

## The importance of the Choir in the Liturgy

Since The Second Vatican Council 1962-1965 there have been several documents written on the liturgy. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (CSL) , The General instruction of the Roman Missal (GI), Music in Catholic Worship (MCW), Liturgical Music today (LMT) and Sing to The Lord Music in Divine Worship (STL). I would like to quote them in regard to the responsibilities of the choir.

Participation in the Sacred Liturgy must be "internal, in the sense that by it the faithful join their mind to what they pronounce or hear and cooperate with heavenly grace." Even when listening to the various prayers and readings of the Liturgy or singing of the choir, the assembly continues to participate actively as they "unite themselves interiorly to what the ministers or choir sing, so that by listening to them they may raise their minds to God."

Participation must also be external, so that internal participation can be expressed and reinforced by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes, and by exclamations, responses and singing. The quality of our participation in such sung praise comes less from our vocal ability than from the desire of 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. (STL)

A liturgical service takes on a nobler aspect when the rites are celebrated with singing and the ministers take their parts in them, and the faithful actively participate.(CSL)

The faithful who gather together to await the Lord's coming are instructed by the Apostle Paul to sing psalms, hymns and inspired songs (Col 3:16). Song is the sign of the heart's joy (Acts 2:46). Thus St Augustine says rightly: "To sing belongs to lovers." There is also the ancient proverb: "One who sings well prays twice." (CSL)

A well-trained choir adds beauty and solemnity to the liturgy and also assists and encourages singing of the congregation,

At times the choir, within the congregation of the faithful and as part of it, will assume the role of leadership, while at other times it will retain its own distinctive ministry. At other times.. the choir alone will sing works whose musical demands enlist and challenge its competence. (MCL)

An important musical role of the choir is to sing various Mass parts in dialogue or alternation with the congregation

At times, the choir performs its ministry by singing alone. Appropriate times when the choir might commonly sing alone include a prelude before Mass, the Entrance chant, the Preparation of the Gifts, during Communion procession or after the reception of Communion and the recessional. (STL)

When the choir is not exercising its particular role, it joins the congregation in song. The choir's role in this case is not to lead the congregational singing, but to sing with the congregation, which sings on its own or under the leadership of the organ or other instruments.

Choir members, like all liturgical ministers, should exercise their ministry with evident faith and should participate in the entire liturgical celebration, recognizing that they are servants of the Liturgy and members of the gathered assembly.(STL)

The Church in the United States continues on its journey of liturgical renewal and spiritual growth. The words of St. Augustine remind us of our pilgrimage: "You should sing as wayfarers do- sing but continue your journey. Do not be lazy, but sing to make your journey more enjoyable. Sing, but keep going". (LMT)