

Notes About Music in the Season of Lent

Catholic teaching views human freedom primarily as a "freedom for:" the ability to choose and pursue the good (especially God as the highest good). This is opposed to the view that sees freedom merely "from" restraints which, when detached from truth and moral order, leads to slavery to sin and self-destruction.

Commandments, regulations, rubrics, etc. are set in place to promote this first kind of freedom, the ability to choose the good. They give us a framework in which to give ourselves wholly to the pursuit of God. It is with this backdrop that we consider what the Church asks us to do during the season of Lent.

Latin Ordinary

The change of seasons is an opportune time to adjust or implement new things. There is a shift from the unassuming character of Ordinary Time to the focus on prayer, fasting, and almsgiving in Lent. With this shift in atmosphere, we will use the opportunity to teach our congregation the Ordinary of the mass in Latin. Although Lent is a season of penance, we ought not see the use of Latin as a punishment. To avoid this, we will continue to use Latin on a regular basis after Lent. Here are a few things which the Church has said about Latin:

Sacrosanctum Concilium (Vatican, 1963)

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

54. 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.

Sing to the Lord (USCCB, 2007)

61b. Pastors should ensure "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." They should be able to sing these parts of the Mass proper to them, at least according to the simpler melodies.

62. At international and multicultural gatherings of different language groups, it is most appropriate to celebrate the Liturgy in Latin, "with the exception of the readings, the homily and the prayer of the faithful."⁶¹ In addition, "selections of Gregorian chant should be sung" at such gatherings, whenever possible.

75. Each worshipping 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.

Singing Without Instrumentation

From the earliest days, Christian communities gathered for worship sang psalms hymns and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19), and historical documents reveal that these were mostly unaccompanied. It was not until around the 7th century that instrumentation began to be used, and it was used very little until the turn of the millennia when more monasteries began to install organs. However, the widespread use of the organ in the liturgy did not begin until the Renaissance.

When we sing unaccompanied, we are connected to a rich cultural inheritance, and we express our vocal worship with the *singular* instrument that God himself made: the human voice.

Here are a few things the Church says about the character of Lent and its music:

Caeremoniale Episcoporum (Vatican, 1984) 251-252

251-252. The true nature of penance, which detests sin as an offense against God, should be instilled in the minds of the faithful through catechesis, together with the social consequences of sin; nor should the Church's role in the penitential work be overlooked, and prayer for sinners should be urged. The penance of the Lenten season should not only be internal and individual, but also external and social, and should be directed to works of mercy for the good of our brothers. The faithful are recommended to participate more intensely and fruitfully in the Lenten liturgy and penitential celebrations. They are especially advised to approach the sacrament of Penance at this time, according to the law and traditions of the Church, so that they may be able to participate with purified souls in the joys of the Lord's Resurrection. It is very fitting that the sacrament of Penance be celebrated in a more solemn form during Lent, as described in the Roman Ritual.

During this time, it is *forbidden to decorate the altar with flowers, and the sound of instruments is permitted only to support the singing*. However, exceptions are made for Laetare Sunday and solemnities and feasts. For Laetare Sunday, the color pink may be used.

Musicam Sacram (Vatican, 1967)

65-66. In sung or said Masses, the organ, or other instrument legitimately admitted, can be used to accompany the singing of the choir and the people; it can also be played solo at the beginning before the priest reaches the altar, at the Offertory, at the Communion, and at the end of Mass. The same rule, with the necessary adaptations, can be applied to other sacred celebrations. *The playing of these same instruments as solos is not permitted in Advent, Lent, during the Sacred Triduum and in the Offices and Masses of the Dead.*

Paschale Solemnitatis (Vatican, 1988)

17. 'In Lent, the altar should not be decorated with flowers, and musical instruments may be played only to give necessary support to the singing.' This is in order that the penitential character of the season be preserved.

General Instruction of the Roman Missal (2011)

313. The organ and other lawfully approved musical instruments should be placed in a suitable place so that they can sustain the singing of both the choir and the people and be heard with ease by everybody if they are played alone. It is appropriate that before being put into liturgical use, the organ be blessed according to the rite described in the Roman Ritual.

In Advent the use of the organ and other musical instruments should be marked by a moderation suited to the character of this time of year, without expressing in anticipation the full joy of the Nativity of the Lord.

In Lent the playing of the organ and musical instruments is allowed only in order to support the singing. Exceptions, however, are Laetare Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent), Solemnities, and Feasts.

