

Continuing from my previous article, [“Addressing Mass Rumors”](#), let us examine the practical aspects of the speculated Hybrid Missal.

To re-summarize, Pope Francis is supposedly cooking up a new “traditional” version of the Roman Missal that will incorporate elements from the *Novus Ordo Missae*, including its three-cycle Lectionary and some saints from its calendar. Furthermore, it has been reported that this Hybrid Missal is coming soon and will be imposed on those who offer the traditional Mass (with an initial exception for the Society of St. Pius X).

For starters, let us recall that this gossip of an impending Hybrid Missal began circulating in 2012—under Pope Benedict XVI—and was to be published by 2013! So in reality, this “news” is merely a regurgitated rumor from five years ago. “But that was then,” you might worriedly say, “and now we know the Hybrid Missal is coming in 2018! It must be, because Pope Francis wants to destroy the traditional Mass!” Or so the rumormongers would have you believe.

To counter this panic of a supposedly impending Hybrid Missal, let us make some practical observations on what it would take to actually produce such a liturgical book. Here I can do this with some expertise, since I had the privilege of managing the reproduction of the [Benziger Brothers’ 1962 edition of the *Missale Romanum*](#).

Despite that it was merely a copy of an original missal, the Benziger *Missale Romanum* project spanned nearly five years (2004-2009) and was replete with complexities that most book publishers do not encounter (particularly as this type of book-making is no longer mainstream in the United States). Now granted, while the Vatican Polyglot Press has the facilities for producing liturgical books, nevertheless, such work is still time-consuming and expensive.

First, as the 1962 missals published by various printers were setup with the old lead-type technique, it is doubtful that the printing house would already have all of the Latin texts in digital format. Access to digitized texts is imperative, as the texts of the Hybrid Missal will need to be reformatted during the layout process to accommodate the additions supposedly desired by Pope Francis (in reality, the long-time goal of some in the Vatican even echoed by Pope Benedict XVI). So these texts would need to be either manually typed in or scanned.

To give an idea of the enormity of this job, the Benziger missal that I reprinted has 1290 pages filled with text in black and red ink (thus a color separation is also required), some chant notation (e.g., for the Prefaces), as well as decorative art work. After formatting the texts and inserting the chant notation and art work, comes the tedious process of proofing the page layouts (which could take weeks, if not months, for a completely re-typeset missal).

There are also the laborious jobs of printing and folding the pages, binding the missal, and manufacturing and inserting the ribbons and page tabs (the latter of which has to be done by hand).

Of course in the case of producing the Hybrid Missal, there is the much-added work of including the readings in Latin from the three-cycle Lectionary of the New Mass. This is not only problematic from a practical side (as three volumes are required in the *Novus Ordo*'s sacramentary to accommodate the differing texts of cycles A, B, and C), but also from a theological and traditional one. For more on this point, I suggest reading the recent article by Dr. Peter Kwasniewski, [“A Case Study of Rupture in the *Lex Orandi*: The Epistles of Lenten Sundays”](#), at the *Rorate Caeli* blog, but here is one extract:

“One of the most striking areas of rupture and discontinuity between the traditional Latin Mass and the Mass of Paul VI is to be found in the passages of Scripture read on Sundays. The annual cycle of the old Missal, embodying the practice of well over a millennium, puts before the Christian people year after year essential truths of the spiritual life and fundamentals of morality to which we must always return. The three-year cycle of the new Mass, an unprecedented novelty against the backdrop of all historic liturgical rites, brings in a greater quantity and variety of texts but, as a result, diffuses the impact and substance of the message.”

This leads to the question: will the Hybrid Missal be produced as three volumes according to each cycle (thus each volume containing the Ordinary and Propers along with each particular cycle of readings), or as a Sacramentary edition (containing just the Ordinary and Propers) with three separate Lectionary supplements? Or perhaps as a single 50lb Missal that will require a 7-year old acolyte to use a forklift to switch the hefty book (twice) during Low Mass? And what is to be done for the readings on the Ember Days and other liturgical days that have been suppressed in the *Novus Ordo Missae*. Will these simply be picked out of thin air—maybe even repeated (oh, the horror! for the New Mass mindset of scriptural variety)?

Nor have we considered the issue of adding names from the calendar of the New Mass, some of who suffer from dubious canonization procedures and thus their cultus status has rightly been called into question. On this important topic, I point to Catholic Family News' April 2014 piece: [“The ‘Canonizations’: CFN interviews Professor Roberto de Mattei”](#) (who will be speaking at this year's CFN conference)—but in a word: “Infallibility of canonizations is not a dogma of the Faith...”. Of course, if certain new “saints” were to be added to the 1962 Roman Calendar, which old ones would be removed to make way for the new? Or would their veneration be made merely optional (another novel concept)?

So many questions, and yet we actually have put the cart before the horse by not asking the most important one: who will finance such a massive publishing project? Any publisher worth their ink will tell you that they would need to print a minimum number of missals in order to maintain an economical price. From experience, I can tell you that this minimum figure usually begins at 2000 copies (due to start-up costs) with a manufacturing expenditure ranging from a quarter million to more than a half-million dollars—and depending on how the three-cycle Lectionary will be implemented vis-à-vis the Hybrid Missal.

So who will underwrite the cost of producing the Hybrid Missal? The Vatican Polyglot Press? Perhaps there's a shadowy Soros-type sponsor waiting in the wings who has nothing better to do than fund subversive liturgical publications? Or maybe Pope Francis intends to pay for its production with his royalties received from his interviews with atheistic journalists? Wait... I know! That's where part of the [\\$25-million Roman hospital loan](#) was supposed to have been re-routed—oh how the ink thickens at the Vatican!

All humorous speculations aside though, the issue of financing the supposed Hybrid Missal project really would be the first obstacle encountered. And as most in the world of Tradition already know, the Hybrid Missal is not about to make any bestseller list soon—which leads to another question: who would even buy it? Exploration of this issue though will have to wait until my next article.