

Notes from the Choir Loft, 2

from the *Liber* (or hymnal). Fill music can be in several forms. First is, chant that was once used for a specific feast but was replaced by another chant at some time in the past. A good example is the Hymn at *Matins* for the Common of Apostles and Evangelists; currently the text used is *An-nue Christe* that has nearly 30+ melodies available by which to sing it. That particular hymn replaced *Aeterna Christi Munera* which was believed to be written by St. Ambrose, c.340-397. At OLMC, we have revived this hymn in the form that the great Giovanna Palestrina used in 1590 to write his parody Mass on the same melody. At times, when we can, we sing it as fill music for Offertory or Communion.

Another criterion, polyphony based upon original chants may be sung. In every writing of popes in encyclical or letter, there are long discussions about what music is appropriate for liturgical functions. In nearly every single example, the popes name only two forms of music, Chant and Polyphony. A form of music can be considered as to how it fits a certain genre; a symphony is for orchestras to play, a motet is for choirs to sing, a concerto is played by a solo instrument and orchestra, Gregorian Chant is sung by a *Schola Cantorum* (literally school of singing) and congregations. In every published form, the popes mention only three types of music that is set aside for the music at Mass, beginning with chant and polyphony. Other than hymns there are NO OTHER FORMS of music that are mentioned as being set aside for liturgy. Music directors wishing to follow the popes in obedience need to take a long look at the writings available that state this- there are dozens. Besides the encyclicals of Pius X, Pius XII, and the articles on music from the II Vatican Council, there are still many books, many articles, and a great number of erudite sources that state that Gregorian

chant is the best music suited for liturgical worship, and Polyphony, being based on chant, is next best suited. Instruments should be used only as an aid to worship, i.e. accompaniment to the singers. Any other instruments so long as they are designed to accompany and not overpower the voice may be used for accompaniment and occasionally used for solo or replacement of voices on special occasions.

In recent years, hymns were added to that very short list and have become an acceptable form of music at Mass so long as they fulfill other criteria (in Latin, based on chant, etc.). The reason why we have hymns in English at the beginning and end of Mass, processional and recessional, is because technically those two times are outside of Mass. Mass begins with the *In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti*, and ends with the last Gospel or final prayers when the last Gospel is omitted.

The popes encourage us to sing at Mass when we can. Please feel free to ask questions and present thoughts about this information; intellectual debate and logical discussion on these subjects are highly encouraged. The Choir email is music.director@olmcfssp.org. MUCH more information about these musical subjects will be at the Liturgical Music Conference on Tuesday, **November 27th**, at 7pm in the Parish Hall.

The Sacred Congregation of Rites, on September 3, 1958, quoted at length in *Matters Liturgical* (pp. 47, 48 of the 1959 edition), states: "First of all, such popular religious hymns are greatly to be commended and esteemed, since they constitute a most effective means in directing the minds of the faithful to heavenly things and in imbuing the Christian life with a genuine religious spirit. Strongly to be encouraged for pious exercises, they can only be sung at liturgical functions "when this is expressly permitted." English hymns are expressly permitted during a Low Mass, but in general, expressly forbidden during a High Mass: Hymns in the vernacular are permitted at a Low Mass, on condition that their theme corresponds to the part of the Mass at which they are sung. This means that a theme of sacrifice or offering is retained at the Offertory, and a theme of thanksgiving, love of God, or any similar theme at Communion time. However, the singing of vernacular hymns at a sung Mass or *Missa Cantata* is manifestly an abuse that can only be tolerated when backed up by a long standing custom that has lasted for over a century: They [hymns in the vernacular] are permitted at a Mass in chant only in the case of a centenary or immemorial custom, which in the judgment of the local Ordinary cannot prudently be suppressed.

So what does that mean?

- Low Mass music is not only permitted but encouraged.
- Low Mass Propers (i.e. Introit, Gradual...etc. CANNOT be sung.
- Low Mass Kyriale CANNOT be sung.

- Low Mass favorite hymns CAN be sung only at certain times.
- Low Mass music must NEVER be sung during the elevation of the host or chalice at the Consecration.
- Low Mass music sung or played as extra "fill" music CAN be in the vernacular.
- High Mass Propers MUST be sung and whenever possible using the "long" chant from the *Liber Usualis*.
- High Mass *Kyriale* MUST be sung by both choir and congregation, preferably in antiphonal form. N.B. technically the schola is responsible to sing the *Kyriale*, but when the congregation is capable of doing so, it is considered "Strongly encouraged" by the Magisterium.
- High Mass fill music must not be in a common language, but a language set aside for the liturgy. i.e., Latin.

So, what is High Mass fill music? This is the music that a good director will consider adding when time permits for the choir to sing, such as during the Offertory or Communion. THIS is one of those things that good directors have a lot more control over.

What are the conditions for deciding this fill music? When looking at what is appropriate for music at Mass, there are several considerations. First and foremost of these is the quality of music, of which there are thousands of pieces to choose from. Sadly there's vast opinion of what is quality when deciding this, so in reality a strict adherence to the popes' writings is key to correctly implementing this music at Mass. The rules stated/quoted above are key to the first part, Propers from the *Liber Usualis*, *Kyriale*