

Tridentine Community News

August 1, 2010

Congregational Responses in the Low Mass – Part 1 of 2

By the grace of God, we now have the privilege of attending Low Masses in the Extraordinary Form every Monday at St. Josaphat Church at 7:00 PM, and every Tuesday at Windsor's Assumption Church at 7:00 PM. In an effort to answer questions that have been posed regarding the congregation's spoken responses at a Low Mass, we will cite relevant excerpts from the authoritative document, *De Música Sacra*, the Instruction on Sacred Music and Sacred Liturgy issued in 1958 by the Sacred Congregation for Rites (now known as the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments):

14. a) In sung Masses only Latin is to be used. This applies not only to the celebrant, and his ministers, but also to the choir or congregation.

“However, popular vernacular hymns may be sung at the solemn Eucharistic Sacrifice (sung Masses), after the liturgical texts have been sung in Latin, in those places where such a centenary or immemorial custom has obtained. Local ordinaries may permit the continuation of this custom ‘if they judge that it cannot prudently be discontinued because of the circumstances of the locality or the people’ (cf. canon 5)” (*Música sacra disciplina*: AAS 48 [1956] 16-17).

b) At low Mass the faithful who participate directly in the liturgical ceremonies with the celebrant by reciting aloud the parts of the Mass which belong to them must, along with the priest and his server, use Latin exclusively.

But if, in addition to this direct participation in the liturgy, the faithful wish to add some prayers or popular hymns, according to local custom, these may be recited or sung in the vernacular.

c) It is strictly forbidden for the faithful in unison or for a commentator to recite aloud with the priest the parts of the Proper, Ordinary, and canon of the Mass. This prohibition extends to both Latin, and a vernacular word-for-word translation. Exceptions will be enumerated in paragraph 31. However, it is desirable that a lector read the Epistle and Gospel in the vernacular for the benefit of the faithful at low Masses on Sundays and feast days. Between the Consecration, and the *Pater noster* a holy silence is fitting.

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At Low Mass

Participation of the faithful in low Mass.

28. Care must be taken that the faithful assist at low Mass, too, "not as strangers or mute spectators" (*Divini cultus*, Dec. 20, 1928: AAS 21 [1929] 40), but as exercising that kind of participation demanded by so great, and fruitful a mystery.

29. The first way the faithful can participate in the low Mass is for each one, on his own initiative, to pay devout attention to the more

important parts of the Mass (interior participation), or by following the approved customs in various localities (exterior participation).

Those who use a small missal, suitable to their own understanding, and pray with [the] priest in the very words of the Church, are worthy of special praise. But all are not equally capable of correctly understanding the rites, and liturgical formulas; nor does everyone possess the same spiritual needs; nor do these needs remain constant in the same individual. Therefore, these people may find a more suitable or easier method of participation in the Mass when "they meditate devoutly on the mysteries of Jesus Christ, or perform other devotional exercises, and offer prayers which, though different in form from those of the sacred rites, are in essential harmony with them" (*Mediátor Dei*, AAS 39 [1947] 560-561).

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Prayers and Hymns

30. The faithful can participate another way at the Eucharistic Sacrifice by saying prayers together or by singing hymns. The prayers and hymns must be chosen appropriately for the respective parts of the Mass, and as indicated in paragraph 14c.

31. A final method of participation, and the most perfect form, is for the congregation to make the liturgical responses to the prayers of the priest, thus holding a sort of dialogue with him, and reciting aloud the parts which properly belong to them.

There are four degrees or stages of this participation:

a) First, the congregation may make the easier liturgical responses to the prayers of the priest: *Amen; Et cum spiritu tuo; Deo grátias; Glória tibi Dómine; Laus tibi, Christe; Habémus ad Dóminum; Dignum et justum est; Sed libera nos a malo;*

b) Secondly, the congregation may also say prayers, which, according to the rubrics, are said by the server, including the Confiteor, and the triple *Dómine non sum dignus* before the faithful receive Holy Communion;

c) Thirdly, the congregation may say aloud with the celebrant parts of the Ordinary of the Mass: *Glória in excélsis Deo; Credo; Sanctus-Benedictus; Agnus Dei;*

d) Fourthly, the congregation may also recite with the priest parts of the Proper of the Mass: Introit, Gradual, Offertory, Communion. Only more advanced groups who have been well trained will be able to participate with becoming dignity in this manner.

32. Since the *Pater Noster* is a fitting, and ancient prayer of preparation for Communion, the entire congregation may recite this prayer in unison with the priest in low Masses; the Amen at the end is to be said by all. This is to be done only in Latin, never in the vernacular.