

MUSIC IN THE ORDER OF MASS

The celebration of the Eucharist on the Lord's Day is the centre of the whole Christian life, for it is the high point of the action of Christ and his people by which Christ sanctifies the world, and by which the whole of humanity, with Christ, worships the Father.

Moved by the Holy Spirit, the faithful listen to the word of God and respond by offering themselves with Christ to the Father. Christ then gathers them into his universal sacrifice, which is completed by sharing in Holy Communion. At the end of the celebration, the people go into the world to be witnesses to Christ in their daily lives, and to bring him to others. By the celebration of the Eucharist, the faithful commit themselves to this service.

The Use of Music at Mass

In the liturgy- the action of Christ in which the whole community of the faithful participates - no other sign brings out the communal dimension so well as singing, where many individual voices are fused together, blending into a single voice. Singing together fosters a strong bond of unity and sense of belonging; it helps to develop the unity of mind and heart which is part of the mystery of the Church.

Because liturgical music is sung prayer, the use of good texts is important. Ideally, hymn and song texts are grounded in the Scriptures and the liturgical sources (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, No. 121), providing images and metaphors that call the community to an ever deeper commitment to the Christian life, and using God's own word to sing the Lord's praise.

But the power of music carries the liturgical assembly beyond the text into a sense of the mystery of God. The chief form of music in the liturgy is the song that arises from the voice of the entire assembly. Musicians and choir members use their talents and resources to "lift up the hearts" (*sursum corda*) of God's people, and to help them proclaim God's marvellous deeds. Music is a wonderful means for drawing the assembly into the "full, conscious and active participation that is called for by the very nature of the liturgy" (CSL, No. 14).

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (2012, No. 41) places the importance of singing at Mass in the following context.

The main place should be given, all things being equal, to Gregorian chant, as being proper to the Roman Liturgy. Other kinds of sacred music, in particular, polyphony, are in no way excluded, provided that they correspond to the spirit of the liturgical action and that they foster the participation of all the faithful (cf. CSL, Nos. 116, 30).

Since the faithful from different countries come together ever more frequently, it is desirable that they know how to sing together at least some parts of the Ordinary of the Mass in Latin, especially the Profession of Faith and the Lord's Prayer, according to the simpler settings (cf. CSL, No. 54; *Musicam sacram*, 1967, No. 47).

In keeping with these directives, *Catholic Worship Book II* provides ministerial chants from the Order of Mass in the *Roman Missal* (2010) and also various traditional chant settings in Latin and English from post-conciliar sources for use during the Mass and other rites of the Church during the Church's liturgical cycle.

When preparing the liturgy, efforts should be made to ensure that music complements and enriches the liturgy, rather than overloads the celebration. Musicians and liturgists ought to work together, so that the liturgy and its music demonstrate a mutual interdependence that enriches the worship of the assembled faithful. The suitability of liturgical or ritual music is normally judged according to several interrelated criteria: liturgical, musical and pastoral.

- Is this text theologically sound?
- Is it in harmony with the text provided in the *Roman Missal*?
- Is it suitable for this particular moment of the liturgy?
- Do the various elements - text, melody, musical rhythm, accompaniment - complement each other?
- Does the music enrich the text without overpowering it?
- Is the music able to be sung by this congregation?
- Will this music help the assembly express its prayer more fully?
- Can this music be used on more than one occasion during the liturgical year?

The GIRM itself (No. 40) provides a clear guide as to what should be sung.

Great importance should be attached to the use of singing in the celebration of the Mass ... Although it is not always necessary (for example, in weekday Masses) to sing all the texts that are in principle meant to be sung, every care should be taken that singing by the ministers and the people not be absent in celebrations that occur on Sundays and on Holydays of Obligation.

However, in the choosing of the parts actually to be sung, preference is to be given to those that are of greater importance, and especially to those which are to be sung by the priest or the deacon or a reader, with the people replying, or by the priest and people together" (cf. *Musicam sacram*, Nos. 7, 16).

In light of this directive, the ministerial chants should be accorded priority. In addition, the Responsorial Psalm and Gospel Acclamation in the Liturgy of the Word, together with the Acclamations of the Eucharistic Prayer in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, should be sung by the entire assembly on Sundays and Holydays of Obligation.

Unfortunately, the pre-Conciliar practice of singing a hymn during each of the four processional moments at Mass, and only reciting the Responses and Acclamations, does not properly honour the distinctive character of each part of the Eucharistic celebration.

In fact, both before and after the Second Vatican Council, the Church emphasised and encouraged the participation of the people, including the priest celebrant, in the singing of the Responses, Acclamations and Ordinary texts of the Mass (see, for example, Pius XII, *Mediator Dei* (1947) No. 192 and *Musicam sacram* (1967) Nos. 16, 29). The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (2012) clearly confirms this important Catholic tradition.

When it comes to selecting music for Mass on Sundays and Holydays of Obligation, the schema below may assist communities in assessing their priorities for liturgical music. The elements in **bold type** should normally be sung.

