

## **Sing Always, If Necessary Speak Words: Rank Order of Sung Mass Parts**

by Father Eric Roush

Change in the Church has rarely been smooth and never easy. Concluding the Second Vatican Council, it was not immediately clear to everyone how to implement the changes called for by the Constitution on the Liturgy. So, Pope Paul VI (now a canonized saint!) issued the Instruction on Music in the Liturgy (*Musicam Sacram*; March 5, 1967). More than 50 years later we as Catholics are still wrestling with completely implementing singing the Mass as outlined by Vatican II. Without continual effort of time and energy, sacrificing our comfort to pick up those daily crosses, the worship of God as called for by the Church that Jesus invested with his own authority (cf. Matthew 16:18) will sadly never be realized. We will continue to miss out on the full beauty and wonder the Lord seeks to draw us into through the Mass.

In humble prayer we come before the Lord and ask for his grace to learn from him how he desires to be honored and praised in the liturgy. He teaches us through his Church, which has the privilege and responsibility to hand on the sacred tradition in every age. We are called to embrace the wisdom of the Church, not according to our personal preferences, but receiving all she offers as a gift. Let's unwrap this gift a little more by reviewing the rank order of sung Mass parts in Pope Paul VI's Instruction on Music in the Liturgy:



27. For the celebration of the Eucharist with the people, especially on Sundays and feast days, a form of sung Mass (*Missa in cantu*) is to be preferred as much as possible, even several times on the same day.

28. The distinction between solemn, sung and read Mass, sanctioned by the Instruction of 1958 (n. 3), is retained, according to the traditional liturgical laws at present in force. However, for the sung Mass (*Missa cantata*), different degrees of participation are put forward here for reasons of pastoral usefulness, so that it may become easier to make the celebration of Mass more beautiful by singing, according to the capabilities of each congregation.

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These degrees are so arranged that the first may be used even by itself, but the second and third, wholly or partially, may never be used without the first. In this way the faithful will be continually led towards an ever greater participation in the singing.

29. The following belong to the first degree:

(a) In the entrance rites: the greeting of the priest together with the reply of the people; the prayer.

(b) In the Liturgy of the Word: the acclamations at the Gospel.

(c) In the Eucharistic Liturgy: the prayer over the offerings; the preface with its dialogue and the Sanctus; the final doxology of the Canon, the Lord's prayer with its introduction and embolism; the Pax Domini; the prayer after the Communion; the formulas of dismissal.

30. The following belong to the second degree:

(a) the Kyrie, Gloria and Agnus Dei;

(b) the Creed;

(c) the prayer of the faithful.

31. The following belong to the third degree:

(a) the songs at the Entrance and Communion processions;

(b) the songs after the Lesson or Epistle;

(c) the Alleluia before the Gospel;

(d) the song at the Offertory;

(e) the readings of Sacred Scripture, unless it seems more suitable to proclaim them without singing.

Sing always, if necessary speak words (like the Scriptures). Let us sing to the Lord!