

New Policy for the Approval of Musical Compositions for the Liturgy

The following policy was approved by the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy on November 10, 1996. This policy will be used by the Secretariat for the Liturgy in decisions concerning the release of liturgical texts for musical compositions.

- 1 No official approbation is required for hymns, songs, and acclamations written for the assembly,[1] provided they are not sung settings of the liturgical texts of the Order of Mass. Nevertheless, the Committee on the Liturgy has always encouraged composers of hymns, songs, and acclamations to “select texts that truly express the faith of the Church, that are theologically accurate and liturgically correct.”[2]
2. Liturgical texts from the Order of Mass, however, must be approved by the Secretariat for the Liturgy before copyright agreements may be drawn up with the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) or the United States Catholic Conference (USCC). The composer of such texts “must respect the integrity of the approved text. Admittedly, not all texts, as approved by the episcopal conference, easily lend themselves to musical composition because of their style, length or translation. Nevertheless, composers may not alter the prescribed texts of the rites to accommodate them to musical settings. The Church is always concerned about the use of the approved liturgical texts be they written, spoken, proclaimed, or sung.”[3]

Minor grammatical adaptations may, however, be made in isolated instances with the prior approval of the Secretariat. Likewise, composers may compose appropriate tropes for Form C of the Penitential Rite and for the Lamb of God[4] and the Great Amen may be augmented and repeated.[5] Finally, the addition of refrains to the Glory to God is permitted, provided the refrains encourage congregational participation.

Further alterations to liturgical texts from the Order of Mass, including the composition of new texts for acclamations during the eucharistic prayer, will not be authorized.

3. All musical settings of liturgical texts from the Order of Mass,[6] must be submitted to the Secretariat during the final steps of editing before being submitted to ICEL for a contract for release of copyright. After a determination of the accuracy and suitability of the liturgical text has been made by the Secretariat, the publisher will be authorized to use the phrase: Published by the authority of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy. The publisher will also be required to submit three copies of the published work to the Secretariat for its archives. Only those musical settings of liturgical texts from the Order of Mass Which have received the approval described in this paragraph may be used in the liturgy in the United States of America.
4. The Secretariat for the Liturgy also assumes the responsibility for approving both the text and musical settings for ministerial chants.[7] Approval will permit the publisher to include the phrase: *Published by the authority of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy.*

5. All liturgical books or significant excerpts from liturgical books must be submitted to the Secretariat for the required concordat before being submitted to ICEL for a contract for release of copyright. The publisher will also be required to submit three copies of the published work to the Secretariat for its archives. Only those liturgical books which have received the approval described in this paragraph may be used in the liturgy in the United States of America. In addition to this approval, the publisher will be required to negotiate a contract with USCC, ICEL, and any other bodies holding copyright interest on the material before being permitted to place the concordat in the publication.
6. This policy becomes effective on November 10, 1996.

Notes

1. *Appendix to the General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, number 19.
2. Committee on the Liturgy, "Letter to Composers," November 23, 1980.
3. The basis for this concern is the Church's responsibility to safeguard the doctrinal content of prayer texts. The Constitution on the Liturgy, no. 36 (4) states: "Translations from the Latin text into the mother tongue which are intended for use in the liturgy must be approved by the competent territorial ecclesiastical authority mentioned above" (i.e. episcopal conference, Apostolic See). ("Letter to Composers," note 9).
4. See the Order of Mass and *Liturgical Music Today*, nos. 20-21
5. *Music in Catholic Worship*, no. 58.
6. All texts found in the Order of Mass of the Sacramentary for use by the priest or the assembly which are set to music are included in this section.
7. All texts found in the Order of Mass of the Sacramentary for use by the priest or other ministers which are set to music are included in this section. See *Musicam Sacram*, no. 57 and *Inter Oecumenici*, no. 42.