

Cum Nostra Hac Aetate

On the Simplification of the Rubrics
(For the Roman Breviary and Missal)
March 23, 1955

Compiler's Note

The work of a general reform of the Roman calendar—affecting both the missal and breviary— was of such a involved nature, Pope Pius XII initially began with decreeing some simplifications.

This decree began the process of restoring the primacy of the Temporal Cycle over the Sanctoral, the simplification of the classification system, and the reduction of octaves, vigils, commemorations, and votive Masses.

Pius XII's general reform would culminate with the posthumous publication of the comprehensive New Code of Rubrics promulgated in 1960.

General Decree

The rubrics reduced to a simpler form.

Whereas priests today especially those who have the care of souls, are burdened with various new apostolic duties, so that they can scarcely recite the divine Office with the tranquility of mind which it requires, some Ordinaries have earnestly petitioned the Holy See that some provision be graciously made to meet this difficulty, and at least the copious apparatus of the Rubrics be reduced to a simpler form.

His Holiness Pius XII in his pastoral care and solicitude entrusted the examination of this matter to a special Commission of learned men who are charged with the restoration of the liturgy in general.

This Commission, after a careful study of the entire subject, decided that the present Rubrics should be reduced to more convenient regulations in such a way, however, that they could be put into practice, keeping in the meantime, the liturgical books as they are, until further provision is made.

When all this was referred to His Holiness by His Eminence the Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, His Holiness deigned to approve the following arrangement of the Rubrics and ordered that it be published, with the understanding that the provisions of this decree are to go into effect on the first of January, 1956.

In the meantime, the pontifical publishers of liturgical books are to see to it that no change whatever is made in arranging whatever new editions may be made of the Roman Breviary and Missal.

All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at Rome from the office of the Sacred Congregation of Rites,
23 March 1955

G. Cardinal Cicognani, Prefect

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✕ A. Carinici, Archbish. Secluc., Secretary

The Rubrics Reduced to a Simpler Form

Title I: General Norms

1. The ordinances which follow concern the Roman Rite. Whatever is not mentioned here is unchanged.

2. The term calendar applies both to the calendar in use in the universal church and to particular calendars.

3. The rules which follow are to be observed in both the private and public recitation of the Divine Office, unless there is express provision to the contrary.

4. All particular indulgences and customs, even those worthy of special mention, if contrary to these ordinances, are to be considered as expressly revoked.

Title II: Changes in the calendar

1. The grade and rite of semi-double is suppressed.

2. The liturgical days which are now marked in the calendar as semi-double rite are celebrated in the simple rite except the Vigil of Pentecost which is raised to the double rite.

a) Sundays

3. The Sundays of Advent and Lent and those that follow up to Low Sunday, and also Pentecost Sunday, are celebrated as doubles of the first class, and outrank all feasts both in occurrence and concurrence.

4. When feasts of the first class occur on the second, third or fourth Sunday of Advent, Masses of the feast are permitted except the conventual Mass.

5. Sundays which have hitherto been celebrated in the semi-double rite, are raised to the double rite but in the meantime the antiphons are not recited in the double form.

6. A Sunday Office and Mass which is impeded is neither anticipated or resumed.

7. If on Sundays *per annum* there occur a feast or title or any mystery of our Lord, the feast itself takes the place of the Sunday, and the latter is merely commemorated.

b) Vigils

8. The privileged vigils are: the Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord and the Vigil of Pentecost.

9. The common vigils are: the Vigil of the Ascension of Our Lord, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint John the Baptist, Saints Peter and Paul, Saint Lawrence.

All other vigils, including those marked in particular calendars, are suppressed.

10. Common Vigils, if they occur on a Sunday, are not anticipated but omitted.

c) Octaves

11. Only the octaves of Easter, Christmas and Pentecost are celebrated; all others occurring either in the universal or in particular calendars are suppressed.

12. The days with the Easter and Pentecost octaves are raised to the double rite, are preferred to all feasts, do not admit of commemorations.

