

Mass of Creation at 25 by Marty Haugen

I recently received an e-mail from liturgical composer and pastoral musician, Carey Landry, wishing me a happy anniversary. Initially I was a bit perplexed, because it arrived fully six months before my thirty-fifth wedding anniversary. As it turned out, Carey was not congratulating me for the success of my relationship with my life partner; rather, he was referring to the twenty-fifth anniversary of the publication of *Mass of Creation*.

I was simultaneously grateful that a colleague would be aware and kind enough to mark such a date, and a bit surprised because I had little awareness that this musical child had been “out there” so long. It made me think of my own children growing up, finding partners, and producing beloved offspring in what seems to be the blink of an eye. But twenty-five years in the Christian worship tradition is indeed a blink in the eye of God. Those of us who have worked in the trenches during the liturgical changes over the past forty-five years—and are now aware of the coming significant changes in our common liturgical texts—may justifiably feel that the tradition of sung communal prayer in which we were formed was not as solid or lasting as we had hoped.

It is important to remember that, since the beginning of Christian worship, our communal prayers, spoken and sung, have existed in a dynamic tension between ancient tradition and changing history. Our own sacramental experience, from Sunday to Sunday, is an ongoing encounter with the living God who came in Jesus and comes to us again and again in the Spirit. Our worship is an encounter both grounded in the faith handed down to us through the past and alive in the culture and time in which we gather.

With that in mind, and aware of the opportunity that anniversaries offer us to step back and reflect, I will share a few thoughts about *Mass of Creation*: how it came about, why it is still used in many communities, lessons (good and bad) that it might teach us, and finally, the possibilities and problems with a revised version of a familiar setting.

Origin of *Mass of Creation*

In 1983 I started work as the music director of a suburban church outside of St. Paul, Minnesota. I inherited a well-developed music program, including a large SATB choir, a “folk” ensemble with a variety of instruments, a children’s choir, a handbell choir, and two accomplished organists. The various groups had distinctive repertoires, including different mass settings; each also served a particular weekend liturgy.

The result of this situation was that different musical settings of the mass became associated with particular liturgies. If members of the community attended a different weekend liturgy than usual, they might not be able to participate in much of the music, including such critical pieces as the Glory to God, the Gospel Acclamation, and the Eucharistic Acclamations. In addition, for such important celebrations as the Triduum, each group would be responsible for one of the liturgies (e.g., one group for Holy Thursday and a different group for Holy Saturday), meaning that the Triduum was experienced as separate celebrations rather than a single Paschal journey undertaken by the whole community.

Mass of Creation was intended to provide a mass setting that could be used for all the liturgies of the community¹. For the “folk” ensemble, an arrangement for piano, guitar, woodwinds, and simple vocals was provided; while for the “traditional” choir, a larger arrangement with SATB vocal parts and parts for organ, brass, timpani, and handbells was written.

¹ The first volumes of GIA’s “Psalms for the Church Year,” were similarly intended to be useful for parishes which used multiple psalm settings for different liturgies.

Because the setting was created for multiple ensembles and because it was new to all the various groups, it did not become associated with a particular style. All of the liturgical music groups were willing to learn it and quickly incorporated it into their repertoire. It was introduced in sections beginning with Advent of 1984, and first used in its entirety for the Triduum in 1985. For the first time in their history, the choir and the folk ensemble participated together in the Holy Thursday and Holy Saturday liturgies and were able to pray the same mass setting.

I am grateful that GIA was willing to make the investment to publish *Mass of Creation* in separate editions to accommodate different musical groups. It is my guess that the subsequent success of the mass setting was not primarily due to the musical quality of the setting. I believe it was successful because it fulfilled a need that was common to many communities: a single mass setting that could be used by different ensembles with different stylistic sensibilities across different Eucharistic celebrations—a setting that allowed the parish community to focus on the rite and the words of the rite rather than upon which musical style or instrumentation was supporting the sung prayer of the assembly.

