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Disposing of Old Missals and Sacramentaries

And More on the Confiteor and Breast-Beating

ROME, JAN. 24, 2012 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Answered by Legionary of Christ Father Edward McNamara, professor of liturgy at the Regina Apostolorum university.

Q: What is the proper way to dispose of old missals and sacramentaries? I have heard that they should be burned, and that some priests have done so at the Easter Vigil for the blessing of the new fire. -- P.R., Oak Harbor, Washington

A: This question was addressed by the secretariat of divine worship of the U.S. bishops' conference. The advice offered is pertinent to other places as well. To wit:

"The Secretariat of Divine Worship has received a number of timely inquiries regarding the disposition of copies of the current *Sacramentary* once the new *Roman Missal, Third Edition* has been implemented.

"There is relatively little written about exactly what to do with liturgical books which have been replaced by updated or revised editions, but some related writings, as well as some common sense, can provide some context. The *Book of Blessings*, no. 1343, indicates that the *Sacramentary*, the *Lectionary*, and other liturgical books are counted among those articles used in the Sacred Liturgy which ought to be blessed using the rite provided for that purpose, the Order for the Blessing of Articles for Liturgical Use (nos. 1341-1359). The Latin *De Benedictionibus, editio typica*, however, does not explicitly mention the *Missale* among the articles that are properly blessed.

"Whether or not the *Sacramentary* has been blessed by an official rite, it is appropriate to treat it with care as it has been admitted into liturgical use. Its disposal should be handled with respect. The Secretariat recommends burying the *Sacramentary* in an appropriate location on church grounds, or perhaps in a parish cemetery if there is one. Some have even suggested following a custom used in various Eastern Churches whereby liturgical books or Bibles are placed in the coffin of the deceased as a sign of devotion and love for the Liturgy. In lieu of burying old liturgical books, they could be burned, and the ashes placed in the ground in an appropriate location on church grounds. It is advisable to retain a copy of the *Sacramentary* for parish archives or liturgical libraries.

"Looking ahead to the reception of the *Roman Missal, Third Edition*, the above-mentioned blessing from the *Book of Blessings* could be used to bless copies of the *Missal* before their first use on the First Sunday of Advent, November 27, 2011. The blessing could take place during a Mass on the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ the King, at the last weekday Mass prior to the First Sunday of Advent, or outside Mass at a separate gathering of liturgical ministers or other parish leaders.

"Many parishes will also replace hymnals and other participation aids (such as hand missals) in light of updated editions corresponding to the new *Roman Missal*. While the Blessing of Articles for Liturgical Use also mentions hymnals, it might be difficult to appropriately dispose of a large number of copies of such

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books. After setting aside an appropriate number of copies for archives and libraries, other copies could be stored for use by prayer or study groups in the parish, offered to parishioners for their own private devotional use, or donated to other small communities that could effectively make use of them. Due to copyright agreements, annual hymnals and participation aids should be discarded after their prescribed period of use and cannot be retained for other uses in parishes."

Some dioceses facilitated this disposal by arranging common drop-off places where priests could leave old missals. The Archdiocese of Denver, for example, made arrangement for a number of old missals to be buried in an unoccupied grave of a Catholic cemetery.

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Follow-up: "Brothers" or "Sisters"

In the wake of our [Jan. 10](#) response on the Confiteor, a reader inquired: "In today's answers to question about the forgiveness of sins at Mass, you state from the Roman Missal: ' . . . the priest invites those present to take part in the Act of Penitence, which, after a brief pause for silence, the entire community carries out through a formula of general confession. The rite concludes with the priest's absolution, which, however, lacks the efficacy of the Sacrament of Penance.' How do you reconcile that with the following teaching of the Council of Trent? Trent in its consideration of the Mass as a propitiatory sacrifice had declared (where I have added the emphasis): ' . . . through the Mass we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need (see Hebrews 4:16). For by this oblation the Lord is appeased, *he grants grace and the gift of repentance, and he pardons wrongdoings and sins, even grave ones*&.'" "

There is no contradiction here. The rubric states that the priest's absolution during the rite of penance is not a sacramental absolution. In other words, it is not the same as the absolution granted in the sacrament of penance. If it were so, there would be almost no need to go to confession at all.

The conciliar doctrine parts from a different level entirely. It is speaking of the Mass as a propitiatory sacrifice insofar as it is the un-bloody re-enactment of Christ's unique sacrifice on Calvary, and hence it has the same infinite effects as this sacrifice among which is to obtain the forgiveness of sins.

The forgiveness of sins is thus a fruit of the Mass because it is a fruit of the sacrifice of Calvary. This does not mean that each concrete individual who attends Mass is forgiven because in this case the application of the fruit of Christ's sacrifice also depends on the use of the sacrament of penance. A person who attends Mass with the proper dispositions will certainly receive forgiveness for venial sins. The Council of Trent does not say that someone in mortal sin obtains forgiveness by attending Mass but supposes that Mass may obtain the necessary grace to move the person to avail himself of the ordinary means of obtaining absolution.

As illustrated in Ludwig Ott's classical dogmatic manual: "The sacrifice of the Mass does not produce the forgiveness of sins immediately, as is the case of the sacraments of Baptism and penance, but only in a mediate way by granting the grace of repentance" (Eucharist 26,2a).

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Follow-up: Breast-Beating

Some readers still expressed doubts about the correctness of my opinion regarding the legitimacy of the triple beating of the breast in spite of an official pronouncement justifying the single strike (see [Jan. 10](#) and [Dec. 13](#)).

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One reader suggested that my earlier follow-up "seemed to imply that we were saying that the Holy See's one-beat indication could be ignored because it's been ignored for 30 years."

I therefore deem it necessary to revisit the argument once more, hoping to finally clarify myself.

First of all, allow me to say that, effectively, Spanish and Italian faithful, including most priests and bishops, have been ignoring the one-strike indication for 30 years. By "ignoring" I do not mean they were disobeying but rather that they had no knowledge that this official reply existed. After all, it was published in Latin in a review with a somewhat limited circulation.

Second, the official reply did not forbid the use of three strikes but simply stated that once was enough and there was no obligation to follow the older rubrics which mandated three strikes. Therefore, people simply kept on doing what they had always done and struck the breast three times at the triple manifestation of sin.

The point I was trying to make is that now that the English translation has restored the triple manifestation, it is probable that the faithful will naturally and spontaneously revert to the former practice of three strikes to the breast even though once is enough to comply with the rubrics.

As mentioned above, the official reply does not forbid this triple strike and I see no good coming from trying to impede its development.

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Readers may send questions to liturgy@zenit.org. Please put the word "Liturgy" in the subject field. The text should include your initials, your city and your state, province or country. Father McNamara can only answer a small selection of the great number of questions that arrive.

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