What does this mean for us?

In the past, we have adjusted our music-making in Lent by omitting solo instruments (flutes, violins, etc.) and by ending instrumental accompaniment when singing has ceased. This year, we will be singing all selections unaccompanied except for the processional and recessional hymns. We will also be reintroducing the Ordinary in Latin, from the *Missa Jubilate Deo*, the ‘simplex.’ Specifically, the *Sanctus* (holy, holy,), *Mysterium Fidei* (Memorial Acclamation), and *Angus Dei* (Lamb of God). These are found on pages 85-86 in the SATB CREDO hymnal. The Gospel will be the *Lenten Gospel Acclamation* we used last year from the *Mass of St. Frances Cabrini*, only unaccompanied.

PRONOUNCING CHURCH LATIN: A QUICK REFERENCE

Throughout the history of the church, singers have sung their Latin in ways closely related to the habits of pronunciation in their own languages. As a result, one can give no single set of rules for the correct performance of Latin sacred music from all times and places. Nevertheless, the following will give some general hints for a practice based on an Italian foundation that has been widely used in the United States.

Vowels

- a is pronounced as in father: sanctam (sahngk-tahm).
- e is pronounced as in egg: ante (ahn-teh).
- i is pronounced as in machine: filii (fee-lee-ee).
- y is pronounced the same as i: Kyrie (kee-ree-eh).
- o is pronounced as in tone: omnia (ohm-nee-ah).
- u is pronounced as in ruler: unum (oo-noom).

Note: When two vowels appear together, each is pronounced: mei (meh-ee). (This rule does not apply in the cases of certain diphthongs—see below.)

Diphthongs

- ae and oe are pronounced like e: saeculum (seh-koo-loom).
au and eu are treated as single syllables, but each vowel is pronounced distinctly.
- In singing, the first vowel is sustained, as in other combinations of two vowels: lauda (lah-oo-dah).

Consonants

- The consonants b, d, f, k, l, m, n, p, s, t, and are pronounced as in English.
- c before e, i, y, ae, oe is pronounced ch: coelo (ch eh-loh); in all other cases,
- c is pronounced k: cantus (kahn-toos).
- cc before e, i, y, ae, oe is pronounced tch: ecce (eht-cheh).
- ch is pronounced k: cherubim (keh-roo-beem).
- g before e, i, y, ae, oe is soft (as in gel): genitum (jeh-nee-toom); otherwise, g is hard (as in go): gaudeamus (gah-oo-deh-ah-moos).
- gn is pronounced ny: agnus (ah-nyoos).
- h is mute, except in special instances, when it is pronounced kh: mihi (mee-khee) and nihil (nee-kheel).
- j is pronounced as y: Jesu (yeh-soo).
- qu is pronounced as kw: qui (kwee).
- r is lightly rolled with the tongue.
- sc before e, i, y, ae, oe is pronounced sh: ascendit (ah-shehn-deet).
- th is pronounced as if the h were absent, as in Thomas.
- ti before a vowel and after any letter except s, t, or x is pronounced tsee: gratia (grah-tsee-a).
- x is pronounced ks: ex (ehks).
- xc before e, i, y, ae, oe is pronounced ksh: excelsis (ehk-shehl-sees).

Fidelium animis catechesti inculcetur, una cum cōnsectariis socialibus peccati, ea genuinia paenitentiae natura quae peccatum, prout est offensa Dei, detestatur; neque praetermittantur partes Ecclesiae in anctione paenitentiali, atque oratio pro peccatoribus urgeatur.

Paenitentia vero temporis quadragesimalis non tantum sit interna et individualis, sed externa quoque et socialis, atque ad opera misericordiae in bonum fratrum dirigatur.

Fidelibus intensior et fructuosior participatio commendetur in liturgia quadragesimali et celebrantionibus paenitentialibus. Moneantur praesertim ut, iuxta legem et traditiones Ecclesiae, ad sacramentum Paenitentiae hoc tempore accedant, ut valeant purificatis animis gaudia dominicae Resurrectionis participare. Valde convenit ut sacramentum Paenitentiae, tempore Quadragesimae, forma sollemniori celebretur ut in Rituali Romano describitur.

Hoc tempore altar floribus ornari prohibetur, ac sonus instrumentorum permittitur tantum ad cantum sustentandum. Excipiuntur tamen dominica Laetare atque solemnitates et festa. Dominica Laetare color rosaceus adhiberi potest.