

Paul E. [sic] Ford

By Flowing Waters — Chant for the Liturgy

Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999. (ISBN 0-8146-2595-9).

xxxix + 466 pages.

from *In Illo Tempore: The Bulletin and Liturgical Review of Ushaw Library*, Number 15, March 2001, pp. 41–42.

Among the documents of the Second Vatican Council, the Instruction on Sacred Music underwent what the Secretary to the Consilium at the time, Annibale Bugnini, described as ‘the way of the cross’. There were no less than ten drafts of the document. The Pope himself intervened and attempted to harmonise the divergent views of the liturgists and musicians. The former were concerned to promote active participation by the people in the singing of the liturgy, and for the texts to be in the vernacular. The latter, however, were passionately concerned with the need to preserve the great musical heritage of the Church, an especially precious part of this heritage being Gregorian chant.

You may be wondering what all this has to do with the publication *By Flowing Waters*. With the final drafting of the Instruction on sacred Music the struggle between musicians and liturgists didn’t come to an end. Far from it, this tension between intelligibility, participation and our musical heritage has rumbled on ever since. This very fine publication produced by Paul Ford is a courageous, imaginative and very successful attempt to respond to this tension. He has taken the heritage of Gregorian chant and adapted the Latin text to English with considerable sensitivity, notwithstanding the occasional moments when the word setting is not as graceful as one might have hoped.

This is a very useful book, especially for a community with few musical resources. It provides a comprehensive repertoire of worthy, yet relatively simple settings of the liturgical texts of the Mass for the whole of the liturgical year, including the Proper of Saints, Ritual and Votive Masses. It is certainly better suited for use by a religious community; but along with other resources could make a valuable contribution to the musical life of any parish. All that is required is the ministry of one or two competent cantors who could lead the congregation in performance of these chants. In this way this publication enables communities to sing the Mass rather than sing at Mass. It is refreshing in that it moves us away from our overemphasis upon hymnody, and provides strong, expressive settings of the antiphons, psalms and acclamations of the Mass.

The presentation and layout of the book itself is very attractive and has the worthiness that one should expect of a liturgical book, being attractively bound and printed and organised with clarity and simplicity.

This book would be a worthwhile addition to the musical library of any community and enables us to respect and value our musical heritage whilst fostering intelligibility and participation in the

liturgy.

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