

*Guidelines for Liturgical Services  
according to the  
1962 Missale Romanum*



**Music for the Requiem Funeral High Mass**

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*Question:*

What constitutes a Requiem High Mass?

*Answer:*

A Requiem High Mass is a Mass sung for the repose of faithful departed.

*Question:*

What is the role of the choir in the Requiem High Mass?

*Answer:*

The choir is instructed to sing the Ordinary of the Requiem Mass (i.e. *Kyrie, Sanctus, Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei*, as well as the Proper of the Requiem Mass, the *Introit, Gradual, Tract, Sequence, Offertory* and *Communion*.)

*Question:*

Do the texts of the Proper of the Requiem Mass ever vary?

*Answer:*

The sung Propers of the Requiem Mass admit of no variation. The texts are never to be altered.

*Question:*

Must the Sequence of the Requiem Mass (i.e. *Dies irae*) always be chanted in the Requiem High Mass?

*Answer:*

The Sequence *Dies irae* is prescribed for all Requiem High Masses. At the minimum, it must be sung *recto tono*, but it is far preferable to sing it according to the tone set forth in the *Liber Usualis*.

*Question:*

In the Requiem High Mass, is it lawful to shorten the chanting of the Sequence *Dies irae* by omitting some of its verses?

*Answer:*

The full text of the Sequence (i.e. nineteen verses in all) must be chanted by the choir. (D. 3365 Dub. VII; 3624 Dub. XI.) It is unlawful to shorten the liturgical texts.

*Question:*

Does the Requiem High Mass employ any special tones for the chanting of the Preface?

*Answer:*

Yes. The ferial tone is appointed for Requiem Masses.

*Question:*

At the Requiem Mass, what tones are to be sung for the responses of the choir?

*Answer:*

The ferial tone (i.e. *tonus ferialis*) is set forth for use in all Requiem Masses. (*Graduale Romanum*)

*Question:*

Is the text of the *Agnus Dei* different for Requiem High Masses?

*Answer:*

The Requiem Mass employs a special version of the *Agnus Dei*. *Dona eis requiem* replaces the *miserere nobis*, and *dona eis requiem sempiternam* is substituted for *dona nobis pacem*.

*Question:*

*Does the Church permit the playing of the organ at the Requiem High Mass?*

*Answer:*

At the Requiem High Mass, the Church prefers that the chant be sung *a capella*. As this may be difficult for smaller choirs, the Church does admit the use of the organ to sustain the voices. But the Church certainly does not allow the organ to be used as a solo instrument at the Requiem High Mass. Thus when there is no singing the organ should remain silent. (Caer. Ep. I. 28, 13.)

*Question:*

*Is it ever permitted to sing the Gloria in excelsis or the Credo in unum Deum at the Requiem Mass?*

*Answer:*

In the Requiem High Mass, without exception, there is never a *Gloria* or *Credo*.

*Question:*

*Is there a special tone for the Ite Missa Est at the Requiem High Mass?*

*Answer:*

At the Requiem High Mass the *Ite Missa Est* is never to be chanted. Rather the *Ite Missa Est* is replaced by the *Requiescant in pace*, to which the choir responds: *Amen*, not *Deo gratias*. The chant tone employed for this is found in the *Liber Ususalis*.

*Question:*

*Do the rubrics of the Requiem High Mass permit the singing of hymns in the vernacular?*

*Answer:*

No. It is a violation of the rubrics to sing in the vernacular during any High Mass. (M. P. III. 7) .

*Question:*

Do the rubrics permit another Latin hymn or antiphon to be sung in place of one of the appointed liturgical texts?

*Answer:*

The Church considers it a violation of the rubrics to substitute any liturgical text which has been chosen and assigned by the Church for a particular service with some other text, even though it be in Latin. (Rit. Rom. Tit. I. Cap. I. 16.)

*Question:*

May the choir sing a motet at the Offertory after the chanting of the Proper Offertory (i.e. *Domine Jesu Christe*)?

*Answer:*

The Proper Offertory in the Requiem Mass, *Domine Jesu Christe*, is the longest Offertory chant in the Traditional Roman liturgy. Therefore, if it is sung according to the tone set forth in the *Liber Usualis*, choirs will find that the chant is of ample length and that an additional motet would be superfluous. If this Offertory Proper were sung to a simple tone, it would be advantageous to prepare an additional Latin motet appropriate to Requiem Mass.

*Question:*

Is the organ permitted to play before and after a Requiem Mass (i.e. prelude and postlude) or to play processional and recessional music?

*Answer:*

No. In the Roman Rite, the organ is employed to create a joyful and festive atmosphere, especially on Sundays and Feast Days. However, during penitential seasons and on mournful occasions, such as at the Requiem Mass, the Church restricts the use of the organ. Thus, at Requiem Masses, solo organ music, though it may be most solemn and dignified, is not permitted before, during or after a Requiem.

*Question:*

What order is prescribed in the Requiem Funeral High Mass?

