

# LITURGY NEWSLETTER

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A quarterly newsletter prepared by the National Liturgy Office  
of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

We're back!

The National Liturgy Office had to suspend the *Liturgy Newsletter* during the period given over to the enormous task of preparing, publishing and implementing the revised *Roman Missal*. As we become more accustomed to the new texts, we will be in a better position to evaluate the strengths and the weaknesses of the revision. However, during the many workshops in the years leading up to the implementation, it was evident that there is a great hunger for a deeper understanding of the Eucharist and the manner of its celebration. It is time now to move into the period of ongoing catechesis about the gift of the liturgy in our lives.

The revised texts have provoked various reactions across the board. In my experience of more than thirty years as a pastor, I cannot recall hearing people comment on the opening Collect or the Preface when leaving Mass on Sunday. I have, however, often heard people talking about two things – the homily and the music. In the many workshops conducted in preparation for the arrival of the new Missal, workshops concerning music in the revised Missal consistently drew the largest number of participants. Hence, we have decided to dedicate this edition of the Newsletter to music in the liturgy. It is our prayerful hope that we all seize this opportunity to improve and solidify good musical practice in the celebration of the liturgy.



Father Bill Burke  
Director, National Liturgy Office

## AN INVITATION TO CONSIDER OUR MUSIC PRACTICE

By Heather Reid  
*National Council for Liturgy*

During the past year, many people have been involved in the formation and education of Catholics across Canada regarding the revised Mass (*Roman Missal*) texts and the revised *General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)*.

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I was privileged to help music ministers in the Maritimes: (Charlottetown PEI, Kentville NS, Moncton NB and Halifax NS) and Ottawa ON consider the challenges that these new texts and instructions present to music ministers and especially to the ordained.

What I think is noteworthy and useful is that these revisions have provided the opportunity for probably the most extensive liturgical education in the English-speaking Catholic world since Vatican II. Indeed, I suggest that there has been more formation and education of both clergy and laity this time than there was back in the 1960's following the Council, when even more was entirely new! We have been invited to consider our liturgical practice: what we are doing well and what needs to be tweaked or improved.

So much of what is in the revised *GIRM* is not new! It's been there for forty plus years. For music ministers, the revised *GIRM* re-emphasizes that the liturgy is sung; that music is integral to the liturgical act and action, and that it is not just an add-on or an option (at least on Sunday).

The revised *GIRM*, to cite a few examples, lauds the importance of silence, the necessity for sung Eucharistic prayer acclamations (Holy Holy, Mystery of Faith, Amen) and the Communion procession hymn. These were in the previous *GIRM* but have not always been well implemented.

At the end of one of the workshops, a priest spoke to me and stated that he had never heard any of what I had spoken about regarding music in the *GIRM*. This was real evidence to me of two things: the formation for the changes of Vatican II was lacking, and what a wonderful opportunity these revisions (whether or not we agree with all of them) has afforded the Church in Canada for updating and formation. The numbers of music ministers, from small country parishes to large urban ones, who came for help, information, formation and challenge were numerous. In Ottawa alone for example, there were three workshops for music ministers. Overwhelmingly music ministers wanted to hear what affects their ministry because they are committed to improving their contribution. They wanted to know how to better enable their parish communities to pray and praise God through music.

Although presiders have had to learn the most in terms of new texts, parish communities are slowly learning the parts which are new to them. At my own parish, we are still hearing, "and also with you ... your spirit." But we have learned a new Mass setting (one of the three Canadian settings by Geoffrey Angeles) and slowly the people in the pews are beginning to sing it from memory. A new Mass setting usually takes at least a year to be totally learned and sung from the heart, so don't despair if your congregation is not yet doing that.

Let us capitalize on this opportunity to further the formation of all liturgical ministers and maybe even more importantly of the assembly who gathers each week to 'praise God and intercede for the life of the world.'

## NEXT STEPS IN THE FORMATION OF LITURGICAL MUSICIANS

By Bernadette Gasslein

*Bernadette Gasslein, editor of Canada's award-winning pastoral magazine, Celebrate!, was involved in offering workshops for the implementation of the Roman Missal in Canada. She holds a Licence in Sacred Theology with Specialization in Pastoral Catechetics from the Institut Catholique de Paris. As a young pianist, she earned an A.R.C.T. in performance in piano from the Royal Conservatory of Toronto.*

The new translation of the *Roman Missal* has been launched. Those of us who were flying and/or driving around the country preparing for its implementation are recovering from the process. We hardly dare ask the question, "What comes next?" But it's a question that we not only need to ask, but also to answer.

First of all, let's look at what was. Most of the workshops I presented were offered to musicians. If the workshops were not directed specifically to musicians, they nonetheless attracted many musicians who were interested and/or curious. The workshops were terrific opportunities to meet lots of engaged people. The interest of musicians was a good indicator of their commitment to their ministry. At the same time, as we got to know these people during the course of daylong workshops, it became abundantly clear that in many instances, people were doing their ministry with little musical or liturgical formation. Their commitment is considerable and generous. Most want to do the right thing. But many have never been offered—or availed themselves of—the formation they need to be able to understand what their ministry involves. For instance, a walk through the Mass outlining the demands of the *GIRM* in terms of music at different parts of the Mass was a great revelation to many people who were veteran music ministers.

Many people asked for more: there's no question that there's a hunger in the land for knowledge and understanding. Many participants travelled great distances, sometimes in less than ideal driving conditions and even took days off from their jobs to attend workshops. In some places people asked that their priests receive the same formation. In many instances the clergy were conspicuous by their absence, even though they, by necessity, are often the first-line formators for their musicians.

### WHAT, THEN, MIGHT COME NEXT?

#### 1. Attend to the basics

There were clear differences between dioceses where basic formation is offered regularly to musicians, and those where it has not been offered. However, what engaged people across the board was not simply the rules or norms of the *GIRM*, but how they connected with and expressed the theology of the rites: the rules became meaningful, instead of just another rule. Giving people this understanding helped them both to accept change and to understand the role of their ministry. In contrast, a pastor who had attended a workshop

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### The Role of Music in the Liturgy

The following fifteen points in the sidebar (pages 4-18) are quotations from *Companion to the CBW III*.

1. The purpose of music in the liturgy is to give glory to God and to sanctify God's faithful people.

returned to his parish and simply ordered the musicians to change the point at which they began the communion hymn without explaining the role of the communion hymn in the communion rite, even though an extensive explanation had been offered at the workshop. When I arrived for a follow-up session, I was greeted with hostility until I provided the explanation.

