

## Singing from the same hymn sheet

Most of us are steadily becoming accustomed to praying the Mass in a slightly different way. Although the Order of Mass has not changed, it will take us some time to get used to praying with different words and standing and kneeling at different times. Of course, change is part of our daily lives and no matter how much we favour routine, change will continue to happen.

The challenge of the revised translation of the Roman Missal is perhaps better described as an *opportunity* for us. When did we last revisit the way we pray the Mass or consider how we might celebrate in a better way? Now is the perfect time to 'fine tune' our celebrations and reflect on how well we pray together as a community of faith.

Many parishes have addressed the issue of change by speaking about the revised translation or printing information in their parish bulletins or websites. Some have taken the opportunity to begin a renewed catechesis on the Eucharist or take part in workshops learning more about the change and why it has come about.

Perhaps one of the groups most instrumental (if you'll pardon the pun) in helping parishioners become familiar with the revised translation is our musicians. We have learned many hymns and musical settings for the Mass over the years and have become familiar with them. It is clear that in learning new settings for the revised translation of the Mass, our musicians have a great responsibility on them. However, we have to be real about what that means and don't need to rush into doing everything all at once.

We might initially take stock of what to sing and when. Often when planning music for Mass, hymns are chosen for the entrance procession, the preparation of gifts, communion and recessional with only a cursory glance to the acclamations of the Mass. It is intriguing to note that "Singing the Mass", published by the Liturgy Office of the English and Welsh Bishops in 1997 (<http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Music/index.shtml>), a helpful tool, recommends that a 'quiet Mass' should include the singing of the Gospel Acclamation, the Sanctus, Memorial Acclamation and Great Amen. Only in second place does it mention the singing of a processional hymn at the beginning of Mass and a hymn to be sung during Communion procession. Singing the acclamations, response and prayers comes first.

Nonetheless, this is also a good time to look at hymns we sing at Mass. Do we try to fill every possible space with words and music and forget to allow time for silence? This might be something to consider particularly with regard to the Communion procession. Singing hymns appropriate to the Communion procession which have a memorable refrain or simple chants, can engage people in that procession towards the Eucharistic Feast. Likewise, some moments of silence after the Communion procession can be very powerful for the assembly to offer praise.

Some of the hymnals in use in our parishes are currently being updated and some (*Celebration Hymnal for Everyone* and *Laudate*) have already produced a supplement with new hymns and new or revised Mass settings. These will be of help to those leading the assembly in song.

A great deal of work has been undertaken by composers of liturgical music in preparation for the revised translation of the Missal, as would be expected. Technology enables us to have many of these new resources at our fingertips and a number of publishers of liturgical music have made Mass settings available in print and by audio file.

To give a few examples of what's on offer:

[stmungomusic.org.uk](http://stmungomusic.org.uk) is the website of the Archdiocesan Committee for liturgical music. There are resources appearing on the website on a regular basis. These include sound and sheet music files which can be easily downloaded for use. Among the revised settings offered is the familiar 'Bellahouston Mass' from 1982 which has been adapted to reflect the revised translations of the Gloria and Sanctus. These might even allow us to make a transition into learning something new. Additionally, the chants for the texts as printed in the Missal itself can be listened to on this website, something every parish community might usefully begin to learn. Even a parish without an organist would find this setting straight forward to sing and the tune (the 'Missa Pro Defunctis') will be familiar to many already.

Likewise, [www.romanmissalscotland.org.uk](http://www.romanmissalscotland.org.uk) was set up to provide resources to help people prepare for the revised translation of the Missal and includes helpful resources for musicians and all those who have a role in liturgical celebration: in other words, for everyone! Both of these websites offer recordings of a number of sung prefaces which may be useful for priests in learning to sing the new preface texts and also for people in learning the responses to the preface dialogue.

[www.rcagliturgy.org.uk](http://www.rcagliturgy.org.uk) may be of some use to musicians in listening to a variety of new or revised Mass settings and deciding which ones best suit their parish communities to ensure the full, conscious, active participation of the whole assembly.

The websites of other publishers of liturgical music, for example, [www.ocp.org](http://www.ocp.org) and [www.giamusic.com](http://www.giamusic.com) have great advantages too. Some have free assembly editions of revised Mass settings which can be used in the short term for teaching purposes as well as audio files to help the user learn how to sing or perform the piece.

There is no shortage of information available at this point in time and the key is to find resources best suited to the parish community to engage everyone in song and learn to sing the Mass. The Church's liturgical documents insist on our singing the actual texts of the prayers themselves: we shouldn't be deviating from the words of the prayers as they are given. So, if we are still using paraphrased settings of the Gloria and Sanctus, for example, then now is certainly the time to source new material.

Some of the ongoing work in the field of liturgical music is concerned with the approval of music for liturgy. In 2001, *Liturgiam Authenticam* asked that Conferences of Bishops compile lists of approved hymns and liturgical songs suitable for liturgy. Such a document will eventually be useful to those involved in music ministry in Scotland. Likewise, documents exist for composers of liturgical music urging them to be faithful to the texts of the revised translation in order to lead people prayerfully in the prayers of the Church. Ultimately, new music for liturgy will be subject to approval by the Bishops' Conference before it can be included for use in celebration.

When we are faced with the challenge of change, all too often we panic and fret. In fact, there is a great deal of support and advice available to us to help us meet the challenges if we take our time, make good choices and develop our parish repertoires of liturgical music thoughtfully, we will also be much more able to pray the Mass with renewed fervour and reverence.