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When will we actually get a new missal?

Nancy Frazier O'Brien Catholic News Service | Feb. 9, 2010

WASHINGTON -- When liturgists in the English-speaking world talk about when the new Roman Missal might go into use in Catholic parishes, the date most often mentioned is Nov. 27, 2011, the start of Advent and the beginning of the church's liturgical year.

But is that what Catholics in the United States can expect? It depends, said Father Rick Hilgartner, associate director of the U.S. bishops' Secretariat of Divine Worship.

First the U.S. bishops have to wait for the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments to grant its "recognitio," or official approval, of the translations that have been in the works since Pope John Paul II issued the new missal in Latin in 2002.

"The publishers tell us they need at least 12 months" to print and distribute the new missal to every U.S. parish, Father Hilgartner said. "And the bishops tell us they need at least 12 months for catechesis."

Other, smaller English-speaking countries might not need a full 12 months for implementation, he noted.

Although the Catholic bishops' conferences in the U.S. and Canada will make their decisions separately about the implementation date in their own countries, "we're each trying to be aware of what the other is doing," he added.

But the time between the "recognitio" and U.S. implementation of the missal could be more than 12 months, depending on when the Vatican announcement is made, Father Hilgartner said.

If the "recognitio" comes this June, for example, "implementation in the middle of the summer would be foolish." Father Hilgartner said. And it is unlikely that the bishops would choose to implement it during Lent, which covers March and most of April in 2011, he added.

Ultimately, the decision on the implementation date will rest with Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Once he sets the date, the USCCB Publishing office will make available a parish implementation kit that will include a planning guide, suggested activities and resources for every facet of parish and school life, and a detailed planning workbook designed to make the catechetical period a time of parish liturgical renewal.

See also: Catholics urged to talk about new missal [1]

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