- a. Offer annual workshops on the basics of liturgy for liturgical musicians. Insist that new musicians participate in these workshops. Schedule the workshops in a couple of locations and at a couple of different times so that busy people can participate. Alternatively, consider recording a session and posting it on your diocesan website so that people can learn at their convenience.
- b. Offer a second workshop that deals with the spirituality of an aspect of the liturgy. You might want to rotate over a two- or three-year cycle among different parts of the liturgy: the gathering rites, the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of the Eucharist and Dismissal.
- c. Include a workshop on the basics of liturgical music in diocesan clergy days. Priests are often called upon to explain to music ministers what they should be doing. Often, however, priests are as poorly informed as musicians. Because they function as authority figures and educators within the community, it is important that they understand the principles that undergird liturgical music as they are articulated within the Catholic Church in Canada. (See *Guidelines for Liturgical Music in Canada* in *Companion to CBW III*, and the online resource, by clicking [Pastoral Notes on the GIRM](#)).

## 2. Help musicians understand the liturgical year

Musicians need to have a clear understanding of the theology and spirituality of the various liturgical seasons so they can choose appropriate hymn texts and music. While the *Guidelines for Liturgical Music in Canada* recommend that one person (a "director of music") select the music for the whole parish, this is rarely the situation in practice. In many parishes, there are as many people selecting music as there are groups. If groups are not practising regularly, they tend to fall back on what they know when they're choosing at the last minute (the week before they are "on" is the last minute!). This, for instance, makes it difficult for people to integrate new pieces appropriately into parish repertoire. Repertoire refers, then, to what a particular group knows, rather than to what the parish knows and can sing.

Sometimes people think that it's simply enough to draw from lists of hymns for each Sunday provided by different publications and websites. These can be useful, but they short-circuit the work that music ministers need to do to understand the relationship between the liturgy itself and the texts and melodies they choose.

Helping musicians understand the liturgical year also raises very practical questions of when we prepare for a particular season. January may feel too early to practise for the Triduum. But to be well-prepared for Lent, the Triduum and Easter, or Advent and Christmas, for that matter, we must begin to practise a couple of months ahead of time so that we can exercise our leadership roles appropriately. In some instances, this may mean picking music three or four months ahead of the season, scheduling regular weekly practises, and benefiting from the discipline of this practice.

Musicians sometimes resist the seasonal approach because it means that they cannot change all the music every week. For instance, if they adopt the best practice of using the same communion hymn throughout the Advent season, they will need some help to transition out of the mentality that says “we have to do something different every week in order to do our ministry properly” to one that recognizes that the assembly will better participate if a high level of repetition is maintained throughout a season.

- a. Begin with the most important season of the liturgical year: The Easter Triduum. Music is central to the Triduum, and the revised translation will mean a number of changes, including the text of the *Exsultet*. Schedule workshops on the Triduum no later than January: Fall is a better time, both from the perspective of travel in Canadian winters, and from appropriate lead time. If parishes maintain a fairly stable repertoire from year-to-year, there will be fewer new things to learn, but if they have not yet appropriated this wisdom or if a new group of musicians ministers at the Triduum from year-to-year, this feast will prove very challenging.
- b. Schedule workshops on other liturgical seasons well ahead of each season. Address the readings of the season, its spirituality, seasonal psalms, and how the Church describes the season. Examine the texts of a variety of hymns and songs to see how well they capture the spirituality of a particular season. *Celebrate in Song* offers several new pieces for the seasons of Lent and Advent. Examine how these pieces capture the sense of the seasons.
- c. Encourage parishes to think in terms of seasonal parish musical repertoire, rather than week-to-week selections. This constitutes a major paradigm shift requiring all groups to pool repertoire and work together. Some would find this very challenging. Plan workshops to help parishes assess and grow their repertoire.

### 3. Pay close attention to text

One of the most startling comments that I heard fairly often was, “You mean the texts are actually important? I usually just choose a song because I like the music.”

Catholic liturgical music is text-heavy. Almost immediately after Vatican II, long before we had received the first *Roman Missal* in

2. “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 (cf. Col 3.16). Singing is the sign of the heart’s joy (cf. Acts 2.46).” Indeed it arises from joy and, if we look closer at it, from love. Singing and making music belong to lovers. Convinced of our human need of praising God, the One we love, at all times, Saint Augustine states: “When the brethren are assembled in church, why should the time not be devoted to the singing of sacred songs, except of course during a reading or a sermon, or while the presiding minister is praying aloud, or the deacon is leading the joint prayer of the congregation? At other times not thus occupied, I do not see what could be a more excellent, useful, and holy exercise for a Christian congregation.”

3. The singing of liturgical texts adds nobility to the words of our prayer.

English, the Vatican *Instruction of the Congregation of Rites on Music in the Liturgy* wrote, “The use of musical instruments to accompany the singing can act as a support to the voices, render participation easier, and achieve a deeper union in the assembly. However, their sound should not so overwhelm the voices that it is difficult to make out the text ...” (64). That texts used in the liturgy must be approved by the Conference of Bishops indicates their importance in the eyes of the Church. We owe people good musical texts, texts that they can pray with and that are worthy of the liturgy. Yet too often musicians default to the pieces that are most familiar to them; this is particularly true in situations where practices are irregular or held shortly before the liturgy at which people are to minister. There is no time for learning new music or engaging with new texts.

Texts must express Catholic doctrine. Many musicians rightfully protest that they don’t feel competent to make these kinds of theological judgments. Some pastors find the task daunting, too, particularly since poetry, the language of hymn and song text, may not be a literary genre with which they feel comfortable. There is, after all, an art to capturing solid theology in as few as 32 syllables! Both pastors and musicians can be assured that pieces they are choosing fall within the relatively broad sweep of orthodox Catholic teaching if they choose pieces from either *Catholic Book of Worship III* or *Celebrate in Song*. Both resources have benefited from the close scrutiny of the Bishops of the Episcopal Commission for Liturgy of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and/or the National Council for Liturgical Music. Other publications, even Catholic ones that sport *imprimaturs*, have not benefited from this close scrutiny, however.

This close scrutiny is particularly necessary when we use texts from other Christian traditions and churches within the liturgy—or even in other contexts. Hymn texts are particularly challenging because the words we sing at liturgy, because we repeat them often, form our religious understanding and imagination without our even knowing it. We sing many texts from other Christian denominations, but not every text. Of particular concern right now are texts that come from the Evangelical/Fundamentalist Christian traditions, which often articulate theologies of the paschal mystery, sin and grace, sacraments, worship, and the human person that are very different from the Catholic understanding. This is a fairly new phenomenon in the Catholic Church, born of the growing popularity of Christian rock, and its use in various kinds of youth ministry. These texts are often used in praise celebrations in youth ministry, and youth ministers often argue that kids don’t care about the words, they just like the music. Whether this is actually the case doesn’t excuse us from doing our due diligence in terms of texts. Many of these evangelically oriented young Catholics are quite concerned with both Catholic identity, as well as orthodoxy, and such an examination of the content of texts can support them in this concern.