*Answer:*

- The Responsory *Subvenite Sancti Dei*, found in the *Liber Usualis*, is chanted as the body is brought into the church. (Rit. Roman. Tit. VI. Cap. III. 3)
- The complete Requiem High Mass is chanted according to the norms mentioned above.
- After the Requiem Mass the priest puts on the cope and comes before the body to give the first Absolution in Church. After the priest says the prayer *Non intres*, the choir chants the Responsory *Libera me Domine* and the responses that follow it. (Rit. Roman. Tit. VI. Cap. III. 7)
- As the body is taken from the church the choir chants the Antiphon *In Paradisum*. (Rit. Roman. Tit. VI. Cap. III. 11)
- If the cemetery is nearby the choir may process with the funeral party to the gravesite for the second Absolution, given in the cemetery, where they may sing the chants appointed in the *Rituale Romanum*,<sup>1</sup> and found in the *Liber Usualis* (i.e. *Ego Sum* with the Canticle *Benedictus* and the responses that follow it.)

*Question:*

In the Requiem Funeral High Mass, do the rubrics permit the choir to sing an additional Latin motet at the point between the conclusion of the Requiem Funeral Mass and the bestowal of the first Absolution given in Church, while the priest is changing out of the chasuble and into the cope?

*Answer:*

Generally, after the Requiem Mass, the priest goes to the sedilia to change from the chasuble into the cope, so that he may make ready for the first Absolution to be given over the body. (D. 3108, 5; Rit. Roman. Tit. VI. III; Rub. Miss.) Because of this, the singing of some additional Latin motet would be

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<sup>1</sup> Rit. Roman. Tit. VI. Cap. III. 14.

superfluous and might would unduly prolong the Sacred Liturgy (M.P. VII. 22.) If the priest should decide to change into the cope in the sacristy for some good reason, the choir might find some justification in chanting some short Latin motet until he returns to the sanctuary for the Absolution over the body.

*Question:*

When should the choir begin the singing of the Responsory *Libera me Domine*?

*Answer:*

Once the priest has said the prayer *Non intres*, the choir may sing the Responsory *Libera me Domine*. The Rubrics, as well as the Decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, note that it is an abuse for the choir to chant the *Libera me Domine* during the recitation of the last Gospel, while the priest is changing into the cope or even while the Celebrant is reciting the *Non intres*. (D. 3108, 4; 3110, 17; Rit. Roman. Tit. VI. Cap. III, 8; Rub. Missal.)

Additional motets in Latin may be sung, as musical selections Supplementary selections may be rendered during a High Mass, after the Proper Offertory and the *Benedictus* have been sung, but the Church does not mention the singing of anything of a supplementary character in the other parts of the Funeral service. (M.P. III. 8.)

*Question:*

Who should sing the *Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison*, which follow the *Libera me Domine*?

*Answer:*

This is appointed to the choir and not the Celebrant. (Rit. Rom. Tit. VI. Cap. III)

*Question:*

When the body is present, what concludes the Absolution in the church?

*Answer:*

When the body is present, as at a Requiem Funeral High Mass, the priest concludes the Absolution in church with the prayer *Deus cui proprium*, to which the choir sings the response *Amen*. When the body is present, as at the Requiem Funeral High Mass, no other versicles or responses are added to this prayer. As the body is taken from the church the choir chants the *In Paradisum*. (Rit. Roman. Tit. VI. Cap. III, 10.)

*Question:*

When are the three following versicles and responses employed in the Requiem Funeral High Mass?

V. *Requiem aeternam dona ei, (eis) Domine*. R. *Et lux perpetua luceat ei (eis)*. V. *Requiescat (cant) in pace*. R. *Amen*. V. *Anima ejus (eorum), et animae omnium fidelium defunctorum, per misericordiam Dei requiescant in pace*. R. *Amen*.

*Answer:*

These versicles and responses do not have application in the Requiem Funeral Mass.

*Question:*

When is it appointed that these verses are to be sung?

*Answer:*

It is to be recalled that at the Requiem High Mass the Rite of Absolution may be observed though the body is not present in the church. When this is the case, the

priest stands before the catafalque<sup>2</sup> to lead the prayers of Absolution. The choir sings the appointed music (i.e. *Liberā me Domine* and the *Kyrie eleison* which follow). These versicles and responses<sup>3</sup> are then at last added to the final prayer of the Rite of Absolution.

It is to be noted that the above versicle, *Requiescat (cant) in pace*, should be sung by the choir. The versicle *Anima ejus (eorum), et animae omnium fidelium defunctorum, per misericordiam Dei requiescant in pace*, is, however, omitted on All Souls Day in the Absolution after the Mass. (D. 1743, 7; Rom. Rit. Tit. Cap. V.)

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<sup>2</sup> A catafalque is a raised bier or platform, often movable, that is used to support the casket, coffin, or body of the deceased during a funeral or memorial service. The black funeral pall covers the catafalque.

<sup>3</sup> V. *Requiem aeternam dona ei, (eis) Domine*. R. *Et lux perpetua luceat ei (eis)*. V. *Requiescat (cant) in pace*. R. *Amen*. V. *Anima ejus (eorum), et animae omnium fidelium defunctorum, per misericordiam Dei requiescant in pace*. R. *Amen*.