

# The Musical Shape of the Liturgy

## The Sacrifice of the Mass

| Part of the Mass                | Musical Descriptions  | Active Participation ( <i>participatio actuosa</i> )  |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| Prelude                         | Organ music; Something that elicits recollection  | Keep from talking; recollection   |
| Introit                         | - A threshold chant: we step out of <i>chronos</i> into <i>kyros</i> - step out of calendar time, clock time, into the now, the today, of God, the moment God is present and God acts - the liturgy is God's work<br>- Music is "neumatic": extends the performance of the text = something more solemn and important is happening (than in Divine Office); projects sense of motion, moves continually through text = accompanies the entrance procession and incensing the altar<br>- Slightly more melismatic than communion chant = not as much motion<br>- Duration of chant is dependent on the processional action | Priest: Process<br>Choir: Sing<br>Congregation: Not the singing; Witness the procession: see the colors of the vestments and the hierarchical order, be moved by the rhythmic quality of the actions to contemplate the order being projected, a foretaste of the heavenly liturgy; turn to the important something that is about to happen; congregation is virtually included in the procession |
| Sign of Cross                   | Simple formulaic melody   | Congregation: Respond to the Priest   |
| Greeting                        | Simple formulaic melody   | Congregation: Respond to the Priest   |
| Kyrie                           | Beginnings differ, endings often set to identical melodies; most melismatic of Ordinary = contemplation of sins and ask forgiveness   | All: Singing is the liturgical action of the moment; Prayer of petition   |
| Gloria                          | Syllabic melody   | All: Singing is the liturgical action of the moment; Hymn of sung praise  |
| Collect                         | Recitative; Ancient Solemn Tone: whole step formula<br>Festal Tone: minor third inflection  | Congregation: Respond to the Priest   |
| Lesson (First Reading)          | Recitative; Middle cadence descends half step = slight harshness of prophecy; Final cadence descends fifth = call of trumpet; cadences fall; Practically, singing removes readers idiosyncrasies  | Congregation: Listen to the reading as it is proclaimed<br>Not just to get information, but to make present and be drawn into the historical event proclaimed   |
| Gradual                         | Melismatic; causes ambient noises to cease into silence = attention of congregation is listening to the music; a meditation; rests attentive = preparation for hearing the lessons; complements the recitative lessons; pace of psalm is slowed down; approaches a suspension of the passage of time = imitation of the experience of eternity;<br>Duration of text extends beyond the liturgical action  | Choir: Sing<br>Congregation: Listening not singing; Attentive resting in an experience of eternity, meditating on first reading as well as preparing to receive the second reading  |
| or                              |   |   |
| Responsorial Psalm              | To give the people something to do? Utility music in commercial sources, only purpose is to set the text so they can sing it<br>GIRM: to foster meditation on the word of God = need settings written to foster meditation, not utility music   | Congregation: Meditation on the word of God   |
| Epistle (Second Reading)        | Recitative; hortatory tone of epistles, rhetorical effect; cadences rise more than they fall  | Congregation: Listen to the reading as it is proclaimed<br>Not just to get information ...  |
| Alleluia / Tract                | Highly melismatic; not just to set the text; " <i>jubilus</i> " = pure musical jubilation; meditation eliciting attentive repose = reflection on the lesson before it and preparation for coming gospel; increase in intensity from gradual to alleluia = coming to the climax of the gospel; pace of the psalm is slowed down; approaches a suspension of the passage of time = imitation of the experience of eternity;<br>Duration of text extends beyond the liturgical action<br>Says: Here comes something really important, rejoice  | Choir: Sing<br>Congregation: Listening not singing; Attentive resting in an experience of eternity, meditating on second reading as well as preparing to receive the Gospel; recognize the high point of the words of Christ in the Gospel, rejoice over it.  |
| Acclamations at Gospel          | Simple formulaic melodies   | Congregation: Respond to the Priest/Deacon  |
| Gospel                          | Recitative; Simplest of readings = simplicity of the gospel;<br>Rising cadence = element of elevation; culmination of the sequence of lessons   | Congregation: Listen to the gospel as it is proclaimed<br>Not just to get information, but to make present and be drawn into the historical event proclaimed  |
| Creed                           | Syllabic melody   | All: Singing; Profession of Trinitarian belief  |
| Prayer of Faithful              | Simple formulaic melody   | Congregation: Respond   |
| Offertory Chant                 | More extended than introit or communion; melismas, music departing from text; proceeds the more solemn part of the liturgy; motion is less than at introit; combination of processional motion and reflective anticipation;<br>Duration of text is dependent on the liturgical action   | Congregation: Not the singing; Interior participation uniting the offering of themselves to the offering of Christ to the Father  |
| Offertory Prayer                | Recitative; should be consistent with the tone used for the collect   | Congregation: Respond to the Priest   |
| Preface with dialogue           | Recitative with neumes to create greater emphasis and motion at cadences = Rhetorical;<br>Uses same pitches as collect = continuity with what went before it;<br>More elaborate than collect = this prayer is more important;   | Congregation: Respond to the Priest   |
| Sanctus                         | Neumatic melody   | All: Singing; Hymn of sung praise   |
| Canon                           | Silence in the midst of a complex of sounds   | Congregation: Silently uniting their prayers to Christ  |
| Final Doxology                  | Syllabic melody   | Congregation: Respond to the Priest   |
| Lord's Prayer, intro & embolism | Melodic; syllabic; Same pitches as collect and Preface = a culmination of the prayers   | Congregation: Sing the Lord's Prayer  |
| Pax Domini                      | Syllabic melody   | Congregation: Respond to the Priest   |
| Angus Dei                       | Neumatic; beginnings differ, endings often set to identical melodies  | All: Singing; Prayer of petition  |
| Communion Chant                 | Nearly syllabic; rhythm projects strong sense of movement = orderly congregational movement to receive communion;<br>Duration of text is dependent on the processional action<br>Content: Often a fragment of the gospel of the day. The very Christ announced in the Gospel gives himself to us in Holy Communion.<br>People go home with this fragment embedded in them.  | Congregation: Not the singing; reception of Eucharist and thanksgiving  |
| Prayer after Communion          | Recitative; should be consistent with the tone used for the collect   | Congregation: Respond to the Priest   |
| Dismissal                       | Syllabic melody; For Easter a <i>jubilus</i> (musical jubilation) is added  | Congregation: Respond to the Priest/Deacon  |
| Recessional                     | Organ music; can either encourage them to stay and pray or send them out of the church immediately  | Congregation: Remain in prayer for time; go out bringing Christ to their places in the world  |

