



# NewsLetter

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Volume XLV

August 2009

## The Priest Celebrant – Encouraged to Sing

The latest news from the International Commission on English in the Liturgy ([www.ICELweb.org/news.htm](http://www.ICELweb.org/news.htm)) provides helpful information on the development of chant music by a group of musicians working together with the translators of the new *Roman Missal*. The background includes an extensive description of the rationale of the development of the chants. This information will be especially helpful for priests familiar with musical notation not only to prepare to sing the new chants of the revised *Missal*, but to learn more about the role of chant in the Liturgy today.

The purpose of this article is to invite priest celebrants to reflect on the role of music in the Liturgy in light of how much they actively sing the chants of the Mass at present, and to encourage priests to take steps to increase their use of singing the Liturgy.

As musicians and clergy begin to make preparations for the implementation of the revised translation of the *Roman Missal*, they may discover increased emphasis on the place of chant (singing) in the presidential prayers and other texts of the priest celebrant. This emphasis must be seen against the backdrop of the integral relationship between music and the Liturgy. Even as the place of music in the Liturgy is often accepted as important and central, pastoral musicians often note the challenge of societal influences which might discourage active participation (singing) in favor of listening to someone else sing as though at a performance. Some feel that only professionals should sing, that singing at Mass requires a trained voice. Rather, authentic worship requires that we use our gifts and engage our whole selves in giving praise to God.

The current practice regarding singing for priests is quite diverse across the country. Music education and training in seminary formation varies widely from seminary to seminary. At a minimum, it seems that musicians are brought into the seminary on a part time basis to teach seminarians the chants of the liturgy. It is encouraging to note that many recently ordained priests mention that they were trained to be able to sing at least one setting of the Eucharistic Prayer. Some priests, however, were never trained in music, or were even discouraged from singing. Others have simply, over time, just convinced themselves that they cannot sing even though the truth is otherwise.

This time of preparation before receiving the new text of the *Roman Missal* provides an opportunity to encourage our priests to sing the various chants of the Liturgy. Music ministers can support priests by giving them time and training if a particular priest is interested. Perhaps priests might take the time to work with the music minister in their parish to learn parts of the Mass that they have not previously sung, especially as recent liturgical texts have emphasized new priorities.

### **Why Should Priests Sing?**

The ICEL introduction to the chants for the new *Roman Missal* notes a number of reasons why the priest celebrant should sing:

1. To preserve the tradition of unaccompanied singing which gives the Liturgy a more noble form;
2. To continue the realization of a goal given by the Second Vatican Council in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* of “full and active participation” of all the people;
3. To reinforce, by chanting, the accentuation of the English language; and
4. To preserve the vernacular chants already in use.

The USCCB’s 2007 guidelines on music in the Liturgy, *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, explicitly address the role of the priest in singing the Liturgy in paragraphs 18-21. These paragraphs highlight the importance of the priest singing the presidential prayers and the dialogues of the Liturgy according to his ability. As previously stated, the implementation of the revised *Roman Missal* is an opportunity for priests to expand their own abilities and to learn to sing the revised texts of the parts of the Mass.

Even if the priest himself is not confident singing alone he should definitely pay attention to his singing with the rest of the community in congregational song. If the celebrant is not perceived as interested in the communal singing of the Liturgy, it will almost always influence the way in which the community will respond in song. Here the truism can apply: “lead by example.” In addition, the priest, by his attention and participation, should support the role of the cantor and psalmist. The priest also needs to be careful in the use of the microphone when singing with the gathered assembly, in order to avoid having his voice overpower that of the people.

Finally, in preparation for the reception of the *Missal*, pastors can point out to the faithful the overall importance of music in the Liturgy, as well as the various parts of the Mass that should be sung and who should sing them.

### **What Should Priests Sing?**

*Sing to the Lord* encourages the priest, particularly on Sundays and solemnities, to sing the Sign of the Cross and the dialogues. Priests will be able to utilize chants provided for these parts in the revised *Missal*. However, some priests who have been hesitant to sing at all may want to start by trying to sing these elements on a single pitch. From there, with the help of a music minister, they may progress to using the new chant settings. By singing these parts of the Mass, emphasis is given to the dialogical nature of the Liturgy. God has initiated the dialogue and the Church responds through Christ and in the Holy Spirit. In addition, such dialogical singing emphasizes the interaction of the ministerial (ordained) priesthood and the royal (baptismal) priesthood of the faithful. Number 95 of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)* notes that God has made His own a holy people “so that they may give thanks to God and offer the spotless Victim not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him...” In addition, no. 34 of the *GIRM* states, “Since the celebration of Mass by its nature has a ‘communitarian’ character, both the dialogues between the priest and the faithful gathered together, and the acclamations are of great significance, in fact, they are not simply outward signs of communal celebration but foster and bring about communion between priest and people.” We are mindful that the priest, in order to preserve this dialogic structure, should not sing along with the congregation in their responses to the dialogues.

