

Same Mass, New Words

The Music of the Mass

The new English translation of the Roman Missal has meant that some familiar melodies to the parts of the Mass which we normally sing are no longer in use. Once you change the number of syllables in any given line of text, it just doesn't fit the same melody any more.

You and your fellow parishioners have been learning new melodies to accompany the texts like *Glory to God, Holy, Holy*, and the Memorial Acclamations. Those melodies are very simple ones to help us in the transition period. There will be enough energy spent making sure everyone is



Gloria

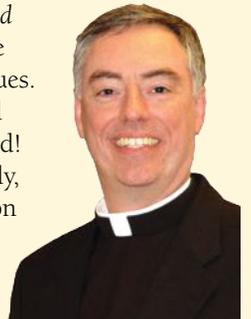
And with Your spirit

keeping up with the new wording; we shouldn't have to spend a great deal of energy learning complicated music! Once the parish is familiar with the new wording to the parts of the Mass over the next year or so, parishes will be trying out additional musical settings for Mass that might be more challenging and more interesting for musicians and choir members.

The revised English translation of the Missal also gives us another opportunity with respect to singing at Mass. For the first time since the Second Vatican Council, every spoken word at Mass has now been set to music in the Missal, beginning with the Sign of the Cross at the beginning of Mass and ending with the dismissal at the conclusion of Mass. We have never had that before! In theory, it would now be possible to sing everything at Mass, including all the prayers by the priest and the readings. In practice, it is doubtful that any parish would ever do that, or ever do that on a consistent basis. But it does mean that some of the shorter texts of Mass can now be sung more easily because it is now indicated how they are meant to be sung. For example, there are many dialogues which take place between the priest or deacon in which the people are greeted with *The Lord be with you*, and the people answer, *And with your spirit*. Priests and deacons are being encouraged to sing those dialogues. Singing those lines will help to remind everyone that the response has changed! We are tempted to answer automatically, *And also with you*. Hearing the invitation sung can remind us that we now answer *And with your spirit*.

Since the Second Vatican Council, there has been an emphasis on singing the texts of the

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Mass as opposed to simply singing at Mass. In other words, it has become important to sing those parts of the Mass that the people and the priest pray together, like *Holy, Holy*, and *Lamb of God*. But there also are many of these shorter texts which are part of the Mass and which merit also being sung so that people and the priest respond to each other in song. The transition phase to the new English wording for Mass will give us an opportunity to try out this additional way of lifting our voices in praise to God. After the initial period of transition is over, parishes may find they like having the priest and people address each other in song. Those parishes may want to continue the practice at one Mass on each weekend or at one Mass on special occasions in order to add to the solemnity of the celebration. In this way, the Second Vatican Council's promotion of the sung Mass (as opposed to the read Mass or Mass at which some religious hymns are inserted) could be more widely practiced in our parishes than has been the case until now.



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