

Ordo Cantus Missae: Introduction to the Roman Gradual

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INTRODUCTION

I. REFORM OF THE GRADUALE ROMANUM

Reform of the General Calendar and of the liturgical books, particularly the Roman Missal and Lectionary, has resulted in the need also to make a number of changes and adaptations in the *Graduale Romanum*. Thus, the suppression of several celebrations in the liturgical year—for example, the season of Septuagesima, the octave of Pentecost, the ember days—required taking out the corresponding Masses. Transference of saints to a different liturgical season entailed making appropriate modifications. The introduction of new Masses called for supplying new proper chants. And the new plan of biblical readings required transferring a number of texts (for example, communion antiphons) to other days more closely connected with the readings.

The criterion for the present rearrangement of the *Graduale* is the prescription in the Constitution on the Liturgy art. 114: “The treasure of sacred music is to be preserved and fostered with great care.”¹ The revision has thus done no harm to the authentic corpus of Gregorian chant, but has in some ways enhanced it, since by eliminating certain later imitations, giving a more appropriate place

to ancient texts, and adding certain norms the revision makes use of this corpus easier and more varied.

The first concern was to retain the authentic Gregorian treasure in its entirety. Chants for Masses no longer forming part of the liturgical year have been employed to compose other Masses (for example, Masses for the weekdays of Advent, for the weekdays between Ascension and Pentecost); or have replaced other chants that were repeated often during the year (for example, during Lent or on the Sundays in Ordinary Time); or, when their style permitted, have been assigned to celebrations of the saints.

In addition, nearly twenty authentic Gregorian chants that, because of changes in the course of time, had fallen into disuse have been brought back into the repertoire. Measures have also been taken against the distortion or mutilation of any authentic chant; when elements have been removed that were not suited to a particular liturgical season, for example, in an antiphon text of the *Alleluia* having notes that form an integral part of the melody.

The elimination, particularly in the case of saints’ feasts, of passages that are late, neo-Gregorian imitations means that only authentically Gregorian chants remain. Nevertheless it remains permissible, for those who wish, to keep and to sing *neo-Gregorian* melodies. None has been completely eliminated from the *Graduale Romanum*; in fact for several of received usage no substitution has been made (for example, chants for the solemnities of the Sacred Heart, Christ the King, the Immaculate Conception). On the other hand, melodies from the authentic corpus and, where possible, connected with the same text, have replaced neo-Gregorian melodies.

¹ DOL 1 no.114.

Finally, the authentic Gregorian repertoire, freed of the nonauthentic melodies, was carefully allocated throughout the *Graduale* in order to avoid excessive repetition of the same texts and to replace them with other beautiful selections that appear only once during the year. The utmost care was given in this regard to enrich the commons, assigning to them all the chants not proper to any particular saint and thus available for all the saints of the same class. The commons have been further supplemented with many chants deriving from the Proper of Seasons that were seldom used. The rubrics make provision as well for use of the newly arranged commons for the sake of greater flexibility in meeting pastoral needs.

For pastoral reasons also there is an option regarding the chants for the Proper of Seasons: namely, as circumstances suggest, to replace the text proper to a day with another text belonging to the same season.

The norms for the singing of the Mass in the front of the *Graduale Romanum* have also been revised and emended in a way that brings out more clearly the function of each particular chant.

II. RITES TO BE FOLLOWED IN SINGING THE MASS

1. When the congregation has gathered and while the priests and ministers are going to the altar, the entrance antiphon begins. Its intonation may be shorter or longer as the circumstances warrant; better still, the whole assembly may begin the chant together. Thus the asterisk in the *Graduale* marking off the part to be intoned is to be regarded merely as a guide.

When the choir has sung the antiphon, the cantor or cantors sing the verse, then the choir repeats the antiphon.

The alternation between antiphon and versicles may go on as long as is necessary to accompany the entrance procession. The final repetition of the antiphon, however, may be preceded by the *Gloria Patri* and *Sicut erat*, sung as the one, final versicle. When the *Gloria Patri* and *Sicut erat* have a special musical termination, this must be used with each of the other verses.

If the *Gloria Patri* and the repetition of the antiphon would cause the chant to last too long, the *Gloria Patri* is omitted. When the procession is short, only one psalm verse is used or even the antiphon alone, without verse.

Whenever a liturgical procession precedes the Mass, the entrance antiphon is sung as the procession enters the church or is even omitted, as the liturgical books indicate in each case.

2. Each acclamation of the *Kyrie* may be assigned to a different cantor or part of the choir or congregation. Each acclamation is as a rule sung twice, but may be sung more than twice, especially by reason of the music itself, as is indicated in no. 491.

Each acclamation is preceded by a brief invocation when the *Kyrie* is sung as part of the penitential rite.

3. The hymn *Gloria in excelsis* is intoned by the priest or, if more convenient, by the cantor. It is sung either by cantors and choir alternating or by two choirs antiphonally. The division of the verses indicated by a double line in the *Graduale* need not be followed, if a better

division, compatible with the music, is devised.

