

Music for the Liturgy A Guide for Schools

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The Church has always used music in its worship and has accorded it primacy of place among the many riches of art and architecture, ritual and gesture, vestments and furnishings, that are used into the service of the liturgy.¹

“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 . . . Therefore, sacred music is to be considered the more holy in proportion as it is more closely connected with the liturgical action, whether it adds delight to prayer, fosters unity of minds, or confers greater solemnity upon the sacred rites.”²

The liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council saw a new emphasis on the participation of the whole congregation³ – in gesture, in understanding the texts, in spoken and sung response. And so the role of musicians in the liturgy changed quite radically from providing more or less exclusively the musical accompaniment of the liturgy to leading and animating the congregation at worship.

The *Roman Missal*⁴ tells us that “great importance should be attached to the use of singing in the celebration of the Mass . . .”⁵

But it is important for those responsible for music in the liturgy have thought through what singing, and indeed instrumental music, is meant to do in a liturgical setting. Music, like every other artistic endeavour in worship, must be understood as being in the service of the liturgy and not incidental to it or simply an embellishment, however intrinsically good the music is as music.

¹ Liturgy is a Greek word (λειτουργία) which literally means ‘the work of the people’ – describing the due that people give to God; in English we use the word worship, literally worth-ship or to give worth, or honour, to something, in this case God.

² Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*) (1963) n.112

³ Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963) n.14: “The church very much wants all believers to take a full, conscious and active part in liturgical celebration.”

⁴ The Roman Missal contains all the texts and rites, some set to plainsong, used in the celebration of the Mass. The first official English version of the Roman Missal was published in 1970 and the most recent translation and revision was published in 2010.

⁵ *General Instruction on the Roman Missal* (2010) n.40 [henceforth abbreviated GIRM]

Music in the liturgy . . .

- gathers individuals into the assembly and binds⁶ them into a worshipping community (we see this particularly in the Entrance Song and the Communion Song)
- draws importance to a prayer
- accompanies gesture turning it into a ritual act (eg. the procession of the Book of Gospels, or the bringing of the gifts of bread and wine to the altar)
- adds a dimension of expression (sorrow, joy, praise, solemn proclamation) to the spoken word, reinforcing and adding a new dimension to what is communicated in word (eg. the plea for God's mercy of the Kyrie, the paean of praise of the Gloria or the Sanctus, the ritual dialogue between priest and people at the beginning of the Gospel or the Preface)

The key principle must always be that the music chosen for the Mass must always serve the liturgy. Its particular function at each point at which it is used must be well understood and music chosen that fulfils that function, on this occasion, with this congregation, and these musical resources, for the greater glory of God.

The Synod on the Eucharist of 2005, sums up the importance of music in the liturgy and the way in which, in the contemporary church, liturgical music ought to be used:

“In the *ars celebrandi*,⁷ liturgical song has a pre-eminent place.⁸ Saint Augustine rightly says in a famous sermon that ‘the new man sings a new song. Singing is an expression of joy and, if we consider the matter, an expression of love.’⁹ The People of God, assembled for the liturgy, sings the praises of God. In the course of her two-thousand-year history, the Church has created, and still creates, music and songs which represent a rich patrimony of faith and love. This heritage must not be lost. Certainly as far as the liturgy is concerned, we cannot say that one song is as good as another. Generic improvisation or the introduction of musical genres which fail to respect the meaning of the liturgy should be avoided. As an element of the liturgy, song should be well integrated into the overall celebration.¹⁰ Consequently everything (texts, music, execution) ought to correspond to the meaning of the mystery being celebrated, the structure of the rite, and the liturgical seasons.^{11”12}

Understanding the structure of the Mass

⁶ The very word *religion* means the binding together of individuals. And so liturgy becomes the highest expression of the practice of religion.

⁷ *ars celebrandi* = the art of celebrating the liturgy

⁸ cf. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 39-41; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n.112-118.

⁹ *Sermo* 34, 1: PL 38:210.

¹⁰ cf. Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist (2005) *Propositio* n.25: "Like every artistic expression, singing must be closely adapted to the liturgy and contribute effectively to its aim; in other words, it must express faith, prayer, wonder and love of Jesus present in the Eucharist."

¹¹ cf. *Propositio* n.29.

¹² Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis* n.42 – the Post-Synodal Exhortation on the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church's Life and Mission (2007).