- a. Plan sessions with musicians (and pastors!) to explore various texts and the differences between the types of texts that are represented in any hymnal. Compare the different

ways God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, and human beings are presented in various texts. Match different texts with different tunes to see how the music complements or detracts from the text.

- b. Organize a similar session for youth ministers, teachers, and youth band types who might more frequently gravitate to Praise and Worship music. Check out texts of favourite songs, and compare them with the Church's teaching on various topics represented. Catechesis through music: hardly original, but very accessible!

#### 4. PROMOTE SINGING OF PSALMS

For many Catholics, "psalm" has become synonymous with "responsorial psalm," and yet our musical tradition also includes psalm singing to accompany the entrance, offertory and communion processions. The psalms put the words of the scriptures into the mouths of God's people, enabling us to sing the same prayers that Christ himself sang. *Celebrate in Song* includes a number of settings of the psalms that are useful for these moments in the celebration. Both *CBW III* and other musical resources used in the Catholic community contain a variety of psalm settings.

Psalm singing needs an important musical ministry, that of the psalmist. Responsorial settings rely on this ministry, which can enable the assembly to participate in different ways in the liturgy.

- a. Offer workshops on the spirituality of the psalms.
- b. Select a variety of psalms in different kinds of settings, and workshop them.
- c. Teach those who select music how to draw on the entrance, offertory and communion antiphons of the liturgy when selecting music.

#### 5. Foster musical skills

No doubt you will need to integrate this aspect of formation into each session.

There are many different types of musicians serving the liturgy today. I'm a classically trained musician who loves to cling to the notes as written. The mere thought of having to play by ear brings on a panic attack. But recently I've gotten involved in a drumming group that performs traditional music from different cultures. I'm struggling to let go of my need for the notes, and to appropriate by ear these traditional rhythm patterns that have been passed down from generation to generation. The patterns are "notated" in entirely different ways from what I know; the "notation" refers more to handing (how the drum is struck) than to the duration of the notes; it has nothing to do with the time signature. For the first time in my life, I'm trying to make music without a secure knowledge of the "tools of my trade." It's challenging! A few extremely talented folks cross over readily from one musical culture to the other. Most of the rest of us just have to work hard:

4. Music is a communication medium that gathers up the distinctive qualities of each individual and weaves them into a whole. A single voice expresses the faith and love of one person. Communal song is shaped by the accumulation of many voices expressing faith and love. Therefore, communal song is a corporate act of prayer and praise.

5. Congregational song unites not only our words and voices, but our hearts and minds. The hymn texts provide us with a common language with which to respond to God. If the texts are chosen from hymnals carefully prepared to serve the liturgy, then the words will indeed express our belief. The texts will also shape our understanding of God's gracious love, the redemptive act of Christ and the Spirit-filled community of disciples.

practising scales and sight-reading in one culture, practising drumming patterns in another. But I also realize that, from a different perspective, I'm in the position of a lot of the musicians who serve our parishes: these generous and talented folks who play by ear, don't read music, don't know what the notes refer to, don't get a time signature. They are doing well in their ministry, but they could do even better if they read music and got more skilled in using their instruments, since Church music depends so much on these skills. Developing such skills will open up the possibility of using different styles of music, including chant, in the liturgy. Being able to read notes engenders musical unity: we can all, literally, be on the same page, and gain from it. And, in an era in which many parishes are becoming much more culturally diverse, the ability to cross over among different styles can, paradoxically, foster unity within the singing assembly as long as no one slips into performance mode.

That's why we need to include in each of these sessions, at least three basic skill development workshops: one for guitarists, one for keyboard players, and a final one for vocalists. Sight singing would be helpful for everyone. Leaders/directors/conductors of groups/choirs could benefit from sessions that help them understand how to determine appropriate tempi and appropriate use of harmony. These same individuals need to learn to listen, not just to the music itself, but also to the dynamic and balance between the various ministerial roles in the liturgy, and learn to correct imbalances that creep in.

Another area of real need is for skill development for parish organists. The Catholic community today has few people who know how to play the organ; this lack will result in fewer and fewer people taking up this instrument seriously. While much liturgical music today has been written with a piano or electronic keyboard in mind, the organ still has a central place in the music of our liturgies, particularly to accompany hymn singing. Played well, the organ breaks through the "let's sing along with the choir" approach to help the assembly find its voice as the primary music maker in the assembly, and clearly invites the musical leadership to enhance the song of the assembly, not take its place.

Clearly there's a lot of formation left to do. As we get over our fatigue, and get used to the new translation, we can build on what we began in preparation for the implementation of the *Roman Missal*. To borrow from a song that we wouldn't use in the liturgy, "We've only just begun."

## ANTIPHONS FOR CANADA

Dr. Glenn CJ Byer

*Dr. Glenn CJ Byer was born and raised in the Archdiocese of Edmonton. He holds the Doctorate in Sacred Liturgy from the Pontifical Institute of Liturgy in Rome and is currently the Director of the Publications Service for the CCCB.*

It may come as a surprise to musicians in most parishes in this country that there is a group of devoted church musicians who would like to eliminate their entire repertoire of music at Mass.



This group would have us sing a chant version of the antiphons, perhaps in English, as found in the new *Roman Missal*.

When we look at the huge number of antiphons in the *Roman Missal* as well as the even larger collection in the *Graduale Romanum* – which includes offertory antiphons – it seems to me that this will not happen in Canada any time soon. I am not commenting on whether or not it *should* happen, I am simply saying that it won't. Call it a legitimate development, call it a cultural adaptation, call it an aberration for that matter, the reality is that people here like to sing songs and do not, in general, have the skill, inclination or cultural aptitude to chant antiphons.

But there is a valid argument here. The antiphons are part of the approved liturgical texts and they have been part of our musical tradition for over a thousand years. So maybe there are a couple of things that we might do to reintegrate at least some of the powerful texts of the antiphons into the living tradition of the Church in Canada. And just so we know that we are on relatively solid ground, it is only the text of the antiphons that bears the *recognitio* in the *Roman Missal*; the music does not. We are free to develop a particularly Canadian approach to this question.