# The Musical Shape of the Liturgy

## The Sacrifice of the Mass

| Musical Descriptions  |  | Active Participation   |
|---|--|--|
| <p>There are a variety of liturgical actions that contribute to the fundamental liturgical action of Christ's sacrifice</p> <p>Music aids in putting our souls in order, bringing it into harmony with the cosmos</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Melody represents the grammar of the text</li> <li>- Melody reflects the accents of the text (accented syllables receive more notes or higher pitch)</li> <li>- Harmony of notes</li> <li>- Synthesis of language and harmony, drawing the soul into the order of the cosmic liturgy, the work of Christ</li> <li>- Suggests order and purpose to us</li> </ul> <p>Singing can only come first out of listening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Music begins in silence</li> </ul> <p>Gregorian chant has great clarity, it is unambiguously sacred</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Passage of time is irregular, evokes a sense of eternal (metric hymns denote regular passage of time)</li> </ul> <p>Seeking going forward; not its own object of attention</p> |  | <p>Faithful uniting themselves to the Eucharistic sacrifice of Christ</p> <p>A hierarchical participation: Priest/choir/congregation each play a part</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. This participation must primarily be interior (i.e., union with Christ the Priest; offering with and through Him).</li> <li>2. But the participation of those present becomes fuller (<i>plenior</i>) if internal attention is joined to external participation, expressed by external actions such as the position of the body (genuflect, stand, sit, kneel), ceremonial gestures, the responses, prayers and singing.</li> <li>3. Perfect <i>participatio actuosa</i> of the faithful is obtained when there is added sacramental participation (by Communion).</li> <li>4. Deliberate <i>participatio actuosa</i> of the faithful is not possible without their adequate instruction.</li> </ol> |
| <p>First Degree – Order</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The most important texts</li> <li>- Historically fixed and written down the earliest</li> <li>- Simple formulaic melodies</li> <li>- Text is lifted up from the conversational tone</li> <li>- Clearly doing something sacred</li> </ul>   | <p>Second Degree - Ordinary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Singing is the liturgical action of the people</li> <li>- The degree of elaboration depends on solemnity of the day</li> <li>- The higher the feast the more elaborate</li> <li>- The people are the substantive expression of the solemnity of the day</li> <li>- Should be a musical unity among the Ordinary chants</li> </ul> | <p>Third Degree - Proper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not a liturgical action in themselves, but a musical complement to some other action, usually with a procession</li> <li>- Texts from the psalms</li> <li>- Variations subtly differentiate various feasts</li> <li>- Meant to aid the people's participation in the liturgical action, their participation is not the singing</li> </ul>  |
| <p>For any particular proper (Gradual, Introit, etc.) there is no more than one version for one text. Many texts are used more than once, but almost always with the same melody. Thus there is an <b>identification of text, function, and melody</b>.</p>   |  |  |

