

Tridentine Community News

August 3, 2025 – Eighth Sunday After Pentecost

The Divine Office – Part 2

Reforms of the Traditional Breviary

Pope Benedict XVI's Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum* specified that those following the Extraordinary Form must use the books in force in 1962. For the Breviary, this means the 1961 edition, which was the result of several iterations of modifications during the 20th century.

The first such change to the Breviary occurred when Pope Pius X in his letter *Divino Afflātu* ordered a new Psalter and modified rubrics to be used in the Breviary as of January 1, 1913.

Perhaps because of the difficulties in typesetting in the pre-computer era, something interesting happened in the case of the *Liber Usualis*, the book used by cantors to chant the Propers of Mass and the Divine Office. Instead of revising the text of the *Liber*, the publishers decided to put the new Psalm texts in an appendix, leaving the old Psalter in the main body of the *Liber*. This makes it easy for a curious reader to compare the “Before and After” Latin texts. In a cursory perusal of the revisions, the changes to the text do not significantly affect the meaning of the Psalms. The changes are less noticeable to the casual reader than the difference in flow and feel of the Douay-Rheims translation of the Bible versus the New American Bible, for example.

In 1955 Pope Pius XII simplified the rubrics of the Breviary. In 1960 Pope John XXIII modified the rubrics again and also changed the structure of Feasts in the calendar. The details of these reforms are beyond the scope of this article, but they do demonstrate that liturgical change was arguably more extensive and frequent with regards to the Breviary than with regards to the Roman Missal. For those who are interested, a detailed study of the various reforms was published as a series of articles at www.newliturgicalmovement.org under the title, *Compendium of the Reforms of the Roman Breviary 1568-1961*.

For this reason, you will see currently-in-print guidebooks to the Extraordinary Form Breviary making reference to the “New [1961] Breviary”, not to be confused with the Ordinary Form Liturgy of the Hours.

Language

Until 1964, it was only permissible to pray the 1961 Breviary in Latin. In April of that year, the U.S. Bishops, with subsequent approval by Rome, permitted the use of two English translations of the Divine Office, the first an English-only edition published by Benzinger Brothers, and the second a Latin-English edition published by the Liturgical Press of Collegeville, Minnesota.

Because *Summorum Pontificum* specified that we are to use the 1962, and not 1964, liturgical books, it is questionable whether an English translation approved in 1964 should be used for *prayer* of the Office. Consider that the 1961, and not 1964, edition of the *Collēctio Rītuū* subset of the *Rituāle Romānum* book of

Blessings and Sacraments is the norm for use in the Extraordinary Form. As an aid to understanding the text, however, there is no question that these translations are of value.

The Ordinary Form Liturgy of the Hours may be prayed in either Latin or the vernacular.

Books – Extraordinary Form

A Latin-only two-volume edition of the *Breviārium Romānum* is available at www.breviariumromanum.com.

A one-volume Latin-only edition that excludes Matins is known as the *Diurnāle Romānum*. This compact edition is popular because of its portability. A republished edition is available at: <https://fraternitypublications.com/product/diurnale-romanum-w-supplement/>

A three volume Latin-English edition is available (but temporarily out of stock) from missal publisher Baronius Press (<https://www.baronius.com/roman-breviary.html>). This is an updated, proofread, and corrected version of the Collegeville edition mentioned above. Unfortunately, it uses rather modern English, with uncapitalized pronouns referring to the Persons of the Blessed Trinity. This is not in keeping with the vernacular used in most missals for the Extraordinary Form, though it is technically a translation authorized to be prayed.

Angelus Press offers a book called *Divine Office* (<https://angeluspress.org/products/divine-office>) which is advertised as a parallel Latin-English text. However, it does not contain all of the hours for every day.

The *Monastic Diurnal* from Britain's St. Michael's Abbey Press (<https://www.theabbeyshop.com/product/the-monastic-diurnal-or-the-day-hours-of-the-monastic-breviary-8th-edition>) is a Latin-English presentation of the Benedictine Divine Office. Its advantage is that it is the only in-print 1961 Breviary to use hieratic English in the translations, making it concordant with the style of prayer found in most English Tridentine hand missals. Its disadvantage is that it is a modified version of the standard Office.

The Monastère Saint-Benoit will soon be releasing the last (1963) edition of the traditional *Breviārium Monāsticum*, the complete Monastic Divine Office in Latin. More information is at: <https://www.monasterebrignoles.org/editionspxinterspinas.html>

Hopefully Rome will eventually clarify if it is permissible to pray the Monastic version of the Office for public recitation or chanting, or to satisfy one's clerical obligations. Laymen may use any edition for private prayer, as they are under no obligations.

Tridentine Masses This Coming Week

Tue. 08/05 7:00 PM: Low Mass at *St. Benedict/Holy Name of Mary, Windsor* (Dedication of St. Mary Major)

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