First, I might suggest that we look to having the whole of Catholic Canada sing selected antiphons – the actual words of antiphons – for the high holy days of the life of the Church. The list would be short: probably any of us could come up with one. There would certainly be the antiphons for the processions at Palm Sunday and the Body and Blood of Christ, the washing of the feet on Holy Thursday, the sprinkling of the water on Holy Saturday and so on. Picking a select few makes the introduction of antiphons a reasonable goal – the complete replacement of songs with antiphons is not. I might also suggest we develop one for the funeral liturgy, especially for the commendation of the body into the grave – a moment that cries for something that can be sung *a cappella* by all.

Second, I would suggest that we develop a single set of simple and singable metered antiphons. There is no widespread Catholic tradition of English chant so it should be metered to help marginal musicians such as myself to play them and to help everyone to join in the singing. They should be simple and singable melodies, but interesting enough to hold the attention of larger groups. In Canada, there is a custom of such things. If I were to walk into almost any parish in Canada and intone the Glory to God from the *New Good Shepherd Mass*, there would be a substantial (though shrinking) group of people that would be able to sing along. It was not that it was particularly exceptional as a piece of music, but it was ours. The four Mass settings in *Celebrate in Song* are, I assume, designed to serve the same purpose for the revision of the Mass texts.

In the long history of the Church, the antiphons of the liturgy have been sung in various ways. We find, in the start of the third Christian millennium, that we're bombarded by solo singing on our iPods, solo voices in the many talent shows on television, and even in a good chunk of the liturgical music which comes to us from our

6. Music also provides the assembly with a melody for its dialogue, either with God or with other ministers in the assembly. For example, during the liturgy of the Eucharist, the preface dialogue engages the presiding priest and assembly in powerful dialogue which leads all to participate in their respective ways in the one great eucharist prayer.

friends in the publishing houses (full disclosure: among them my former employer) south of the border. The question for us is: How can we settle on a single set of antiphons and a single set of melodies that serve the needs of a country as diverse and multicultural as ours?

Well, here's a thought: why not have a national body, and/or a national publishing house – not necessarily mine – come up with a set? Let's pick a half dozen or so antiphons for us to learn, ones that will be used especially during Holy Week, and get music composed by Canadian musicians to respond to the issues I mentioned above, and publish them. This is totally possible. For example, here's a Hosanna to the Son of David for Palm Sunday by John Dawson.

## Hosanna Son of David

D Dsus4 D Dsus2 Bm G G/F# Em

Ho-san-na to the Son of Da-vid. Bles-sed is He who

5 D G A F#m G

comes in the name of the Lord the King of Is-ra-el Ho-

9 D Bm G A D

san-na! Ho-san-na! Ho-san-na in the High-est.

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It is in a modern style, has a meter and guitar chords, and is quite singable. Sure we could have others, but why not, for the sake of participation, just pick one as our shared antiphon for that ritual moment? Then, as the years go by, we don't have to worry about where in Canada we are on Palm Sunday, we'll know what to sing. And then once these catch on we can look at all of Advent and then...and then...we might have a very different discussion around the place of antiphons in a decade or two.

## IS IT TIME FOR A PARISH LITURGICAL MUSIC AUDIT?

By Clare V. Johnson

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In the business world, when a corporation moves to implement a new strategic approach to conducting its core business, often an internal audit is carried out to determine areas of strength and weakness in production and delivery, management and implementation. Such an audit might investigate questions like: are the systems, procedures and equipment currently being employed achieving the stated aims

7. Music is integral to the structure of all of our liturgical rites and therefore, integral to our worship of God.

and objectives of the corporation? What operational problems can be identified and what solutions can be recommended to remedy those problems? According to what standards will future goals and outcomes be measured and by what methods will they be achieved? An auditing process can be somewhat uncomfortable as it shines a light on all aspects of a corporation's operations (positive and negative), but it can also be instructive as it offers an impartial view of what is actually occurring and makes recommendations to aid in the successful achievement of long-term goals.

In 2002, Pope John Paul II promulgated the fifth *General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM 2002)* since Vatican II, in order to implement a new approach to and updated understanding of the official rules, rubrics and expectations for the proper celebration of the church's central ritual, the Eucharist. This instruction serves as a preface to the third edition of the *Roman Missal* following Vatican II, abrogating, correcting and updating previous general instructions,<sup>1</sup> and setting forth clearly the church's current approach to celebrating the Eucharist. In introducing a new version of the *Roman Missal*, the church has made some adjustments to the manner and language in which we celebrate the ongoing presence of Christ in our midst, giving glory and praise to God. With the implementation of the new translation of the *Roman Missal* and its 2002 General Instruction, the church has provided an opportunity for local parishes to consider the manner in which they celebrate the Eucharist, and to determine whether what they are doing currently, aligns with official understandings and procedures for the correct performance of this central ritual act.

The *GIRM* can be a useful tool for local parish communities to use in conducting an audit of their liturgical celebrations as a whole or of individual aspects of those celebrations, such as music. The *GIRM* is a touchstone against which local Eucharistic celebrations can be measured. Understood well, the *GIRM* can serve both as a guidebook for celebrating the liturgy properly and as a diagnostic tool to inform those charged with preparing liturgical celebrations, regarding the degree to which they are in accord with official church expectations. Such use of the *GIRM* can also highlight the extent to which local upgrading and re-focussing may be needed in order to achieve the liturgical goals and outcomes delineated by the church in this document.

Given the importance of the role played by music in the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy, it can be helpful to investigate what guidance the *GIRM* offers to musicians regarding the church's current expectations for the inclusion, choice and performance of music in the liturgy. Music is at once one of the most potent and one of the most contentious areas of the liturgy. Depending on how it is used, music can significantly add to or seriously detract from the overall liturgical celebration. Ill-chosen, ill-prepared or ill-performed music that has little regard for liturgical moment, season, musical

<sup>1</sup> See *A Commentary on the General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, eds. Edward Foley, Nathan D. Mitchell and Joanne M. Pierce (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press/Pueblo, 2007), vii.

8. Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious and active participation in the liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy.

## 9. The Ministers of Music

The primary minister of music is the assembly itself. Every member of the assembly is called to participate in the liturgy by way of acclamations, responses, psalms, antiphons and other songs. With the support of competent music ministers, the entire assembly is enabled to voice its song of praise to the God of salvation. By joining their voices in song the members of the assembly express their unity in Christ, acclaim Christ's presence in word and sacrament, and exercise their baptismal priesthood, offering a living sacrifice of praise to God.

ability or resources can be a source of disquiet, displeasure and distraction in the liturgy. Appropriately chosen and carefully prepared music that fits the liturgical moment, season, musical ability and resources of a parish can express what words alone cannot,<sup>2</sup> accessing a dimension of human expression, spirituality and experience that can be encountered in no other way, and constituting an unmatched vehicle for channelling the worshipping assembly's unified expression of its faith in God.