The Mass of the Roman Rite has two ‘movements’ which belong together but also have their own internal structure and dynamic: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Thus, "from the two tables of the word of God and the Body of Christ, the Church receives and gives to the faithful the bread of life."¹³ Bookending these two movements are a longish introduction and a very brief conclusion.

The Liturgy of the Word

At the heart of the Liturgy of the Word¹⁴ is the proclamation of the Gospel.¹⁵ Everything before it, leads up to it. And everything that follows amplifies it. The Reading which precedes it, will usually be from the Old Testament and will foreshadow in some way what is happening in the Gospel.

The Psalm which follows the reading is intended to expand on the theme of the Reading (and the Gospel) and foster a time of reflection. Fairly obviously, the Psalm of its very nature should be sung. But note that in the reform of the Vatican Council, the people were given a response so that they could have an active role alongside the choir or cantor.

On Sundays and great feast days, there is a Second Reading or Epistle (which is not thematically connected to the gospel) – but a Second Reading would not usually be used in Masses with children.

Then comes the Gospel Acclamation (an ‘Alleluia’¹⁶ with a scripture verse between) which prepares us for and greets the Gospel, accompanying the procession of the Book of the Gospels.¹⁷

The proclamation of the Gospel is followed by the Homily – which is the kerygmatic proclamation of the Gospel. On a Sunday, then follows the Creed – the profession of faith which is the people’s response to the Gospel, and the Universal Prayer¹⁸ in which the community, in supplication for the needs of the Church and the world, returns to the God it has just heard proclaimed, and responded to in faith in the Creed.

The Liturgy of the Word is linear in structure: everything leading, step by step, towards the proclamation of the Gospel. And what follows the Gospel is a response to the word of God in the good news of Jesus Christ:

¹³ *Propositio* n.18

¹⁴ Word denotes the Word of God, spoken through the Scriptures.

¹⁵ Note that the gospel is proclaimed not simply read.

¹⁶ The simple word ‘Alleluia!’ is one of the most ancient and venerable prayers in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, meaning ‘Praise be to God!’ (Hebrew יהוה הללו).

¹⁷ The gospel acclamation may be extended if it is accompanying a procession – by adding more than one scripture verse between the repeated alleluias.

¹⁸ Known as the *bidding prayers* in England.

| | | | |
|---------------------|--|---------------------|--|
| Liturgy of the Word | First Reading | | |
| | Psalm | | ♪ Psalm & Response |
| | Second Reading | | |
| | Gospel | thematically linked | Gospel Procession (with Book of Gospels) ♪ Gospel Acclamation Gospel Dialogue (Signing with cross) Incensation of Book of Gospels Gospel proclamation Gospel Conclusion Showing and reverencing of the Book of Gospels |
| | Homily | | |
| | Profession of Faith (Creed) | | |
| | Universal Prayers (Bidding Prayers) | | |

In terms of singing, the principle must be that what is sung serves to highlight the Gospel – so, in terms of priority, the Gospel Acclamation (the ‘Alleluia’) comes first, followed by the Dialogue between priest and people which tops and tails the Gospel; then the Psalm (which should be sung of its nature); and then Bidding Prayers, and the Creed.

If the Psalm is sung and the Gospel Acclamation immediately follows (as there would normally be no Second Reading at a Mass with children), consideration needs to be given to this transition. Is there just a gap between two pieces of music? Or could the organ/instruments be used to create a short musical bridge?

The *Lectionary*¹⁹ offers a rich diet of Psalms from the 150 psalms of the Old Testament together with some scriptural canticles. It is perfectly permissible to select a smaller number of psalms, covering a handful of ‘themes’ (praise of God, repentance, God speaks through his word, rejoicing in creation, the gathering of the assembly) and to use this as the repertoire for school Masses.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

The Liturgy of the Eucharist²⁰ is not like the Liturgy of the Word in that it does not follow a linear pattern building up to a highlight. There are four actions in the Liturgy of the Eucharist which mirror the actions of Jesus at last supper: to *take* bread, offer it in *blessing*, to *break* the bread, and to *share* the one bread and one cup.²¹ These actions are recalled in the institution narrative (ie. the telling of the story of the night of the last supper) which is at the centre of the eucharistic prayer, but they are also played out dramatically across the whole of the eucharistic liturgy: the taking of bread and wine at the offertory, the blessing of the bread and wine in the words of Jesus, the breaking of the bread and sharing it after the eucharistic prayer. Within the eucharistic prayer itself are prayers for the church and the world.