4. Whenever there are two readings before the gospel, the first—usually from the Old Testament—is chanted according to the lesson or prophecy tone, with the usual termination for the final period. The conclusion *Verbum Domini* also is sung with the same final termination; then all sing the acclamation *Deo gratias* in the manner usual for the end of lessons.

5. The gradual response is sung after the first reading by the cantors or the choir. The verse is sung all the way through by the cantors. To be disregarded, therefore, is the asterisk in the *Graduale* indicating the choir's coming in at the end of the gradual verse, the *Alleluia* verse, and the last verse of the tract. When it seems appropriate, the first part of the response may be repeated as far as the verse.

During the Easter season the gradual response is omitted and the *Alleluia* is sung in the way that will be indicated later.

6. The second reading, from the New Testament, is sung in the epistle tone with its proper termination; the second reading may also be sung in the tone of the first reading. The conclusion *Verbum Domini* is sung according to the melody given among the common tones; all then sing the acclamation *Deo gratias*.

7. Either the *Alleluia* or tract follows the second reading. The arrangement for the *Alleluia* is this: the cantors sing the entire *Alleluia* and its neumes, then the choir repeats it. But the whole may be sung once by all, should this seem desirable. The cantors sing the verse all the way through; after the verse all repeat the *Alleluia*.

During Lent the tract replaces the *Alleluia*. Two parts of the choir sing the verses antiphonally or the cantors alternate with the choir. The final verse may be sung by all together.

8. When there is a sequence, it is sung in alternation either by the cantors with choir or by the two parts of the choir; the final *Amen* is omitted. When the *Alleluia* and its verse are not sung, the sequence is omitted.

9. Whenever there is only one reading before the gospel, it is followed by either the gradual responsory or the *Alleluia* with its verse. During the Easter season one or the other *Alleluia* is sung.

10. The conclusion *Verbum Domini*, in the way given among the common tones, follows the proper termination of the singing of the gospel; all then sing the acclamation, *Laus tibi, Christe*.

11. The *Credo* is sung as a rule either by all together or in alternation.

12. The singing of the general intercessions follows local custom.

13. After the offertory antiphon, versicles may be sung, depending on tradition; but they also may be omitted, including the *Domine, Iesu Christe* in a Mass for the dead. After each verse there is a repetition of the part of the antiphon marked for repetition.

14. After the preface, all sing the *Sanctus* and after the consecration all join in the memorial acclamation.

15. After the doxology of the eucharistic prayer, all sing the acclamation, *Amen*. Then the priest alone pronounces the invitation for the Lord's Prayer and all sing it with him. The priest alone continues

with the embolism and all join in the concluding doxology.

16. During the breaking of the bread and the commingling, the invocation *Agnus Dei* is sung by the cantors and answered by all. The *Agnus Dei* may be repeated in a way conforming to the music as often as is necessary to accompany the breaking of the bread. At the last repetition the conclusion is *dona nobis pacem*.

17. The communion antiphon is begun as the priest receives the body of the Lord. It is sung in the same way as the entrance antiphon, but with proper provision for the cantors to receive communion.

18. After the final blessing by the priest, the deacon sings the *Ite, missa est* and all join in the acclamation, *Deo gratias*.

III. USE OF THE ORDO CANTUS MISSAE

19. A great variety of readings has been introduced into the Roman Missal, but the chants for Mass received from tradition cannot be changed. Accordingly, the same chant formulary is used with the different readings in the Lectionary for the three-year cycle (A, B, C) established for Sundays.

For weekdays the chants of the previous Sunday are used again, both with the readings assigned to each day of the special seasons—Advent, Lent, and Easter—and with the first reading for Ordinary Time, in its two-year cycle (I and II).

Chants closely related to the readings should, of course, be appropriately transferred for use with these readings.

20. After each basic formulary, changes that need to be made in the Proper of Seasons are indicated in the *Ordo Cantus Missae* by means of the following symbols:

A, B, C for Sundays, solemnities, and certain feasts;

I and II with arabic numerals adjoined in parentheses for the weekdays (7 is the numeral for Saturday); arabic numerals alone for the weekdays of the other seasons.

These symbols are references to the section of the Ordo (nos. 136-141) that lists all the changes together.

21. As its principal norm, this *Ordo Cantus Missae* has the aim of respecting the arrangement of the Roman Missal as faithfully as possible. This is the reason for the transferral or change of some chant formularies.

COMMUNION PSALMS

22. The numbering of the psalms and their verses is that of the Neo-Vulgate edition (Vatican Polyglot Press, 1969). The format of the verses and their parts is that of the *Liturgia Horarum* (Vatican Polyglot Press, 1971).

23. An asterisk attached to a psalm number indicates that the antiphon is not from the psalter and therefore that the psalm is provided as an option. In such a case another psalm may be substituted at will, for example, Ps 33 [34], which by an ancient tradition is used at communion.

When this psalm is given as the psalm at communion, no particular verses are usually suggested, since all the verses are so relevant.