

# The Musician at Mass



Diocese of Kansas City – St. Joseph

## Importance and Dignity of the Eucharistic Celebration

- ✦ The celebration of the Eucharist in a particular Church is of utmost importance.
- ✦ For the diocesan Bishop, the chief steward of the mysteries of God in the particular Church entrusted to his care, is the moderator, promoter, and guardian of the whole of its liturgical life. In celebrations at which the Bishop presides, and especially in the celebration of the Eucharist led by the Bishop himself with the presbyterate, the deacons, and the people taking part, the mystery of the Church is revealed. For this reason, the solemn celebration of Masses of this sort must be an example for the entire diocese.
- ✦ The Bishop should therefore be determined that the priests, the deacons, and the lay Christian faithful grasp ever more deeply the genuine meaning of the rites and liturgical texts and thereby be led to an active and fruitful celebration of the Eucharist. To the same end, he should also be vigilant that the dignity of these celebrations be enhanced.
- ✦ In promoting this dignity, the beauty of the sacred place, of music, and of art should contribute as greatly as possible. (22)

## The Different Elements of the Mass

- ✦ The nature of the “presidential” texts demands that they be spoken in a loud and clear voice and that everyone listen with attention. Thus, while the priest is speaking these texts, there should be no other prayers or singing, and the organ or other musical instruments should be silent. (32)
- ✦ Since the celebration of Mass by its nature has a “communitarian” character, both the dialogues between the priest and the faithful gathered together and the acclamations are of great significance; in fact, they are not simply outward signs of communal celebration but foster and bring about communion between priest and people. (34)

- ✦ The acclamations and the responses of the faithful to the priest's greetings and prayers constitute that level of active participation that he gathered faithful are to contribute in every form of the Mass, so that the action of the entire community may be clearly expressed and foster. (35)
- ✦ Other parts, very useful for expressing and fostering the faithful's active participation, that are assigned to the whole assembly that is called together include especially the Act of Penitence, the Profession of Faith, the Prayer of the Faithful, and the Lord's Prayer. (36)
- ✦ Finally, concerning the other formulas:
  - a. Some constitute an independent rite or act, such as the *Gloria*, the Responsorial Psalm, the Alleluia and verse before the Gospel, the *Sanctus*, the Memorial Acclamation, and the *cantus post communionem*;
  - b. Others accompany another rite, such as the chants at the Entrance, at the Offertory, at the fraction (*Agnus Dei*), and at Communion. (37)

## The Importance of Singing

The Christian faithful who gather together as one to await the Lord's coming are instructed by the Apostle Paul to sing together psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Col. 3:16). Singing is the sign of the heart's joy (Acts 2:46). Thus Saint Augustine says rightly, "Singing is for one who loves." There is also the ancient proverb: "One who sings well prays twice." (39)

- ✦ Great importance should therefore be attached to the use of singing in the celebration of the Mass, with due consideration for the culture of the people and abilities of each liturgical assembly.
- ✦ Although it is not always necessary (e.g., in weekday Masses) to sing *all* the texts that are of themselves meant to be sung, every care should be taken that singing by the ministers and the people is not absent in celebrations that occur on Sundays and on holy days of obligation.
- ✦ In the choosing of the parts actually to be sung, however, preference should be given to those that are of greater importance and especially to those to be sung by the priest or the deacon or the lector, with the people responding, or by the priest and people together. (40)
- ✦ All other things being equal, Gregorian chant holds pride of place because it is proper to the Roman Liturgy. Other types 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.
- ✦ Since faithful from different countries come together evermore frequently, it is fitting that they know how to sing together at least some parts of the Ordinary of the Mass in Latin, especially the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, set to the simpler melodies. (41)

## The Entrance

After the people have gathered, the Entrance chant begins as the priest enters with the deacon and ministers.

The purpose of this chant is to open the celebration, foster the unity of those who have been gathered, introduce their thoughts to the mystery of the liturgical season or festivity, and accompany the procession of the priest and ministers. (47)

- ✦ The singing at this time is done either alternately by the choir and the people or in a similar way by the cantor and the people, or entirely by the people, or by the choir alone.

