

2009 Letter to Bishop's Committee on the Liturgy Re: *Spoken Propers*

Conference of Roman Catholic Cathedral Musicians

2535 Collingwood Blvd., Toledo , Ohio 43610

Most Reverend Arthur J. Sarratelli
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
3211 4th Street, NE
Washington DC 20017-1194

March 3, 2009

Dear Bishop Sarratelli,

The Conference of Roman Catholic Cathedral Musicians met in Pittsburgh from January 5 through 8 of this year. One of the issues discussed at the Conference is a concern about the wording of articles 48 and 87 of the United States Adaptation of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal. The members of the conference would like the USCCB to consider revisiting these articles and to correct the language for inclusion in the new missal.

These articles pertain to the proper sung texts at entrance and communion. At present, the articles read:

"In the dioceses of the United States of America, there are four options for the Entrance/Communion Chant: (1) the antiphon from the Roman Missal or the Psalm from the Roman Gradual as set to music there or in another musical setting..."

Here is a practical example of what these articles mean if taken literally: On Christmas Day, Midnight Mass, the introit antiphon in the Roman Missal says:

"The Lord said to me: You are my Son; this day have I begotten you."

The psalm from the Roman Gradual says:

"Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?"

While this is one Mass where the antiphon of the Missal is the same as the Gradual, the present wording allows us to consider only the verse of the Gradual as an alternate to the antiphon of the Missal.

As you know, the antiphons in the Missale Romanum differ substantially from those in the Graduale Romanum (*Sacred Music*, Winter 2006, V. 133 No. 4, pp. 4-13). The original intent of the Missal antiphons were for recitation at Masses when there was no singing at entrance or communion (*Notitiae* v.6, pp. 213-221, 1970), hence their inclusion in the Sacramentary. The present wording not only raises the spoken Missal antiphons to the level of sung proper antiphons, but it does not allow for the Gregorian introit and communion antiphons to be considered proper for singing when the antiphon in the Missal differs. The articles only mention the psalm verses associated with these chants, but not the antiphons. This could lead to misunderstandings and long term damage to the stature of Gregorian chant in the United States. The Latin GIRM, from which the present document is adapted, continues the long tradition of the Church to uphold the importance of the sung proper antiphons found in the Graduale Romanum.

The USCCB discussed proposed changes to articles 48 and 87 in 2007. However, the proposal was withdrawn by Bishop Trautman because of a feeling of unease about changing an adaptation that had already been approved for the United States. This does not change the fact that the wording is erroneous and could lead to further misunderstandings. Countless hours are already invested in the new missal, and everybody would like to see this as a book of utmost quality. We therefore feel that it is important that the General Instruction be accurate in regard to the proper sung texts and urge you to reconsider articles 48 and 87.

Sincerely,

CRCCM Steering Committee
Paul Monachino, chair

2009 Reply from Bishop's Committee on the Liturgy Re: *Spoken Propers*

May 19, 2009

Mr. Paul Monachino
Conference of Roman Catholic Cathedral Musicians
2535 Collingwood Blvd.
Toledo, Ohio 43610

Dear Mr. Monachino:

Thank you very much for your letter of March 3, 2009. I apologize for my delay in responding to you (due to a backlog in correspondence).

It is true that the BCL discussed in 2007 proposed changes to articles 48 and 87 in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*. While the bishops, at the time, did not wish to withdraw an adaptation that had already been approved for the United States there were other issues that were taken into consideration and now have even more weight.

The antiphons of the *Missale Romanum* were first provided in the 1969 *editio typica Latina*. These were to accompany the processions at the Entrance and the procession to receive Communion. The latest edition of the *Missale Romanum* completes those texts that were missing at the time of the development of the *editio typica tertia*.

In the intervening years, the antiphons of the *Missale Romanum* have been employed in several pastoral initiatives in musical settings which are simpler and more accessible than the settings of the *Graduale Romanum*. In addition, the correspondence of the *Roman Missal* to the liturgical texts of the current liturgical year have commended their use, even in a musical setting.

Of particular note is the adaptation of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* numbers 48 and 87 for the United States. This was simply the recognition of the fact that for nearly forty years these antiphons have been allowed for the Entrance and the Communion Chant.

The Committee on Divine Worship has subsequently discussed the issue but, in light of these positive developments, there does not seem to be an urgent reason for emending the particular law in force in the Dioceses of the United States. Should musicians wish to use the *Graduale Romanum* there is nothing preventing them from doing so.

Thank you very much for your observations and insights.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

signature

Most Rev. Arthur J. Serratelli, S.T.D., S.S.L., D.D.
Bishop of Paterson