

THE PROPERS OF THE MASS: THE ENTRANCE CHANT

When the people are gathered, and as the Priest enters with the Deacon and ministers, the Entrance Chant begins. Its purpose is to open the celebration, foster the unity of those who have been gathered, introduce their thoughts to the mystery of the liturgical time or festivity, and accompany the procession of the Priest and ministers.

General Instruction to the Roman Missal #47

As part of our series on the Joy of Tradition in sacred music, we now turn to the music of the Entrance Rite.

What are the Propers of the Mass? The **Propers of the Mass** are certain Scriptural texts, besides the readings, that are prescribed by the Church for various parts of each Mass, particular to the day and occasion being celebrated. These Scriptures were assigned early in the first centuries of Christian liturgy in the West, codified in the 6th century by Pope St. Gregory the Great, and expanded and re-issued by order of the Second Vatican Council to reflect the Church's new three-year cycle of readings. The **sung Propers** include the **Entrance Chant** (or **Introit**), the **Gradual**, the **Alleluia** or **Tract**, the **Offertory Chant**, and the **Communion Chant**.

What is the Entrance Chant? The Entrance Chant is a musical setting of the first Proper text of the Mass, also known as the Introit, which is sung during the entrance procession. It begins with an antiphon and, depending on the length of the entrance procession, includes one or more verses, usually concluding with the *Gloria Patri* (*Glory be to the Father...*) and a repeat of the antiphon.

Who sings the Entrance Chant? The Church rubrics allow the Entrance Chant to be sung by the cantor or choir with the congregation responding, the choir and cantor in alternation, or the choir alone. A wide array of settings exist for each day's Introit, ranging from ancient Psalm tones, which the congregation may be comfortable singing, to elaborate polyphonic settings, which require a skilled choir to master. The introit we are singing this Lent at the Basilica uses the tune of a familiar Lenten hymn, and the congregation is invited to sing the antiphon while the cantor/choir sings the verses. No matter who is singing, it is fitting for all assembled to meditate on the words of the chant and to observe the procession to the altar as the Mass begins.

Do the words of the Entrance Chant always match the words in the Missal? When sung in the Church's original Latin, the words of the Entrance Chant are universal regardless of musical setting. The Church does allow the Entrance Chant to be sung in the people's native language, but it has never issued an official translation. Therefore, different English musical settings might use slightly different words than the translation contained in our Missal.

What about the opening hymn customary in many parishes? As a lesser alternative to the Entrance Chant, the Church rubrics allow a Psalm or other suitable liturgical hymn to be sung by the congregation. At the Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul, we joyously honor the Church's ideal of singing the proper Entrance Chant while the ministers process to the sanctuary to begin Mass. On some occasions, we also sing a congregational hymn as a *prelude* to the Mass.