So, schematically the liturgy of the eucharist looks like this:

¹⁹ The books of the readings from Scripture set out for each celebration of the Mass.

²⁰ Eucharist is a Greek word (εὐχαριστία eucharistia) meaning thanksgiving.

²¹ cf. 1 Corinthians 10:17

| | | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|------------------------|---|
| Liturgy of the Eucharist | take bless | Preparation of Gifts | Procession | | |
| | | | ♪ Offertory Song | | |
| | | | | Blessing Prayers | |
| | | | | Incensing | |
| | | | | Washing of hands | |
| | | | | Offertory prayer | |
| | | | Preface | Preface dialogue | |
| | | | | Preface | |
| | | | | ♪ Sanctus / Benedictus | |
| | | | Epiclesis ²² | | |
| | | Eucharistic Prayer | Institution Narrative ²³ | Institution narrative | "For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my remembrance of me.' In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." ²⁵ |
| | <i>Mysterium fidei</i> ²⁴ | | | | |
| | ♪ Anamnesis (Memorial Acclamation) | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Prayer for the Church | | | | | |
| Prayer for the Dead | | | | | |
| Prayer for the Living | | | | | |
| | | Doxology ²⁶ | ♪ Doxology | | |
| | | | Great Amen | | |
| | | Lord's Prayer | | | |
| | | The Peace | | | |
| break | | Breaking of Bread | ♪ Agnus Dei | | |
| share | | Communion | Communion Song | | |
| | | | Post-Communion Song/Silence | | |
| | | Post-Communion Prayer | | | |

Musically, the Liturgy of the Eucharist is punctuated by three great songs: the Sanctus, the Memorial Acclamation, and the Doxology/Great Amen. There are also songs to accompany the preparation of the bread and wine (Offertory), the breaking of bread (Agnus Dei), and the sharing of the bread and wine (Communion). The dialogue between priest and people at the beginning of the eucharistic

²² *Epiclesis* = the prayer calling down the Holy Spirit upon the gifts of bread and wine.

²³ Institution narrative = the words spoken by Jesus at the Last Supper.

²⁴ *Mysterium fidei* = (Behold!) The mystery of faith.

²⁵ 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 NRSV

²⁶ Doxology – from the Greek δοξολογία/doxologia meaning *words of glory/praise*.

prayer (Preface) may be sung, as may the Lord's Prayer (Pater noster). The liturgy provides for silence or a song of thanksgiving after the people have come up to the altar to receive communion.

The Introductory and Concluding Rites

The Introductory Rites (before the Liturgy of the Word) exist to gather the people into a worshipping congregation, to seek forgiveness for our sins before we listen to the word and share the eucharist, to praise God, and prayerfully to bring to mind the mysteries²⁷ we are about to celebrate. The introductory rites conclude with an important prayer, the collect, which establishes the 'theme' of the Mass.

| | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Introductory Rites | Entrance | Procession Entrance Song Reverencing of Altar |
| | Greeting | Trinitarian formula Greeting |
| | Introduction/Commentary | |
| | Penitential Rite | Introduction Confiteor / Tropes 'Absolution' Prayer Kyrie |
| | Gloria | |
| | Collect | |

The *Directory on Masses with Children* advises that, in Masses celebrated with children, the large number of elements in the introductory rites is reduced.²⁸

The Concluding Rite of the Roman rite of the eucharist is notoriously brief. Once the Liturgy of the Eucharist is ended with the Post-Communion Prayer, there is simply a blessing and the dismissal. There is nothing after the dismissal and the addition of a final hymn is anomalous.

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|------------------------|------------------|
| Concluding Rite | Blessing |
| | Dismissal |

²⁷ The word *mysteries* is often used in a liturgical context and it important to understand it correctly. It does not mean hidden or secret but rather the profoundly deep meaning behind the liturgical rites and rituals which is nothing less than God the Father working the salvation of the world through the death and resurrection of his Son; an action continued by the activity of the Holy Spirit in the Church as a worshipping community.

