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Book Review: I Am With You Always

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By Chris Kan

Marie Therese Levey, *I am with you always: The Place of the Kyriale: The Ordinary of the Mass in Catholic History, Liturgy and Music* (Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, 2020) 207 pages

In this very broad and rich text, Marie Therese Levey discusses the development of the Ordinary - those parts of the Eucharistic liturgy (Kyrie, Gloria, Creed, Eucharistic acclamations, Agnus Dei) that are sung or said by the assembly. Musical or chant settings of these texts are known as the *Kyriale*, and Levey recounts their development from Christian antiquity through to the pre-Second Vatican Council period. Using both musical examples and a great deal of historical detail, *I am with you always* is a narrative of the way in which these sung texts gradually move from a peoples' text, into something that became only for choirs and cantors, and was then reclaimed by the laity through the liturgical developments of the twentieth century.

The book is broken into four key sections. Part 1, *Singing from Memory*, relates developments from the institution of the Eucharist, acknowledging the place of sung psalms and hymns in the Jewish tradition, through to the tenth century and advent of the first notated manuscripts. The first millennia of the Church was one of rapid growth and change, and Levey examines the patristic, early missionary and monastic movements. A key observation in this section is the consideration of the role of local liturgies and the way in which each fledgling Christian community established their own tradition, eventually to brought under the watchful eye of a central authority. In an era where liturgical Churches are considering the role of authority and the local adaption of both texts and ritual action, the examples provided give an insight into what has been an issue from the Church's first foundations.

Part 2, *Diastematic Notation*, considers the turn of the millennium until the time of the Reformation and the Council of Trent. Key events in this period included the liturgical reforms of Pope Gregory VII, which included the limiting of the *Agnus Dei* to three repetitions. Perhaps more significant was the Cistercian compilation of their handwritten chants into a single volume for use in their monastic foundations and parishes in 1134. This was significant as it is the first time the Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus and Angus Dei are put together as a unified text. Much else occurs in this period, including the Crusades and the Great Schism of the 14th Century, but it was the advent of the printing press that allowed the wider disseminations of Mass settings by the early 1500s.

Part 3, *The Age of Printed Books*, discusses the impact of the reforms of the Reformation and the Council of Trent. In this period the musical style for Mass settings was polyphonic – multiple interweaving musical lines (think Byrd or Palestrina), virtually removing congregation participation in singing the Ordinary entirely. The advent of the Protestant Reformation meant that congregation participation returned in the form of vernacular language hymns, a practice that also gained some momentum in German Catholic parishes of the time. However, the place of Gregorian chant for the assembly remained needing a reimagining in the Church, something that would begin in the late 19th Century.

The final section, *The Restoration of Gregorian Chant*, explores the importance of the foundation of the monastery of Solesmes and, in particular, the work of Dom Prosper Guéranger. It is from this period that Gregorian Chant began to be critically examined, in both its history and practice, which eventually led to the Vatican releasing its own edition of the *Kyriale* in 1908. In *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Second Vatican Council endorsed the place of Chant, using both Latin and Vernacular texts, and this reaffirmation of its importance led to the publication of the official chant book, the *Graduale and Kyriale*, in 1974.

This is a helpful and extremely detailed background text for anyone interested in the development of liturgy, and specifically Gregorian Chant within the life of the Church, and also for those interested in the relationship between historical events and liturgical development. Understanding the origins and varieties of implementation of sung Ordinary texts, particular for those who would like to understand and use chant in their liturgical community, can only aid in choosing appropriate settings.

It is to be hoped that, if not Levey, someone will complete this work in the future by looking at the way in which the Ordinary has been set in the post-conciliar period, both stylistically and textually.