13. The days of the octave of Christmas, although they are of the double rite, are celebrated as at present.

14. On the days from the 2nd to the 5th of January, unless some feast occur, the Office is of the current feria in the simple rite. In the

Office, the antiphons and psalms at all the Hours and the verse of the nocturn are of the current day of the week as in the psalter; the rest as on the first of January excepting the lessons, which are said from the current Scripture with their responses, and the *Te Deum* is said. The conclusion of the hymns and the verse in the short responsory at Prime are said as on Christmas. The Mass is the same as that of the 1st of January, without the *Credo* and without the special *Communicantes*.

Low votive Masses and low Masses *cotidianae defunctorum* are forbidden.

15. The days from the 7th to the 12th of January, since the octave of Epiphany is suppressed, become *feriae per annum* (in the simple rite). In the Office, the antiphons and psalms at all the Hours and the verse of the nocturn are from the current day of the week as in the psalter; the rest as on the Feast of the Epiphany except the lessons, which are said from the current Scripture with their responses, and the *Te Deum* is said. The conclusion of the hymns and the versicle at Prime are from the Epiphany. The Mass is the same as that of the Epiphany, without the *Credo* and without the special *Communicantes*.

Low votive Masses and low Masses *cotidianae defunctorum* are forbidden.

16. On the 13th of January, the commemoration of the baptism of Our Lord is celebrated, in the major double rite. The Office and Mass are said as at present on the Octave of the Epiphany.

But if the Commemoration of the Baptism of Our Lord occurs on Sunday, the Office and Mass are those of the Feast of the Holy

Family without any commemoration. On the preceding Saturday is placed the beginning of the first Epistle to the Corinthians.

17. The days from the Ascension of Our Lord to the Vigil of Pentecost exclusive are *feriae tempore paschali* (in the simple rite). In the Office, the antiphons and psalms at all the Hours and the verse of the nocturn are said from the current day of the week as in the psalter; the rest as on the Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord, except the lessons, which are said from the current Scripture with their responses. The conclusion of the hymns and the verse at Prime are said from the feast of the Ascension; the Mass from the same feast, without the *Credo* and without the special *Communicantes*.

Low votive Masses and low Masses *cotidianae defunctorum* are forbidden.

On the vigil of Pentecost nothing is to be changed.

18. The days of the suppressed octaves of Corpus Christi and the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus become *feriae per annum*.

19. On the Sundays formerly within these octaves of the Ascension, Corpus Christi and the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Office is said as at present.

d) Feasts of the Saints

20. The feasts of the saints which heretofore have been celebrated in the semidouble rite are considered as simple feasts.

21. The feasts of the saints which heretofore have been celebrated in the simple rite are reduced to a commemoration, without any historical lesson.

22. On the ferias of Lent and Passiontide, from Ash Wednesday to the Saturday before Palm Sunday, when any feast occurs that is not of the first or second class, the Office (if recited privately) and the Mass can be said either of the feria or of the feast.

Title III: Commemorations

1. What is said here applies both to the Office and the Mass in both occurrence and concurrence.

2. The commemorations which are never to be omitted and which have absolute precedence are:

- a) Any Sunday;
- b) A feast of the first class;
- c) The ferias of Lent and Advent;
- d) The ferias and Saturday of the Ember Days of September;
- e) The Major Litanies.

3. Other commemorations which may occur are omitted providing that the orations are never more than three.

4. The addition to and after the commemorations mentioned in n. 2, the arrangement regarding commemorations is as follows:

- a) On Sundays of the first class, feasts of the first class, privileged ferias and vigils, and moreover in high Masses and solemn votive Masses, no commemoration is allowed.
- b) On feasts of the second class, and on the other Sundays only one commemoration is allowed.
- c) On all the days, whether they be feasts or ferias, only two commemorations are allowed.

5. Feasts that are commemorated no longer have:

- a) In the Office, a special verse in the short responsory at Prime, and a special doxology in the hymns, excepting the days mentioned in Title II, nn 14-17.
- b) In the Mass, the *Credo* and a special Preface.

Title IV: Changes in the Breviary

a) The Beginning of all the Hours

1. The canonical Hours, in both the public and private recitation, begin absolutely as follows omitting the *Pater, Ave* and (where it formerly occurred) the *Credo*:

- Matins: with the words: *Domine, labia mea aperies*;
- Lauds, the small Hours and Vespers: with the verse *Deus in adiutorium*;
- Compline: with the verse *Iube, domne, benedicere*.