| Types of Chants |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Recitative      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Primarily found in the Divine Office (Liturgy of the Hours)</li> <li>- Simple, sensitive declamation of the text</li> </ul>   |
| Melodic         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Found in the antiphons and responsories of the Mass and Office</li> <li>- Not simply to set forth the text, but rather to provide music proportioned to the activity which it accompanies.</li> </ul> |
| Syllabic        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- One note per syllable</li> <li>- Recitative is syllabic</li> <li>- Melodic pieces that accompany the most motion are the most syllabic</li> </ul>   |
| Neumatic        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sets of a few notes (neumes) per syllable</li> </ul>  |
| Melismatic      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Many notes per syllable</li> <li>- Pieces that accompany the least motion, and require the most recollection are the most melismatic</li> <li>- <i>jubilus</i> - sheer wordless jubilation</li> </ul> |

| Silence at Mass   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>“Sacred silence ... is to be observed at the designated times. Its purpose, however, depends on the time it occurs in each part of the celebration.”</p> |   |
| Before Mass Begins  | <p>“Commendable that silence be observed in the church, in the sacristy, in the vesting room, and in adjacent areas, so that all may dispose themselves to carry out the sacred action in a devout and fitting manner.” (GIRM 45)</p> |
| During Penitential Act  | <p>To examine conscience for sins (GIRM 45, 51)</p>   |
| Proceeding the Collect  | <p>“Be conscious of the fact that they are in God's presence and may formulate their petitions mentally” (GIRM 54)</p>  |
| Liturgy of the Word   | <p>Following each reading and homily to “meditate briefly on what they have heard” (GIRM 45, 56)</p>  |
| Prayers of the Faithful   | <p>May be observed as an alternative to an invocation/response (GIRM 71)</p>  |
| Eucharistic Prayer  | <p>The faithful “should associate themselves with the priest in faith and in silence” (GIRM 147)</p>  |
| After Communion   | <p>“Spend some time praying privately” in thanksgiving, “they praise and pray to God in their hearts” (GIRM 45, 88)</p> <p>Even if there is song, a period of silence should still be observed.</p>                                   |
| <p>The music of the liturgy resolves into silence, so that we are led to silent prayer.</p>   |   |

| Overall Music Shape of the Mass               |   |
|---|---|
| Liturgy of the Word                           | <p>High point is the Gospel; prepared for by the elaborate gradual and alleluia; gospel is simple</p>   |
| Liturgy of the Eucharist (Extraordinary Form) | <p>High point is the silent Canon; point of ineffable mystery</p> <p>Symmetry: Offertory (choir chant), Preface (priest and people), Canon, Our Father, Agnus Dei (priest and people), Communion (choir chant)</p> <p>Climactic progression: Our Father most elaborate of priest chants</p> |
| Liturgy of the Eucharist (Ordinary Form)      | <p>Quicker alternation of priest and people before communion may actually increase the sense of anticipation and of the worship of the Eucharistic presence, and thus be a more effective preparation of the people for communion.</p>  |

| Incense at Mass          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| Liturgy of the Word      | <p>At Introit: begins major part of the Mass by a ritual preparation, a blessing and consecration of the altar area</p> <p>At Gospel: emphasizes the high point of major part by showing the honor due the Lord</p>         |
| Liturgy of the Eucharist | <p>At Offertory: begins major part of the Mass by a ritual preparation, a blessing and consecration of the altar area</p> <p>At Consecration: emphasizes the high point of major part by showing the honor due the Lord</p> |

### Resources

*Musicam sacram*, instruction, Second Vatican Council, March 5, 1967.

*The Musical Shape of the Liturgy*, William Peter Mahrt, 2012.

*Lectures 1 and 3*, CMAA Colloquium 2010, Rev. Mark David Kirby, OSB.

*The Ars Celebrandi and the New Roman Missal, Part 2*, USCCB Committee on Divine Worship Newsletter, March 2010.

*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, USCCB, 2002.