²⁸ *Directory on Masses with Children* (1973) n.40: 'The introductory rite of Mass has as its purpose "that the faithful coming together take on the form of a community and prepare themselves to listen to God's word and celebrate the Eucharist properly." (GIRM n.39) Therefore every effort should be made to create this disposition in the children and not to jeopardize it by any excess of rites in this part of Mass. It is sometimes proper to omit one or other element of the introductory rite or perhaps to expand one of the elements. There should always be at least some introductory element, which is completed by the opening prayer. In choosing individual elements, care should be taken that each one be used from time to time and that none be entirely neglected.'

What to choose – finding the theme

Before choosing the music for a Mass, it is important to find the ‘theme’ of the Mass.

However, musicians need to beware the idea of a ‘theme’ at all because every Mass always has the overriding ‘theme’ of being the celebration of our salvation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is always the heart and focus of the liturgy. Those sung parts of the Mass which relate directly to this central Christian belief, re-enacted in the Mass, remain essentially the same, whatever the particular celebration of the day, ie. the Preface, Sanctus, Memorial Acclamation, Doxology, Agnus Dei. It can, of course, be that these parts of the Mass take on a particular musical ‘flavour’ which reflects the predominant ‘tone’ of the liturgical season (repentance in Lent, rejoicing at Christmas and Easter, preparation and longing in Advent, etc.).

Secondly, certain sung parts of the Mass accompany particular actions which will largely determine the choice of music, including:

- the entrance song
- the gospel acclamation
- the offertory song
- the communion song

Only once these determinants have been understood is the liturgical musician able to consider the particular celebration of the day. This will come from one of two sources:

- a. the **liturgical seasons** with the particular great feast days which are embedded in them
 - Advent – Christmas (with Epiphany)
 - Lent – Easter (with Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Pentecost)
 - Ordinary Time²⁹
- b. specific celebrations of **feast days** associated with Jesus or the Saints (eg. Ss Peter and Paul, All Saints Day, the patronal feast days of your school).

There are three places to look for a quick understanding of the ‘theme’ of the Mass:

- a. the **Gospel** of the day – it is often not possible to find liturgical music which repeats the gospel text but it may be that a piece can be found which mirrors the general theme of the gospel (eg. mercy, forgiveness, healing, the reign of God, etc.)
- b. the **Collect** (or ‘opening prayer’ of the Mass) – this prayer is the key prayer articulating the ‘theme’ of the Mass. It will come in two parts: the first sets out the quality or characteristic of God, or the activity of Christ or a saint, relevant to the season/feast; and the second

²⁹ Ordinary Time is so-called because it is the time of the counted Sundays of the year. Ordinal means counted-in-order, ie. the passing of time and the year. The liturgical calendar counts the Sundays after the season of Advent/Christmas, is interrupted for the season of Lent/Easter, and continues after Pentecost Sunday until the new Church year begins again with Advent.

applies that to us, the Christian congregation at worship. This can be a helpful pointer in thinking about what musical texts to choose.

- c. the **Preface**³⁰ - the preface of the Mass unfolds the theology of the celebration. It is often quite technical but is usually reliable and rich. The preface especially can suggest texts of liturgical music which pick up on and reflect on the theology of the feast.

So the task of the liturgical musician is to select music which can be used in the appropriate places across Masses in the whole year or a particular season. And to combine that with music which is specific to a celebration (such as the Entrance Song, the Psalm, etc.).

Priority given to singing different parts of the Mass

The 19/20th century liturgical reform movement³¹ which culminated in the meeting of the world’s Catholic bishops at the Second Vatican Council (1963-65), was an evolving process of scholarship, rediscovery and reflection which, at different times and in different documents said very different, and often conflicting, things about the priority to be given to singing the different parts of the Mass.