LITURGICAL AND MUSICAL PRIORITIES

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Chant/Hymn/Song

Greeting

Penitential Act:

Lord, have mercy (*Kyrie*)

Sprinkling Rite (for example, during Easter time)

Song during the sprinkling of holy water

Glory to God (*Gloria*)

Collect

LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading

Responsorial Psalm

Second Reading

[Silence]

[Sequence]

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel

Homily

[Silence]

Creed

Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful)

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Preparation of the Gifts (hymn/choral or instrumental music)

Eucharistic Prayer

Preface - Dialogue and Preface

Holy, Holy (*Sanctus*)

Memorial Acclamation

Amen

Communion Rite

Our Father and Doxology

Lamb of God (*Agnus Dei*)

Communion Chant/Hymn/Song

Post-Communion Hymn/Song/Canticle

Prayer after Communion

CONCLUDING RITE

Blessing and Dismissal

Recessional Song (optional, or choral/instrumental music)

Commentary

The following paragraphs outline the role of music at the various parts of the Eucharistic Liturgy and are based on the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (2012), Nos. 47-88.

Introductory rites

1. In opening the celebration, the *Entrance Chant/Hymn/Song* is intended to unite as one the faithful who have gathered on the day of the Lord, to direct their attention towards the mystery celebrated that day, and to accompany the procession of priests and ministers.
2. The *Lord, have mercy/Kyrie eleison* is a brief litany sung or said after the Penitential Act (unless already included therein). It is usually sung by everyone, with the priest, the people and the choir or cantor all taking part.
3. The *Glory to God/Gloria in excelsis* is an ancient festive hymn, praising the Father and Jesus, the Lamb of God. It is prescribed to be sung on Sundays (outside of Advent and Lent), solemnities, feasts and special celebrations. It may never be replaced with another text.

Liturgy of the Word

4. A period of silence is recommended after the *First* and *Second Readings* and again after the *Homily* so that the faithful can respond in their hearts to the word proclaimed.
5. The *Responsorial Psalm* fosters meditation on the word of God. The cantor sings the verses, and the people respond. The *Psalm* may also be sung directly, that is, straight through, without the response. The GIRM (No. 61) encourages a degree of flexibility regarding the choice of *Responsorial Psalm* to ensure that the participation of the assembly in the sung response is the norm. The *Psalm* should not be replaced with a hymn.

6. During the *Acclamation* before the Gospel, the assembly welcomes and greets the Lord, whose wisdom and love is about to be proclaimed in the Gospel.

7. The *Sequence* is sung before the *Alleluia* on Easter Sunday and Pentecost Sunday (and also may be sung on Corpus Christi Sunday).

8. In the *Profession of Faith*, the people respond to the word of God and together honour and confess the great mysteries of faith. The text may be sung or recited on Sundays, solemnities, and other festive occasions.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

9. The *Preparation of the Gifts* may be accompanied by the Offertory Chant, a song, by choral or instrumental music or by silence (for instance, during Lent, see GIRM, no. 313). The music continues at least until the gifts have been placed on the altar.

10. The sung *Preface Dialogue and Preface* introducing the Eucharistic Prayer lift the community's prayer into a hymn of praise as the wonders of God are proclaimed, culminating in the *Holy, Holy*. It is highly recommended that the *Preface Dialogue and Preface* be sung because both these elements begin the central prayer of the entire celebration.

11. The *Holy, Holy/Sanctus* unites the prayer of the Church on earth with that of the angels and saints in heaven and is sung by the whole congregation.

12. In the *Memorial Acclamation* the people joyfully proclaim the saving work of Christ and look forward to his coming again at the end of time. This also is sung.

13. The sung *Amen* is the people's assent to the whole Eucharistic Prayer and fittingly follows the singing of the *Doxology* by the priest celebrant.

14. *The Lord's Prayer* introduces the Communion Rite. The voices of the people unite in praising God and asking for daily bread. It is preferable that the whole prayer, including the *Embolism* and the *Doxology*, is sung.

15. The *Lamb of God/Agnus Dei*, a litany to Jesus, the Lamb of God given up for us, accompanies the Fraction Rite, and may be sung as long as it takes to break the consecrated bread, the final repetition concluding with "*Grant us peace*".

16. The *Communion Chant/Hymn/Song* begins as the priest is receiving Communion. Its purpose is to allow the assembly to express with one voice their union in spirit, to evidence their joy of heart, and to emphasise the communitarian nature of their procession to receive Christ's body and blood (see GIRM no. 86).

17. When the distribution of Communion is finished, there is a time of silence for prayer.

18. This period of silence may be followed by a *thanksgiving hymn*, psalm or canticle.

19. After the *Blessing* and *Dismissal*, the people return to their daily lives.

The liturgy is ended. Some communities may choose to add a hymn, a psalm, or choral or instrumental music as a recessional, in accordance with the spirit of the liturgical time of year. If a recessional hymn is sung, it should not be lengthy.