

Music and the Liturgy of the Eucharist

Music is integral to our celebration of the Liturgy of Eucharist. It assists us in expressing our thanksgiving, in joining with choirs of heaven, in deepening our reverence for the Communion we receive.

This resource looks at the role of music in the Liturgy of the Eucharist including the Communion Rite.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

The Mass has two parts which go to make it up: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Both parts are necessary and flow from one to the other. Our participation in the Liturgy of the Word prepares us to participate in the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The structure of the Liturgy of the Eucharist is made up of three parts: Preparation of Gifts; Eucharistic Prayer; Communion Rite.

Music is integral to our celebration of liturgy. It is not only that singing is one of the ways that we are invited to participate and that some parts of the Mass make more sense if they are sung rather than said. Music helps shape our celebration, it marks parts as out as more important than others, it can articulate the structure of the liturgy.

Music acts as a form of punctuation in the liturgy; singing emphasises or highlights the point at which there is music. It is important, therefore, that the music reflects the flow of the liturgy. That music highlights the high points. For example, in the Liturgy of the Eucharist the priorities for singing would be:

1. the Acclamations in the Eucharistic Prayer (Holy, holy; Memorial Acclamation; Amen),
2. the Lamb of God—Communion Processional Song,
3. a song for the Preparation of Gifts.

The Eucharistic Prayer

Now the centre and summit of the entire celebration begins: the Eucharistic Prayer, a prayer of thanksgiving and sanctification. (GIRM 78)

The structure of the Eucharistic Prayer

Preface Dialogue
 Preface
 Sanctus
 Thanksgiving
 Institution Narrative
 Memorial Acclamation
 Intercession
 Doxology
 Amen

It is important to recognise the unity of the Eucharistic Prayer. It begins with the Preface Dialogue and ends with the Amen. Our common understanding of the word 'Preface' may lead us to regard the Preface as of lesser importance to the rest of the prayer. It is in the Preface that the assembly is invited to participate in the prayer, that the theme of thanksgiving is first proclaimed and the whole prayer is put in the context of our worship joining the worship of heaven. This overall unity of the prayer has implications for the music that is chosen.

The Eucharistic Prayer is often mistakenly seen as something that the priest 'does'. The General Instruction begins its section on the Prayer with the following sentence highlighting the role of the entire assembly. 'The priest invites the people to lift up their hearts to the Lord in prayer and thanksgiving; he unites them with himself in the prayer which, in the name of the entire community, he addresses to God the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.' (GIRM 78)

The above structure suggests that Eucharistic Prayer has a pattern. With 11 Eucharistic Prayers (including those for Masses with Children, for Reconciliation and Various Needs and Occasions) it is hard to provide a structure that fits all but the broad outline is true. All would recognise that the Institution Narrative comes at towards the centre of each prayer. It is useful for musicians to recognise the other parts too so that one can recognise the rhythm of the prayer so that instead of frantically following the prayer in a Missal or anxiously finding the next piece of music musicians can join in the prayer. It is necessary that the musicians are ready to play their part – the flow of the prayer should not interrupted by a pause while the musicians get ready. The musical settings should be familiar enough that the singers can participate without necessarily needing music.

The priest prays in the name of the entire assembly – it is our thanksgiving, our intercession. Music, the acclamations, comes at significant points in the structure and so, as mentioned before, articulate the structure. Of course, they do more than that, they are our expressed participation in the prayer. The responses can be seen as our responses to what the priest has said, a dialogue between priest and people but that would be to misunderstand the nature of the prayer and our role within it. A better musical analogy would be solo and chorus. Priest and people are not addressing one another, both are addressing, praying to, God. The acclamations are statements of affirmation and assent responding to the priest's proclamation of the prayer.

Music in the Eucharistic Prayer

Acclamations

The Acclamations in the Eucharistic Prayer are Sanctus (Holy, Holy), Memorial Acclamation (Christ has died etc.) and Amen. They are, with the Gospel Acclamation, a priority for singing in any celebration of Mass, Sunday or Weekday. They are a priority for singing because they are the assembly's participation in the Eucharistic Prayer, 'the source and summit of the celebration' and because singing better articulates acclamation, affirmation, assent.

Sanctus

The introduction to the Sanctus at the end of the Preface is the point in the liturgy where it is most explicit that in our worship we are joined with heaven. The text is derived from Isaiah's vision of God in temple (Isaiah 6) and from the quotation of Psalm 117 (118) in the narrative of Palm Sunday (Mark 11 or Matthew 21).

Though in musical settings in recent centuries the Sanctus and Benedictus (Blessed is he) have been separated this not at all envisaged in the current Missal.