The *General Instruction on the Roman Missal* (most recently revised for the publication of the 2010 Missal) is the most authoritative guide to the current state of play:

“... in choosing of the parts [of the Mass] actually to be sung, preference is to be given to those that are of greater importance and especially to those which are to be sung by the priest, or the deacon, or a reader, with the people replying, or by the priest and people together.”³²

| | | priority to sing | | | | |
|---|---|-------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| | | high priority | | | | low priority |
| Opening Rites | | | | | | |
| Note that for Masses celebrated with children, the <i>Directory</i> (n.40) calls for a reduction in the number of elements included in the opening rites. | | | | | | |
| 1 | Entrance/Gathering Song | ✓ | | | | The purpose of the entrance song is “to open the celebration, foster the unity of those who have been gathered, introduce their thoughts to the mystery of the liturgical time or festivity, and accompany the procession of priest and ministers.” ³³ |
| 2 | In the name of the Father & Greeting | | | ✓ | | |

³⁰ The name ‘Preface’ is often misunderstood. It does not mean a preface in the English sense of a foreword or preamble but comes from an older Latin word (*praefatio*) which means ‘praise’ – so the preface is a prayer of praise of the mystery of Christ’s life, or the saint, whose feast is being celebrated today.

³¹ The Roman Catholic liturgical reform movement essentially began 1832 when the French Benedictine abbey at Solesmes was refounded under Dom Prosper Guéranger (1837-75). The monks of Solesmes resurrected the huge plainsong collection entitled the *Liber Usualis*.

³² GIRM (2010) n.40

³³ GIRM (2010) n.47

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| 3 | Penitential Rite / Kyrie | | ✓ | | | The Kyrie should normally be sung by the people. ³⁴ |
| 4 | Gloria | | ✓ | | | If used the Gloria would usually be sung. However it is unlikely to be used in Masses with children under the DMC principle (n.40) of reducing the number of introductory rites. Sung by everyone, or choir and people alternating, or by the choir. ³⁵ |
| 5 | Collect | ✓ | | | | The Collect is a very important prayer hence, if the priest can sing, it should be sung. |
| LITURGY OF THE WORD | | | | | | |
| 6 | First Reading | | | | ✓ | |
| 7 | Responsorial Psalm³⁶ | | ✓ | | | Psalms of their nature should be sung ³⁷ although this is not always possible at Mass. The psalm should not be replaced with another song or hymn. |
| 8 | Second Reading (Epistle) | | | | ✓ | There would not usually be a second reading at Masses with children. |
| 9 | Gospel Acclamation/Alleluia | ✓ | | | | The Gospel Acclamation/Alleluia has a very high priority to be sung by all. ³⁸ |
| 10 | Gospel Dialogue The Lord be with you. And with your spirit. A reading from the holy gospel according to N. Glory to you, O Lord. | | ✓ | | | |
| 11 | Gospel Reading | | | ✓ | | The reading of the gospel constitutes the high point of the Liturgy of the Word. ³⁹ On greater feasts and celebrations. |
| 12 | Conclusion of Gospel The gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ. | | | ✓ | | Usually only sung if the Gospel itself is sung. |
| 13 | Creed I believe in one God . . . | | | ✓ | | The Creed would not normally be used at Masses with children. |
| 14 | Bidding Prayers | | | ✓ | | While the whole intention/prayer will probably not be sung, consideration should be given to singing the response (eg. Lord, in your mercy: hear our prayer) at more important celebrations. |
| LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST | | | | | | |
| 15 | Offertory Song | | ✓ | | | The procession of the gifts of bread and wine to the altar is a ritual that cries out to be accompanied by singing. The offertory might also be an opportunity to use instrumental music so the people can watch the ritual. |
| 16 | Presentation of Gifts Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation . . . | | | ✓ | | If there is singing at the offertory procession, the prayers of offering would usually be said silently by the priest. If there is no offertory procession, |

³⁴ GIRM (2010) n.52

³⁵ GIRM (2010) n.53

³⁶ Also known as the *Gradual* in the musical liturgical books.

