

# SING THE GRADUALE ROMANUM

As reaffirmed in the *Ordo Cantus Missæ* (Vatican, 1970) the Mass Propers—Introit, Gradual, Alleluia, Offertory, and Communion—are to be drawn from the *Graduale Romanum* (most recent edition: Solesmes, 1974), just as the priest's parts are found in the *Missale Romanum* and the Mass readings come from the *Lectionary*.

However, based on the results of a 1968 survey<sup>1</sup>, the Consilium decided to revise Introit and Communion antiphons “for Masses without music.” As Pope Paul VI explained in 1969:

The text of the “Graduale Romanum” has not been changed as far as the music is concerned. However, for a better understanding, the responsorial psalm, which St. Augustine and St. Leo the Great often mention, has been restored, **and the Introit and Communion antiphons have been adapted for Masses without singing.**<sup>2</sup>

Needless to say, these revised “spoken” antiphons frequently do not match the sung versions found in the *Graduale Romanum* (especially the Communion antiphons). Since the *Graduale Romanum* is a book for singing, it would have been ridiculous to include these “spoken” texts in that book, so a place was found for them in the *Missale Romanum*, a practice which continues to this day (for the ease of priests who celebrate private Masses without a choir present).

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM) has not changed, regarding the Introit and Communion antiphons, since its initial publication in the 1970's. The *Graduale Romanum* text is the first option:

## INTROIT [“Entrance chant”]:

For the entrance chant, one could use either the antiphon with its psalm as found in the Roman Gradual or in the Simple Gradual, or another chant, congruent with the theme of the sacred action, day or time, whose text has been approved by the Conference of Bishops. If there is no singing at the Introit, the antiphon proposed in the Roman Missal is recited.<sup>3</sup>

## COMMUNION CHANT:

For the Communion chant, an antiphon from the “Graduale Romanum” may also be used, with or without the psalm, or an antiphon with psalm from “The Simple Gradual” or another suitable song approved by the conference of bishops. If there is no singing, the communion antiphon in the Missal is recited.<sup>4</sup>

The “American adaptation” of the GIRM (1975) stressed to an even greater degree that the

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1 Adalberto Franquesa, OSB, “Las Antifonias del Introito y de la Comunión en las misas sin canto,” *Notitiae*, 6 (1970), 214

2 *Quod reliquum est, licet textus Gradualis Romani, ad cantum saltem quod attinet, non fuerit mutatus, tamen, facilioris intellectus gratia, sive psalmus ille responsorius, de quo S. Augustinus et S. Leo Magnus saepe commemorant, sive antiphonae ad introitum et ad Communionem in Missis lectis adhibendae, pro opportunitate, instauratae sunt.* — Pope Paul VI • Apostolic Constitution, *Missale Romanum* (3 April 1969)

N.B. Additional translations are available here: <http://www.ccwatershed.org/pdfs/8713-pope-paul-vi-missale-romanum/download/>

3 Cf. GIRM (“Universal Version”) §26 (1975) §48 (2011) *Adhiberi potest sive antiphona cum suo psalmo in Graduali Romano vel in Graduali simplici exstans, sive alius cantus, actioni sacrae, diei vel temporis indoli congruus, cuius textus a Conferentia Episcoporum sit approbatus. Si ad introitum non habetur cantus, antiphona in Missali proposita recitatur sive a fidelibus, sive ab aliquibus ex ipsis, sive a lectore, sin aliter ab ipso sacerdote, qui potest etiam in modum monitionis initialis (cf. n. 31) eam aptare.*

4 Cf. GIRM (“Universal Version”) §56 (1975) §87 (2011) *Pro cantu ad communionem adhiberi potest aut antiphona ex Graduali Romano sive cum psalmo sive sola, aut antiphona cum psalmo e Graduali simplici, aut alius cantus congruus a Conferentia Episcoporum approbatus. Cantatur sive a schola sola, sive a schola vel cantore cum populo. Si autem non habetur cantus, antiphona in Missali proposita recitari potest sive a fidelibus, sive ab aliquibus ex ipsis, sive a lectore, sin aliter ab ipso sacerdote postquam ipse communicavit, antequam Communionem distribuat fidelibus.*

“spoken” versions included in the Missal are only to be proclaimed if there is no singing:

**ENTRANCE CHANT:** Only if none of the above alternatives is employed and there is no entrance song, is the antiphon in the Missal recited.<sup>5</sup>