One aspect of the Sanctus musicians need to be sensitive to is how the musical setting fits into the prayer. Does it seem to be an interruption to the preface or where it is naturally leading to? What is the effect when the length of the musical setting seems longer than the rest of prayer and so upsets the balance between the various parts?

Memorial Acclamation

There are 4 acclamations in the Missal. They follow the Institution Narrative and Consecration and introduced by an invitatory acclamation 'Let us proclaim the mystery of faith'. They are addressed to Christ and speak of his Paschal Mystery. They express a past, present and future.

They should not be replaced by other texts even where they follow the pattern given above. To substitute with a text about adoration is to misunderstand the purpose of the acclamation and indeed the whole prayer.

Also to be avoided is 'Let us proclaim Mystery of Faith number 3 on page 27'. The use of a musical setting should anyway obviate the need for such statements.

It is good if a parish's chosen musical setting offers version of all 4 acclamations. Not only is an assembly being deprived if it only ever sings 'Christ has died' but different Acclamations may be more suited to the Season or the particular Sunday. Some would suggest that 'Lord, by your cross and resurrection' is the most suitable acclamation for Lent. Another example might be to sing 'When we eat this bread' on Maundy Thursday.

Amen

The Amen is our assent to the whole of the Eucharistic Prayer. A mumbled Amen said as people are getting up from kneeling is not enough. A sung Amen joins voices together and gives significance and space to the moment. It helps when the doxology (Through him, with him...) is sung by the priest. Where the priest is unused to singing he may need to work out with the musicians how to enable this important acclamation to be sung. This maybe by how he paces his proclamation of the doxology; by bringing in the musical introduction very quietly under the doxology or through consistent practice over weeks.

All parishes should consider a short pause for silence after the Amen before beginning the Communion Rite.

Parishes which use the simple plainsong Amen at the end of the doxology may wish to use the triple Amen to set this Amen apart from others in the liturgy.



Choosing Music

The Eucharistic Acclamations are texts that can be treated in a number of ways musically: through composed, verse or verse and refrain, ostinato, call and response.

The acclamations belong to all, priest and people, and so should be capable of being **sung by all**. The role of cantor or choir is to facilitate or enhance the assembly's participation not to replace it.

The musical setting of the three acclamations should display a **unity** through the repetition or development of musical themes, harmony or key. This unity is one way of showing the unity of the whole prayer. There is no reason why the setting of the Eucharistic Acclamations needs to be from the same Mass setting as the Gloria, where such a setting exist, many composers today are writing settings of just a part of a Mass rather than complete settings. It is important that the Eucharistic Acclamations are from one settings.

Paraphrase settings (such as the *Israeli Mass*) should be avoided. Often the text has been changed and adapted to fit a tune which is expected to carry completely different liturgical moments. Such settings may have had a place when there were few other Mass settings and it was seen as important to sing something. Now there are many available settings suitable for a wide ranges of groups and resources. If a parish is still using paraphrase settings perhaps Season IV is an opportunity to review this practice and to find new settings.

How many settings does a parish need? At a most basic levels there are perhaps three different circumstances: ordinary Sunday setting; a more solemn setting for Christmas and Easter etc.; a weekday setting that can be sung without the necessity of musicians. One musical setting may answer all these situations: work well unaccompanied and have choir and instrumental parts that enhance it for solemnities. What is important that parishes have setting that address all 3 situations.

Another circumstance that may need provision for is where many of those present would be unfamiliar with the parish's musical settings - though one would always hope that there would be enough of the community present to help lead the singing the best solution may to be use a call and response setting (Inwood, Lillis, McGrail *St John of the Cross* for example). Such settings

are a way of enabling people's participation and maybe introducing sing at this part of the Mass. They are probably not the best musical form to be repeated Sunday by Sunday.

Seasonal Settings Repetition of the Eucharistic Acclamations over a liturgical season might be one of the ways a parish marks the liturgical season. As has already been noted the Memorial Acclamation can be chosen to reflect the season. Liturgy Preparation Groups need to decide how they will mark Lent in Season IV: quiet and reflective or spare and solemn for example. How will the musical setting provide an effective contrast with the surrounding seasons of Easter and Ordinary Time?

Common Parish settings When the parish comes together at times other than Sunday Mass, Easter Triduum, Christmas, Holydays of Obligation, there is a need to have settings of the Eucharistic Acclamations that are common to the whole parish. Many recent settings are written so that can be sung by groups with different resources: choirs and organs, guitars and instruments.

