

# Year of the Eucharist

October 2004 to October 2005

---

Declared by Pope John Paul II on  
the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ 2004

## It Wasn't Always Like This

In the very beginnings of the life of the church, the prayers of the Mass were not written down as they are today. Although the celebration of the Liturgy included prayers, readings from the Scriptures, and the prayer of thanksgiving which we now call the "Eucharistic Prayer," in the early years of the church, the Liturgy was less structured. The celebrant spontaneously wound the prayers and Scripture readings around a particular theme. Even when the prayers of the Mass were written down, they weren't written in one book as they are today, and they varied from region to region. It wasn't until the eighth century that all the prayers of the Mass were written in one book which was used in Gaul and in England. From such beginnings, today we have the third edition of liturgical books since 1970!

As we reflect on the celebration of the Mass during this Year of the Eucharist, it's important to remember that change is a part of our tradition. Many people find change unsettling, especially where expressions of their faith are concerned. In current times, when some things at Mass are changing, we hear questions such as, "What was wrong with the way we used to do it?" and "Just when we began to know what to expect, 'they' changed things." In matters of faith, whether it be quiet, private prayer, or participation in the public prayer of the church, perhaps it's more helpful to think in terms of *development* rather than change.

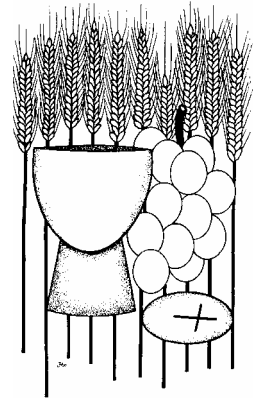
A *developing* tradition is a *living* tradition. If we take a moment to look around us, we can't help but see that whatever is alive changes! That's especially obvious at this time of year when leaves are changing colors and falling from trees. In the spring there will be new buds and fresh leaves. New life! Renewal is meant to bring new life.

Vatican Council II opened in 1962, and the first document to come from the Council was the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. Some of us have seen many changes since then. During this Year of the Eucharist, our main thrust is renewed reverence and appreciation for the Eucharist, as well as the renewal of our hearts and minds through our participation in the Eucharist. The celebration of the Eucharist is intricately connected to our daily lives... or at least it should be. **We want to focus on doing Liturgy better so that we can do life better.** That is the point.

"We will never fully appreciate the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist until we see the intimate connection that exists between the mystery of the Holy Eucharist and the mystery of the Church, the Body of Christ."  
*Thomas Merton*

#2B in a Series of Articles on the  
Liturgy during  
**The Year of the Eucharist**

The Office of Rites and Sacraments  
Catholic Diocese of Memphis  
in Tennessee



**The Roman Missal or *Missale Romanum*** is the book that contains all the texts for the celebration of Mass. The renewal of the Liturgy called for by the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy necessitated the writing of new liturgical books and guidelines for celebrating the Liturgy. In 1970 the New Roman Missal was issued in Latin. In 1975 the second edition was issued in Latin, and in 2002, the third edition was issued in Latin. We are still awaiting the English translation.

**The General Instruction on the Roman Missal or, *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*** is the introduction to the Roman Missal. Whereas the Roman Missal contains the prayers, chants, gestures, etc. for appropriate days and seasons, the General Instruction specifies *how* Mass is to be done, and the manner and attitude of celebration by all gathered. Although we do not yet have an approved English edition of the third edition of the Roman Missal, we do have the approved edition of the General Instruction which refers to the Roman Missal.