**COMMUNION CHANT:** Only if none of the above alternatives is employed and there is no Communion song, is the antiphon in the “Missal” recited.<sup>6</sup>

Needless to say, even in the various “adaptations” of the GIRM for different countries (Canada, Great Britain, etc.), the *Graduale Romanum* texts are always the first option. For example, the 1975 “American adaptation” of the GIRM says:

There are thus four options for the entrance song:

1. the entrance antiphon and psalm of the “Roman Gradual”;
2. the entrance antiphon and psalm of the “Simple Gradual”;
3. song from other collections of psalms and antiphons;
4. other sacred song chosen in accord with the above criterion.

The same options exist for the sacred song at the offertory and Communion, but not for the chants between the readings (below).

However, an unfortunate typo crept into the “American adaptation” requested by the United States Bishops (11/14/2001) and subsequently approved by Rome (4/25/2002). Attempting to correct an earlier draft which contained a serious error<sup>7</sup>, the final wording was mangled even more, leaving a final result that was nothing short of unintelligible:

**GIRM “American adaptation” 48:** *In the dioceses of the United States of America, there are four options for the Entrance Chant: (1) the antiphon from the Roman Missal or the psalm from the Roman Gradual, as set to music there or in another musical setting . . .*

**GIRM “American adaptation” 87:** *In the dioceses of the United States of America there are four options for the Communion chant: (1) the antiphon from the Roman Missal or the psalm from the Roman Gradual, as set to music there or in another musical setting . . .*

During the decade following the error, several conscientious church musicians in the United States petitioned for this mistake to be set aright, as the potential for confusion was enormous (Christoph Tietze’s voice being especially notable). An attempt at correction<sup>8</sup> was finally made in 2007, but certain members of the Committee on Divine Worship blocked it, expressing concern about asking Rome to approve a *revision* to an *adaptation* already approved.<sup>9</sup>

In 2011, the matter was finally clarified with the publication of a new “American adaptation” of the GIRM, which now reads:

**ENTRANCE CHANT:** *In the Dioceses of the United States of America, there are four options for the Entrance Chant: (1) the antiphon from the Missal or the antiphon with its Psalm from the Graduale Romanum, as set to music there or in another setting . . .*

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5 GIRM “American adaptation,” §26 (1975)

6 GIRM “American adaptation,” §56 (1975)

7 Cf. BCL 2002 Newsletter, which can be downloaded at <http://www.ccwatershed.org/pdfs/8887-may-2002-bcl-newsletter/download/>

8 Cf. Exchange of letters between Paul Monachino (*Conference of Roman Catholic Cathedral Musicians*) on 3 March 2009 and Most Reverend Bishop Arthur J. Serratelli on 19 May 2009.

9 Perhaps they feared that resubmission of the “American adaptation” would risk its rejection. In light of the Universal GIRM’s constant affirmation of the *Graduale Romanum* as the first option, their position was not completely without merit. In other words, their argument was that this correction constituted “much ado about nothing.”

**COMMUNION CHANT:** *In the Dioceses of the United States of America, there are four options for singing at Communion: (1) the antiphon from the Missal or the antiphon with its Psalm from the Graduale Romanum, as set to music there or in another musical setting . . .*

Therefore, starting in 2011, the “spoken” antiphons found in the Missal have been raised to the level of “first option” alongside the *Graduale Romanum* texts. Some have suggested this was done as “damage control” for the 2001 error that caused so much confusion. However, whatever the reason behind this “American adaptation,” the legitimate church musician is not forbidden from pointing out the drawbacks of this decision:

A) These “spoken” texts were never meant to be sung; rather, they were specifically revised with “functionality” for proclamation in mind.<sup>10</sup>

B) The United States is the only location to place the “spoken” text alongside the *Graduale Romanum* texts. For instance, neither Great Britain nor Canada do this.

C) The texts frequently lack the theological depth<sup>11</sup> of the ancient *Graduale* texts, which are 1500+ years more ancient.

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10 Adalberto Franquesa, OSB, “Las Antífonas del Introito y de la Comunión en las misas sin canto,” *Notitiae*, 6 (1970), 214

11 Christoph Tietze, “Graduale or Missale: The Confusion Resolved,” *Sacred Music* 133:4 (Winter 2006): 4-12.