Musical Settings

This list is in no way exhaustive. It is based primarily what is available in common parish hymnbooks which now include settings of parts of the Mass. A note of caution about *Hymns Old & New Liturgical* – like other hymnbooks it offers settings of Mass parts but for the Eucharistic Acclamations it groups all the Amens etc. together and does not necessarily offer complementary settings of the other Acclamations.

Roman Missal
 Mass of Peace – Bodley
 Eucharistic Acclamations – Farrell
 Mass of Creation – Haugen
 Coventry Acclamations – Inwood (not in Lent)
 Gathering Mass – Inwood
 St Anne's Mass – MacMillan
 Sanctus XVIII or Missa de Angelis
 with Memorial Acclamation (*Mortem tuam*)
 – Plainchant
 German Mass - Schubert
 Celtic Liturgy – Walker

Other Resources

The collections *Music for the Mass I & II* (Chapman) provide numerous settings. Other settings that may be worth seeking out:

Burntwood Mass – CJM (Rejoice 'n' Sing 1)
 Soli Mass – CJM (Rejoice 'n' Sing 1)
 Lenten Eucharistic Acclamations – Farrell

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Mass of Remembrance – Haugen (Octavo)
Millennium Mass – Inwood
No Greater Love – Joncas (Octavo - needs adaptation for use in Lent)
Celtic Mass - Walker
Festival Mass – Walker

Eucharistic Prayers for Masses with Children

These Prayers include additional acclamations for singing. To be effective these prayers need careful presentation and consistent use. They will need rehearsal of the priest and musicians so that the flow between spoken and sung text is managed seamlessly. Settings can be found in *Music for the Mass I & II*, *Calling the Children* (Walker), *Young at Heart* (Inwood), *Share the Light* (Farrell).

Other Acclamations

The General Instruction on the Roman Missal (147) allows for additional acclamations in the Eucharistic Prayer which must have been approved by the Bishops' Conference and received *recognitio* of the Holy See. This may happen with the forthcoming new translation of the Missal. These optional acclamations would help to further articulate the structure of the prayer.

Preface Dialogue

The purpose of the preface dialogue is to draw all, priest and people, together so that the priest can pray to the Father in the name of the whole community. Though it need not be sung at every Mass communities should be familiar with the tone given in the Missal.

In the context of complete Eucharistic Prayer settings composers have provided settings but it should always be possible to use the Missal chant.

The value of singing the dialogue is that it clearly marks the beginning of the Prayer. Through singing it should be possible to bring out that sense in the dialogue that we are being called to order - both our attention and our unity as one body.

Singing the Eucharistic Prayer

Preface

Singing the Preface is another way both of marking the beginning of the Prayer and suggesting solemnity. The Roman Missal provides a setting of all the Prefaces to a simple tone. Composers have provided settings of prefaces in the context of complete settings of the Eucharistic Prayer. The Celtic Liturgy (Walker)

provides a sung setting of the end of the preface as an introduction to the Sanctus.

Eucharistic Prayer

The General Instruction (147) encourages that the Eucharistic Prayer, or at least those parts for which musical settings are provided in the Missal, be sung. It is an extremely effective way of expressing solemnity and is also very appropriate at concelebrated Masses. The Roman Missal provides simple chant settings of Eucharistic Prayers I-IV.

There are also published settings by composers. Care should be taken that the musical setting allows the text to be well proclaimed and that music does not provide an interpretation of the text. There is also an issue where the Eucharistic Prayer set (such as Eucharistic Prayer II) may not be suitable to the occasion. The advantage of many composed settings is that they provide an accompaniment to support the singing of the presider. This is not in contradiction of GIRM 32 which refers to the one time practice of some organists (particularly in the French tradition) to play over the Eucharistic Prayer. The once similar practice of singing *Sanctus* and *Benedictus* over the quietly spoken Eucharistic Prayer is similarly repudiated. It is encouraged that the Prayer be sung: if provision of unobtrusive support helps this to happen it should be provided. The problem is when the accompaniment becomes the dominant partner.

Roman Missal
Eucharistic Prayer II – Gaisford
Celtic Liturgy – Walker

Communion Rite

Structure

The Lord's Prayer
Rite of Peace
Breaking of the Bread
Communion
Period of Silence or Song of Praise
Prayer after Communion

When preparing music for the Communion Rite care needs to be taken to preserve the flow of the rite from the Amen at the Eucharistic Prayer to the Distribution of Communion. Neither music or liturgical action should unduly prolong this movement.

The Lord's Prayer

There are a number of opinions as to whether

the Lord's Prayer should be regularly sung at Mass or not. It is perhaps best to offer some of the reasons for and against.