The numerous references to music in the *GIRM* underscore its status as a key element in the church's celebration of the Eucharist. Beyond emphasizing the importance of liturgical music in general, the *GIRM* elucidates certain principles<sup>3</sup> with regard to the choice, preparation, performance and place of music in the liturgy, which can be a helpful guide to those interested in conducting a parish liturgical music audit.

## 1. SINGING IS NORMATIVE

Arguably the most prominent of the *GIRM*'s liturgical music principles is that singing is normative in the liturgy. Paragraphs 39 and 40 point out that from the earliest times, singing has constituted a central part of Christian prayer (see Col 3:16 and Acts 2:46), and that "great importance should therefore be attached to the use of singing in the celebration of the Mass..."<sup>4</sup> The *GIRM* instructs that while it is not always necessary to sing everything that can be sung in the liturgy, ministers and assemblies should sing on Sundays and holy days of obligation.<sup>5</sup> The use of 'should' in this directive indicates obligation and normativity regarding singing. Paragraph 115 also instructs that it is appropriate "whenever possible" that the celebration of Mass with a congregation include singing.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the *GIRM* singing is preferred over speaking in the liturgy for those texts which "are of themselves meant to be sung."<sup>7</sup> For example, paragraph 48 states "if there is no singing at the entrance, the antiphon in the Missal is recited..."<sup>8</sup> The clear implication here is that singing is normative at the entrance, and every effort should be made to enable and encourage singing at this moment in the liturgy. Whenever the *GIRM* lists the option of either singing or speaking an element of the liturgy (such as the *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Sanctus*, etc.), the sung option is always listed ahead of the spoken option, which offers a strong indication that singing rather than speaking these elements is the church's preference.

<sup>2</sup> See USCCB "Music in Catholic Worship," no. 24, in *The Liturgy Documents: A Parish Resource*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Elizabeth Hoffman (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1991), p. 280.

<sup>3</sup> What is said of music in the *GIRM* is based on and makes reference to the official documents on music which have preceded it. The *GIRM* presumes that many of the principles enunciated in earlier documents such as *Musicam Sacram* still pertain. The footnotes of the *GIRM* offer useful resources for discovering in further detail the church's thought on particular points regarding music in the liturgy.

<sup>4</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (Washington D.C.: USCCB, 2003), no. 40, p. 24. (Hereafter referred to as *GIRM*.)

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

## 2. IMPORTANCE OF PLANNING, PREPARATION AND DECORUM

The *GIRM* instructs that the aim of careful planning is to facilitate the full, conscious and active participation of the faithful in the liturgical act.<sup>9</sup> Those charged with preparing the liturgy should aim to ensure the harmony and diligence of that preparation "... in accord with the Missal and other liturgical books,"<sup>10</sup> which means that liturgical musicians should be educated regarding what is in the Missal and other liturgical books if they are to carry out properly their task of facilitating the assembly's full, conscious and active participation in the liturgy via music. Further, as music is one of the liturgy's "perceptible signs that nourish, strengthen, and express faith,"<sup>11</sup> "the utmost care must be taken"<sup>12</sup> in the choice and arrangement of music as one of the liturgy's "forms and elements set forth by the church," so that the full, conscious and active participation of the faithful in the liturgy may be facilitated, and so that their spiritual needs may be met.<sup>13</sup>

According to the *GIRM* it is the responsibility of the Bishop to promote the dignity and beauty of the liturgy, to which music (along with sacred space and art) "should contribute as greatly as possible."<sup>14</sup> It is up to the local Bishop then, to ensure that music as a central element of the liturgy is supported, resourced and encouraged in the parishes and schools under his jurisdiction, just as it is the responsibility of local parishes and schools to ensure that the liturgical music they perform is dignified, beautiful and "carried out with decorum."<sup>15</sup> The choice of music for use in the liturgy is crucial in assuring that these qualities are evident as far as possible in liturgical celebrations.<sup>16</sup>

An important way of ensuring that liturgical music is performed with decorum, is to ensure that sufficient time is allocated for the sung parts of the liturgy, particularly those parts where the singing constitutes the liturgical act, e.g., the *Gloria* or the Creed, and that these elements are not truncated or omitted in service of 'getting to the important parts' of the liturgy (i.e., the liturgy of the Word or the liturgy of the Eucharist). Some consider the Introductory Rites simply to be preliminaries ahead of 'the main event'. However, the layering of these varied rites one on top of the other is necessary in order to clothe us in and raise to consciousness in us some of the complexities of our relationship with God. Acknowledging that we are redeemed sinners who need the opportunity to express both glorification and penitence as we enter into the presence of God, can help us to prepare to hear the Word of God honestly (not triumphantly nor cringingly).

<sup>9</sup> See *Ibid.*, no. 18, p. 16 and cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* no. 14, in *The Liturgy Documents: A Parish Resource*, p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 111, p. 52.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 20, p. 17. Cf. *SC* no. 59, p. 21.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 20, p. 17.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 22, p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 44, p. 27.

<sup>16</sup> This point will be expanded upon further below.

10. A competent director of music ministry coordinates the efforts of all music ministers within the community. The director, who must possess a good knowledge of music and the liturgy, is responsible for the selection of music for all liturgical celebrations and for the training and on-going formation of the music ministers who serve the community. Frequently, the director of music ministry is also the choir director.

11. Because of the unique ministry which the cantor exercises, in addition to musical skills the cantor must have a knowledge of the scriptures and understand the place of the psalms and biblical canticles in the liturgy.

### 3. SILENCE

The *GIRM* emphasises the importance of silence in the liturgy, or when not to use music. Paragraph 32 instructs that when the presider is speaking the presidential texts “there should be no other prayers or singing, and the organ or other musical instruments should be silent.”<sup>17</sup> Paragraph 45 emphasises the importance of the observance of silence at designated times.<sup>18</sup> Hence, musicians should not give in to the temptation to fill every liturgical space with music out of fear of being in silence, nor should they feel that the high points of the liturgy must be enhanced by musical accompaniment of some sort. Sometimes the most profound liturgical moments take place in silence, for example, the Bishop’s laying on of hands in the rite of priestly ordination, where the inclusion of music clearly would be inappropriate and distracting, instead of being an enhancement.

The silences in the liturgy serve numerous purposes and seldom are they ‘empty’; on the contrary, they are often ‘charged’ with the internalised prayers of the assembly, their unvoiced intentions and unarticulated desires into which the intrusion of music can be unwelcome. The silences can offer needed moments of respite from what can be a relentless progression of sound in the liturgy (words and music) which can become burdensome if not balanced by respectful, reverent moments of silence.