Of course, there are some priests who will have no difficulty at all of singing all the parts of the Mass that will be made available to them in the revised *Missal*. *Sing to the Lord* does note in number 20 that, at a minimum, the priests should sing those parts of the Eucharistic Prayer for which notation is provided. Particularly on Sundays and solemnities, the opening dialogue and the Preface, the invitation to the Mystery of Faith (the Memorial Acclamation), and the concluding doxology should be sung.

The importance of the priest singing various parts of the Liturgy must also be explained to the faithful. Recently, for example, the Secretariat of Divine Worship received a telephone call from a parishioner who was very concerned that the young priest in her parish chanted the Eucharistic Prayer, and asked: “Is this Catholic?” “Catholic” it is indeed, but it is still a new experience for many of the faithful.



In his 2006 Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, Pope Benedict XVI notes that liturgical song has “pre-eminent place” as an aspect or building block of the *ars celebrandi*, the art of liturgical celebration (see no. 42). Singing not only at the Liturgy but singing of the Liturgy (*i.e.*, singing the rites themselves), which involves both the priest and the gathered assembly, is an important tool for fostering the full, conscious, and active – and therefore fruitful – participation in the Liturgy. The implementation of the revised *Roman Missal* provides an opportunity for pastors and parishes to evaluate their practices and commit to embracing the *ars celebrandi*, which will lead to more fruitful worship and prayer.

### **Republication of the *Rite of Penance***

Bishop Arthur Serratelli, Chairman of the Committee on Divine Worship, recently announced that the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has granted permission for an *ad interim* republication of the *Rite of Penance*, which has been out of print for several years.

For a number of years, the Committee on Divine Worship (and the previous Committee on the Liturgy) has attempted to address concerns about the lack of availability of the text of the *Rite of Penance*, which was originally published for the dioceses of the United States of America in 1975. The Committee desired that any effort to republish the text would also allow for the opportunity to update the Scripture readings contained in the Rite so that they would correspond to those in the revised *Lectionary for Mass*.

In December 2007, Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I., USCCB President, sent a formal request to republish the *Rite of Penance* to the Congregation, along with an updated collection of readings, drawn from the revised *Lectionary for Mass*. On August 10, 2009, Cardinal George received a letter from Antonio Cardinal Cañizares Llovera, Prefect of the Congregation, granting permission for the *ad interim* republication of the *Rite of Penance* with the revised Scripture readings, for use until such time that the *Rite of Penance* can be retranslated in accord with the requirements of *Liturgiam authenticam*.

The Secretariat of Divine Worship is working with publishers to see to the publication of the text as soon as possible. Once the text is available, a formal public announcement will be made so that parishes and priests can obtain copies. Bishop Serratelli notes that in this Year for Priests, as Pope Benedict XVI offers the example of St. John Mary Vianney as a devoted and wise confessor, “the republication of the *Rite of Penance* will encourage the fruitful celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation for our faithful people.”

### ***Roman Missal* Workshops Planned for Clergy and Diocesan Leaders**

To prepare clergy and diocesan liturgical leaders for the implementation of the revised *Roman Missal*, the Committee on Divine Worship and the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions (FDLC), with the support of the National Organization for the Continuing Education of Roman Catholic Clergy (NOCERCC), are sponsoring a series of 2-day regional workshops across the country during 2010. The workshops will feature sessions on the background of the translation of the new texts, training for chanting texts of the revised *Missal*, presentations and discussion on the *ars celebrandi*, and discussion on implementation strategies in dioceses and parishes. The official title of the program, dates, and locations are still being finalized at this time. At least one workshop is planned for each of the 14 episcopal regions of the United States, although priests and diocesan leaders will be free to select any one of the workshops throughout the country. Online registration for workshops will begin in late fall. More information will be available in the fall in the *Newsletter* and on the *Roman Missal* website, and brochures will be sent to diocesan contacts when they are available.

**Visit [www.USCCB.org/romanmissal](http://www.USCCB.org/romanmissal)  
for Catechetical Resources and the Latest Information  
on the Implementation of the Revised *Roman Missal***