

Seven Questions on Implementing the *Roman Missal, Third Edition*

Since the implementation of the Roman Missal, Third Edition on November 27, 2011, the Secretariat of Divine Worship has received a number of questions regarding the Missal, and in particular, the Order of Mass. To resolve these confusions, answers are provided here for the benefit of our readers:

1. Does the use of the word “chant” in the *Roman Missal* forbid hymnody during the Entrance and Communion processions?

No, the use of the word “chant” is a title for all sung pieces. The Secretariat has had numerous inquiries regarding the significance of this change in translation and its implications in liturgical practice. The 1985 edition of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM) explained the “entrance song” in terms of antiphons, psalms, or another song. In the revised 2011 GIRM, no. 48 and nos. 86-87 now refer to the “Entrance Chant” and “Communion Chant,” respectively, and give as musical options: antiphons, Psalm chants, or other liturgical chants. While the 2003 GIRM rendered “chant” in lowercase, the new version has capitalized the word.

“Chant” (the translation of the Latin *cantus*) is intended here to refer not to a particular musical form (e.g., Gregorian *chant*), but as a general title for any musical piece. This is seen most clearly in the *Missal* itself. During the Good Friday celebration, the *Missal* has as a heading for one section, “Chants to Be Sung during the Adoration of the Holy Cross.” The “Chants” that follow include antiphons, the Reproaches, and a hymn. Similarly, in Appendix II, the Rite for the Blessing and Sprinkling of Water, a rubric states, “one of the following chants... is sung.” There follows antiphons and a hymn. From these examples, it is clear that the *Missal* in no way forbids the use of hymns or songs for the Entrance and Communion processions.

2. How many times do we strike the breast in the *Confiteor*?

The Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship addressed this question in a 1978 *dubium* (found in *Notitiæ* 14 [1978], 534-535):

While in the Roman Missal promulgated by the authority of the Council of Trent the words were very frequently also accompanied by minute gestures, the rubrics of the Roman Missal restored by the authority of the Second Vatican Council are noteworthy for their discretion with regard to gestures. Having said this: The words *mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa* which are found in the *Confiteor* are introduced in the restored Roman Missal by a rubric of this sort: “All likewise... striking their breast, say...” (Order of Mass, no. 3). In the former Missal, in the same place, the rubric read like this: “He strikes his breast three times.” It does not seem, therefore, that anyone has to strike his breast three times in pronouncing those words in Latin or in another language, even if *mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa* is said. It suffices that there be a striking of the breast.