

Preface: Congregational Singing in a Time of Pandemic

Please read! This contains important information on music at our Masses in these special circumstances

COVID-19 has temporarily changed Church as we know it and has presented a great challenge to our spiritual lives. For two months, the faithful have been unable to receive the Blessed Sacrament and to gather for the Sacrifice of the Mass. Nonetheless, at St. Rose of Lima and in churches elsewhere, we have done what we can to turn this challenge into an opportunity to deepen our faith. For example, the parishioners have been introduced to the riches of the Liturgy of the Hours by way of our priests' live-streaming of Morning Prayer and Compline. Now that public Masses are resuming, we can once again receive the Blessed Sacrament, but still with limitations. This situation gives us the opportunity to discover things about our faith. Our bishop, for example, has recommended that choirs be temporarily suspended and that worship resume with limited music and congregational singing. This presents a challenge and a difficulty, but again, it can be an opportunity to learn something about our faith.

St. Rose of Lima is a singing parish, and our congregation is proud of its hymn-singing. This is definitely a fruit of the Second Vatican Council, whose document *Sacrosanctum Concilium* called for “full, active, conscious participation” by the laity. However, the singing of hymns at Mass—and even reciting the dialogues or saying the Our Father—is a very recent phenomenon. For most of the world, up until the twentieth century, Catholics at Mass would kneel, sit, and stand mostly in silence, often praying privately while Mass occurred. In 1903, Pope St. Pius X's document *Tra le sollecitudini* started a revolution of liturgical renewal. Among other things, the Pope called for a renewed education of the laity to understand and to participate in what occurs at Mass. “Active participation” according to Vatican II means being fully engaged in the Mass: intellectually, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. By “active participation,” these church fathers did not mean primarily singing and speaking dialogues and prayers aloud. They meant understanding what the priest and ministers are doing and being present in heart, mind, and prayer. In our strange new circumstances at Mass, we can still actively participate in Mass by being present, meditating on the readings, antiphons, and homily, and praying along with the priest. This is what pious Catholics used to do at Mass, and it is no less pious to do so today. Furthermore, I think we can all think of times we've sung hymns at Mass and said all the prayers and dialogues all the while being spiritually absent!

More specifically about music: the temporary suspension of congregational singing as we are used to allows us to encounter another element of the Mass, that is, the singing of the Propers. The Propers are the Introit, Offertory, and Communion antiphons—verses from Scripture, usually the Psalms—that are unique to each Mass of the year, and up until a few decades ago would have been sung (or at least recited by the priest) at each Sunday going back all the way until the middle of the first millennium. Indeed, the original Gregorian Chant melodies of the Propers are the oldest written pieces of music in all of the Western world—they are the source of music as we know it! Though the Gregorian melodies have gone through periods of disuse, the antiphon texts would always have been recited or sung. However, the Church never intended for these antiphons to go extinct, and has repeatedly called for priests and music directors to re-institute them at Mass. The pandemic has given us a unique opportunity to turn to these antiphons again. Though the congregation will not sing them, the faithful are invited to listen and to meditate on these scriptural passages as a true form of active participation, much as we do for the readings.



The Ascension of the Lord

May 24, 2020

Introit

Acts 1:11

Men of Galilee, why gaze in wonder at the heavens? Alleluia; This Jesus whom you saw ascending into heaven will return as you saw him go, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Greeting and Penitential Act

Kyrie Eleison (Lord, Have Mercy) and Gloria in Excelsis (Glory to God)

Collect (Opening Prayer)

First Reading

Acts 1:1-11

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 47:2-3, 6-9

God mounts his throne to shouts of joy; a blare of trumpets for the Lord.

Second Reading

Ephesians 1:17-23

Alleluia and Verse

Matthew 28:19-20

*Go and teach all nations, says the Lord;
I am with you always, until the end of the world.*

Gospel

Matthew 28:16-20

Homily

Nicene Creed (11:30 A.M. Mass)

Baptismal Liturgy (5:30 P.M. Mass) with The Litany of Saints

Intercessions

Offertory antiphon

Psalm 47:6

God has ascended with shouts of joy, and the Lord with the sound of a trumpet, alleluia.

Prayer over the Offerings

Dialogue and Preface

Sanctus (Holy)

Eucharistic Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

Agnus Dei (Lamb of God)

Communion antiphon

Matthew 28:18-19

All power has been given to me; go therefore and teach all the nations. (Verses from Psalm 78)

Prayer for Spiritual Communion

Prayer after Communion

Blessing and Dismissal

Prayer to St. Michael

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, o prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.