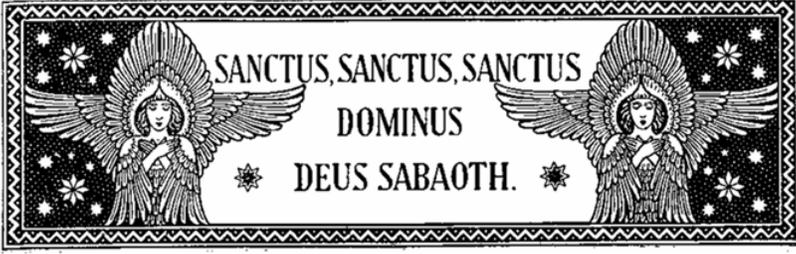


THE SUNG ORDINARY OF THE MASS



In our last two issues on the Joy of Tradition in sacred music, we discussed Church norms for sacred music and introduced the sung *Propers* of the Mass, specifically the Entrance Chant. Today we continue our series by introducing the *Ordinary* parts of the Mass that are sung.

What parts of the Mass are meant to be sung? In today's Ordinary Form Mass, it is possible for most parts of the Mass to be sung, and this is a worthwhile goal on Sundays and solemnities. To engage the faithful in the singing of the Mass, it is of primary importance that the celebrant and the deacon sing the parts of the rite that are assigned to them, which in turn leads the congregation to sing their responses. In the Ordinary Form of the Roman rite, the prayers that do not change with each liturgy are ideally sung by the entire assembly. The *Propers*, which are different for each Mass, are usually sung by the choir. At the appointed times, the celebrant or deacon can opt to sing special chants, such as the Christmas Proclamation, the Epiphany Proclamation of the Date of Easter, and the Exsultet on the Easter Vigil. There are even chant tones assigned to the Old Testament, New Testament and Gospel readings. It is a privilege to hear these parts sung from time to time. Today we turn our attention to the **sung Ordinary** of the Mass.

What is the Ordinary of the Mass? The Ordinary of the Mass consists of the prayers of the Mass that do not change each day or week. The **sung Ordinary** traditionally includes the **Kyrie** (*Lord, have mercy...*), the **Gloria** (*Glory to God...*), the **Credo** (*Creed: I believe in God...*), the **Sanctus** (*Holy, Holy...*), and the **Agnus Dei** (*Lamb of God...*). Today's Ordinary Form Mass includes additional prayers of the assembly with texts that do not vary: the **Memorial Acclamation**, the **Great Amen**, and the **Pater Noster** (*Our Father...*).

When is the Ordinary sung, and who sings it? On Sundays and solemnities, the Ordinary parts are traditionally sung. Unlike the *Propers*, which vary with each Mass, the Ordinary prayers remain the same every Mass and can easily be learned and sung by the entire assembly. The Credo, which is the longest of the Ordinary prayers, is commonly recited, even on Sundays. However, the Church encourages congregations to learn to sing it over time.

What options are there for the Ordinary? Although the words of the Ordinary are always the same in both the ancient and modern form of the Roman rite, there are countless musical settings of the Ordinary in Latin, the Church's universal language, as well as in English. Most Americans are familiar with modern hymn-style arrangements of the Ordinary that use instrumental accompaniment, but many are unaware of the variety of Gregorian chant settings the Church has developed over the centuries. During the Renaissance period, composers began setting the Mass Ordinary to rich polyphonic (multi-voiced) melodies, and later composers added orchestration to their Masses. The more elaborate settings require a skilled choir, but many of the ancient chants and modern arrangements can be mastered by the assembly with weekly repetition.



Which setting of the Ordinary is the most universal? The Church's official treasury of music for the Mass, the *Graduale Romanum*, includes eighteen numbered Gregorian chant settings of the Ordinary in Latin, appropriate to different occasions or seasons. The most universal setting is known as *Missa Jubilate Deo*, which includes chants from Mass VIII, XVI, and XVIII. Pope Paul VI encouraged all Catholics to learn this setting, and his exhortation was recently echoed by our own U. S. Council of Catholic Bishops:

Each worshipping community in the United States, including all age groups and all ethnic groups, should, at a minimum, learn Kyrie XVI, Sanctus XVIII, and Agnus Dei XVIII, all of which are typically included in congregational worship aids. More difficult chants, such as Gloria VIII and settings of the Credo and Pater Noster, might be learned after the easier chants have been mastered.

Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship, USCCB (2007)

What are we doing at the basilica to follow Church directives for the Ordinary? At the Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul we enjoy singing the Ordinary, including the *Our Father*, and we are developing a repertory of ancient and modern settings of the Ordinary in Latin and English. We regularly sing two Ordinary settings in English, known as *Missa Simplex* and *Missal Chants*. During Lent, we continue our custom of singing *Missa Jubilate Deo* a capella at all weekend Masses. These simple Latin and Greek chants are a universal choice in multilingual parishes like ours. Last year, we introduced the festive chanted *Mass VIII - Missa de Angelis* on special feasts. This coming Easter season, our choirs will lead the congregation in singing it each week. Our youth schola cantorum studies these Mass Ordinaries in their classes.

In future years, we can learn other beautiful chant settings of the Ordinary that the Church has given us for various occasions. Fortunately, many of these Mass settings are included in our new St. Michael hymnal, such that the assembly can easily follow along. Both the ancient and modern forms of the Roman rite draw from the same treasury of Gregorian Chant settings. When you attend a *Missa Cantata* in the ancient form of the Roman rite, you can listen to and/or sing along with a variety of Gregorian chant settings of the Ordinary in Latin. In due season, our schola cantorum hopes to occasionally offer polyphonic settings of the Ordinary while the congregation joins in prayer.

Where can I learn more? If you would like hear or study some different settings of the Ordinary of the Mass, you can start by visiting Corpus Christi Watershed's webpage: ccwatershed.org/kyriale. This non-profit organization has compiled recordings of all eighteen of the Church's Gregorian Chant settings of the Ordinary and most of the Sunday propers of the Mass, sung by monks or by a cantor. Many scholae cantorum, including the basilica's own, benefit from these compilations when learning to sing the Mass.

For a sampling of settings of the Ordinary of the Mass that have been composed by the masters of sacred polyphony over the centuries, here are few beloved Masses you can search for on [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com).

Mass for Four Voices, William Byrd

Missa pro defunctis à 6 (Requiem Mass), Tomás Luis de Victoria

Mass in B Minor, Johann Sebastian Bach

Coronation Mass in C, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Our next issue on sacred music will discuss the role of sacred silence in the liturgy.