

❖ The Assembly's Voice: Sacred Music in the Liturgy ❖

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Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship

[Referred to herein as "STTL"]

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I. Why We Sing

- a. God has bestowed upon his people the gift of song. **God, the giver of song, is present whenever his people sing his praises.** [STTL, 1]
- b. A cry from deep within our being, music is a way for God to lead us to the **realm of higher things.** [STTL, 2]
- c. Singing is for the one who loves. Music is therefore a sign of God's love for us and of our love for him. [STTL, 2]
- d. By its very nature song has both an **individual and a communal dimension.** Thus, it is no wonder that singing together in church expresses so well the sacramental presence of God to his people. [STTL, 2]
- e. [The] sung expression of faith within liturgical celebrations strengthens our faith when it grows weak and draws us into the divinely inspired voice of the Church at prayer. [STTL, 5]
- f. Faith grows when it is well expressed in celebration. **Good celebrations can foster and nourish faith. Poor celebrations may weaken it.** [STTL, 5]
- g. The Paschal hymn, of course, does not cease when a liturgical celebration ends. Christ, whose praises we have sung, remains with us and leads us through church doors to the whole world, with its joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties. [STTL, 8]

II. Principles of Participation

- a. Within the gathered assembly, the role of the congregation is especially important. **"The full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else."** [STTL, 10]
- b. The quality of our participation in sung praise comes **less from our vocal ability** than from the **desire in our hearts to sing together of our love for God.** Participation in the Sacred Liturgy both expresses and strengthens the faith that is in us. [STTL, 13]
- c. Christ always invites us...to enter into song, to rise above our own preoccupations, and to give our entire selves to the hymn of his Paschal Sacrifice for the honor and glory of the Most Blessed Trinity. [STTL, 14]

III. Those Responsible for Singing in the Liturgy [STTL, 16-47]

A. The Bishop

B. The Priest

C. The Deacon

D. The Gathered Liturgical Assembly

E. Ministers of Liturgical Music

(Note that musicians are listed after the assembly!)

IV. Importance of the Gathered Assembly

- a. [The] faithful form a holy people, a people whom God has made his own ... so that they may give thanks to God and offer the spotless Victim ... and so that they may learn to offer themselves. This is the basis for the “**full, conscious and active participation**” of the faithful demanded by the very nature of the Liturgy. [STTL, 24]
- b. Because the gathered liturgical assembly forms one body, each of its members must shun “any appearance of...division, keeping before their eyes that they have only one Father in heaven and are accordingly all brothers and sisters to each other.” [STTL, 25]
- ☛ c. The **musical formation of the assembly** must be a continuing concern in order to foster full, conscious and active participation. [STTL, 26]
- ☛ d. So that the holy people may sing with one voice, the music must be **within its members’ capability**. [STTL, 27]
- ☛ e. Familiarity with a **stable repertoire** of liturgical songs rich in theological content can deepen the faith of the community through repetition and memorization. [STTL, 27]

V. Ministers of Liturgical Music [STTL, 28-47]

A. The Choir

B. The Psalmist

C. The Cantor

D. The Organist and other Instrumentalists

The primary role of the ... instrumentalists is to lead and sustain the singing of the assembly ... without dominating or overpowering them. [STTL, 41]

E. Director of Music Ministries

VI. Formation of Ministers

- a. The whole assembly is actively involved in the music of the liturgy. [STTL, 48]
- b. Parishes and dioceses should provide the **financial support** needed to ensure competent liturgical musical leadership. [STTL, 51]

VII. Gift of the Human Voice

- a. Of all the sounds of which human beings, created in the image and likeness of God, are capable, voice is the most privileged and fundamental. Musical instruments in the Liturgy are best understood as an extension of and support for the primary liturgical instrument: the human voice. [STTL, 86]

VIII. The Parts of the Liturgy to Be Sung

(in implied order of importance) [STTL, 115]

- A. Dialogues and Acclamations
- B. Antiphons and Psalms
- C. Refrains and Repeated Responses
- D. Hymns

- ☛ The importance of **sacred silence** in the liturgy cannot be overemphasized. [STTL, 118]

IX. The Three Judgments [STTL, 126-136]

A. Liturgical Judgment

Just because a song is “religious” in nature doesn’t mean it can necessarily fulfill the many requirements demanded by the liturgy.

B. Pastoral Judgment

C. Musical Judgment



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