



**Wheatsheaf
Music**

Introducing the new Order of Mass Tips for musicians

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Top tips

You know your congregation and your musicians. You know what will and won't work at your mass.

Don't be too ambitious. Drip-feed one setting in over the course of September and October.

Engage your priest or deacon. Even if he thinks he can't sing, he can chant on one note! His explanations of change to the congregation can be underlined by your musical choices.

Sing something, rather than nothing. If you have a Gloria from the current Mass and aren't ready to introduce a new one, keep using it. Don't go back to saying the Gloria. However...

Have a transition plan in mind. The new Missal should be fully introduced from Advent. Plan to have at least one complete setting in use by then.

Be merciful to your musicians, congregation and yourself. At a time of change, you have freedom to experiment and some things are going to fail. This is a learning experience for everybody.

Share experiences and musicians between masses to bolster those that don't have your resources. Can you agree a common parish mass setting?

You and your musicians

Your congregation and musicians have the spoken and sung prayers of the mass committed to memory. Now they will look down at their mass cards when taking part in mass and **confidence and volume will drop**. Help them by choosing settings that are instinctive ("they go up and down where you expect them to") and without jazzy rhythms. **Revisit cantor/choir-led responsorial settings** (words not needed – just sing what you hear!), especially if your congregation includes children and people whose first language is not English.

Do you have budding composers in your ranks? They might like the challenge of **arranging an existing setting** for the new text – for use within your own community, of course – or even better, writing a new one.

There's a lot of pressure on you so **lower your expectations** and don't do too much too soon. Go easy on the choir solo pieces during autumn. Just after the summer holiday is the worst time to introduce new music!

How do you **teach new music** to your congregation? Stand up before mass and "repeat after me". Teach a little bit at a time ("this week we'll learn the hosannas in the Holy", "the Mystery of Faith is very similar to

the Holy we learned last month"). Have a cantor sing first and the congregation repeat (e.g. most Mystery of Faith or Amen settings are about 10-15 seconds long so could bear repetition in the early stages of learning).

If you don't have a **conductor or choral animateur** (worship leader), now might be the time to train somebody. A simple lift of the hand or an expectant gaze at the congregation is all that is required to indicate their turn to sing. More experienced *animateurs* can shape the melody through hand gestures.

The sung parts of the mass are prayers, not hymns: **understand what you are singing**. Choose settings that enliven the text so that song becomes prayer, sung (eventually) with the eyes closed. Pick tuneful settings that are simple yet worthy, neither sentimental nor trite (Gloria to the EastEnders theme, anybody?), that keep the flow of the prayer going, do not repeat unnecessarily and are no longer than they need to be.

Your congregation

Your church has ordered **cards or booklets** containing the new Order of Mass. By liturgical directive, most settings will follow these words exactly, so do you need to buy a new hymnbook right now? Composers have shoehorned over 30 years of learning into barely a year of music writing. Not all new settings will pass the test of time and more will be written in the months to come.

If you have a suitable **copyright licence**, you can print words and melody lines for the congregation on cards provided you have bought enough copies for all your musicians (check the terms!). For more flexibility, include the melody line of a new Holy in your weekly newsletter. Consider printing the **melody lines** for your congregation as well as the words – even if they can't read music, most can follow notes going up and down.

Don't overlook **chant settings**. The missal tone¹ will be (vaguely) familiar and can be sung unaccompanied²; or consider one of the new chant mass settings³.

Your priest or deacon

He may be a confident singer, or at least be able to sing on one note – even if he thinks he can't! Use him; include him in your music rehearsals. His singing confidently breeds confidence in your community.

People accept and remember texts more readily if they are sung. "The Lord be with you; And with your spirit" is a more notable change - can your priest sing it to the tone in the missal, or even on one note?

New for old?

Many current mass settings are being rewritten for the new text. Some will be available for the beginning of September. Should you use them straight away or try something new and bring them back later?

¹ People's chants available on the Liturgy Office website: www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Missal. The full chants of the mass are available at www.icelweb.org/musicfolder/openmusic.php

² The Diocese of Leeds has produced accompaniments for the missal chants: dioceseofleedsmusic.org.uk/docs/staff_downloads/New%20Missal%20Format10.pdf

³ For example, Christopher Walker's *Belmont Mass* (OCP) or the *Psallite Mass* (Liturgical Press)

The pros: the settings are familiar and won't take much time for your music makers to learn. The Lamb of God and Amen are probably unchanged, with a slight tweak in the words of the Holy, so you may not need to reproduce words for the congregation.

The cons: the settings are familiar! Some of the new arrangements are very similar to the old: is the music for "When we eat this bread" very similar to the "Chris has died"? Will your congregation slip back to the old words instinctively? As we take this opportunity to reflect on the meaning of the mass, are these settings really appropriate? Do they support the texts to turn them into prayer, or do they dominate the texts, are over-long?

Have faith!

Things will go wrong, and that's OK! Mess-ups may be burned into your memory, but your congregation will have forgotten by the time they are home from church. If a piece of music doesn't work, analyse why and try again. Maybe it was raining on Sunday and the congregation didn't feel like singing! Make several attempts at a piece of music before you dump it.

At Advent, **celebrate what you have achieved and reassess where you are.** What worked and what didn't? Are you ready to learn a new setting or should you stick with your current one (remember, Christmas is coming!) Is a wider choice of music now available⁴?

