



Music & the Mass

Part III

Propers and 11:30am Mass

The Church has given us an enormous treasury of sacred music. Much of it is specific to each particular Sunday of the year. These pieces of music are called Propers. They are scriptural texts set to music in traditional chant form. There are five sung Propers: Introit, Gradual (Responsorial Psalm), Alleluia (or Tract), Offertory, and Communion. The Introit has become the Procession Hymn. The nice thing about the Introit is that the congregation can really focus on the procession, veneration of the Altar, etc., while listening to the schola sing the words from sacred scripture. The Gradual is sung after the 1st reading. This is almost always replaced by the Responsorial Psalm. The Offertory actually has prescribed text attached to the Mass of the day. Offertory doesn't just describe an event that happens at Mass. The Communion is also a prescribed text and song. You can always find the translation of the antiphon for the Introit and Communion in the Missal. At 11:30, we have added the Communion proper to the Mass. It is a relief to know that we are singing exactly what the Church has prescribed for us. We don't have to debate the quality and theology of lyrics or the level of profanity that may come from certain styles of modern music when we sing the Propers of the Mass. They are pieces of music that together add another level of continuity and deliberate action to the Mass.

So let's take a look at all of the singing that is going on at 11:30! We will be singing Mass parts in Latin and some Propers and choral pieces. The rest, readings, Gospel, Homily and other prayers, will be in English. I promise that you will know what is going on and will be able to follow the Mass. We will try to consistently have a small guide for you as well. This will help with page numbers, translations, etc.

We are currently singing a Procession Hymn. As the schola grows and develops, we will look forward to replacing that hymn with the Introit. When the priest reaches his chair, we begin singing our responses to his greeting. This is in agreement with what we read last week about Mass degrees. We are also singing the Confiteor (a.k.a. Penitential Rite). It is very easy, though, as it is all on the same note. Next on the list is the Kyrie. Kyrie is Greek for Lord have mercy. There are several settings for the Kyrie in our hymnal. However, many of the great composers have set the Ordinary (Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei are Ordinary parts or the parts of the Mass that do not change from week to week) to more complicated music. It is not uncommon for the schola only to sing the Ordinary.

(over)

After the Kyrie, we go directly into singing the Gloria, except during Advent and Lent. The priest or cantor intones the Gloria ‘Glória in excélsis Deo’ and the congregation/choir comes in with ‘et in terra pax homínibus’ and we sing it together until its end. We will continue to sing the Responsorial Psalm after the 1st reading. There are many ways to incorporate the Alleluia before the Gospel. We may look into alternate options in the future, but for now we will continue to sing the Alleluia that can be found in the Missal.

The next *big* change comes with our Profession of Faith. We will be singing the Credo. Our hymnal contains Credo III, probably the most familiar. People may be wondering why we need to sing this particular piece. The Credo is part of the Ordinary. We should sing it just as confidently as we sing the other Ordinary parts that have become second nature to us. Of course, this takes some practice and familiarity, but it will come sooner than you think. Pretty soon you’ll even be singing it in the shower.

During Offertory, the schola will be singing sacred polyphony and other choral works. Polyphony is a style of music that implements the use of the same text in different voices, layered and woven into an intricate melodic pattern. There are countless beautiful pieces by the greatest composers of all time that are suitable for Mass. Our Church gives us sacred polyphony, second on the list to Gregorian chant, as acceptable for Mass.

We will also be singing (in English) other small parts of the Mass on one pitch (the same note). These parts are “May the Lord accept the sacrifice...”, and “Lord, I am not worthy...”

The music to the *mystérium fidei* really doesn’t change like many of the other Mass parts. It is number 104 in the hymnal. It is easy to memorize.

One thing that seems to catch people off guard is the Pater Noster. Pater Noster is Latin for Our Father. This chant is only found on page 84 in the hymnal. It is not a separate Mass part with a song number like many of the other Ordinary parts. This is a very good one to memorize so you don’t have to flip around in the book to find it. The last part of the prayer, “quia tuum est regnum...” is on page 86. This is because the left and right side of each page in the front of the hymnal is a mirror of the Latin and English.

The next thing we sing, besides more responses to the priest, is the Agnus Dei. After that we are onto the Communion antiphon. Please enjoy your time to pray and meditate after receiving our beautiful Lord.

Lastly, there is no mention of a closing hymn in any Church document or book I’ve ever read. This leads some people to the conclusion that it should be eliminated. Once the priest says “The Mass is ended...” the Mass is over. The closing hymn really is a piece of music that is considered after Mass. However, we should be ecstatic considering we just spent the last moments of our lives in Jesus’ real presence and we can voice this happiness in song. We will not eliminate the closing hymn, so I expect to hear you all singing at the top of your lungs.

In Christ,
Fr. Lappe and Kristin Yoshimura