

Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2007

Gregorian Chant

72. “The Church recognizes Gregorian chant as being specially suited to the Roman Liturgy. Therefore, other things being equal, it should be given pride of place in liturgical services.”⁶⁸ Gregorian chant is uniquely the Church’s own music. Chant is a living connection with our forebears in the faith, the traditional music of the Roman rite, a sign of communion with the universal Church, a bond of unity across cultures, a means for diverse communities to participate together in song, and a summons to contemplative participation in the Liturgy.
73. The “pride of place” given to Gregorian chant by the Second Vatican Council is modified by the important phrase “other things being equal.”⁶⁹ These “other things” are the important liturgical and pastoral concerns facing every bishop, pastor, and liturgical musician. In considering the use of the treasures of chant, pastors and liturgical musicians should take care that the congregation is able to participate in the Liturgy with song. They should be sensitive to the cultural and spiritual milieu of their communities, in order to build up the Church in unity and peace.
74. The Second Vatican Council directed that the faithful be able to sing parts of the Ordinary of the Mass together in Latin.⁷⁰ In many worshiping communities in the United States, fulfilling this directive will mean introducing Latin chant to worshipers who perhaps have not sung it before. While prudence, pastoral sensitivity, and reasonable time for progress are encouraged to achieve this end, every effort in this regard is laudable and highly encouraged.
75. Each worshiping 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.⁷¹

⁶⁸ SC, no. 116.

⁶⁹ MS, no. 50a, further specifies that chant has pride of place “in sung liturgical services celebrated in Latin.”

⁷⁰ “Steps should be taken enabling the faithful to say or to sing together in Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass belonging to them” (SC, no. 54).

⁷¹ See GIRM, no. 41. Further resources for congregational Latin chant are *Iubilate Deo* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1986) and *Liber Cantualis* (Sable-sur-Sarthe, France: Abbaye Saint-Pierre de Solesmes, 1983).

76. “The assembly of the faithful should participate in singing the Proper of the Mass as much as possible, especially through simple responses and other suitable settings.”⁷² When the congregation does not sing an antiphon or hymn, proper chants from the *Graduale Romanum* might be sung by a choir that is able to render these challenging pieces well. As an easier alternative, chants of the *Graduale Simplex* are recommended. Whenever a choir sings in Latin, it is helpful to provide the congregation with a vernacular translation so that they are able to “unite themselves interiorly” to what the choir sings.⁷³
77. The Entrance and Communion antiphons are found in their proper place in the *Roman Missal*. Composers seeking to create vernacular translations of the appointed antiphons and psalms may also draw from the *Graduale Romanum*, either in their entirety or in shortened refrains for the congregation or choir.
78. Gregorian chant draws its life from the sacred text it expresses, and recent official chant editions employ revised notation suggesting natural speech rhythm rather than independent melodic principles.⁷⁴ Singers are encouraged to adopt a manner of singing sensitive to the Latin text.
79. Missals in various languages provide vernacular chants inspired by Latin chant, or other melodies, for sung responses between ministers and people. For the sake of unity across the Church, musicians should not take it upon themselves to adjust or alter these melodies locally.
80. Whenever strophic chant hymns are published with Latin or vernacular texts, their melodies should be drawn from the *Liber Hymnarius*.

⁷² MS, no. 33.

⁷³ MS, no. 15.

⁷⁴ The Praenotanda to the 1983 *Liber Hymnarius* explains the flexible rhythms intended by the revised notation.