- ✦ In the dioceses of the United States of America there are four options for the Entrance Chant:

1) the antiphon from the Roman Missal or the Psalm from the Roman Gradual as set to music there or in another musical setting;

2) the seasonal antiphon and Psalm of the Simple Gradual

3) a song from another collection of psalms and antiphons, approved by the Conference of Bishops or the Diocesan Bishop, including psalms arranged in responsorial or metrical forms;

4) a suitable liturgical song similarly approved by the Conference of Bishops or the Diocesan Bishop.

- ✦ If there is no singing at the entrance, the antiphon in the Missal is recited either by the faithful, or by some of them, or by a lector; otherwise, it is recited by the priest himself, who may even adapt it as an introductory explanation. (48)

## **The Kyrie Eleison**

After the Act of Penitence, the *Kyrie* is always begun, unless it has already been included as part of the Act of Penitence.

- ✦ Since it is a chant by which the faithful acclaim the Lord and implore his mercy, it is ordinarily done by all, that is, by the people and with the choir or cantor having a part in it.

- ✦ As a rule, each acclamation is sung or said twice, though it may be repeated several times, by reason of the character of the various languages, as well as of the artistry of the music or of other circumstances.

- ✦ When the *Kyrie* is sung as a part of the Act of Penitence, a trope may precede each acclamation. (52)

## **The Gloria**

The Gloria is a very ancient and venerable hymn in which the Church, gathered together in the Holy Spirit, glorifies and entreats God the Father and the Lamb.

- ✦ The text of this hymn may not be replaced by any other text.

- ✦ The Gloria is intoned by the priest or, if appropriate, by a cantor or by the choir; but it is sung either by everyone together, or by the people alternately with the choir, or by the choir alone.

- ✦ If not sung, it is to be recited either by all together or by two parts of the congregation responding one to the other.

- ✦ It is sung or said on Sundays outside the Seasons of Advent and Lent, on solemnities and feasts, and at special celebrations of a more solemn character. (53)

## **The Responsorial Psalm**

After the first reading comes the responsorial Psalm, which is an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word and holds great liturgical and pastoral importance, because it fosters meditation on the word of God.

- ✦ The responsorial Psalm should correspond to each reading and should, as a rule, be taken from the Lectionary.
- ✦ It is preferable that the responsorial Psalm be sung, at least as far as the people's response is concerned. Hence, the psalmist, or the cantor of the Psalm, sings the verses of the Psalm from the ambo or another suitable place. The entire congregation remains seated and listens but, as a rule, takes part by singing the response, except when the Psalm is sung straight through without a response.
- ✦ In order, however, that the people may be able to sing the Psalm response more readily, texts of some responses and Psalms have been chosen for the various seasons of the year or for the various categories of Saints. These may be used in place of the text corresponding to the reading whenever the Psalm is sung.
- ✦ If the Psalm cannot be sung, then it should be recited in such a way that it is particularly suited to fostering meditation on the word of God.

In the dioceses of the United States of America, the following may also be sung in place of the Psalm assigned in the *Lectionary for Mass*:

- ✦ either the proper or seasonal antiphon and psalm from the Lectionary, as found either in the *Roman Gradual* or *Simple Gradual* or in another musical setting;
- ✦ or an antiphon and Psalm from another collection of the psalms and antiphons, including psalms arranged in metrical form, providing that they have been approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops or the Diocesan Bishop.
- ✦ Songs or hymns *may not be used* in place of the responsorial Psalm. (61)

## The Alleluia

After the reading that immediately precedes the Gospel, the *Alleluia* or another chant indicated by the rubrics is sung, as required by the liturgical season. An acclamation of this kind constitutes a rite or act in itself, by which the assembly of the faithful welcomes and greets the Lord who is about to speak to them in the Gospel and professes their faith by means of the chant.