In writing the setting, I was very much influenced by the ritual music of Richard Proulx, especially the Glory to God from *Community Mass* and the Eucharistic Acclamations from *A Festival Eucharist*. Richard did not shy away from using minor keys (and sometimes different modes such as Dorian); assemblies have reacted positively to these settings and are still singing them almost forty years later. I was also influenced by numerous traditional folk tunes in minor keys, including DETROIT, CONSOLATION (MORNING SONG), and DISTRESS from the United States; and COLUMCILLE, SOUTHWELL, and ST. PATRICK'S BREASTPLATE from England, Scotland, and Ireland. Except for the Lord's Prayer and the Lamb of God (written in Bb major), *Mass of Creation* (like *A Festival Eucharist*) is written in G minor.

Another time of transition

Sometime in the next few years the Roman Catholic Church will mandate a new English translation of the Order of Mass, although as of this writing a timeline for implementation has not yet been announced. During this time of transition, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has provided a website for the new translation (www.usccb.org/romanmissal), and a pdf file of the new translation of what is known as the Order of Mass I is available as a study text. (The Order of Mass I includes the basic assembly texts for Eucharistic celebrations, including all the dialogues between the priest and the people and other liturgical texts such as the Glory to God and the Holy, Holy.) The Order of Mass I is considered final at this time, although there are some American adaptations, such as the inclusion of "Christ Has Died" as a memorial acclamation, that are still awaiting final decisions from the Holy See. This text should be the starting point for worship leaders to begin reflecting on and discussing the impact of changes upon the worship of their communities.

The revised texts that appear in the following examples are all taken from this study text. I would also commend to you *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship* (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC, 2007) as a helpful reference guide for musicians and other liturgical ministers in planning and leading faithful and meaningful worship during this transitional period.

When a new translation of the Order of Mass is implemented there will be a need for both new musical settings and the revision of existing settings. It is wise for all those involved in planning and leading worship to consider the effect of these text changes and to take stock of the strength of their current musical settings. As a composer, it is fitting for me to ask, "How best can I revise a particular setting, or parts of a setting, in order to support the new texts?" For music ministers, it is fitting to ask, "Which settings should we continue to use in revised versions, and which new settings should I introduce to my assembly?" There are several factors to consider when attempting to answer these questions.

Revising a published setting

In some respects it is easier to create a completely new musical setting for the assembly parts of the Mass than to attempt a revision of a setting that communities have already learned and often committed to memory. Consider these questions: When revising a published setting, is it better to try to adhere very closely to the original familiar music (and run the risk of confusing congregations) or to create music that varies from the original music (and run the risk of frustrating congregations that need something familiar, especially during a time of transition)? At what point does a revision stray so far from the original that it becomes, in effect, a new setting? At the suggestion of the editorial staff at GIA, the revised *Mass of Creation* will stay as close as possible to original melodies. Having said that it is important to realize that, in ritual music, the melody must always be a support to the text and will have to change to accommodate text changes. In addition, subtle changes in the music will support the changes to the text; in other words, it is hoped that there will be enough change to avoid confusing the new version with the old version.

The Holy, Holy—One of the simpler revisions will most likely be in the setting of the Holy, Holy. Here is the currently published version of the first lines of the Holy, Holy.²



Ho - ly, Ho - ly, Ho - ly, Lord; God of pow - er, God of might.

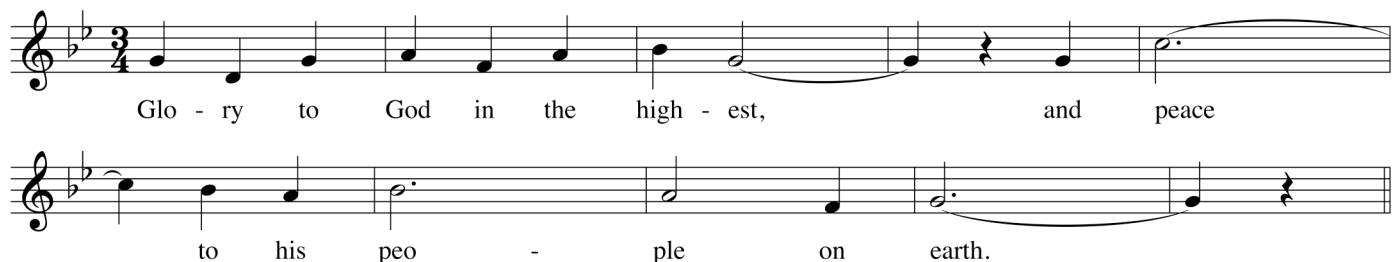
And here is the revision:



