

Tridentine Community News

February 18, 2007

The Season of Septuagesima

The Tridentine Liturgical Calendar is now within the pre-Lenten season of Septuagesima, a season which has been eliminated in the Novus Ordo. Just what is Septuagesima?

The “regular” season of Lent consists of the 40 days before Easter. Septuagesima extends the pre-Easter season to 70 days, with Septuagesima Sunday representing the 70th day, Sexagesima the 60th, and Quinquagesima the 50th. Some Lenten practices already take hold during Septuagesima: for example, the liturgical color is violet. The Gloria and Alleluia are omitted. But unlike during Lent, the organ may be played when not accompanying singing.

Why do we need Septuagesima? Doesn't Lent give us sufficient time to practice penance and mortification? Holy Mother Church wants us to contemplate mankind's fall from Original Sin and Actual Sin, prior to undertaking the fasting and penance of Lent itself.

The extensive Antiphons and prayers of the Tridentine Mass of Ash Wednesday (celebrated for the first time in our region since Vatican II at St. Josaphat this Wednesday at 7:00 PM) articulate more clearly than their Novus Ordo counterparts man's need to turn away from sinful habits. One can think of Ash Wednesday as serving as more of a mindset-changing day in the Tridentine rite. The season of Septuagesima conditions one's outlook to expect the change, before the change is made. The Latin/English Propers handout that will be distributed at the Ash Wednesday Mass has five pages of prayers, two pages longer than the Novus Ordo Propers. Download the handout from the Tridentine Mass section of www.stjosaphatchurch.org if you can't make it to Mass, and carefully read the prayers yourself.

The Fortress Won't Be So Mighty Around Here

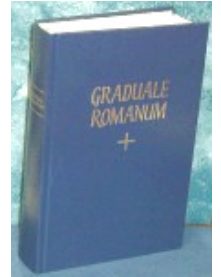
Our column of a few weeks ago which discussed the pros and cons of employing the hymn, *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*, brought in more responses than any previous edition. The message we heard was clear: It may be a fine hymn, but let's not use the “Battle Hymn of the Reformation” at the Tridentine Mass.

We may yet use the melody of the hymn with different lyrics by a less controversial author; it's the original text that crosses a line for many of you. Thanks for providing feedback...we won't be using Martin Luther's text here.

Singing the Propers at a Novus Ordo Mass

Some questions have arisen about the possibility of singing the Propers at a Novus Ordo Mass. It is standard custom to sing the Introit, Gradual, Offertory, and Communion Antiphon in the Tridentine Order of Mass. But the vast majority of Novus Ordo Masses choose instead to sing an Entrance Hymn, a Responsorial Psalm, an Offertory Hymn, and a Communion Hymn in place of the Propers.

It is a little-known fact that the Church does encourage the singing of the Propers, in either Latin or the vernacular, in the new rite. The 2002 General Instruction of the Roman Missal



makes numerous references to Solesmes' Graduále Románum as the official reference text for those Propers, akin to the role of the Liber Usualis for the Tridentine Mass. There is even an Organ Accompaniment edition for the Graduále Romanum.

Solesmes also publishes the Graduále Simplex, another GIRM-approved option for the Propers, designed for less experienced choirs.

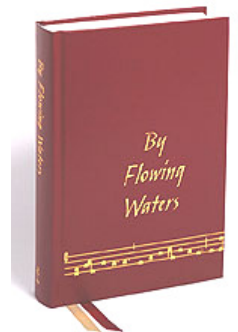
Dominica in Quinquagesima.

Intr. 6.



E -sto mi -hi * in De - um pro - te - ctó - rem, et
in lo - cum re - fú - gi - i, ut sal -vum me fá - ci - as :
quó - ni - am firmaméntum me - um, et re - fú - gi - um me - um

As for vernacular Propers, there is unfortunately no “official” book of Propers in English. Perhaps the closest is By Flowing Waters, a translation of the Graduále Simplex that has garnered favor with various ecclesiastical authorities in North America, despite its choice of the New Revised Standard Version Bible as the textual source. (This bible has been refused recognition for liturgical use in the U.S.)



Certainly any proponent of the Tridentine liturgy can only hope that more parishes elect to sing the Propers in the Novus Ordo. Especially in their Latin form, they demonstrate an organic continuity with the original Tridentine Propers, a heritage that Pope Benedict XVI wants Catholics to appreciate.

Old St. Mary's Church in Greektown used to sing the Gradual in Latin in place of the Responsorial Psalm, but gave that practice up several years ago. St. Joseph Church has a long tradition of singing the Introit in Latin. So while use of the Propers is rare, it is permissible, and is something that the “Reform of the Reform” movement can advocate.