

MUSIC AT MASS



*2011 General Instruction of the Roman Missal
(GIRM)*

Canadian Edition

INTRODUCTION

- ◎ 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 (Col. 3:16).
- ◎ Great importance should be attached to the use of singing in the celebration of the Mass. Every care should be taken that singing by the ministers and the people is not absent in celebrations that occur on Sundays and on holy days of obligation, (*GIRM, nos. 39, 40*).
- ◎ *Pastoral musicians should consider how best to encourage the full, conscious, and active participation of the whole assembly.*

INTRODUCTORY RITES

The Entrance Song

The four-fold purpose of this song is to:

- open the celebration,
- foster the unity of those who have been gathered,
- lead their thoughts to the mystery of the season or feast,
- accompany the entrance procession.

❖ It is sung by the cantor/choir and people, entirely by the people, or by the choir alone. The nature of the song as expressing and fostering the unity of the assembled Body of Christ suggests that this last option would be rarely employed, (nos. 47, 48).

INTRODUCTORY RITES

The Act of Penitence

- ◉ The *Kyrie eleison* (“Lord have mercy”) is a litany that may be sung, especially in penitential seasons.
- ◉ The *Kyrie eleison* functions as a separate ritual element when the *Confiteor* (“I confess...”) is used, or as a response to the tropes in praise of Christ in the other forms.
- ◉ On occasion, especially on the Sundays of the Easter Season, in place of the customary Act of Penitence, the blessing and sprinkling of water to recall Baptism may take place, (nos. 51, 52).

INTRODUCTORY RITES

The Gloria

- ◎ The Gloria is an ancient hymn of praise. It is sung or said on Sundays outside of Advent and Lent, on solemnities and Feasts, and at celebrations of a more solemn character.
- ◎ **The text of this hymn may not be replaced by any other.** The opening words of the Gloria are intoned by the priest or, if appropriate, by a cantor or by the choir. The body of the hymn is sung either by everyone together, or by the people alternately with the choir/cantor, or by the choir alone, (n. 53).

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The Responsorial Psalm

- ⦿ *The Responsorial Psalm is an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word and holds great liturgical and pastoral importance because it fosters meditation on the Word of God. It is preferable that the Responsorial Psalm be sung, at least as far as the people's response is concerned.*
- ⦿ *The psalmist sings the verses from the ambo or another suitable place. The text of the Responsorial Psalm should be taken from the Lectionary selection of the day. A seasonal psalm, (cf. n. 173-4, pages 44, 107, 251, 433, 768 in the Sunday Lectionary for the common seasonal psalms) may also be used.*
- ⦿ *Songs or hymns may not be used in place of the Responsorial Psalm. If the Psalm cannot be sung, then it should be recited in such a way that it is particularly suited to fostering meditation on the Word of God, (n. 61).*
- ⦿ *The GIRM makes no mention of the choir having any role in the psalm. Like other portions of Scripture that are proclaimed, a high value is placed on communicating the text as intelligibly as possible—by an individual psalmist rather than by a group of singers.*

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The Gospel Acclamation

- ◉ The Gospel Acclamation constitutes a rite or act in itself, by which the gathering of the faithful welcomes and greets the Lord who is about to speak to them in the Gospel.
- ◉ The Alleluia (or another acclamation during Lent), led by the cantor or choir, is sung by all. The verse, however, is sung either by the cantor or the choir, (n. 62).
- ◉ When there is only one reading before the Gospel, as at weekday Masses, the Alleluia or acclamation may be sung after the psalm, or may be used as the psalm response. If not sung it may be omitted, (n. 63).

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The Prayer of the Faithful

- ◎ The *Prayer of the Faithful* is both a response to the Word of God and an exercise of the baptismal priesthood of the faithful.
- ◎ On occasion the petitions may be sung. A sung response by the assembly can help to express the importance of the intercessions as the priestly ministry of the whole community.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

The Preparation of the Gifts

- ◎ The procession and placement of the gifts is accompanied by a song which continues until at least the gifts have been placed on the altar. However, it may not always be necessary or desirable to sing at this time, therefore organ or instrumental music is also an option.
- ◎ The norms on the manner of singing are the same as for the entrance song. It may be sung even when there is no procession with the gifts, (n. 74).

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Music during the Eucharistic Prayer and Other Presidential Prayers

- The nature of the presidential prayers requires that they be spoken in a clear voice and that everyone listen to them attentively. Therefore, there should be no singing or instrumental music during the recitation of these prayers, (n. 32). However, this should not preclude the singing of the *Preface Dialogue* as a noble entry into the Eucharistic Prayer which is the most solemn part of the Mass.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

The Eucharistic Acclamations

- ◉ The *Sanctus, the Memorial Acclamation, and the Great Amen* are sung by all the people. These acclamations ought to be sung even at Masses in which little else is sung, (n. 79).

The Lord's Prayer

- ◉ The priest pronounces the invitation to the Lord's Prayer and the people pray it with him;
- ◉ then the priest alone adds the *embolism* (*Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil...*), which the people conclude by means of the doxology.
- ◉ *If the Lord's Prayer is sung, it should be sung by all the people, (n. 81).*

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

The Lamb of God

- The Lamb of God litany is usually sung by a cantor or choir with the assembly responding. This litany accompanies the Fraction Rite and may be repeated as many times as necessary until the rite is concluded. The last time ends with “grant us peace.”
- If the Lamb of God is not sung it is recited, (n. 83).
- Alternate tropes may not be added to this litany, (n. 366).

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

The Communion Song

The purpose of the Communion Song is to:

1. express the communicants' union in spirit by means of the unity of their voices;
2. to show joy of heart;
3. to highlight the communitarian nature of the procession to receive communion, (nos. 86, 159).

- The Communion Song begins while the priest is receiving Communion.
- The Communion Song is sung either by the cantor/choir with the people or by the choir alone.
- Pastoral sensitivity is encouraged in the choice of Communion Songs; for example, paying attention to songs with familiar refrains so that the communicants may participate while processing without having to carry a hymnal.
- In general, during the most important seasons of the Church Year, Easter, Lent, Christmas and Advent, it is preferable that most songs used at Communion be seasonal in nature.

Optional Song of Praise after Communion

- ◎ On occasion, the entire assembly may sing a psalm or other canticle of praise or a hymn after the period of silence and before the Prayer after Communion, (n. 88).

CONCLUDING RITE

The Recessional Song

- ◉ Even though the *GIRM does not explicitly mention singing at the end of Mass*, because the text describes the community leaving “praising and blessing God,” it has been customary in most parishes to sing a closing song.
- ◉ When music is used for the dismissal it should express joyful praise of God as members of the assembly go out to take up the mission of Christ in the world.