

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



**Music for the Requiem 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.