- ✦ It is sung by all while standing and is led by the choir or a cantor, being repeated if this is appropriate. The verse, however, is sung either by the choir or by the cantor.
- a. The *Alleluia* is sung in every season other than Lent. The verses are taken from the Lectionary or the *Graduale*.
  - b. During Lent, in place of the *Alleluia*, the verse before the Gospel is sung, as indicated in the Lectionary. It is also permissible to sing another psalm or tract, as found in the *Graduale*.
- (62)

- ✦ When there is only one reading before the Gospel,
- a. During a season when the *Alleluia* is to be said, either the *Alleluia* Psalm or the Responsorial Psalm followed by the *Alleluia* with its verse may be used;
  - b. During the season when the *Alleluia* is not to be said, either the psalm and the verse before the Gospel or the psalm alone may be used;
  - c. The *Alleluia* or verse before the Gospel may be omitted if they are not sung. (63) (The Lectionary Introduction stipulates that the Alleluia must be sung)

## The Sequence

- ✦ The Sequence, which is optional except on Easter Sunday and on Pentecost Day, is sung before the *Alleluia*. (64)

## The Profession of Faith

The Creed is to be sung or said by the priest together with the people on Sundays and Solemnities. It may be said also at particular celebrations of a more solemn character.

- ✦ If it is sung, it is begun by the priest or, if this is appropriate, by a cantor or by the choir. It is sung, however, either by all together or by the people alternating with the choir.
- ✦ If not sung, it is to be recited by all together or by two parts of the assembly responding one to the other. (68)

## The Preparation of the Gifts

- ✦ The procession bringing the gifts is accompanied by the Offertory chant (cf. 37b) which continues at least until the gifts have been placed on the altar.
- ✦ The norms on the manner of singing are the same as for the Entrance chant (cf. 48).
- ✦ Singing may always accompany the rite at the offertory, even when there is no procession with the gifts. (74)

## The Lord's Prayer

The invitation, the Prayer itself, the embolism, and the doxology by which the people conclude these things are sung or said aloud. (81)

## The Fraction

.....The priest breaks the Bread and puts a piece of the host into the chalice to signify the unity of the Body and Blood of the Lord in the work of salvation, namely, of the living and the glorious Body of Jesus Christ.

- ✦ The supplication *Agnus Dei*, is, as a rule, sung by the choir or cantor with the congregation responding; or it is, at least, recited aloud.
- ✦ This invocation accompanies the fraction and, for this reason, may be repeated as many times as necessary until the rite has reached its conclusion, the last time ending with the words *dona nobis pacem* (grant us peace). (83)

## Communion

- ✦ While the priest is receiving the Sacrament, the Communion chant is begun.
- ✦ Its purpose is to express the communicants' union in spirit by means of the unity of their voices, to show joy of heart, and to highlight more clearly the "communitarian" nature of the procession to receive Communion.
- ✦ The singing is continued for as long as the Sacrament is being administered to the faithful. If, however, there is to be a hymn after Communion, the Communion chant should be ended in a timely manner.
- ✦ Care should be taken that singers, too, can receive Communion with ease. (86)

In the dioceses of the United States of America there are four options for the Communion chant:

- 1) the antiphon from the Roman Missal or the Psalm from the *Roman Gradual* as set to music there or in another musical setting;
- 2) the seasonal antiphon and Psalm of the *Simple Gradual*;
- 3) a song from another collection of psalms and antiphons, approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops or the Diocesan Bishop, including psalms arranged in responsorial or metrical forms;
- 4) a suitable liturgical song chosen in accordance with no. 86 above. This is sung either by the choir alone or by the choir or cantor with the people.
  - ✦ If there is no singing, however, the communion antiphon found in the Missal may be recited either by the faithful, or by some of them, or by a lector. Otherwise the priest himself says it after he has received Communion and before he distributes Communion to the faithful. (87)
  - ✦ When the distribution of Communion is finished, as circumstances suggest, the priest and faithful spend some time praying privately.
  - ✦ If desired, a psalm or other canticle of praise or a hymn may also be sung by the entire congregation. (88)

## The Duties of Ministries

### The psalmist's role

The psalmist's role is to sing the Psalm or other biblical canticle that comes between the readings. To fulfill this function correctly, it is necessary that the psalmist have the ability for singing and a facility in correct pronunciation and diction. (102)