³⁷ GIRM (2010) n.61

³⁸ GIRM (2010) n.62

³⁹ GIRM (2010) n.60

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|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|--|
| | | | | | these prayers and their response (<i>Blessed be God for ever</i>) could be sung. |
| 17 | Offertory Prayer | | | ✓ | |
| 18 | Preface Dialogue The Lord be with you. And with your spirit. Lift up your hearts. We lift them up to the Lord. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right and just. | ✓ | | | |
| 19 | Preface It is truly right and just . . . | ✓ | | | The Preface is a key prayer of the Mass – its text often sums up the mystery or feast. It should be proclaimed with confidence. |
| 20 | Sanctus Holy, holy, holy Lord . . . | ✓ | | | The Sanctus is sung “by all the people with the priest.” ⁴⁰ |
| 21 | Eucharistic Prayer | | | ✓ | On more important occasions, consideration could be given to singing parts (eg. the institution narrative) or all of the Eucharistic Prayer. |
| 22 | Anamnesis (Memorial Acclamation) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We proclaim your death • When we eat this bread • Save us, Saviour of the world | ✓ | | | Words ‘The mystery of faith’ are not an introduction to the acclamation. They are an awestruck statement of what has just happened – the re-enactment of the sacrifice of Calvary in bread and wine at the altar. The acclamation is a response to the statement ‘Mysterium fidei.’ The phrase is so short that it can be lost. A moment of silence before beginning the acclamation can help. |
| 23 | Doxology & Great Amen Through him, and with him, and in him . . . | ✓ | | | This climax of the great prayer of thanksgiving and the people’s Amen acclamation should be sung whenever music is used at Mass. |
| Communion Rite | | | | | |
| 24 | Our Father | | ✓ | | The <i>Our Father</i> must be sung by the people – the choir cannot usurp this prayer. |
| 25 | Embolism & Response Deliver us, Lord, we pray . . . For the kingdom, the power . . . | | | ✓ | |
| 26 | The Peace The peace of the Lord be with you always . . . | | | ✓ | The peace would not usually be sung unless the whole Mass is sung. |
| 27 | Agnus Dei Lamb of God . . . | | ✓ | | Singing the <i>Agnus Dei</i> accompanies and involves the people in the rite of breaking the bread (the <i>fraction</i>). |
| 28 | Behold the Lamb of God & Response | | | ✓ | |
| 29 | Communion Song | | ✓ | | The purpose of the communion song is “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.” ⁴¹ |
| 30 | Song after communion | | ✓ | | |

⁴⁰ GIRM (2010) n.79

⁴¹ GIRM (2010) n.86

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| | | | | | There is a distinction between a song during communion and a song after communion – the first to accompany the ritual act of processing, the second by way of meditation, prayer “After communion a psalm or other canticle of praise or a hymn may also be sung by the whole congregation.” ⁴² |
| 31 | Postcommunion Prayer | | | ✓ | |
| Concluding Rites | | | | | |
| 32 | Blessing | | | ✓ | |
| 33 | Dismissal | | ✓ | | Easter form |
| 34 | Final song / Recessional | | | | ✓ There is no final song in the Roman liturgy. Mass ends with the dismissal. It is usually better to have the organ play for the recessional procession but if this is not possible then a song/hymn of missioning, going-out, may be considered if it is needed to cover the ministers processing from the sanctuary. |

Parts of the Mass Sung by the People

The Second Vatican Council established the principle of active participation by the people, especially in singing the dialogues between the priest and the people and those texts sung by priest and people. So, care needs to be taken to build up a repertoire of music for these texts which a particular congregation can sing with confidence. The choir must be careful not to usurp the people’s right to sing the Ordinary of the Mass.⁴³

Adaptation

The *General Instruction* sets out the principle that the Ordinary parts of the Mass should not be altered or substituted: “It is not permitted to substitute other chants for those found in the Order of Mass, for example, at the *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God).”⁴⁴

The *Directory on Masses with Children* (1973) regulates the way in which the Church celebrates liturgy with children. It permits certain adaptations, calls for the active participation of the children in a variety of ways (to which singing is accorded a high priority), and seeks to simplify the rites. Liturgical musicians need to know the DMC and its principles well.

⁴² GIRM (2010) n.88

⁴³ The ‘Ordinary’ of the Mass refers to those parts which remain the same at every Mass (ie. Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei, and Dismissal). The ‘Proper’ of the Mass refers to those prayers which change each day according to the season or feast (ie. Collect, Offertory, Preface, Postcommunion).

⁴⁴ GIRM (2010) n.366

The choir

A choir can make a significant contribution to the celebration of the liturgy. But thought needs to be given to the three liturgical functions:

- primarily, it is there to lead and encourage the congregation
- secondly, it is there to provide music to which the congregation can listen and reflect
- thirdly, it can embellish liturgical song (through part singing, descants etc.)

The choir is not there to ‘perform’ but rather always to support the people, the liturgical action, and the sense of worship. The Second Vatican Council comments:

“The treasure of sacred music is to be preserved and fostered with great care. Choirs must be diligently promoted, especially in cathedral churches; but bishops and other pastors of souls must be at pains to ensure that, whenever the sacred action is to be celebrated with song, the whole body of the faithful may be able to contribute that active participation which is rightly theirs, as laid down in Art. 28 and 30 . . .

To promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes. And at the proper times all should observe a reverent silence.”⁴⁵

Great care should be taken that the choir is never a distraction by its behaviour when not singing, and that choir members participate fully in the liturgy as members of the congregation: answering the responses to the prayers, reflecting or praying silently at the moments of silence, sitting and standing with the congregation, listening to the homily, receiving communion, etc.

Consideration needs to be given to the role of Cantor – someone who can lead and animate the singing and participation of the congregation and act as a link between people and choir.

Instruments

The Church has a long tradition of using the organ (which is accorded primacy of place) and other instruments in the liturgy. But, as with singing, instrumental music must serve the liturgy and not simply be an addition.

Instrumental music can effectively be used before the liturgy begins to create a sense of occasion (reflecting the ‘theme’ of the particular liturgy or season).

As the Roman Rite has no final hymn, the organ can also provide ‘cover’ for the procession by which the ministers leave the sanctuary at the end of Mass.

Instrumental music can also provide an extension of a sung text to accompany a liturgical action – a good example of this is the incensing of the altar following on from the Entrance Song, or the incensing of the bread/wine and altar following on from the Offertory Song.

⁴⁵ Decree on the Sacred Liturgy (1963) *Sacrosanctum Concilium* n.114 and 30

The organ and other instruments are to be used “with moderation”⁴⁶ during Advent and are not to be used solo during Lent except on *Laetare* Sunday⁴⁷ and on solemnities and feasts which may occur during Lent.⁴⁸

The French tradition of liturgical improvisation is an important part of the heritage of Catholic music – the organ announcing and meditating upon the theme of the celebration at various points (Entrance, Gradual,⁴⁹ Offertory, Communion). This musical heritage should be experienced by pupils in a Catholic school.

Silence

Silence has an ancient and venerable place in the liturgy. Often it is squeezed out and perhaps especially so at school Masses where an eye has to be kept on finishing on time. In putting together a celebration, musicians, no less than other liturgists, should ensure that there is an appropriate use of silence.

“Sacred silence also, as part of the celebration, is to be observed at the designated times. Its nature, however, depends on the moment when it occurs in the different parts of the celebration. For in the penitential act and again after the invitation to pray, individuals recollect themselves; whereas after a reading or after the homily, all meditate briefly on what they have heard; then after communion, they praise God in their hearts and pray to him.”⁵⁰

After communion “a sacred silence may be observed for some time”.⁵¹

Points at which silence should be considered:

- In the church before the liturgy begins⁵²
- After the greeting the priest may invite a moment of silence to bring ourselves into the presence of God
- In the penitential rite to recollect our need for mercy and forgiveness
- At the Collect between the invitation to pray (‘Let us pray’) and the prayer itself
- After the first reading and before the psalm
- After the gospel reading and before the homily
- After the homily
- In the Universal Prayers after each intention and before the prayer
- After the Liturgy of the Word and before the offertory procession and song
- After the proclamation *Mysterium fidei* and before the Anamnesis⁵³

⁴⁶ GIRM (2010) n.313

⁴⁷ 4th Sunday of Lent

⁴⁸ GIRM (2010) n.313

⁴⁹ ie. in preparation for the Gospel

⁵⁰ GIRM (2010) n.45

⁵¹ GIRM (2010) n.164

⁵² GIRM (2010) n.45: “Even before the celebration itself, it is a praiseworthy practice for silence to be observed in the church . . . so that all may dispose themselves to carry out the sacred celebration in a devout and fitting manner.”

⁵³ The words ‘*Mysterium fidei* / *The mystery of faith*’ are not an introduction to the Anamnesis (or Memorial Acclamation) which follows. They stand alone and refer back to what has just happened in the consecration.

- After communion and before the Postcommunion Prayer

It is not suggested that a substantial silence is observed at all of these points. But thought needs to be given to when periods of silence (shorter or longer) will be observed and, especially in masses with children, to establish a familiar pattern so that the silences are anticipated and observed.

Passing on the tradition of liturgical music

The great tradition of liturgical music is something very precious and held in trust for future generations. One of the responsibilities of Catholic schools is faithfully to pass on the heritage of liturgical music to the next generation.