### 4. PROGRESSIVE SOLEMNITY

While not named as such in the *GIRM*, the ‘principle of progressive solemnity’<sup>19</sup> in regard to liturgical music is apparent in the directive that “...preference should be given to those sung parts of the liturgy that are of greater importance, especially those sung by the priest, deacon or lector with the people responding (i.e., dialogues) or by the priest and people together.”<sup>20</sup> This principle of progressive solemnity was identified and explained in the Sacred Congregation of Rites’ 1967 instruction, *Musicam Sacram*,<sup>21</sup> which taught that while the liturgy licitly can be celebrated without singing, singing is preferred, and the more solemn the liturgical celebration, the more elements of the liturgy should be sung. Ideally as a minimum, the dialogues between presider and assembly should be sung, along with the Ordinary parts of the Mass (*Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, Mystery of Faith/Memorial Acclamation, Great Amen, and Agnus Dei*). Entrance and communion antiphons, Creed, prayers of intercession, psalmody and offertory song are of lesser importance, but still should be sung where possible. While it has become customary for many congregations to conclude the liturgy with a hymn or song as the presider and ministers process out of the worship space, the *GIRM* makes no mention of music at this point in the liturgy.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>19</sup> For more information on this principle see United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship* (Washington D.C.: USCCB, 2008), p. 32-36.

<sup>20</sup> *GIRM*, no. 40, p.24.

<sup>21</sup> See paragraphs 7, 16, 29-31 of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction, *Musicam Sacram: On Music in the Liturgy*, (5 March 1967): AAS 59 (1967): 302, 305.

One implication of this principle of progressive solemnity is that resorting to the priest and assembly simply listening to recordings of other people singing the ordinary, psalmody and hymnody of the Mass, or replacing the assembly's song with that of the choir in the singing of these parts of the liturgy is not at all preferred.

## 5. CHOICE OF LITURGICAL MUSIC AND IMPORTANCE OF LATIN CHANT

One of the most important planning tasks of the liturgical musician is choosing what music will be included in the liturgy. Different parishes are gifted with varying levels of musical personnel, resources, equipment and ability which will delimit the range of musical choices available to them. The *GIRM* specifies that adaptations can be made by the priest celebrant in choosing which rites, texts, chants, readings, prayers, explanations and gestures should be used in the liturgy, so that these "respond better to the needs, preparation, and culture of the participants."<sup>22</sup>

Working within the constraints of the local situation and in concert with the priest celebrant, those charged with choosing liturgical music should bear in mind the *GIRM*'s directives regarding musical types, forms, purposes and languages. Local liturgical music leaders should make an effort to carry out those directives to the best of their ability, recognizing the need to learn some new music and texts that, while unfamiliar at first, will help to bring local practice into consonance with the updated official expectations for liturgical celebrations indicated by the *GIRM*.

Paragraph 41 of the *GIRM* instructs that (all other things being equal), in choosing music for liturgy, "Gregorian chant holds pride of place." It goes on to state that other types of sacred music are not excluded provided they correspond with the spirit of the liturgical action and foster full conscious and active participation of the faithful.<sup>23</sup> There has been a tendency to allow chant to fall into disuse in many local parishes. Being reminded of the pre-eminence of chant may help parish musicians to remember to include it among the music chosen for liturgy. Teaching local congregations to sing the simpler chant settings of the Ordinary included in the *Roman Missal* is to be encouraged. An advantage of learning to sing a simple chant-setting is that the Ordinary of the Mass can still be sung by the congregation even if there are no instrumentalists available to accompany their song.

Paragraph 41 also directs that it is fitting that the faithful "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."<sup>24</sup> Assigning the singing of Latin chant to the choir or schola exclusively (and thereby potentially discouraging its singing by the assembly), is insufficient for the parts of the Mass that rightfully should be sung by the assembly.

<sup>22</sup> *GIRM*, no. 24, p. 18.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 41, p. 24.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

12. At all times, the choir is part of the assembly and enriches its prayer.

13. As servants of the Church's prayer, organists and other instrumentalists provide support for the song of the assembly.

With the degeneration of overall congregational exposure to, knowledge of and comfort with both the chant genre and the Latin language since Vatican II, parish musicians may need to engage in an active teaching program to aid local congregations in learning (often from scratch) sufficient basic ecclesiastical Latin pronunciation so that they can participate in singing together at least some parts of the Ordinary of the Mass, especially the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. While this may sound like an onerous and difficult task, it need not be. Beginning by introducing and practicing short sections of Latin (aided by a pronunciation guide in a handout or in the parish bulletin) can help local assemblies to gain aural familiarity with Latin, and eventually achieve a sufficient level of comfort with singing in Latin so that it becomes commonplace once more. The *GIRM* in no way suggests that Latin will or ought to displace the vernacular in the celebration of the liturgy, rather that it must not be allowed to fall into complete disuse.

## 6. MUSICAL FORM AND PURPOSE

The *GIRM* instructs that it is important for those choosing music for liturgy to utilise a variety of musical forms, that is, singing alternately by the choir and the people, cantor and people, entirely by the people, or by the choir alone.<sup>25</sup> The *GIRM* enshrines as liturgical law the practice of using the organ and other musical instruments with moderation during Advent,<sup>26</sup> and playing them "only to support the singing" during Lent.<sup>27</sup> Demarcating the changing liturgical seasons through greater and lesser use of instrumental accompaniment can serve to reinforce the assembly's experience of the different flavours of the liturgical year. It is easy to underutilise the variety of musical forms available and to become routine in the manner in which we perform music in the liturgy. Often musicians forget that it can be an empowering experience for the assembly to sing without instrumental accompaniment on occasion, and that often when the instruments rejoin the assembly after a break, the volume and intensity of the assembly's song tends to swell even more.

Identifying and respecting the liturgical purpose of each piece of music is crucial in choosing appropriate music for liturgy. The decision-making process in regard to musical choice needs to move beyond mere personal preference or guarding against boredom among the musicians, to ensuring that the musical choices actually reflect what each piece of music is supposed to do at its particular moment in the liturgy. For example, *GIRM* paragraph 47 specifies that the purpose of the entrance 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."<sup>28</sup> Given such

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 48, p. 28. This is a restricted understanding of the notion of musical form pertaining primarily to performance procedures or options for using music within the liturgy.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 313, p. 106.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 47, p. 28.



a specific list of purposes for this chant (entrance song or hymn), choosing 'just anything' will not suffice. The choice must be one that fulfils the purpose of the entrance chant or it is an inappropriate choice. Paragraph 86 explains that the purpose of the Communion chant is "...to express the communicants' union in spirit by means of their voices, to show joy of heart, and to highlight more clearly the 'communitarian' nature of the procession to receive Communion."<sup>29</sup> This suggests the appropriateness of a psalm or other canticle that can be sung at least in part by the entire congregation during the Communion procession rather than by a soloist or the choir alone (which risks silencing the community's voice).<sup>30</sup>

Another important aspect of musical choice is the need to ensure that the music chosen is of sufficient quality (compositionally, textually, and theologically) that it can bear repetition over many years' use in a local community's worship. Ensuring that an appropriate, well-chosen, durable and sufficiently-diverse<sup>31</sup> repertoire of music is taught to the assembly over a period of some years is one of the most vital tasks of a liturgical musician.