Ho - ly, Ho - ly, Ho - ly Lord God of hosts.

This change in the very first line is the only change in the new translation of the Holy, Holy; for most currently published settings it should not present too difficult a change for assemblies. In the revision for *Mass of Creation*, the melodic contour remains the same, and the accompaniment will support the rhythmic and melodic changes. The Glory to God is a more complicated matter.

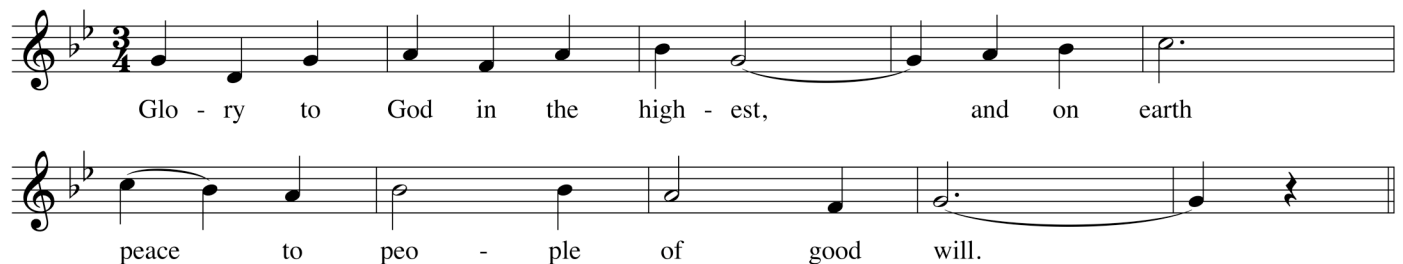
The Glory to God—When you download the current version from the USCCB link you will see that the text of the more lengthy Glory to God (while its content will still be very familiar to Roman Catholics) has changed to a degree that will require more extensive changes in existing published settings than the text of the Holy, Holy. Here is the refrain of the published version:



Glo - ry to God in the high - est, and peace
to his peo - ple on earth.

² All musical examples are from *Mass of Creation*, Marty Haugen, © 1984, 2009, GIA Publications, Inc. Text: English translation of The Order of Mass I © 2006, 2008, International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc. All rights reserved. Texts reprinted for study purposes only.

And here are the same measures using the revised text:



Glo - ry to God in the high - est, and on earth
peace to peo - ple of good will.

From this point forward the melody of the revised Glory to God (although utilizing familiar melodic and rhythmic patterns) will change in a greater degree in order to better support the new translation.

Memorial Acclamations—There are three Memorial Acclamations in the revised Order of Mass I, and they differ enough from the present texts to require a new melodic setting. Here is one of them. First, the current version of the text:



When we eat this bread, when we drink this cup, we pro - claim your
death, Lord Je - sus, un - til you come in glo - ry.

And second, a setting for the revised version of the same acclamation that attempts to evoke the original melody of the setting while supporting the new translation:



When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we pro - claim your death, O
Lord, un - til you come a - gain.

As stated earlier, the memorial acclamation most in use today, “Christ has died,” is not included among the new translations of the memorial acclamations, but is part of the American adaptations currently being considered by the Holy See.

