

For the Pastor's Desk

by Rev. Michael Gilligan, Ph.D.

Paul Ford, professor at St. John's Seminary in Camarillo, California, has edited a new collection of antiphons and Psalm settings for Mass, patterned after the *Simple Gradual*. This Roman collection, dating back to 1967 and 1974, was intended to promote Gregorian Chant. (In the past, genuine Gregorian Chant was largely used only in cathedrals and very large parishes. There never was a "golden age" when chant was used widely and well.) The purpose of this reform of the Gradual was to make chant more available, especially to the average Catholic, Sunday by Sunday. Needless to say, this excellent idea was rarely put into practice. Instead, all over the United States, people continued the pre-conciliar Low Mass tradition of hymn-singing, usually in the form of the "Four-Hymn Syndrome": Entrance Hymn, Offertory Hymn, Communion Hymn, and Recessional. Often enough, the Communion hymn would be truncated or omitted, because people didn't sing it.

To the present day, many parishes continue to sing metrical (or not-so-metrical) hymns at various parts of Sunday Mass, especially at the same four times as in the "Four-Hymn Syndrome," though the names of the hymns may have changed. Especially during Communion the people do not always participate well. If the song is not known by heart, many individuals going up to Communion and returning will not join in the singing. How come? Because metrical hymns (unless known by heart) don't work well when people are involved in a procession. A simple refrain or antiphon is what's needed.

And that's the genius of the Roman Rite. We have a very long tradition of the simplest participation by the people during the processions of the Mass: the antiphon, with verses sung by a cantor, by two cantors, or by a group. Perhaps one reason we used this method for so long is that it worked. There is, of course, much more to the *Simple Gradual* than that. But the introduction to this new collection provides the choir director with the knowledge needed.

There are editors who attempt to preserve the unreformed tradition of the 1940s and 1950s, without taking advantage of the reforms of the current liturgy (such as the Responsorial Psalm. and music for the Liturgy of the Hours). Other editors, in part out of a similar kind of isolation, produce books that could have been published in 1950, with an abundance of Benediction hymns, for example. I would single out, more or less, in this respect, the *Adoremus Hymnal* and *Cantate et Iubilate Deo*.

Paul Ford's collection, however, represents a masterful implementation of the ideal of the Second Vatican Council. *By Flowing Waters* is an excellent adaptation of Gregorian Chant, practical for even the smallest parish. In fact, it would be a distinct improvement over much of what congregations today are asked to sing. The settings in this collection are pastorally effective, liturgically appropriate, scripturally faithful, and musically attractive. I recommend this book highly, for both choir and congregation.

Paul F. Ford, *By Flowing Waters* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1999). 466 pages. Hardcover, with ribbon. ISBN 0-8146-2595-9. \$19.95.

cover letter

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Professor Paul Ford
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Dear Professor Ford,

Congratulations on the publication of your excellent work, *By Flowing Waters*. As you will see from the enclosed review on page 23 of the

current issue of *Parish Liturgy*, I think it's a delightful achievement. This is the sort of book we have been waiting for for years!

You have also done a fine job of respecting the natural English accent of the text, highlighting the meaning. Over the years, we have tried to do this sort of thing in some of our publications. You have truly made a major success of this effort, showing that Chant can indeed be used in this way, effectively and pastorally.

I hope that many parishes make use of your arrangements. They deserve to succeed.

Sincerely,

Father Michael Gilligan
Executive Director