

## Our Music, Our Faith

July 26, 2020

Dear friends in Christ,

As I mentioned in my first letter to you, my upcoming columns are dedicated to explaining further the impact of COVID-19 on our liturgical music. Last week I wrote about the risks associated with congregational singing, and so if we are to have music in our celebration of the Mass, it must be done in a way that keeps our congregation safe. This week's article is dedicated to explaining the music being offered each week at Mass and why it is appropriate at this time. We all are accustomed to singing hymns at Mass, namely opening, offertory, communion, and closing hymns. Since we cannot as a congregation sing hymns, I have been singing the Propers of the Mass, also known as antiphons, in a chanted style, at the opening, offertory, and communion. You may be thinking that this is unusual and that surely it is not what the Church prescribes. The General Instruction of *The Roman Missal* (GIRM), however, provides us with very clear guidance regarding our liturgical music:

41. "The main place should be given, all things being equal, to Gregorian chant, as being proper to the Roman Liturgy. Since the faithful from different countries come together ever more frequently, it is desirable that they know how to sing together at least some parts of the Ordinary of the Mass in Latin, especially the Profession of Faith and the Lord's Prayer, according to the simpler settings."

48. "[The antiphons are] sung alternately by the choir and the people or similarly by a cantor and the people, or entirely by the people, or by the choir [or cantor] alone. [T]here are four options for the [antiphons]: (1) the antiphon from the Missal or the antiphon with its Psalm from the Graduale Romanum, as set to music there or in another setting; (2) the antiphon and Psalm of the Graduale Simplex for the liturgical time; (3) a chant from another collection of Psalms and antiphons...(4) another liturgical chant that is suited to the sacred action, the day, or the time of year, similarly approved by the Conference of Bishops or the Diocesan Bishop.

There are a few things to which I wish to draw your attention. First, the antiphon from the Missal is listed as the first option for the Mass. Second, "another liturgical chant" refers to the singing of a hymn, which is the final option. Third, while we are accustomed to singing a closing hymn, the GIRM does not actually prescribe any music whatsoever (this one was a surprise to me, too.). Do not worry, though; we will always have closing music!

Our liturgical music today is a reflection of both the times we live in and the instructions given to us by the Church. As the world and we, the Body of Christ, change, so will our music in the Mass. Nothing is permanent except for God, and I assure you that one day we will return to singing the hymns we know and love. while continuing to expand our musical horizons to encompass the beautiful music of our Roman Catholic heritage, as the Church requires of us. Let us all pray not only for a return to the liturgical music we know, but also for our ability to meditate on and find beauty in the liturgical music that we have today.

AMDG,



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