

# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

... regarding the *Saint Jean de Brébeuf Catholic Hymnal*

**Q. I went to a liturgical conference where the speaker said hymns don't belong at Mass; he said hymns are found in the books for the Divine Office (ANTIPHONALE), but not the books for Mass (GRADUALE). Is this true?**

## WHERE WE FIND HYMNS

While the books for the Divine Office (a.k.a. *Breviary*) certainly do contain hymns, it is erroneous to assert that the *GRADUALE ROMANUM* does not contain any hymns. For example, in the Roman Gradual we find: *Pange Lingua* (Aquinas), *Veni Creator Spiritus*, *Crux Fidelis* (Fortunatus), *Ubi Caritas*, *Aeterne Rex*, *Benedictus Es* (Dan 3), *Gloria Laus*, *Jesu Nostra Redemptio*, *Sacris Solemniis*, *Salutis Humanae*, *Te Deum*, *Verbum Supernum Prodiens*, *Vexilla Regis Prodeunt*, and so forth.

## HYMNS DURING COMMUNION

In 1961, a rubric was added to Code of Rubrics (1961) in paragraph 502, which said: “The proper time to distribute Holy Communion to the faithful is during Mass, after the Communion of the Celebrant. [...] It is altogether unbecoming for another priest to distribute Holy Communion, other than at the proper time for Communion, at the same Altar at which Mass is actually being celebrated.” It was always *theoretically* possible for the laity to receive Communion during Mass, but **this was seldom done** prior to the 1960s. (The only exception was on Holy Thursday). Even on major feasts such as Easter Sunday, Holy Communion was normally distributed outside of Mass: (1) before Mass; (2) after Mass; or (3) by another priest while Mass was going on. The *American Ecclesiastical Review* (vol. CXXV, 1955), describes a very common practice, in which an assistant priest would begin distribution of Holy Communion immediately after the Consecration (!)

Now that Holy Communion is normally distributed during Mass, we have an excellent place for hymns to be sung. Indeed, the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (§88) specifically recommends a hymn: “When the distribution of Communion is over ... if desired, a Psalm or other canticle of praise or a hymn may also be sung by the whole congregation.” The best place to find Roman Catholic hymns for Communion is the *Saint Jean de Brébeuf Hymnal*.