

Musical Reminders

From the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*

PURPOSE

The Christian faithful who gather together as one to await the Lord's coming are instructed by the Apostle Paul to sing together psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (cf. Col 3:16). Singing is the sign of the heart's joy (cf. Acts 2:46). Thus Saint Augustine says rightly, "Singing is for one who loves." There is also the ancient proverb: "One who sings well prays twice."

GOAL

[All elements of the Mass] should form a complete and organic unity, clearly expressive of the unity of the entire holy people. The character and beauty of the place and all its appointments should foster devotion and show the holiness of the mysteries celebrated there.

STYLE

All other things being equal, Gregorian chant holds pride of place because it is proper to the Roman Liturgy. Other types of sacred music, in particular polyphony, are in no way excluded, provided that they correspond to the spirit of the liturgical action and that they foster the participation of all the faithful.

ASSEMBLY

Since the faithful from different countries come together ever more frequently, it is fitting that they know how to sing together at least some parts of the Ordinary of the Mass in Latin...

CHOIR/CANTOR

Among the faithful, the schola cantorum or choir exercises its own liturgical function, ensuring that the parts proper to it, in keeping with the different types of chants, are properly carried out and fostering the active participation of the faithful through the singing. It is fitting that there be a cantor or a choir director to lead and sustain the people's singing. When in fact there is no choir, it is up to the cantor to lead the different chants, with the people taking part.

MASS PARTS

The singing at [at the *entrance*] is done either alternately by the choir and the people or in a similar way by the cantor and the people, or entirely by the people, or by the choir alone.... Since [the *Kyrie*] is a chant by which the faithful acclaim the Lord and implore his mercy, it is ordinarily done by all, that is, by the people and with the choir or cantor having a part in it....

The *Gloria* is intoned by the priest or, if appropriate, by a cantor or by the choir; but it is sung either by everyone together, or by the people alternately with the choir, or by the choir alone... It is preferable that the responsorial Psalm be sung, at least as far as the people's response is concerned.... The *Alleluia* constitutes a rite or act in itself. It is sung by all while standing, and led by the choir or cantor.... The supplication *Agnus Dei*, is, as a rule, sung by the choir or cantor with the congregation responding. While the priest is receiving the Sacrament, the Communion chant is begun.... The singing is continued for as long as the Sacrament is being administered to the faithful. ... This is sung either by the choir alone or by the choir or cantor with the people.