the last forty years. This article explores Chapter VI, the Order of the Commendation of the Dying, and Appendix III, Prayers after Death.

While Viaticum is “the last sacrament of the Christian” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1524), the Church’s ministry to the dying does not cease with its administration. Following that celebration, ministers—whether clergy or laity—together with the dying carry out a liturgy of commendation using elements from Chapter VI, the Order of the Commendation of the Dying.

Ministers and Recipients of the Order of Commendation

In liturgical celebration and catechesis, it is important to consider the diversity of ministers and recipients. While the rubrics highlight that these prayers are led by clergy and, in their absence, laypersons (cf. ASPC, no. 142), the entire community and the dying person are also celebrants of the rite. This fact is underlined by a fruitful ambiguity in the chapter’s title in Latin and English. Are dying persons

objects of the commendation or are they its agents (i.e., “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit”)? The rubrics underline both meanings: Christians are directed to pray “with and for” the dying (no. 138; cf. nos. 139-142); thus, liturgical catechesis should do so as well. The dying are members of the celebrating Church who are equal in dignity to those who are healthy. They are not merely recipients of the Church’s care but active members of Christ’s Mystical Body.

The same is true regarding the recipients of the rite. The Order notes that, if the dying person is still conscious, these prayers assist the dying to overcome the anxiety of death by imitating Christ and accepting anxiety in hope. Even if the dying person is no longer conscious, the Commendation of the Dying also gives consolation to those gathered by expressing the paschal meaning of Christian death.

An Early Roman Order of Commendation

In the history of the Roman Catholic Church, these rites have gone by different titles in different manuscript traditions: “dutiful service for the dead,” “the order for one held by death,” “the departure or migration of the soul,” and “the commendation of the soul.” An early set of rubrics for this ceremony are found in the *Ordo Romanus* 49, which likely represents Roman practice of the 8th century. Notably, this *ordo* includes under a single heading three liturgical acts that are today frequently considered distinct—the celebration of Viaticum, the commendation of the dying, and the funeral rites of the vigil, funeral, and burial—each carefully structured with its own prayers, psalms, and ritual transitions.

Before and at the moment of death, there are three principal elements. First, the dying person receives “communion from the holy sacrifice”—even if the dying person has already received communion that day. The rubric alludes to the Johannine theology of the Eucharist as the pledge of resurrection (cf. John 6:54), stating that communion “will be for him a defender and helper in the resurrection of the just—for it is this that will raise him up.” The second element is the proclamation of the Passion, which later rites indicate as that of John. In this way, the dying person is nourished both by the table of the Eucharist and the table of the Word of God. The third element is the recitation of the familiar response and verse (“Saints of God...”) / “May Christ, who called you...”), with Psalm 114 (“When Israel came forth from Egypt”), an antiphon (“May choirs of angels”), and a concluding oration (cf. no. 151). The response, verse, and antiphon are attested as early as the 5th or 6th centuries, all rooted in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus from the Gospel of Luke (16:19-31, esp. v. 22). Following death, the body is washed and placed in a casket, with antiphons and psalms accompanying the various processions and vigils. Strikingly, only one of the penitential psalms is used (Psalm 51), while the others express themes of trust, intercession, and passage rather than contrition or judgment—a paschal character shared by the contemporary rite, which likewise provides no traditional penitential psalms among its readings.

This brief historical sketch is helpful for clergy and pastoral ministers as they carry out the Church’s ministry to the dying. First, it underlines the connection of this Order to the administration of Viaticum. Second, it assists in the selection of Scripture readings provided at no. 144 and

points to the importance of making use of the readings from the Narrative of the Lord’s Passion provided in Chapter VII, nos. 224-229—a new addition not found in the 1983 edition.

Individual Elements of the Order of Commendation

The Order of Commendation provides four elements for use in communal prayer: brief formulas, biblical readings, the Litany of the Saints, and prayers. The brief formulas or “aspiratory prayers” (cf. no. 140) are intended to be repeated several times in a soft voice. There are three main categories: those in the first-person plural, those in the first-person singular, and those drawn from the words of Christ.

The revised edition provides all the proper biblical readings from the Latin typical edition, in addition to a rubric that directs to the texts of Chapter VII. As noted above, Psalm 114 is particularly appropriate in light of its paschal themes and historical use. Psalm 91 with its reference to the angel anticipates the themes of the prayer immediately after death: “Hasten to meet him (her), Angels of the Lord!” None of the traditional penitential psalms are provided, and the entire body of material is chiefly paschal in character, inserting the individual’s death into the mystery of Christ’s dying and rising.

