

Passages from the GIRM on the topic of Sacred Music

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal is the detailed document governing the celebration of Mass of the ordinary form of the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church since 1969.

39. The Christian faithful who come together as one in expectation of the Lord's coming are instructed by the Apostle Paul to sing together Psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles (cf. Col 3:16). Singing is the sign of the heart's joy (cf. Acts 2:46). Thus St. Augustine says rightly, "Singing is for one who loves,"[48] and there is also an ancient proverb: "Whoever sings well prays twice over."

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

112. *The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art.* The main reason for this pre-eminence is that, as sacred song united to the words, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy.

Music during the Processional/Entrance

48. This chant is 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 alone. In the Dioceses of the United States of America, there are four options for the Entrance Chant:

- (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, approved by the Conference of Bishops or the Diocesan Bishop, including Psalms arranged in responsorial or metrical forms;
- (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.

Music during Offertory

74. The procession bringing the gifts is accompanied by the Offertory Chant (cf. no. 37 b), 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. no. 48). Singing may always accompany the rite at the Offertory, even when there is no procession with the gifts.

Music during Communion

86. While the Priest is receiving the Sacrament, the Communion Chant is begun, its purpose being to express the spiritual union of the communicants by means of the unity of their voices, to show gladness of heart, and to bring out more clearly the "communitarian" character of the procession to receive the Eucharist. The singing is prolonged for as long as the Sacrament is being administered to the faithful.[73] However, if 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.

87. In the Dioceses of the United States of America, there are four options for singing at Communion:

- (1) the antiphon from the Missal or the antiphon with its Psalm from the *Graduale Romanum*, as set to music there or in another musical setting;
- (2) the antiphon with Psalm from the *Graduale Simplex* of the liturgical time;
- (3) a chant 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) some other suitable liturgical chant (cf. no. 86) approved by the Conference of Bishops or the Diocesan Bishop. This is sung either by the choir alone or by the choir or a cantor with the people.