For Singing is a sign of unity and so singing the Lord's Prayer is a sign of our communion. Church documents encourage that the faithful should be able to sing the Lord's Prayer in Latin to simple chant so that they can participate in international gatherings.

Against As the common prayer of all the baptised should all present including visitors be able to participate which singing it may preclude working against the desired unity. As a prayer it is not a natural form for singing – the settings which work best are chant settings that allow the natural rhythm of the words to dictate the sung rhythm. Most settings using a regular metre distort the text in some way. If it is sung care needs to be taken that the flow of the liturgy is not distorted. As the Great Amen should have been sung it may be more appropriate to adopt the 'Orans' posture and encourage prayerful recitation rather than have a succession of musical highpoints.

If the Lord's Prayer is sung its doxology (For the kingdom...) should also be sung. Singing the Lord's Prayer may be more appropriate at Morning and Evening Prayer.

Roman Missal
Bévenot
Duffy
Rimsky-Korsakov (Russian)

Rite of Peace

There is no need to sing anything during the sign of peace and it is discouraged. The problem with singing at the sign of peace is that it can be music getting in the way of the liturgical action! It is difficult to offer peace to those around one and sing at the same time. More importantly singing at this point will both prolong the sign and give it an inappropriate emphasis within the Communion Rite.

Breaking of Bread

The disciples on the road to Emmaus recognised Jesus in the breaking of the bread; the phrase is used as one of the earliest names for the Mass. In Sunday Mass would we actually recognise the breaking of bread?

The Lamb of God is the text which accompanies the liturgical action. The Missal suggests that it should be prolonged if necessary to cover the action. The form of the text is a litany which can

easily be extended. The approval by the Bishops' Conference to use of the ICET text (Jesus, bearer of our sins) when sung has led to other settings which provide tropes expanding the titles of Christ at this moment.

There are often issues of current practice for liturgy groups and musicians to review here. Because we do not often use one bread broken for everyone for Mass the time taken to break the consecrated host is not long. Therefore in some place the singing of the Lamb of God has been used to bring an end to the sign of peace, accompany the liturgical action of the breaking of bread and cover the approach of the lay commissioned ministers of Holy Communion. This is not what is intended. The relationship between music and the liturgical action needs consideration. We perhaps need the eyes of an outsider to see what we are giving emphasis to and compare that with the liturgical rite.

As noted many settings of the Lamb of God provide ways of extending the text. Some settings make a link with communion procession to provide a unified piece of music that makes the connection between the action of breaking and sharing. As music that accompanies a liturgical action the music and text should be such that people do not need to resort to books or leaflets to participate.

Agnus XVIII – plainchant
O Lamb of God – Berthier (may be used with *Eat this bread*)
Jesus, Lamb of God – Duffy
Jesus, Lamb of God – Farrell
Communion Song – Foster
Mass of Creation – Haugen
Litany for the Breaking of Bread (Communion Song 3) – Inwood
Jesus, Lamb of God (Communion Song 4) – Inwood
Holy Name Communion Song – Sands
Litany for the Breaking of Bread – Schiavone

Communion

How Church documents describe the place of music during communion would surprise many people particularly in contrast to the usual practice of many parishes. The priority for singing is the Communion Procession, which may be followed by a silence or a song of thanksgiving. The use of music helps both to express and support what is going on but also helps us to participate in and to deepen our understanding of communion.

Liturgy preparation groups face a particular challenge in ensuring that the ministering of Holy Communion is organised so that it is experienced as both a reverent and communal action and parish musicians face the challenge of how best to enable and support this action through music.

Communion Procession

During the priest's reception of the Sacrament the Communion chant is begun. This singing is meant to express the communicants' union in spirit by means of the unity of their voices, to give evidence of joy of heart, and to highlight more the "communitarian" nature of the Communion procession. The singing continues for as long as the faithful are receiving the Sacrament. (GIRM 86)

During the Communion Procession the role of music is more than accompany the liturgical action it is to be an integral part of that action. Singing starts at the Priest's communion and continues as long as people are receiving. This makes particular demands on musicians – how they sustain music during this time while managing also to receive communion themselves.

It is intended that people will sing as they approach communion reverently in procession. This means that whatever is used should be able to be sung without recourse to sheets or books so people are unencumbered as they process. The use of an ostinato refrain or a refrain with verses sung by cantor or choir will be among the possibilities. This is how the Communion antiphon is meant to be used: a refrain with psalm verses. There are, however, few settings of the antiphons available and the present texts have been criticised as being unmusical but they do provide a model.