The Litany of the Saints may also be sung or recited, and the Order provides a form drawn from the opening invocations of the Paschal Vigil litany, though other versions may be used.

The Order also provides several prayers of commendation:

- “Go forth, Christian soul” (no. 146) is a condensed version of a prayer of commendation transmitted by the Gellone Sacramentary (ca. 8th c.) and other early witnesses. The original prayer bid the Christian to go forth not only in the name of the Trinity but also in the name of the choirs of angels and of various scriptural and ecclesiastical groups (all humanity, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, bishops, and others). This element is now expressed at the prayer’s end, as a petition to dwell with Mary, Joseph, and all the angels and saints.
- “I commend you” (no. 147) is a condensed version of Letter 171 of St. Peter Damian, to a sick man at the point of death. The prayer stands out for its use of the first-person singular and alludes to two passages from Genesis (2:7 and 3:19).

- “Receive, O Lord, your servant” (no. 148) is closely associated with “Go forth, Christian soul” in the manuscript tradition (ca. 8th c.), and sometimes serves as its conclusion. This litanic prayer consists of twelve invocations with ten biblical paradigms of deliverance (Noah, Abraham, Job, etc.). Throughout the prayer’s history, Abel, Enoch and Elijah, Lot, the people of Israel, Isaac, Jacob, Jonah, and St. Thecla were also included.
- “We commend to you” (no. 149) in its first part is a reworking of a prayer for a deceased woman appended to the rule of St. Caesarius of Arles for holy virgins (ca. 6th c.). The theological ground of the petition in both instances is the Incarnation of Christ: “receive him (her)... for whom... you came down to earth.”
- The Marian antiphon “Hail, Holy Queen” (no. 150) is also included.
- “To you, O Lord” (no. 151) in its earliest attested form is found in the Sacramentary of Padua (ca. 7th c.) and concludes the response and verse that are recited immediately after death. This entire unit is also used at the *Order of Christian Funerals* as the Song of Farewell and the Prayer of Commendation (cf. nos. 174/175B, 201/202B, 230/231B).

Taken together, these prayers express the twofold character of the Order noted at the outset. The dying person is not

merely the object of the Church’s care but an active participant: praying the brief formulas, joining the litany, and commending his or her own spirit to the Father. The community, in turn, prays with and for the dying. This reciprocity should shape the way ministers prepare for and celebrate the Order.

Prayers after Death

Death does not end the Church’s prayerful accompaniment of her members. The Introduction of the ASPC notes that even a priest who arrives after death has occurred should beseech God for the deceased “so that God may absolve them from their sins and mercifully admit them into his Kingdom” (no. 15). In such cases, both the 1983 and the revised editions provide “Prayers after Death,” a rite also contained in the *Order of Christian Funerals* (OCF, nos. 101-108). The rubrics, ritual structure, and individual elements of the new Appendix III are nearly identical to the 1983 edition, with the exception of the concluding prayers at no. 314. These prayers have been retranslated after the pattern of the *Roman Missal* and according to the principles of *Liturgiam authenticam*, and they also appear in other parts of the OCF, including the Gathering in the Presence of the Body, the Funeral Liturgy within and outside Mass, and the Rite of Committal, among others. Reprints of the OCF will include these revised translations.

© 2026 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC. All rights reserved.

Members

Most Rev. Michael G. Woost, *Chairman*
 Most Rev. Samuel J. Aquila
 Most Rev. Mario A. Avilés, CO

Most Rev. Keith J. Chylinski
 Most Rev. Christopher J. Coyne
 Most Rev. John T. Folda

Most Rev. Steven J. Lopes
 Most Rev. Douglas J. Lucia
 Most Rev. Mark J. Seitz

Consultants

Linda M. Budney
 Christopher J. Carstens
 Jennifer Donelson-Nowicka

Maria Perez-Rudisill
 Right Rev. Gregory J. Polan, OSB
 Rev. Ryan T. Ruiz

James M. Starke
 Rita A. Thiron

Secretariat

Rev. Dustin P. Dought, *Executive Director*
 Ciara M. Gallagher
 Matthew M. Godbey

Roxana F. Hall
 Rev. David R. Price
 David K. Ringwald



United States
 Conference of
 Catholic Bishops

Committee on
 Divine Worship

3211 Fourth Street, NE, Washington, DC 20017
 Web: USCCB.org/committees/divine-worship
 Phone: (202) 541-3060