

Singing the Liturgy

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

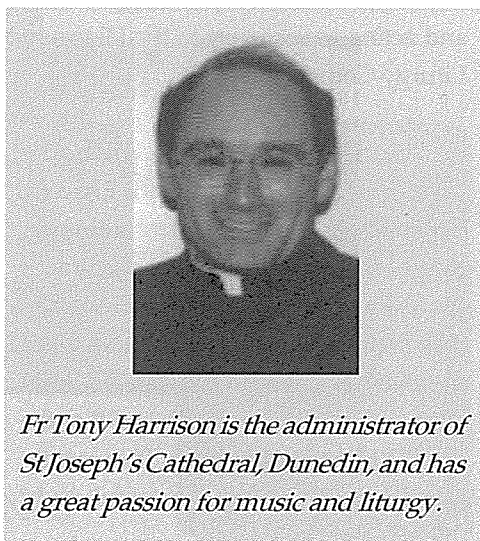
Previous articles have pointed out that we sing the Mass, not at Mass. In New Zealand, we have become very adept at singing through the Liturgy of the Word and at the Communion Rite.

Rightly, after the Liturgy of the Word, the Preparation of the Gifts is a lower time – it is a time of preparation. It is a time in which we can gather our thoughts and prayers together; ruminating, if you like, on the Word that has been broken, while we prepare ourselves for the Liturgy of the Eucharist and Holy Communion. In receiving the Body and Blood of Christ we enter into another high point which we surround with song and acclamation as we give thanks for the gift we have received.

We must try to achieve a balance between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. We can spend much time and energy in our

prayer, reading of the scripture and song during the Liturgy of the Word, but we must not allow that energy to fall away during the Liturgy of the Eucharist and especially the Eucharistic Prayer.

The question I have worked with is “How to fulfil the requirement of full, conscious and active participation” through the Eucharistic Prayer. Some may sing the entire



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Eucharistic Prayer and there are settings to be found to accommodate that action. More so, is how to make the acclamations and responses what they are intended to be, that is, shouts of acclamation.

It is noted that the people of New Zealand are often shy in expressing acclaim in places outside of the sports arena. When we are faced with such a momentous occasion during the Eucharistic Prayer, we should be filled with joy that we will want to give acknowledgement for what has been given to us through the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ because of God's love for us.

It is obvious then that in singing the Mass we need to give first attention to the Acclamations.

The first acclamation to be sung is the *Sanctus*. The *Sanctus* has been sung

since the early days of the vernacular Mass, and some settings have weathered the years quite well. More settings have also become available.

The second acclamation is the Memorial Acclamation. It is important to understand the nature of this acclamation. The priest's invitation helps us to understand what it is about: “Let us proclaim the mystery of faith.” What we proclaim is our faith that Jesus died, is risen, and will return in glory at the end of time. It is about proclaiming what has been done for us in and through Jesus Christ.

The Memorial Acclamation should be sung. There is a number of settings for these acclamations, some of which have been in use throughout the country for many years and others which have been introduced by way of particular Mass settings.¹

¹ *Nowadays, most composers include settings of the Memorial Acclamations and the Great Amen as a normal part of a complete Mass Setting; e.g. the widely used “Mass of Creation” by Marty Haugen, or the Mass settings of Richard Proulx such as “A Community Mass” (1970) or “Mass of the Redeemer” (1972). Both of these settings are included in Worship II (1975) published by GIA Publications Inc., Chicago, Illinois.*

Sometimes the acclamation falls flat principally, I believe, because the congregation does not know what to expect. This hesitation can be easily overcome by the priest intoning an invitation when the acclamation is to be sung. The musician may then give a chord or a short introduction to lead the people. A good example of the value of this approach is when the Second Eucharistic Prayer for Children is prayed.

Priests and congregations may have found difficulties with the various acclamations throughout the prayer. My experience has been, when the acclamations are recited, that the assembly is still looking for the acclamation when it is all over, and it never sounds like a joyous acclamation. Against that, when the

invitation is intoned and the acclamation sung, the response is stronger and begins to sound like an acclamation. (Christopher Walker has composed music for the entire prayer.)

The Great Amen is the other acclamation that must be highlighted. Many will have experienced the Great Amen as a whimper rather than the sound of praise that it ought to be. Again, my experience has been that when the Doxology is sung the assembly is ready to join in the Great Amen. There are a number of settings for the Doxology. One setting is easily found in the Roman Missal, another setting was composed for New Zealand about 30 years ago², and there is another in the Mass of Creation composed by Marty Haugen. The last of these is quite friendly, as the note

² A setting of the "Priests Chants for the Mass and Benediction" was officially approved for use in New Zealand by the conference of Bishops in the mid-1970s. This was prior to the publication of the English Edition with music of the Roman Missal. The doxology of the Eucharistic Prayer is included, and a simple Amen is provided (but any Amen setting can be substituted). At that time, all official Priest's chants had to be approved by the Bishops. The setting originated from the (then) Bishops' National Sub-Committee for Music, and is included in the "Sing Praise" Hymnal, published 1978, Price Milburn Music Ltd, Wellington. It is free of copyright (see appendix A).

the priest finishes on is the same note for the assembly to commence the Great Amen.

The other part of the Eucharistic Prayer that may be sung is the Preface with the Responses. For a number of years, on Sundays, I have sung the Preface using the chant in the Roman Missal. Gradually, with the help of the choir, the sung responses were introduced. Now the congregation has no difficulty joining in without the support of the choir.

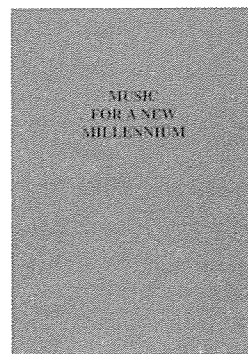
When deciding what is to be sung in the Mass these acclamations should be standard, and set before anything else. I am sure we can all remember occasions when hymns have been sung, but not one acclamation. Maybe the reasoning could be that not all members of the congregation know the particular settings. That is all the more reason why it is good to have at least a number of musical settings of the Mass and Acclamations that are standard, especially in a small country such as New Zealand.

MUSIC FOR A NEW MILLENNIUM



In September 2003, the Liturgy Centre published Music for a New Millennium, containing complete mass settings from local composers.

Copies of this resource are still available, at \$10 each, from the Liturgy Centre.



Millennium Mass - Christopher Archer

'Te Miha Tuituia' Mass - Helen Fisher

Mass of the Holy Spirit - Graham Parsons

Psalms 67/68 - Suzanne Gasson

Psalms - Anthony Mullany