### The choir and other musicians' role

- ✦ Among the faithful, the *schola cantorum* or choir exercises its own liturgical function, ensuring that the parts proper to it, in keeping with the different types of chants, are properly carried out and fostering the active participation of the faithful through the singing.
- ✦ What is said about the choir also applies, in accordance with the relevant norms, to other musicians, especially the organist. (103)
- ✦ It is fitting that there be a cantor or a choir director to lead and sustain the people's singing. When in fact there is no choir, it is up to the cantor to lead the different chants, with the people taking part. (104)

### Harmony among liturgical ministries

Among all who are involved with regard to the rites, pastoral aspects, and music there should be harmony and diligence in the effective preparation of each liturgical celebration in accord with the Missal and other liturgical books. This should take place under the direction of the rector of the church and after the consultation with the faithful about things that directly pertain to them. The priest who presides at the celebration, however, always retains the right of arranging those things that are his own responsibility. (111)

## **Mass with a congregation**

By “Mass with a congregation” is meant a Mass celebrated with the participation of the faithful. It is moreover appropriate, whenever possible and especially on Sundays and holy days of obligation, that the celebration of this mass take place with singing and with a suitable number of ministers. It may, however also be celebrated without singing and with only one minister. (115)

....It is very appropriate that the priest sing those parts of the Eucharistic Prayer for which musical notation is provided.....(147)

## **Communion**

The Communion chant begins while the priest is receiving the Sacrament (cf. #86) (159)

After communion, the priest may return to the chair. A sacred silence may now be observed for some period of time, or a Psalm or another canticle of praise or a hymn may be sung(cf. #88). (164)

## **The Manner of Speaking the Eucharistic Prayer**

It is a praiseworthy practice for the parts that are to be said by all the concelebrants together and for which musical notation is provided in the Missal to be sung. (218)

## **Architecture that serves the gathered assembly**

The people of God, gathered for Mass, has a coherent and hierarchical structure, which finds its expression in the variety of ministries and the variety of actions according to the different parts of the celebration.

- ✦ The general ordering of the sacred building must be such that in some way it conveys the image of the gathered assembly and allows the appropriate ordering of all the participants, as well as facilitating each in the proper carrying out of his function.
- ✦ The faithful and the choir should have a place that facilitates their active participation. (294)

## **The Place for the choir and the musical instruments**

- ✦ The choir should be positioned with respect to the design of each church so as to make clearly evident its character as a part of the gathered community of the faithful fulfilling a specific function.
- ✦ The location should also assist the choir to exercise its function more easily and conveniently allow each choir member full, sacramental participation in the Mass. (312)
- ✦ The organ and other lawfully approved musical instruments are to be placed in an appropriate place so that they can sustain the singing of both the choir and the congregation and be heard with ease by all if they are played alone.
- ✦ It is appropriate that, before being put into liturgical use, the organ be blessed according to the rite described in the Roman Ritual.

- ✦ In Advent the organ and other musical instruments should be used with a moderation that is consistent with the season' character and does not anticipate the full joy of the Nativity of the Lord. In Lent the playing of the organ and musical instruments is allowed only to support the singing. Exceptions are Laetare Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent), Solemnities, and Feasts. (313)

## **The Choice of the Mass and its parts**

Since, indeed, a variety of options is provided for the different parts of the Mass, it is necessary for the deacon, the lectors, the psalmist, the cantor, the commentator, and the choir to be completely sure before the celebration which text for which each is responsible is to be used and that nothing be improvised. Harmonious planning and carrying out of the rites will greatly assist in disposing the faithful to participate in the Eucharist. (352)

## **The chants**

It is not permitted to substitute other chants for those found in the Order of Mass, such as at the *Agnus Dei*. (366)

The norms laid down in their proper places are to be observed for the choice of the chants between the readings, as well as of the chants at the entrance, at the offertory, and at Communion (cf., #40-41, 47-48, 61-64, 74, 86-88) (367)

## **Adaptations within the competence of Bishops and Bishops' Conferences**

It is up to the Conferences of Bishops to decide on the adaptations indicated in this General Instruction and in the Order of Mass and, once their decisions have been accorded the *recognitio* of the Apostolic See, to introduce them into the missal itself. These adaptations include.....

