

THE  
ST. MICHAEL  
HYMNAL

*Edited by Linda Powell Schafer &  
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FOURTH EDITION

# The Saint Michael Hymnal

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# CONTENTS

Preface .....	8
Order of Mass .....	12
Mass Settings .....	100
Service Music .....	207
Entrance Antiphons .....	300
Hymns .....	400
Prayers .....	840
Indices .....	853
Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament .....	865

## PREFACE

The Second Vatican Council ushered in a new age of renewal in the Catholic Church. At the heart of this renewal was the bold re-articulation of the universal call to holiness: *“The Lord Jesus, the divine teacher and model of all perfection, preached holiness of life to each and every one of his disciples. He himself stands as the author and consummator of this holiness of life. Therefore, all the faithful of Christ are invited to strive for the holiness and perfection of their own proper state. Indeed, they have an obligation to so strive”* (LUMEN GENTIUM, 40, 42). Above all else, the Council called the Church to focus her attention once again on the ultimate end of every human person: to become a saint, to live with God forever in the kingdom of heaven.

With this end in mind, the Church has, over the past decades, sought to renew the whole of her life, understanding that any authentic renewal of the Church must, in the end, present a complete and integral vision of the Christian life. No essential element of the Church’s life can be neglected. Thus, the Church must lead her children into true spiritual worship of the Triune God. She must proclaim the fullness of the truth of Divine revelation. And she must direct the innate human desire for happiness to its only authentic answer: the perfect love of God and neighbor. Over the past decades, then, the Church has called for a renewal of the liturgy, of theology, and of the moral life—a renewal aimed at making that which is ever-ancient, ever-new.

This renewal is still very much under way. In his first message upon being elected the successor of St. Peter, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, announced to the Church that, *“Pope John Paul II rightly pointed to the Council as a compass by which to take our bearings in the vast ocean of the third millennium...I also wish to confirm my determination to continue to put the Second Vatican Council into practice, following in the footsteps of my predecessors and in faithful continuity with the two-thousand year tradition of the Church.”* Both Blessed Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI have clearly indicated that a very significant part of “continuing to put the Second Vatican Council into practice” is the renewal of the Church’s liturgical life.

This call to put into practice the Second Vatican Council’s vision of the renewal of the sacred liturgy provided the impetus and inspiration for what has become the *St. Michael Hymnal*. St. Boniface Parish in Lafayette, Indiana, desiring to “open wide its doors” to the authentic spirit of renewal ushered in by the Council, saw the need to renew its own liturgical life. A disparity became apparent between the doctrinal and moral truths that were faithfully preached and handed on in the context of the liturgy and the sometimes poor or ambiguous “incarnations” of this saving truth in the music and musical texts used in the liturgical celebrations.

In the early 1990's, in response to a gradual alteration of traditional hymns, St. Boniface Parish searched for a hymnal or missalette that consistently preserved the original language of the authors, but could find none. Because of this, and because of the theological problems presented by some newer hymns, the parish began working to produce a simple supplement containing traditional and sound hymns for its own use. However, this idea soon took on a life of its own and came to be seen as a tremendous opportunity for a much larger project. The *St. Michael Hymnal* was the result of this initial desire to promote the musical treasures of the Church's tradition and to maintain traditional language in hymnody.

The *St. Michael Hymnal* is unique among contemporary hymnals because of its large and excellent selection of classic hymnody which conserves doctrinally sound texts, and also because of its promotion of Gregorian chant as proposed by the Church. At the same time, the hymnal stands out among the smaller collection of more traditional hymnals because of its realistic assessment of the present state of liturgical music and its prudential judgment of how best to address this situation. Fundamentally, the *St. Michael Hymnal* is predicated on the belief that what is most useful at the present time is a hymnal which provides for taking a decisive step forward, rather than one which prematurely tries to achieve the final goal. Authentic renewal in the life of the Church does not often come about quickly. It requires great patience, continuing prudence, and unflinching charity.

The previous editions of the *St. Michael Hymnal* have proven to be very successful in providing hundreds of parishes throughout the country with a middle ground between the novelties of contemporary hymnals and the limited usefulness of some of the more traditional hymnals. For over a decade now, pastors and musicians alike have rejoiced in the unique collection of "old and new" offered by the *St. Michael Hymnal*. This hymnal has indeed made it possible for many parishes to move forward gradually and to embrace ever-more deeply the Church's vision of the sacred liturgy. With the decisive direction set by our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, along with the implementation of a new translation of the Roman Missal, the *St. Michael Hymnal* now takes its next step forward in presenting this new, fourth edition of an already well-loved and respected hymnal.

In this new edition, the *St. Michael Hymnal* furthers its contribution to the ongoing renewal of the sacred liturgy. First and foremost, it provides music for a complete sung Mass in both Latin and English, as desired by the Second Vatican Council. In addition, the hymnal offers an increased number of Latin Gregorian chant Mass settings, in traditional chant notation, as well as many new and dignified settings of the new translation of the Mass into English. For the first time, the hymnal also offers a complete collection of Entrance Antiphons for Sunday Mass, providing an excellent starting point for singing the Propers of the Mass. Finally, to serve the needs

of a broad range of parishes, the hymnal contains a large and rich collection of hymnody featuring ancient Latin hymns, as well as the best of the living tradition of English hymnody. There are also hymns in the Spanish language which offer a greater traditional repertoire than earlier editions.

Nearly fifty years since the opening of the Second Vatican Council, the liturgical renewal of the Church is now more imperative than ever. It is, in fact, at the very heart of the new evangelization inaugurated by Blessed Pope John Paul II. In his own words: *“Now is the time for the new evangelization. This challenge calls the liturgy directly into question.”* The new evangelization calls the liturgy into question precisely because we find ourselves in an increasingly secular world; and if we are going to evangelize a world that is more and more secular and less and less inclined to believe in the supernatural, we must be able to offer something sacred, something otherworldly. The Church has a truth to proclaim: a truth that is not relative – a truth that is objective and universal – a truth that leads to authentic happiness and everlasting life. Christ through His Church reveals the answers to the greatest desires and longings of every human heart. But, if we are to convince people of the *truth* of the Church, we would do well first to strive to capture their hearts with the *beauty* of the Church – the beauty of the sacred – the beauty of the Divine. And this beauty is nowhere more present than in the Church’s sacred liturgy: in the divine worship of the Father, in the Son, and through the Holy Spirit.

It is, then, in a spirit of filial love for holy Mother Church and with devoted fidelity to the successor of St. Peter, that we are happy to place this hymnal at the service of the Church and her sacred liturgy. Our hope is that the *St. Michael Hymnal* will help adorn the liturgies of the Church with grace and dignity, and so move the People of God, the Body of Christ, to “worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (PSALM 96:9).

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September 29, 2011  
*St. Michael the Archangel*