Singing while processing, which is a very Catholic thing to do during the liturgy, is more than just giving people something to do while they stand in a queue. We receive communion not as group of individuals, the whole of Mass has been drawing us together to form one body and it as the body of Christ that we go to receive the Body of Christ. Music helps to unify as we sing with one voice. If the text and music is chosen well it can help those who are processing express their faith in what they are about to receive and those who have already received reflect on the mystery in which they have participated.

In many parishes to introduce a singing in the communion procession will be a challenge. People tend to regard communion as a private moment

that music would interrupt. Often the use of music will reinforce this view by being either non-participatory or using a text that is more suitable to Eucharistic adoration. Like many aspects of the renewed liturgy we are beginning to understand the implications of its vision. Much of the music that is shaped by that vision is still waiting to be written, to be inspired by the Holy Spirit. Even if this is not where we are we need to know that it is where we hope to be.

Introducing liturgical change needs consistency of practice. What is done one week needs to be continued the week after and the week after that. Just introducing music will not be enough, people will need to be invited to participate, there will need to be catechesis on the nature of communion. Music also exists as a part of the liturgy. Introducing a song for communion procession should take place in a context of how communion is distributed and received within Mass so change is seen as organic. The reason for such a change needs always to be kept in mind – above all to enable participation, to enable participation in so great a mystery, the gift of Christ himself.

Music for the Communion Procession falls into three categories: Psalms, ostinato refrains (such as Taizé *Eat this bread*) or songs with refrains sung by all and verses that can be sung by cantors or choir. Some also recommend that the Lamb of God (with multiple verses) is continued and accompanies the procession.

Settings of Psalm 115 (116) (*The Blessing Cup*)
Settings of Psalm 33 (34) (*Taste and See*)
Behold the Lamb of God – Bell
This is the body of Christ – Bell
We will take what you offer – Bell
Bread of Life – CJM
Holy Gifts – Dean
One bread we break – Dean
The bread that we break – Dean
Bread of Life – Farrell
One bread, one body – Foley
Unless a grain of wheat – Farrell
Amen, amen so shall it be – Foster
Now we remain – Haas
Song of the Body of Christ – Haas
Come and eat this bread – Haugen
Now in this banquet – Haugen
Happy are those who are invited – Russian
O how blest – Schiavone
Eat this bread – Taizé
One in body, heart and mind – Walker
Come Christ's beloved – Walsh & Foster

After Communion

When the distribution of Communion is finished, as circumstances allow, the priest and faithful spend some time praying privately. If desired, a psalm or other canticle of praise or a hymn may also be sung by the entire congregation. (GIRM 88)

Silence will often be the preferable option to more music. If there is to be silence it should be observed by all ministers and not be broken by announcements, collections or devotional readings.

Where a song is chosen it should be remembered that the Roman Rite does not envisage that there will be a final song at the end of Mass. It should also be borne in mind that many Eucharistic Hymns of the last two centuries were not written to sung at Mass, where hymns would not have been sung, but for Benediction. They were therefore written for a different situation, for Eucharistic Adoration rather than reflection on reception of communion and being sent forth.

There is a wide choice of suitable music for thanksgiving after communion. It can take many forms: hymns, psalms, verse and refrains or ostinato chants. The theme does not only have to be thanksgiving for communion but can be praise and thanksgiving for the wonderful works of God.

Motets

Many choirs like to sing motets during Communion. They are more appropriate after Communion rather than accompanying the procession. Care should be taken that the text is appropriate to the celebration, the liturgical season or the particular Sunday. As with hymns motets that were written to accompany exposition of the Blessed Sacrament should be

avoided. The texts of many Latin motets derive from the Communion antiphon. Where possible a translation of Latin motets should be made available to people in the Mass leaflet.

Solo pieces that have highly personal or devotional text should be avoided.

Instrumental music may also be appropriate. It is the tradition of the Church, however, that instruments are only used to sustain singing in the Season of Lent.

Making Choices

In 1973 the US bishops issued a document 'Music in Catholic Worship' which gave some principles to help with the choice of music. It offered 3 judgements to use when choosing music for the liturgy. A musical, liturgical and pastoral judgement. Musical – is this good music and text? Liturgical – is this appropriate for the liturgy? Pastoral – is this right for this community? These are related questions to the ones used to describe music above. These 3 principles need to be held together. No one piece likely to totally fulfil all criteria but what it guides against is just choosing music that we think is good or something which right for the liturgy but not appropriate for this community. This is a helpful tool it reminds that to choose music we need to know not only about music and liturgy but our community too.

Where to obtain Music

If music mentioned in this article is not available in the Catholic hymnbook used in your parish you can obtain it from suppliers of liturgical music such as Decani Music (0845 456 8392) or McCrimmons bookshop at London Colney (01727 827 612).