

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Question received on 5 May 2021:

Does the Brébeuf Hymnal Pew Edition have harmonies? or is it just melody?

The Brébeuf Pew Edition employs melody only for a crucial reason: if harmonies are added to the pew book, *that severely limits the book* because then all the verses are “**perpetually locked in**” to just one harmonization and one key.

Something that distinguishes the Brébeuf Hymnal is how it usually includes all the verses for each hymn. This was done because when hymns only have 2-3 verses, by the time the congregation locates the hymn it is already almost over! But many hymns have 7-8 verses. Do choirmasters want to forever want to sing the same harmonies in the same key for all the verses?

Is it not better to retain the freedom to add harmonies, descants, and counter-melodies? Is it not better to allow the organist freedom to improvise before the final verse, transposing the singers into a higher key? Is it not better to treat the hymn verses in a creative way? Perhaps some are female only, some are male only, some are SATB harmonized, some have a descant, some have a “ison,” some have a counter-melody, and so forth?

These are some of the important reasons the Pew Edition is melody only.