

LITURGY CORNER: What Guides our Choices for Ritual Music? Part 1 of 3

Every Mass has the same order: Introductory Rites, Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of the Eucharistic, and Concluding Rites.

The **Introductory Rites** are intended to be brief and to prepare us to hear the Word of God and to receive the Body and Blood of Christ: Entrance Song, Sign of the Cross, Greeting, Penitential Act, Glory to God, and Collect.

The **Liturgy of the Word** consists of the First Reading, Responsorial Psalm, Second Reading, Gospel Acclamation, Gospel, Homily, Creed, and Universal Prayer.

The **Liturgy of the Eucharist** consists of the Presentation of Gifts, Eucharistic Prayer, and Communion Rite (Lord's Prayer, Sign of Peace, Communion Procession, and Prayer after Communion).

The **Concluding Rites**, like the Introductory Rites, are intended to be brief. We are sent out into the world, having been nourished at the Altar of the Word and the Altar of Sacrifice, to change the world by our living. The Concluding Rites consist of the Final Blessing and Dismissal. The final hymn is an American adaptation. The Rite calls for a Hymn of Praise after Communion, but in most Catholic parishes in the U.S., including Saint Hubert, this is omitted and instead a hymn is sung after the Dismissal.

There are several Church documents which instruct us when we are making decisions about liturgy, specifically about music. The two books we use during Mass are the **Lectionary** (scripture readings) and the **Roman Missal** (prayer texts). Each of those books bears an edifying **Introduction** which includes instructions for celebrating Mass. *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, the first document published by the Second Vatican Council, offers guiding principles toward our desire to lead the faithful in full, conscious and active participation. In addition, we rely on the U.S. bishops' beautiful document *Sing to the Lord*.

These documents are much more than dry, boring prescriptions for who does what when. Rather, they are inspiring assertions that the public prayer of the Church has the power to evangelize, to encourage the faithful, to strengthen those who are weak; that art is a gift from God; that our singing is pleasing to God who created us.

In these documents, we read that the Church's allows for the parts of the Mass mentioned to be sung, either a formally composed song or using a simple or elaborate chant. For pastoral reasons, a more common parish experience is to recite some of these elements.

Next week, we'll look at the some of the principles which help us make these decisions.

The Parish Liturgy Board