

The Parts of the Mass: A Guide to What Should be Sung

# THE PARTS OF THE MASS

## A Guide to What Should be Sung

This guide summarises the **General Instruction of the Roman Missal** (24-57) and the statement **Music in Catholic Worship** (53-74) issued by the *Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy* in the United States of America.

### Introduction

Singing is an integral part of any liturgical celebration. *Hence, in celebrating the liturgy singing is not to be regarded as an embellishment superimposed on prayer; rather, it wells up from the depths of a soul intent on prayer and the praise of God and reveals in a full and complete way the community nature of Christian worship.* (**General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours**, 270)

The parts of the Mass that may be sung can be categorised under the following headings, according to their nature and function:

#### **The Acclamations**

#### **The Processional Songs**

#### **The Responsorial Psalm**

#### **The Ordinary Chants**

#### **The Litanies**

#### **The Supplementary Songs**

#### **The Dialogues**

#### **The Presidential Chants**

As singing enhances the solemnity of the Eucharistic celebration, the choice of how much to sing and which parts of the Mass should be sung should take into consideration the appropriate level of solemnity. Important feasts and the seasons of Easter and Christmas should be celebrated with more music than Sundays in Ordinary Time. Celebrations in Lent and Advent should be more restrained.

In choosing which parts of the Mass are to be sung at a particular celebration, priority should be given to parts in the categories higher up in the list above.

The following sections consider each of the above categories in more detail.

### **The Acclamations**

The acclamations are:

#### **The Gospel Acclamation**

**The Holy, Holy**  
**The Memorial Acclamation**  
**The Great Amen**  
**The Doxology (For the Kingdom)**

The acclamations are sung by all present. The verse of the Gospel Acclamation may be sung by the Psalmist.

### **The Processional Songs**

The processional songs are the **Entrance Song** and the **Communion Song**. They are sung by all present. The Communion Song should be sung by the people while they are in procession to receive Holy Communion.

### **The Responsorial Psalm**

The **Responsorial Psalm** is sung by the Psalmist. The people sing the response. The Cantor may lead the people in singing the response.

### **The Ordinary Chants**

The ordinary chants are:

**The Glory to God**  
**The Creed**  
**The Lord's Prayer**

When these are sung, they should be sung by all present.

### **The Litanies**

The litanies are:

**The Lord, have mercy**  
**The Prayers of the Faithful**  
**The Lamb of God**

The litanies are responsorial in nature. They may be sung by the Presider or the Cantor in alternation with the people.

### **The Supplementary Songs**

The supplementary songs are:

**The Presentation Song**  
**The Song after Communion**  
**The Recessional Song**

The supplementary songs are sung by all present. As an alternative, the choir may sing a song to which the people listen, or a piece of instrumental music may be played.

### **The Dialogues**

The dialogues are:

**The Introduction to the Gospel**

**The Introduction to the Eucharistic Prayer**

**The Introduction to the Sign of Peace**

**The Final Blessing and Dismissal**

The dialogues are sung by the Presider and the people in alternation.

## **The Presidential Chants**

The presidential chants are:

**The Opening Prayer (Collect)**

**The Gospel**

**The Preface**

**The Eucharistic Prayer**

**The Embolism (Deliver us, O Lord)**

**The Prayer after Communion**

The presidential chants are sung by the Presider.

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