

How Great is your Amen?

Musical Setting

Looking for a new setting of the "Great Amen"?

Don't go overboard! The original Gregorian "Amen" at the conclusion of the Canon of the Mass is one of the least musically "great" of all time, using 2 notes in 3 measures for the 2 syllables. Yet this Amen setting is still firmly locked in the memory banks of Catholics around the world.

Post Vatican II thinking is that the Amen at the conclusion of the Eucharistic Prayer should be more solemn (= extended) than the other "simple" Amens throughout the liturgy.

The original Gregorian tone can, however, be extended to render it more solemn while retaining (it is hoped) "noble simplicity". The following setting is offered to NZ parishes: it has a strong unison line for Congregational use, but

can also be sung in harmony by Choirs, accompanied or unaccompanied.

To be successful, and "Great Amen" setting requires the celebrant to sing the preceding doxology. Any priest should be able to chant this, on one note if necessary, or using the approved chant settings. A simple intonation, ending with a drop of a minor third on "e-ver" allows the Amen to be sung immediately with no organ introduction. This is also the case with the official Chant settings. The "Dunedin Amen" (it was composed in Dunedin) retains and builds upon our Catholic musical roots. (The "Danish" and "Dresden" Amens borrow from Reformation tradition.)

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Dunedin Amen. THE GREAT AMEN M.F. McC
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(unison, or SATB) A - men. A - men. A - men.