The texts of the chants at the entrance, at the presentation of the gifts, and at Communion (cf. 48, 74, 87) ..... (390)

It is up to the Conferences of Bishops to provide for the translations of the biblical texts used in the celebration of Mass, exercising special care in this. For it is out of the Sacred Scripture that the readings are read and explained in the homily and that psalms are sung, and it is drawing upon the inspiration and spirit of Sacred Scripture that prayers, orations, and liturgical songs are fashioned in such a way that from them actions and signs derive their meaning. (391)

It will also be up to the Conferences of Bishops to prepare, by means of careful study, a translation of the other texts, so that, even though the character of each language is respected, the meaning of the original Latin text is fully and faithfully rendered. In accomplishing this task, it is expedient to take account of the different literary genres used at Mass, such as the presidential prayers, the antiphons, the acclamations, the responses, the litanies of supplication, and so on.

It should be borne in mind that the primary purpose of the translation of the texts is not with a view to meditation, but rather that they be proclaimed or sung during an actual celebration.

Language should be used that is accommodated to the faithful of the region, but is noble and marked by literary quality, and there will always remain the need for some catechesis on the biblical and Christian meaning of certain words and expressions.

It is indeed, of advantage that in regions using the same language, the same translation be used whenever possible for liturgical texts, especially for biblical texts and for the Order of Mass. (392)

Bearing in mind the important place that singing has in a celebration as a necessary or integral part of the Liturgy, all musical settings of the texts for the people's responses and acclamations in the Order of mass and for special rites that occur in the course of the liturgical year must be submitted to the Secretariat for the Liturgy of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for review and approval prior to publication.

While the organ is to be accorded pride of place, other wind, stringed, or percussion instruments may be used in liturgical services in the diocese of the United States of America, according to longstanding local usage, provided they are truly apt for sacred use or can be rendered apt. (393)

## **Conclusion of GIRM**

...The Roman Rite constitutes a notable and precious part of the liturgical treasure and patrimony of the Catholic Church. Its riches are of benefit to the universal Church, so that were they to be lost, the Church would be seriously harmed.

Throughout the ages, the Roman Rite has not only preserved the liturgical usages that arose in the city of Rome but has also in a deep, organic, and harmonious way incorporated into itself certain other usages derived from the customs and culture of different peoples and of various particular Churches of both West and East, so that in this way, the Roman Rite has acquired a certain supraregional character. In our own times, on the other hand, the identity and unitary expression of this Rite is found in the typical editions of the liturgical books promulgated by authority of the Supreme Pontiff, and in those liturgical books corresponding to them approved by the Bishops' Conferences for their territories with the *recognitio* of the Apostolic See. (397)

The norm established by the Second Vatican Council – that in the liturgical reform there should be no innovations unless required in order to bring a genuine and certain benefit to the Church, and taking care that any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing – must also be applied to efforts at the inculturation of the same Roman Rite. Inculturation, moreover, requires a necessary length of time, lest the authentic liturgical tradition suffer contamination due to haste and a lack of caution.

Finally, the purpose of pursuing inculturation is not in any way the creation of new families of rites, but aims rather at meeting the needs of a particular culture in such a way that adaptations introduced either in the missal or in combination with other liturgical books are not at variance with the distinctive character of the Roman Rite. (398)

And so, the Roman Missal, even if in different languages and with some variety of customs, must be preserved in the future as an instrument and an outstanding sign of the integrity and unity of the Roman Rite. (399)

Sung dialogues between presider, people (40)

Concern for hymn text

Privilege place of Gregorian chant (41)

Conferences of bishops approve melodies, musical forms, instruments for worship (393)

Importance attached to singing (40)

Latin for occasions of universality (41)

Creed, Our Father

3. Particular ministries

Psalmist (102)

*Schola cantorum* and other musicians (104)

4. Concern for uniformity (in the interest of unity?)

5. Importance of Silence (45)

6. Importance of Posture and movement (42 – 44)

Actions, processions, decorum

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