

Dear Parishioners,

I'm sure that most of you will have been following the news of the upcoming introduction of the new translations of the Roman Missal with great interest. In addition to the texts, there are newly-set chants which will comprise the first listed setting in all published collections of music for the Mass. An excellently helpful analysis of these chants and explanation of the rationale behind their composition is to be found at the following web address:

<http://www.icelweb.org/ICELMusicIntroductionRev809.pdf>

As a congregation in the Archdiocese of Boston, we are permitted to introduce settings of the new texts to the Gloria, the Sanctus, the Memorial Acclamations, the Great Amen (to which no textual change has been made!) and the Agnus Dei (also textually unaltered) from the 1st of September; complete implementation of the new Mass texts will be mandatory from the beginning of Advent on November the 27th.

This seems to me to be a wonderful opportunity to sustain and renew our congregational singing and repertoire. I would like to develop a repertoire of at least 8 settings of the Ordinary of the Mass to enrich the musical variety and interest of our worship. The first of these settings will be the Missal chants mentioned above. In addition, we will use a selection of Gregorian chant (a tradition honored by the Holy Father in his letter marking the 100th anniversary of the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music as "the supreme model of sacred music"), and settings by Dr. Theodore Marier. As time goes on, and music of high quality is composed for the new texts, contemporary settings may be incorporated. I have adapted some familiar chants and well-loved materials from the St. Paul's Hymnal for use during the initial period of implementation to enable us to make a gradual transition to an eight setting cycle across the Church Year.

In line with the Archdiocesan implementation schedule, it seems to me a good idea to use the time until the beginning of Advent to sing settings of the texts permitted for early introduction at both the 9:30 and 11:00 Masses on Sundays so that we might grow in familiarity in readiness for full use of the new translation. I will also hold two open Congregational rehearsals in DiGiovanni Hall on Tuesdays the 20th and 27th of September. They will begin at 7, end at 9 and there will be a short break in the middle for refreshment. The aim of these rehearsals is to support learning of the standard Missal chants, and to refresh familiarity with customary materials adapted to fit the new texts. The rehearsals will be positive and encouraging in atmosphere, and certainly nothing of which to be afraid; they are, of course, entirely optional!

As we enter this period of development, I intend to take the opportunity to develop a more participative and traditional approach to Psalm-singing at the Sunday 11:00 Mass. When the new Mass texts become mandatory, we will begin to sing the Psalms in dialogue, with verses alternating between the boys and the congregation (supported by the Men's Schola). We will mostly continue to use the same Psalm tones we have been

using in the St. Paul's Hymnal, so the chants should be familiar to many. This will enable us to adopt the Revised Grail Psalm texts. The Grail Psalter is a new translation by the Benedictine monks of Conception Abbey, intended for sung liturgical use; it will be the official English-language psalter for the United States, and its texts will be used in all future editions of liturgical books published in this country. More information about this admirable resource is available at www.giamusic.com/sacred_music/RGP/. We will practice this style of Psalm-singing at the September rehearsals so that we may be confident of the skill in time for Advent. The 9:30 Mass will continue to use the fauxbourdon settings of Psalms in the St. Paul's Hymnal.

For the season of Advent, the Missal chants will be the only ones used in the Archdiocese. At the 11:00 Mass, the choir typically sings more elaborate polyphonic and choral settings from the rich repository of the Church's history of music; this year, until Christmas we will save these choir-only settings for more solemn and festal liturgies, such as the Memorial of 9/11, The Mass of the Holy Spirit, the Feast of Christ the King, and Christmas Day. Other weeks, we will use the new congregational settings in order to ensure that our parish is able to use them with confidence and familiarity. In the New Year, we will once more incorporate more choral settings.

At the 9:30 Mass, the Adult Choir will also begin to introduce the sections of the new translations permissible before Advent, and will use the Missal chant setting until Christmas Day. After this introductory phase for the new texts (as required by the Archdiocese), the character of the 9:30 Mass, with its greater emphasis on settings for choir with congregation, will remain unaltered. The eight-week rotation of congregational settings used at the 11.00 will be used at the 9:30 service, amongst which settings are the congregational compositions from the hymnal familiar to those who are used to attending this Mass. The Adult Choir will continue to use the fauxbourdon Psalm settings from the hymnal.

Finally, a brief words about the Saturday Vigil Mass and weekday Masses. As of September, boys from grades 5 and 6 at the Choir School will sing at the Saturday Vigil Mass. This is designed to encourage yet more robust congregational singing, as well as helping a new section of our congregation benefit from the presence of our Choir School. The aim is not to alter the length of this liturgy. During the school year, the boys will also sing at the 12:10 Mass (instead of the 8:00 Mass, as has formerly been the practice). Again, care will be taken that this does not onerously add to the length of the Mass, but will rather enable a new and larger group of parishioners to benefit from the boys, not to mention the benefit the boys will gain from singing later in the day when their voices are more warm and their wits less weary!

If you have any questions about the musical implications of the introduction of the new Mass texts, please do not hesitate to speak with me in person, or to contact me at jrobinson@choirschool.net.

With thanks,
John Robinson, Director of Music.