2. In the Office of the last three days of Holy Week and in the Office of the Dead, all the Hours begin as marked in the breviary omitting the *Pater, Ave* and (where it formerly occurred) the *Credo*.

3. Similarly, the canonical Hours, in both public and private recitation, end as follows:

- Matins (in private recitation), Lauds, Terce, Sext, None and Vespers: with the verse *Fidelium animae*;
- Prime: with the blessing *Dominus nos benedicat*;
- Compline: with the blessing *Benedicat et custodiat*.

b) The conclusion of the Office

4. The daily course of the divine Office is concluded after Compline with the usual antiphon of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the versicle *Divinum auxilium*.

The indult and the indulgences attached to the prayer *Sacrosanctae*, are attached to this final antiphon.

c) Concerning certain parts in the Office

5. The hymns proper to the Office of certain Saints and assigned to certain Hours are not transferred. In the hymn *Iste Confessor*, the third verse is never changed but will always be: *Meruit supremos laudis honores*.

6. Antiphons at the *Magnificat* in ferias of the Septuagesima season, which may have been missed, are not resumed.

7. The *preces feriales* are said only at Vespers and Lauds, in the Office of the Wednesdays and Fridays of Advent, Lent and Passiontide, and of Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays of the Ember Days, except those that occur during the octave of Pentecost, when the Office is from the feria.

8. All the other *preces* are omitted.

9. The Suffrage of the Saints and the Commemoration of the Cross are omitted.

10. The Athanasian Creed is recited only on the Feasts of the Most Holy Trinity.

d) Other changes

11. First Vespers (whether entire, or a *capitulum*, or by way of commemoration) pertain only to feasts of the first and second class and Sundays.

12. As regards the different parts of the Office, the following are to be observed:

a) On Sundays and feasts of the first class—no change.

- b) On feasts of the second class and double feasts of our Lord and the Blessed Virgin Mary, at Matins, Lauds and Vespers, the Office is said as in the proper and the common; at the small Hours as in the psalter for the current feria and in the proper; at Compline as of Sunday.
- c) On other feasts, vigils and ferias for all the hours it is said as in the psalter and proper, unless in Matins, Lauds and Vespers, special antiphons and psalm are indicated.

13. The lessons from the current Scripture together with their responses, if they cannot be said on the day to which they are assigned, are omitted, even in the case of the “beginnings” of the various books.

14. On the feasts of the saints the lessons of the first nocturn, if none are specially designated, are taken from the current Scripture; if these are lacking, they are taken from the common.

Title V: Changes in the missal

a) The Orations

- 1) The orations assigned for the various times are abolished.
- 2) In votive Masses for the departed, if they are sung, only one oration is said; if they are not sung, three orations may be said.
- 3) The oration *Fidelium*, hitherto prescribed for the free feria or on Monday of any week, is abolished. In choir, on these ferias the conventual Mass is said according to the rubrics.
- 4) Collects which are ordered by the Ordinary *simpliciter*, are omitted according to the rubrics hitherto in effect, and moreover on all Sundays and whenever the Mass is sung; and finally also when the orations to be said according to the rubrics have reached the number of three.

b) Certain Other Changes

5. In the *feriae per annum* if the commemoration of some Saint is to be made, the Mass may be said at the option of the celebrant, either of the *feria* or, *moro festivo*, of the Saint who is commemorated.

6. In Masses for the departed, the Sequence *Dies Irae* may be omitted, unless the Mass is of the day of death or burial with the body present, or not even present for some reasonable cause, and excepting All Souls' Day. On this day, however, the Sequence need be said only once, that is, in the principal Mass otherwise in the first Mass.

7. The *Credo* is said only on Sundays and feasts of the first class, on feasts of our Lord and of the blessed Virgin Mary, and the natal feasts of the Apostles and Evangelists, on feasts of the Doctors of the universal Church, and on solemn votive Masses which are sung.

8. The Preface to be said is the one which is proper to the Mass. If this is lacking the Preface *de tempore*, is to be said; otherwise, the common preface.

9. In all Masses, the last Gospel is always the beginning of the Gospel according to St. John, except in the Third Mass of Christmas and the Mass of Palm Sunday.