## 7. APPROPRIATE USE AND PLACEMENT OF MUSICIANS IN THE LITURGY

The *GIRM* specifies certain special roles for musicians within the liturgy, noting in particular that: "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 singing. What is said about the choir also applies, in accordance with the relevant norms, to other musicians, especially the organist."<sup>32</sup> *GIRM* insists that the choir should be placed appropriately relative to the congregation within the liturgical space<sup>33</sup> so that it can fulfil its function easily and effectively, but also so that its members can still be allowed "full sacramental participation in the Mass."<sup>34</sup> The placement of the organ and "other lawfully approved musical instruments should be carefully done in order to "sustain the singing of both the choir and the congregation" and so that they can "be heard with ease by all if they are played alone."<sup>35</sup>

The *GIRM* directs that it is appropriate to have a cantor or 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."<sup>36</sup> The *GIRM* assumes that priests and

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 86, p. 44.

<sup>30</sup> Different bishops' conferences permit slight adaptations for the music to be used at this point in the liturgy. For example, the adaptation of the *GIRM* for use in the United States of America indicates in that psalmody or antiphons can be used to accompany the Communion procession, as can appropriate liturgical songs which "can be sung either by the choir alone or by the choir or cantor with the people." *Ibid.*, no. 87, p. 44.

<sup>31</sup> Diversity in style, simplicity/complexity, language, ethnicity, tessitura, timbre, seasonal use, theology, scriptural basis, etc., ideally will be reflected in a parish's liturgical music repertoire.

<sup>32</sup> *GIRM*, no. 103, p. 50.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 294, p. 99.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 312, p. 105.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 313, p. 105.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 104, p. 50.

14. The leader of song does not stand at the ambo, but rather at another place which is visible to the assembly. In some cases the leader of song also serves as the cantor.

deacons will sing. While it is not as explicit as *Musicam Sacram* in its instructions regarding presiders who do not sing well,<sup>37</sup> the *GIRM* does indicate a clear preference for sung presidential leadership especially in the dialogues and when introducing the sung Creed.<sup>38</sup>

## 8. THE CONGREGATION HAS A RIGHT TO SING

Another important liturgical music principle present throughout the *GIRM* is that the congregation has a right to sing certain parts of the Mass. Paragraph 52 specifies that since the *Kyrie eleison* “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 the choir or cantor having a part in it.”<sup>39</sup> ‘Ordinarily done by all’ is the key phrase here – while the tropes of the *Kyrie* can be sung by choir or cantor, provision should be made for the entire assembly to join in the *Kyrie*. Paragraph 62 explains that the gospel acclamation “...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 it in the Gospel and professes its 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.”<sup>40</sup> The Creed too is a ritual act whereby the assembly professes its faith aloud and effects its unity of belief through a performance of the ritual act as a unison voice.<sup>41</sup> In the *Sanctus*, the whole congregation joins with the heavenly powers to sing to the glory of God.<sup>42</sup>

The choice of music for these ritual actions must not exclude the congregation’s participation. That there are certain elements of the liturgy that are reserved to the congregation makes it clear that the choir and instrumentalists must not usurp the congregation’s right to sing those parts of the Mass because this subverts the intentionality of the ritual. All that can be done should be done to aid the congregation in fulfilling its musical role within the Mass. Silencing the congregation by choosing a musical setting of the Ordinary in which they cannot participate is not the preference of the *GIRM*. The choice to utilise in the liturgy some of the concert Mass-settings (such as those from the Classical Period of music history) which exclude the assembly from singing their acclamations may need to be rethought in light of the *GIRM*.

15. In addition to participating in the song of the assembly, the presider adds dignity to the liturgical celebration by singing texts which are proper to the one who presides.

<sup>37</sup> *MS* no. 8 states: “Whenever, for a liturgical service which is to be celebrated in sung form, one can make a choice between various people, it is desirable that those who are known to be more proficient in singing be given preference; this is especially the case in more solemn liturgical celebrations and in those which either require more difficult singing, or are transmitted by radio or television. If, however, a choice of this kind cannot be made, and the priest or minister does not possess a voice suitable for the proper execution of the singing, he can render without singing one or more of the more difficult parts which concern him, reciting them in a loud and distinct voice. However, this must not be done merely for the convenience of the priest or minister.” *Musicam Sacram*, AAS 59 (1967): 302.

<sup>38</sup> *GIRM*, no. 68, p. 36.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 62, p. 34.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 68, p. 36.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 79b., p. 40.

One of the central, unifying ritual actions in the liturgy is the praying of the Lord's Prayer. It is important that when the Lord's Prayer is sung,<sup>43</sup> the setting chosen is one that is well-known or if it is a locally-composed setting known only to the regular praying community at a particular liturgy, that the music is made available for visitors so that they too can participate in the singing of this very important prayer of the liturgy. Being excluded from this prayer because one does not know the musical setting is most unfortunate and principles of liturgical hospitality and etiquette necessitate that liturgy planners should do everything possible to make the local musical setting of this prayer accessible to visitors.

## 9. THE PSALMIST IS A MINISTER OF THE WORD

The *GIRM* assumes that wherever possible, the responsorial Psalm will be sung. In paragraph 40, the lector is described as one of those who sing. While other paragraphs mention a 'cantor' or 'psalmist' in relation to the Psalm, paragraph 40 calls for the 'lector' to sing, hence whoever proclaims the psalm (whether sung or spoken) is a minister of the Word. This means that any directive pertaining to ministers of the Word must also apply to the psalmist in their sung proclamation of the Psalm. Paragraph 38 instructs that "...the tone of voice should correspond to the genre of the text itself," and "the tone should also be suited to the form of celebration and solemnity of the gathering."<sup>44</sup> Paragraph 101 directs that those serving as ministers of the Word "should be truly suited to perform this function and should receive careful preparation so that the faithful may develop in their hearts a warm and living love for Sacred Scripture."<sup>45</sup> Paragraph 102 specifies that in order to fulfil their role in the liturgy, "it is necessary that the psalmist have the ability for singing and a facility in correct pronunciation and diction."<sup>46</sup> This paragraph reinforces the notion that the psalmist is a minister of the Word by highlighting the need for them to sing well and pronounce the text of the Psalm correctly and distinctly. Hence is it inappropriate for someone to sing the Psalm if they are ill-prepared, lack clear diction while singing or are not truly suited to perform this function.

