

Gotta Sing Gotta Pray

THURSDAY, APRIL 22, 2010

The Revised Grail Psalms: I Am Befuddled

Welcome to this installment of New Translation Thursday.

Yesterday, I ended the post with what some around here called a "bomb."



I feel compelled to comment on the new Revised Grail Psalms. As you may know, this version of the psalms has been given formal recognition by the Vatican for use as the responsorial psalm at Mass. But, until they appear in revised liturgical books, we are not obliged to use them. So, until the final revisions are made by the abbot at Conception Abbey, they are not yet available for use or to be set to music. I have been told that there are over three hundred corrections that were made by the Vatican.

That brings me to the issue I raised yesterday. GIA Publications is "the worldwide agent for the Revised Grail Psalms." I cannot understand why a private family (the owners of GIA Publications) can be granted a position as "worldwide agent" for the official prayers of the Church. Once the Lectionary for Mass is revised and the Grail Psalms are printed in that revised Lectionary, GIA Publications will receive payment when those psalms are published in worship resources,

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hymnals, missals, and other resources. How that payment is distributed has not been made public. For instance, does GIA retain an administrative fee, while directing other part or parts of the fee to the Abbey or to another party? This information would be helpful to those who are directly affected by this decision.

Right now, when a composer sets the NAB (current version) of the psalms, the USCCB (who owns the rights to the NAB) has chosen to waive the royalty fee. So, this has been wonderful for composers, who are able to be paid a higher percentage, since they do not have to share the royalty fee with the NAB rights holder. Once composers begin setting the new Grail Psalms, their royalty payments will be reduced, since GIA will take their own share of the royalty, as "the worldwide agent for the Revised Grail Psalms." This is bad news for composers, and very good news, of course, for GIA Publications. This simply does not make sense to me. In a letter received by publishers from GIA Publications, we were told this: "Please be assured that this text will be available to all legitimate publishers on an equal basis at rates consistent with those established for official liturgical texts."

When we print the NAB Psalms in our hymnals and missals, it is the bishops conference of the United States that receives the payment of rates "established for official liturgical texts." I am at a loss as to why the bishops have chosen to have the payment of those rates now go to a private family here in Illinois (the owners of GIA Publications).

I want to make it clear that I have been a consistent supporter of our friends at GIA Publications. They publish, and continue to publish, many excellent resources for the singing Church. My own liturgical life has been enriched by their music over the years, and for that I am grateful. I just don't understand how a private family and music publisher could be granted the status as "the worldwide agent for the Revised Grail Psalms"—which will eventually become the official version used in the Church's liturgical books. While I understand how a family business is granted worldwide rights to intellectual property—that is what all publishers strive for—what I don't understand is how the Church allows a private business to control and license what are official texts of the Church. For anyone to publish the official texts of the Church—for the first time in our corporate memory—publishers will need to go to someone who is not part of the Church. Remember that the Church has no control over private business. More importantly, the bishops, in their wisdom, granted a gift to composers of the NAB psalms and now the fact that GIA Publications is the "worldwide agent" for the Revised Grail Psalms, that gift has been taken away from composers. This is lamentable.

Sometimes I can be a little slow in my own understanding of these things. Am I missing something here? Please feel free to comment.

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Posted by [Jerry Galipeau, D. Min.](#) at 11:30 AM



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About Me and the Blog

Jerry Galipeau, D. Min.
Dr. Jerry Galipeau is Vice President and Chief Publishing Officer at J. S. Paluch Company and its music and liturgy division, World Library Publications, located in Franklin Park, Illinois.