The Dialogues—The *General Instruction on the Roman Missal* (GIRM) states that, among the parts to be sung within the mass, preference should be given “especially to those to be sung by the priest or the deacon or the lector, with the people responding.”³

The texts for these brief dialogues between priest and assembly (e.g., the Preface Dialogue and the Sign of Peace) will be changing, and this change could provide a good opportunity for communities to begin singing these sections if they have not previously been doing so. Singing these dialogues will give them an added liturgical “weight,” which might help the community develop a better understanding of their importance. It

³ General Instruction on the Roman Missal (GIRM), no. 40, MS, nos. 7 and 16.

also might help people to learn and embrace changes in texts that they have memorized and owned for so many years. In other words, when the priest begins the preface dialogue with “The Lord be with you,” it may be easier for an assembly to respond “And with your spirit” if they are responding in song rather than in speech.

Here is the currently published Preface Dialogue for *Mass of Creation*:

Priest: The Lord be with you. *Assembly:* And al - so with you.

Priest: Lift up your hearts. *Assembly:* We lift them up to the Lord.

Priest: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. *Assembly:* It is right to give him thanks and praise.

and here is the same dialogue with the revised text:

Priest: The Lord be with you. *Assembly:* And with your spir - it. *Priest:* Lift up your hearts.

Assembly: We lift them up to the Lord. *Priest:* Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. *Assembly:* It is right and just.

Kyrie, Gospel Acclamation, Lord’s Prayer, and Lamb of God—There are no changes in the translations of the assembly parts for the Penitential Act (Kyrie), the Gospel Acclamation, the Lord’s Prayer and the Lamb of God, although there are changes to the priest’s and deacon’s words. However, over the years since *Mass of Creation’s* publication, my own pastoral experience has raised concerns around these pieces, concerns that will be reflected in changes in the revised version.

At the time I wrote the Kyrie and Gospel Acclamation, I was intrigued by the ways in which musical form is yoked to ritual action and experience. For the Kyrie, I used an ostinato form, having been influenced by much of the music from the Taizé community. Since the setting was published, I have found that such a form is not useful for most communities. In the revision, the musical form will more closely resemble the dialogical form most common when the Kyrie is sung with invocations.

The Gospel Acclamation (“Word of Truth and Life”) was written in a call-and-response form and was intended to accompany a Gospel procession. Since a lengthy Gospel procession does not seem very common, this form was not as helpful as I had originally hoped. The revision (although remaining close to the original melody) is written to better support the typical practice in most Roman Catholic churches (i.e., the deacon or priest moving from their place to read the Gospel from the ambo). Here is the revised refrain for the Gospel Acclamation:

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! Al - le -

lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

Several parts of the Mass of Creation are still being considered as far as their practical use in light of common liturgical practice in Roman Catholic worship. A question remains about the “Lord’s Prayer,” which was written largely because the community I was serving was using a setting with what I considered a poorly written melody; I wanted to give them both something new and something that would be strong enough to support weekly use. I am unsure of its practical use in liturgy today; I believe that the chant version of the Lord’s Prayer adapted by Robert Snow is so widely known that there may not be a need for another setting.

The current version of the Lamb of God from *Mass of Creation* allows for multiple tropes (or bids) by a cantor or schola. Liturgical practice for this part of the liturgy differs across the United States, and it may be more practical to omit the multiple tropes so that assemblies simply sing “Lamb of God” three times.

Mass of Creation, written for a very specific community with its own gifts and its own quirks regarding liturgy, has surprised and delighted me by taking on a larger life for so many other communities—as my children have surprised and delighted me by their accomplishments as they have moved from childhood to adulthood. While there are those who may not like or use the setting for various reasons, it has become a staple in parishes in the United States and other parts of the world, in no small part due to the fact that it crosses lines of musical style. It is my hope that the revision will serve communities even better than the currently published version.

Fortunately, my salvation will not depend upon what I have written; rather, we all trust that God’s Spirit is at work in the world, in the midst of doubt and grief and violence and suffering and yes, even in the midst of music that is flawed and in the midst of the changing mass texts. In the end, a musical setting is nothing more than a frame for the words that we offer—in thanksgiving, praise, petition, and hope—to a God who changes not and who is deeply in love with the world and with us. Amazing grace!

—Marty Haugen