Schools should give consideration to which items from the tradition are most important and which can serve the liturgical needs and experience of the pupils. Some obvious examples for consideration would be:

a. Gregorian Chant

“While respecting various styles and different and highly praiseworthy traditions, I desire, in accordance with the request advanced by the Synod Fathers, that Gregorian chant be suitably esteemed and employed (130) as the chant proper to the Roman liturgy (131).”⁵⁴

- the plainsong setting of the *Pater Noster/Our Father*
- parts of the Mass in their plainsong settings, especially the Sanctus (XVIII) and Agnus Dei (XVIII)⁵⁵
- Easter triple alleluia
- the Creed (plainsong setting III)⁵⁶
- the Marian anthems (*Salve Regina, Regina Coeli, Alma Mater Redemptoris*)
- some of the easier seasonal chants (eg. Lent: *Attende Domine*)

Plainsong is modal (not in modern key signatures/functional harmony) – so, if it is accompanied, a competent and sympathetic accompaniment is crucial – see *Plainsong for Schools*, anything by James O’Donnell (Westminster Cathedral), or Richard Dubois (in *Praise the Lord* hymnal).

b. Polyphony

- the ‘rediscovered’ renaissance polyphony of the 16th century such as Palestrina and the later English recusant music of Byrd, etc.

c. Catholic hymnody of the 19th and 20th centuries

When the draconian repression of Catholic practice began to be lifted towards the end the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, there was a flowering of Catholic vernacular hymn writing.

⁵⁴ Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis* – the Post-Synodal Exhortation on the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church’s Life and Mission (2007).

⁵⁵ Note which plainsong settings are used in the 2010 Missal – these are the ones which should be given priority. The Sanctus and Agnus Dei are from plainsong Mass XVIII.

⁵⁶ Although this would be something for older pupils as it is difficult to see when the Creed would not be omitted in a Mass with children following the DMC’s principle of simplification of rites.

d. Liturgical music of the reform

The Second Vatican Council encouraged composers to write new music for the liturgy, specifically suited to the new priorities envisaged by the reform movement.

- music which came out of the reform of the Second Vatican Council such as the psalm settings of Joseph Gelineau SJ, Laurence Bévenot OSB, Anthony Gregory Murray OSB
- Huub Oosterhuis, Bernard Huijbers, Lucien Deiss
- English Catholic hymnals: *New Catholic Hymnal* (1971), *Praise the Lord* (1972)
- James Walsh OSB, Paul Inwood, Christopher Walker, Stephen Dean, Geoffrey Boulton (*Music for the Mass* Vol.1+2 (1985))
- Taizé/Jacques Berthier, Iona Community

To this rich heritage will be added pieces of contemporary music written for the liturgy.

Hymns

Strictly, hymns are alien to the liturgy of the Mass in the Roman rite, but rather they have their place in the Divine Office. However, the rise of Catholic hymns, many in English as well as in Latin, in 19th Century, gave the people something to sing in a liturgy otherwise performed more or less exclusively by priests and ministers. At its worst the infiltration of hymns into the Mass led to the four-hymn-sandwich: one at the beginning, one at the offertory, one at communion, and one at the end. There is no liturgical justification for this – using hymns in this way rather forces the liturgy out of its natural shape.

Some practical considerations in using hymns . . .

- What does this hymn do? Is it accompanying a liturgical action? Is it proclaiming a belief? Is it a personal response, a prayer?
- Be careful to read and understand the text of the hymn. Don't cut verses without thought about the sense of the text.
- A hymn may have a good tune, but is the language of the text intelligible to your congregation?
- Choose good accompaniments to hymns.
- Consider giving one or more verses to the choir, or adding descants, etc.
- Sometimes, especially for a feast day, the verses of one hymn can be used in different places across the Mass.

Use of Latin (and other languages)

Latin has been the language of Catholic worship for two millennia. With the encouragement of the Second Vatican Council to use the vernacular in worship, Latin almost disappeared but has made something of a comeback.

Some principles for using Latin . . .

- Always have the text available so everyone can see what is being sung.
- Make sure there is a good quality, contemporary translation.
- The criteria for selection should not be different from that for music in English – that it serves the liturgy well.
- If the Latin text is set to Gregorian chant, remember that any accompaniment needs to respect the modal nature of plainsong.