

## The Mass of 1000

In the later Middle Ages, after about 1000, a Roman Catholic plainchant Mass lasted about one and a half hours and would be performed daily, usually between Terce and Sext, at about ten a.m. The Terce and Sext services of the later medieval divine office in between the Mass lasted around fifteen to twenty minutes and functioned primarily as time to recite psalms (all one-hundred-fifty psalms were recited each week). Psalms were framed by antiphons, melodic and song-like phrases. According to Prof. Powers' 2.6 handout, other types of chant in the Office services are canticles, responsories, hymns (strophic songs), and prayers. A book called an Antiphoner housed all the music for the Divine Office. The Mass is the longest and most important service of the later medieval Western Roman church.

The Mass is a symbolic reenactment of The Last Supper. It consists of symbolic bread, wine and sacrifice, ritual actions, psalm and bible readings, and prayers. The Mass, the longest and most developed of the Western Roman church's services, contains almost every type of chant throughout its entire succession. Beginning with the Introit, or Introductory Section, this first part of the mass uses proper text in a neumatic singing style with an opening antiphon and psalm verse. During this opening antiphon, priests and assistants enter church and go to altar, while the choir is already in place. A choir and soloists sing the Introit. Next comes the Kyrie, the only one of the Mass texts in Greek rather than Latin. The Kyrie could be either neumatic or melismatic and, following an ABA format, consists only of the phrases: Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison. Within the constraints of the limited range of words however, the choir uses melismas to give each phrase a distinctive meaning of its own, though still keeping the chant

grounded through ending each phrase with the same melody. Like most movements of the mass, the chant begins with a soloist, and the choir joins where the star is marked in the music.

Following the Kyrie is the Gloria. The Gloria, or Greater Doxology, is a text set in a mostly syllabic style that praises God, states the doctrine of the Trinity, and asks for mercy (HWM 50). According to NAWM Vol. 1, “The Gloria is sung only on Sundays and feast days and is omitted in the seasons of Advent (before Christmas) and Lent (before Easter). Thus its presence adds to the festive quality of the Mass for Christmas Day, especially after having been absent during the preceding weeks” (14). The Gloria is direct, meaning sung by a full choir, after a solo first phrase.

Following the Gloria is Collect (a prayer), which is a proper text and is not sung but rather intoned by a priest. The Collect is the last item of the first third of the Mass. The Liturgy of the word begins with the Epistle (a lesson), which is a proper text and is also intoned by a priest or assistant. Following the Epistle comes the Gradual, which, along with the Alleluia (or Tract, which is sung in penitential seasons) is the most melodically complicated and virtuosic of the chants. They are responsorial chants and are performed on the gradus, or steps to give the talented singers a sort of stage to showcase their ability. Both the Gradual and Alleluia are Proper texts and sung melismatically. Next comes the Sequence (on major feasts) which is sung by a choir and soloists, is proper and sung syllabically. A proper text which is intoned by a priest or assistant called the Gospel appears next and is followed by the Credo, the third movement of the Ordinary (aka Common) mass. The Credo is syllabic because of its long text and was the last item to be added to the standard form of the Mass in 1014. According to NAWM

Vol. 1, “The Credo, or Nicene Creed, is a statement of faith that summarizes the central doctrines of the Catholic Church... and was the last of the Ordinary chants to be taken away from the congregation and given to the choir” (20). Credo melodies have no standard style of repetition, but they consist of a few motives that are varied and/or repeated to model the different points of the text meant to be emphasized. The Credo marks the end of the first main division of the Mass, the Liturgy of the word.

Following the Liturgy of the Word comes the Liturgy of the Eucharist in which bread and wine are placed on the altar. It begins with the Offertory which is a proper text and set in a melismatic style. A choir and soloists sing the Offertory. The Offertory was originally a long responsorial psalm, performed with donations of bread and wine to the priests by members of the congregation, with “florid verses sung by a soloist framed by a respond sung by the choir” (NAWM 1, 21). The next part of the Liturgy of the Eucharist is the Secret, a proper prayer spoken in silence by the priest, followed by the Preface, a proper prayer intoned by the priest. Then comes Sanctus, the fourth movement of the Ordinary mass. Sanctus is neumatic and sung by a choir and soloists. The Sanctus begins with the words sung by angels in a vision described in Isaiah 6:3 (HWM 51) 1. The repetitions of “Sanctus” and “Hosanna” are mimicked by musical repetitions.

Once the priest elevates the bread and wine chalice, the Canon, an ordinary text prayer, is spoken in silence by the priest. Following the Canon, the ordinary text prayer Pater Noster (Lord’s Prayer) is intoned by the priest. After Pater Noster, the priest breaks the host into pieces. The second to last movement of the Ordinary Mass is Agnus Dei, which is neumatic and sung by a choir and soloists. The Agnus Dei was originally a repeated prayer in which participants respond to a leader. The three periods of the Agnus

Dei chant each end with the same music, similarly to the Kyrie (Sadie, 303) <sup>2</sup>. It follows the form of AB CB AB (NAWM 1, 23). Communion follows, sung by a choir and soloists. It is neumatic and part of Proper Mass. During Communion, the priest eats the host and drinks the wine. Post-communion, a proper prayer intoned by the priest follows. Lastly, *Ite, Missa Est*, the sixth and final movement of Ordinary mass, closes Mass. It is neumatic and sung by a choir and soloists. The text is simply: Go, the mass is over. Thanks to God. This text is sung to the melody of the first “Kyrie eleison.” After *Ite missa est*, the priest and assistants recess from church.

Thus, the Mass essentially consists of an introduction and the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei and *Ite, Missa Est* which is broken up by several prayers and a few different antiphonals that serve as a sort of soundtrack to actions taken by the priest, his assistant, and/or hosts. The twenty total divisions of the Mass serve to faithfully and thoroughly symbolically carry out a recreation of The Last Supper.

## **Bibliography**

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