The small print

Use of the new order of Mass is mandatory in all dioceses in England and Wales (except Liverpool) from the first Sunday in September. There is no opting out! The readings, psalm and Gospel Acclamation (lectionary) are not changing.

The prayers of the mass must not be replaced by hymns, other songs or paraphrases (rewritings or versifications) of the texts.

Your diocese may have suggested or mandated a mass setting for use. Check with your diocesan liturgy or music advisor.

⁴ Keep up to date with publications from Decani (www.decanimusic.co.uk), McCrimmons (www.mccrimmons.com); and independent publishers on the Liturgy Office list of published settings (www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Missal/Music/Published.shtml)

Parts of the Mass

The most important things to sing at Mass⁵ (even before the hymns) are the Gospel Acclamation, Holy, Mystery of Faith and Great Amen – they highlight the high points of the Mass: Christ present in the word and on the altar.

Penitential Act

The Penitential Act is more positive than we might think. *Kyrie eleison* means “Lord, have mercy”, not mercy as in ‘don’t cause us pain’ but asking for compassion from our loving God. The invocations in the second form (“You were sent to heal the contrite of heart”) are statements of God’s goodness, not admissions of the bad things we have done. The second and third (Kyrie) forms are commonly sung. Highlight the Act at penitential times, such as Lent, by singing it to a simple setting.

Gloria

A song of praise in three sections: praise to God, penitence and petition to Christ, and praise to Father, Son and Spirit.

The Gloria has grown by nearly 50% in the new text because it is more faithfully translated without transposition or abbreviation. This makes the second section (“Lord Jesus Christ...”) longer and harder to set to a metrical tune: most current settings are either for cantor/choir or a “through setting” for all to sing from beginning to end. Beware of settings that amble around without direction in the second section or that don’t highlight its penitential nature.

Liturgy of the Word

Although outside the scope of the changes to the Mass text, remember why we sing during the Liturgy of the Word. The psalms were written as songs so don’t come fully alive if spoken. The Gospel Acclamation welcomes the Lord, about to reveal himself through his word in the Gospel⁶. If you have just started singing the psalm or Gospel Acclamation, why not have a sung response with the lector (reader) saying the verses.

Don’t rush between the readings and the psalm or Gospel Acclamation; allow silence to take hold⁷. How many people actually listen to the readings, rather than just hear them? Take time to ponder and meditate on the word of God.

Eucharistic Acclamations – Holy, Mystery of Faith, Amen

Three short and snappy interjections in the Eucharistic Prayer. An acclamation is a “loud and enthusiastic approval” for everyone to sing. Don’t let the acclamations become long hymns in themselves, interrupting the flow of the Eucharistic Prayer. The acclamations are “top tier” music and all part of the one Eucharistic Prayer, so all three should be sung whenever possible, preferably to the same setting.

⁵ See *Singing the Mass* (www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Music/Singing.html)

⁶ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)* 62 (www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/GIRM/Documents/GIRM.pdf)

⁷ *GIRM* 56

New settings are using similar tunes for the three acclamations – use this to your advantage when teaching your congregation. The missal provides a chant for the priest at the doxology and the introduction to the Mystery of Faith. All new settings should be designed to use it as an alternative to the composer’s own introduction, so your priest can learn just one chant.

The **Holy** references the vision of the Seraphim in Isaiah and Revelation and Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem⁸ amongst others. Hosanna (“save us!”) is a cry of hopeful expectation. Blessed means “God has come down (on this person)” - not something soft and gentle. Beware of settings that turn down the volume at this point: Christ is about to be truly present on the altar; God’s salvation is happening right here, right now!

The **Mystery of Faith** (memorial acclamation) expresses our belief in what has just happened on the altar: Christ truly present through his death and resurrection, past, present and future. Three options; “Christ has died” no longer features. Don’t just keep “Save us, Saviour of the world” for Lent; the new text accentuates the saving love of God through Christ which is relevant all the time.

The **doxology** of praise (“Through him...”) rounds off the Eucharistic Prayer and we respond with a loud and enthusiastic **Amen**. It’s difficult to encapsulate that feeling in a single word so most settings repeat the Amen.

Lamb of God and the Communion Rite

Asking Jesus, the Lamb of God⁹, for mercy means praying for the all-encompassing love of God and the peace only God can give.

The Lamb of God is a litany (repetitive prayer, not a hymn or song) accompanying a ritual action – the breaking of the bread. You are not restricted to using it three times but as many as necessary to accompany the action but ending with “grant us peace”¹⁰. Words are unchanged but settings must stick to the text.

Don’t allow chat and fidgeting to build up between “Lord I am not worthy” and the communion procession forming. Communion has already started when the priest receives¹¹. Singing in procession highlights the nature of our moving forward; the Body of Christ processing together to receive the Body of Christ– it’s not a bread queue at the supermarket.

Some Lamb of God settings can be extended to become **communion processions** (e.g. Mass of Creation into “Come and eat this bread”¹²), or use a psalm setting? Musicians are servants – can they receive communion later, rather than being at the front of the queue – “the first shall be last”? It depends upon the logistics of your church.

⁸ Isaiah 6, Revelation 4, Psalm 117, Matthew 21

⁹ See John the Baptist’s reference to the Lamb of God (John 1:29) or the lamb led to the slaughter (Isaiah 53)

¹⁰ GIRM 83

¹¹ GIRM 86

¹² *Laudate* #634