

Singing God's praises in a revised way

By Heather Reid

Third of three parts

IN THIS THIRD AND FINAL article about the revised *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM) and its implications for music ministers, we will look at music for processions; the Kyrie and Gloria; hymn texts; and some general considerations when choosing music for Sunday Mass.

There are three processions during Mass: the entrance or opening procession; the procession for the presentation of the gifts and the Communion procession. There is much to learn about the nature and meaning of liturgical processions. Of the three processions, the Communion procession holds pride of place, followed by the entrance procession. The Communion procession calls for ritual music that highlights or points to the ritual action of the gathered body of Christ moving forward together in procession to receive the sacramental Body of Christ. Please see my article in the Summer 2011 issue of *Celebrate!* for a discussion of music to accompany this procession.

The entrance chant

The revised GIRM, like the 1975 GIRM, describes the song that accompanies the entrance procession in this way: "When the people are gathered, and as the Priest enters with the Deacon and ministers, the Entrance Chant begins. Its purpose 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 accom-

pany the procession of the Priest and ministers" (47). Then it offers these options for the Entrance chant: "In the dioceses of Canada the Entrance Chant may be chosen from among the following: the antiphon with its Psalm from the *Graduale Romanum* or the *Graduale Simplex*, or another chant that is suited to the sacred action, the day, or the time of year, and whose text has been approved by the Conference of Bishops of Canada" (48). Clearly such texts

truncate the hymn without consideration for the sense of the text. The old example of singing a hymn to the Trinity, but omitting the verse about the Spirit, well illustrates this point. Asking that the procession not begin until the second or third verse can eliminate the need to omit verses.

In the last forty years, the typical choice has been a song from a hymnal. Such music should reflect the liturgical season or be a song of praise. When your parish uses incense, the hymn must be long enough to accompany this action. It is also important to consider the full text of the hymn. Follow the wisdom of the 2006 document of the American bishops, *Sing to the Lord – Music in Divine Worship*: "Care must be taken in the treatment of the texts of psalms, hymns, and songs in the Liturgy. Verses and stanzas should not be omitted arbitrarily in ways that risk distorting their

content. While not all musical pieces require that all verses or stanzas be sung, verses should be omitted only if the text to be sung forms a coherent whole" (143).

Consider using psalms and scriptural texts with refrains that people can sing from memory after one hearing and don't require hymnbooks. The revised GIRM can encourage music ministers to rediscover this tradition of the early church. Asking congregations that are not comfortable with singing to sing only a psalm refrain can encourage their singing. The verses are sung by the cantor or the choir as during the Communion procession.

Choosing music entails knowing the liturgical season, the scriptures of the day, your musical resources (both human and print or electronic), the ritual action, the repertoire your community knows and, perhaps most importantly, your community itself.

would be found in any edition of *Catholic Book of Worship*, in *Celebrate in Song* or in *D'une même voix (Chants notés de l'assemblée)*, Canada's official French-language hymnal.

While none of this is new, it hasn't always been followed in our parishes. It is essential to grasp that the entrance chant helps the assembly know itself as the Body of Christ gathered to praise and worship God. Singing as a community cements the gathering that began at home and is fleshed out in the pews of the church. Often, however, the entrance hymn or song abruptly stops as soon as the priest gets to the presider's chair. It is not appropriate to

Gloria

CURRENT TEXT

Glory to God in the highest,
And peace to his people on
earth.

Lord God, heavenly King,
Almighty
God and Father,
We worship you,
We give you thanks,
We praise you for your glory.

Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away
the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
You are seated at the right hand
of the Father:
receive our prayer.

Text: Excerpts from the English translation of The Roman Missal, © 1973, ICEL. All rights reserved.

LATIN TEXT

Gloria in excelsis Deo
Et in terra pax hominibus bonae
voluntatis.

Laudamus te.
Benedicamus te.
Adoramus te.
Glorificamus te.

Gratias agimus tibi propter
magnam gloriam tuam,
Domine Deus, Rex caelestis,
Deus Pater omnipotens.

Qui Tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.

Qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe
deprecationem nostram.

Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris,
miserere nobis.

2010 TRANSLATION

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of
good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you.

we give you thanks for your
great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
God almighty Father.

Lord God, Lamb of God, son of
the Father,

You take away the sins of the
world, receive our prayer.