According to the *GIRM* paragraph 61, when the psalmist/cantor proclaims the Psalm he/she should be located at the ambo or another suitable place. Paragraph 309 states more explicitly that "... From the ambo only the readings, the responsorial Psalm, and the Easter proclamation (*Exsultet*) are to be proclaimed; it may be used also for giving the homily and for announcing the intentions of the Prayer of the Faithful. The dignity of the ambo requires that only a minister of the word should go up to it."<sup>47</sup> That the responsorial Psalm is to be sung from the ambo is an element of liturgical choreography that may need reinforcement in some parishes.

<sup>43</sup> See *ibid.*, no. 81, p. 42.

<sup>44</sup> See *ibid.*, no. 38, pp. 23-24.

<sup>45</sup> See *ibid.*, no. 101, pp. 49-50.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 102, p. 50.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 309, p. 103.

The following points (a-d) in the sidebar (pages 19-22) are quotations from the *National Bulletin on the Liturgy*, vol. 27, no.138, Fall 1994 pp. 185-190

- a. This vision has often been summed up in the Latin phrase of Prosper of Aquitaine, *Lex orandi statuat lex credendi*. What we do at worship (*lex orandi*), establishes what we believe (*lex credendi*). Note that I said: what we do. This vision includes not just the words but also the action of the ritual; music is an integral element of this doing.

## 10. RESPECT OFFICIAL LITURGICAL TEXTS AND DO NOT SUBSTITUTE OTHER TEXTS FOR THEM

The *GIRM* is quite explicit about the importance of maintaining the integrity of official liturgical texts. Paragraph 366 states that “it is not permitted to substitute other chants for those found in the Order of Mass, such as the *Agnus Dei*.”<sup>48</sup> Paragraph 53 directs that the text of the Gloria “may not be replaced by any other text”<sup>49</sup> while paragraph 57 instructs that “...it is unlawful to substitute other, non-biblical texts for the readings and responsorial Psalm, which contain the Word of God.”<sup>50</sup> While it is often easier for musicians to choose one of the many contemporary familiar Psalm settings which have appealing melodic lines but often paraphrase Psalm texts rather than quoting them accurately, the *GIRM* makes clear the principle that the integrity of the Psalm text (from the current approved lectionary) is to be privileged over the musical setting.<sup>51</sup> If the music does not set the official Psalm text, then it should not be used during the Liturgy of the Word. The *GIRM* also instructs that songs and hymns are not to be substituted for the Psalm. There are other places in the liturgy where a psalm-paraphrase can be utilised licitly (e.g., accompanying the Communion procession), but the proclamation of the responsorial Psalm in the Liturgy of the Word requires a musical setting which respects the integrity of the Psalm text, which may mean it is a setting in which the verses are chanted (where the text remains intact and the rhythm is relatively free) rather than one that compromises the text in service of a melody set metrically.

The *GIRM*'s directives regarding the *Agnus Dei* may require some adjustments to be made in local parishes, especially where the inclusion of alternate tropes within this prayer has formed a regular part of parish practice for some years. Paragraph 83 explains that the *Agnus Dei* “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).”<sup>52</sup> This section of the *GIRM* makes no provision for alternate tropes (e.g., Bread of Life, Living Word, Prince of Peace, etc.) to be included within the *Agnus Dei*.<sup>53</sup> The lack of explicit permission to include tropes at this point in the liturgy is significant, especially when compared with the *GIRM*'s encouragement of tropes in the *Kyrie eleison*. Altering current practice regarding tropes in the *Agnus Dei* may be needed in some parishes if they are to adhere to the *GIRM*'s directives.

b. Liturgy is ritual in nature. That means that repetition is an essential element of liturgy. Can this piece of music bear the weight of being sung week after week, or does one use exhaust its resources? In making this judgement, you must consider both the music and the text. It is important here not to fall into the trap, “newer is better.” Repetition allows a community to enter deeper into the rites.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 366, p. 122.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 53, p. 30.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 57, p. 32.

<sup>51</sup> See *ibid.*, no. 57 and 61, pp. 32-33. Paragraph 61 clarifies that in certain ecclesiastical territories (such as the USA) permission has been given for “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 they have been approved... Songs or hymns may not be used in place of the responsorial Psalm.”

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 83, pp. 42-43.

<sup>53</sup> See Foley et al, p.185.

## Questions to consider

For a parish auditing its liturgical music practices in light of the ten *GIRM* principles identified above, consideration of the following general questions might offer a useful starting point:

1. Does our approach to liturgical music comply with the official methods, processes and procedures outlined in the *GIRM*?
2. Having studied the liturgical music principles of the *GIRM*, what are our operational problems in liturgical music, and what possible solutions might we work on to remedy those problems?
3. Do we understand the standards by which we should be measuring our liturgical music practice? In light of those standards, what goals and outcomes do we want to set and achieve for our parish liturgical music ministry?
4. What are the methods we will employ to achieve these goals and outcomes?

A detailed liturgical music audit could compare what is occurring at the local level with the principles outlined above in order to determine where local practices stand in relation to the criteria defined by the church in the *GIRM*. Such an audit could result in the identification of some clear goals to be achieved as a parish moves to align itself more closely with the model of liturgy outlined by the Church.

As the Roman Catholic Church moves to implement a new way of praying the liturgy by introducing the third edition of the *Roman Missal*, local liturgical musicians may wish to take the opportunity to assess areas of strength and weakness in the way music is chosen, prepared, performed and utilised in liturgical celebration. Comparing local practices with what the Church has defined as the manner in which music ideally should be employed in the liturgy may help to identify some adjustments that need to be made in order to facilitate celebration of the Eucharist to the highest standards possible, given local limitations and abilities.

- c. Repetition does not preclude music imagination. You may want to characterize different seasons of the church year by using different instruments, or no instrument at all.

d. Liturgists consider music an integral and essential part of the liturgical action. It is not something apart from the liturgical action; it is not liturgical "muzak," there to provide background music while the real action happens elsewhere. But it is not just any kind of music: it is music that is so bonded to the liturgical action that it enhances that action by its presence: the music makes the meaning of the action clearer, and allows the assembly to do the action more richly. The form of both music and liturgy reinforce each other. It is in this interaction that "music shapes the relationship of believers to God and to each other."

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