



St. Augustine Cathedral

FROM THE MUSIC DIRECTOR'S DESK

Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time

AS Catholics, we immediately recognize the large red altar “Missal” used by the priest; this book contains all the official prayers for Mass. Each Mass has its specific set of prayers, in much the same way that it has a specific set of readings (which are found in the Lectionary). While the altar missal and the Lectionary are familiar to most, few people know about the *Graduale Romanum* or the *Kyriale*. These are the two books which contain the official music for Mass. The *Graduale Romanum* contains the “propers” of the Mass; these are the special chants (in Latin) that change week to week, and are specific (ie- “proper”) to each Mass, just like the prayers and readings. ***This corpus of chants remains the official music for Mass in the Roman Rite***—and was even rearranged to match the novus ordo lectionary cycle under the new title of *Gregorian Missal* in the wake of the conciliar reforms.

Indeed, the majority of Catholics are unaware that the Second Vatican Council actually mandated in its teaching document *Sacrosanctum Concilium* that both Gregorian chant and Latin were to be ***retained*** in the new rite of Mass:

36. Particular law remaining in force, the use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites.

54. In Masses which are celebrated with the people, a suitable place may be allotted to their mother tongue. This is to apply in the first place to the readings and “the common prayer,” but also, as local conditions may warrant, to those parts which pertain to the people, according to the norm laid down in Art. 36 of this Constitution.

Nevertheless, steps should be taken so that the faithful may also be able to say or to sing together in Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass which pertain to them.

116. The Church acknowledges Gregorian chant as specially suited to the Roman liturgy: therefore, other things being equal, it should be given pride of place in liturgical services.

But other kinds of sacred music, especially polyphony, are by no means excluded from liturgical celebrations, so long as they accord with the spirit of the liturgical action, as laid down in Art. 30.

117. The typical edition of the books of Gregorian chant is to be completed; (†1) and a more critical edition is to be prepared of those books already published since the restoration by St. Pius X.

Going a step further, Pope Saint Paul VI even promulgated a special booklet entitled *Jubilate Deo (Sing to the Lord)* in 1974 which contained the “minimum repertoire of chant that every Catholic should know”—***nearly a decade after the council(!)***—so strong was the desire that our musical patrimony was to be retained in the new rite. This explains why the rubrics in the front of the *Missal* instruct that the first option for the Introit (Entrance Antiphon) is to sing from the *Graduale Romanum* (ie- “Latin chant”) and the second option is to sing the chant in a simplified form.

(†1 • The result of this directive is the *Gregorian Missal* referenced previously.)

(†2 • I have been blessed to attend Mass in Portugal, Spain, France, and Austria. It was in precisely those places that employed this truly universal music that I was able to most fully participate in Mass and feel in deepest union with those worshipping next to me—in spite of our cultural and linguistic differences.)



HERE the *Graduale Romanum* (or *Gregorian Missal*) contain the **propers** for each Mass, the *Kyriale* contains the official collection of Gregorian **ordinaries** which are to be sung. ‘*Ordinary*’ is the official term used for those parts of Mass that never change: Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus & Agnus Dei (a.k.a: Lord, have mercy; Glory to God in the highest; Holy, Holy, Holy; and Lamb of God...).

This Lent we will be learning a new Latin chant **ordinary**: *Missa XVII* (“Mass 17”) which comes from the official collection of ordinaries found in the *Kyriale*. We are learning this particular set of chants because it is prescribed “for Sundays during Advent and Lent.” Since these chants will be new to you (apart from the Kyrie which was introduced by my predecessor) I am preparing special pew cards **which will rest in the pew racks**. These pew cards contain all the chants needed for Mass and **feature literal, interlinear translations printed in red, so you can know the precise meaning of the words as you sing them**.

I pray that even if Latin is not your favorite and is somewhat outside of your comfort zone, you will be willing to simply **try** singing these chants. Listen to the chants and come to them on their own terms. With time, singing them will become easier and easier—I promise.

Occasionally I hear people say that chanting feels funny at first, since it is so different from the music that fills our daily lives. But therein lies its genius! **This music is authentically “sacred” (literally: “holy; set apart for God’s use”) and stems from the most ancient tradition of Christian worship**. In fact, there are 1,000 year-old manuscripts containing these ancient melodies in notation that can still be deciphered today. Further still, these chants are descendants of music dating all the way to the temple in Jerusalem.

It is also worth noting that singing chant is not (even remotely) penitential. The *Kyriale* offers eighteen different sets of chants that cover the entire liturgical year. (And do not fear: we will **not** be exclusively singing Latin ordinaries all year round!) **But it bears repeating: the council fathers specifically mandated that the use of Latin was to be retained in the new rite of Mass and Gregorian chant is to be given “pride of place.”**

Sadly, this formal directive of the council was not honored, and post conciliar excesses resulted in a drastically different expression of Mass than was intended. Nevertheless, we now have the opportunity to course correct and **restore** music that is authentically ours, and authentically **sacred** (even if it takes some effort on our part). ***It should also be clearly understood that this restoration is in no way a repudiation or condemnation of any music that has been done at the cathedral previously. It is merely the restoration of an authentic good.***

Here it is prudent to briefly reflect on just what makes chanting in Latin an authentic good: firstly, this music is **universal**—both geographically and **temporally**. These exact chants cross every cultural boundary and are known all around the entire world. (†2) By singing them, we enter into a deeper mystical unity with our Catholic brothers and sisters both living—and **deceased**. Consider the fact that your favorite saints knew and sang these exact same chants! What a privilege it is for us to be able to honor God in the same way that they did, and to be yet more faithful to our One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Faith. This music is our most authentic Catholic patrimony—of which the council stated, “The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, **greater even than that of any other art.**” [S.C.112]

To close, I once again ask that you simply give these chants... a chance. Allow the flowing melodies to wash over you, and contemplate the liturgical aura that they foster. It is OK if you need to simply listen until you are ready to sing. Maybe focus on a single chant each week. Also: be on the lookout for **patterns**. These chants are constructed with musical motifs that repeat multiple times, so they are actually simpler than they look! For instance, the Kyrie employs a single falling gesture at the end of every phrase. Two whole lines of the Sanctus are repeated verbatim, and so on.

If you have any questions, please come speak with me; I am eager to help make this accessible to you! And lastly, if you would like to practice these chants outside of mass, please scan the neighboring QR code with your phone.



Scan for
Practice Tracks

Sincerely, James J. Richardson
Director of Sacred Music & Organist