You are seated at the right hand
of the Father, have mercy on us.

Text: Excerpts from the English translation of The Roman Missal, © 2010, ICEL. All rights reserved.

The Offertory chant

The other place for processional music is during the offertory. Although the song is once again called the offertory chant, this music does not speak of offering, but reflects the liturgical season, the scriptures of the day, joy, unity, peace or as always, praise. The Canadian Pastoral Notes to the GIRM indicate that the music begins when the collection begins and continues through the washing of the hands (229) and, if incense is used, throughout the incensation.

Singing a psalm is an option. However, this is a time when the assembly, after giving their gift (collection) can easily sing a complete song or hymn. Instrumental music may be used or the choir may sing alone. Normally silence would not be the preferred choice.

The Introductory Rites

In addition to the dialogues between the priest and people, two parts of the introductory rites that may be sung are the Kyrie and the Gloria. The Kyrie can be part of what is now known as the penitential act. The revised Missal offers several options: the blessing and sprinkling of water replacing the penitential act (when this option is used, usually in the Easter season, it is best accompanied by singing); Confiteor (I confess) and the Kyrie, or a brief dialogue of





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psalm verses or a litany of praise, followed by the Kyrie (52). The GIRM adds: “Since it is a chant by which the faithful acclaim the Lord and implore his mercy, [the Kyrie] is ordinarily performed by all, that is, with the people and the choir or cantor having a part in it ...”

Singing the Kyrie might best be reserved for Advent and Lent when the Gloria is not sung to avoid overloading the introductory rites and overshadowing the more important Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Eucharist. Singing the Kyrie during Advent and Lent gives it the appropriate importance for the liturgical season. Usually the Kyrie is sung responsorially between a cantor or choir and the assembly. The presider, a deacon or a music minister may sing the trope or invocation.

The text of the Gloria, an ancient hymn of praise cries out to be sung (53). Indeed, it is meant to be sung by everyone. Try to sing, rather than recite, it at all Sunday Masses during Ordinary Time, the Christmas and Easter seasons as well as on other feasts or solemnities. Because the text is five lines longer in the revised Missal (see box, page 43), choosing a setting with a refrain will help our communities learn the new text. Teach the refrain first, and have a choir or cantor sing the rest of the text. Eventually congregations will be able to sing

a through-composed version (one without a refrain) or the entire text with the refrain at the beginning and end. The CCCB resource *Celebrate in Song* offers three settings of the new Gloria text, by Angeles, Dawson and Guimont whose settings of the Eucharistic acclamations we discussed in the first article. Since it can take up to two years for a community to learn a Gloria, stick with one of these new settings until you're sure your community knows it by heart.

Choosing music

This new Missal and General Instruction offer music ministers an opportunity to re-visit and update their knowledge about the important task of choosing music for the Sunday liturgy. This responsibility entails knowing



PRAISING AND WORSHIPPING GOD
with voices and instruments is what the music minister's craft is all about.

the liturgical season, the scriptures of the day, your musical resources (both human and print or electronic), the ritual action, the repertoire your community knows, and, perhaps most importantly, your community itself. Choosing music involves making musical, liturgical and pastoral decisions. The musical judgment is based on knowing the musical aspects of a piece of music: melodic line, rhythm, form etc. as well as considering the resources and capabilities required for the piece. The liturgical decision looks at the appropriate placement of a piece of music within the liturgy or ritual action. The pastoral judgement requires knowledge of a particular community, its cultural milieu and anything else that is occurring in the community. These decisions are not made in isolation of each other. They are also made more easily when liturgical ministers collaborate.

You will find an invaluable guide in the CCCB's *A Companion to the Catholic Book of Worship III: Guidelines for Liturgical Music*, now on sale at discount prices from the CCCB. (Its material about the what, why and how of choosing music will never be outdated.) Our responsibility to foster the sung prayer and praise of the gathered assembly must always motivate our choice of liturgical music.

As we embrace these challenges presented by the revised GIRM and Roman Missal, let's use them to re-vitalize and improve our Sunday liturgies. The gift of music will help us in this task, which is at once a calling and a blessing. Praising and worshipping God with voices and instruments is what the music minister's craft is all about. With such a glorious conductor, our only cry can be, “How can I keep from singing?” †

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