

The Ministry of Music at St. Edward

And a vision for the role of Cantor

Music forms a necessary and integral part of the liturgy. The standards of musical performance in the liturgy are necessarily different from the standards of music schools and the concert hall. Music in the Liturgy takes a ministerial role in service to the Assembly in their participation in the liturgy. The music, which must be of the highest quality, cannot be performed for its own sake. The music assists the people in their communal prayer, and provides solemnity and significance to the ritual action. We seek to emphasize the performing “audience”.

Roles in Music Ministry

The principal role in music ministry is the role of the *assembly*. The song of the assembly is a sign of their unity of heart and mind in worship of God. Every other person taking a role of service to the assembly must first consider themselves as disciples, as bearers of the Word of God, prior to consideration of musical roles.

In service of the assembly’s musical prayer the primary role belongs to the *presider*¹. He serves the assembly by coordinating and supporting all the ministries. Even if he does not consider himself an adequate singer, his posture and participation in the communal song does more to encourage the community’s song than any other role. By facial expression and other gestures he invites the assembly to prayer and song.

At St. Edward, because of the priority we give to the Liturgy, we employ a full-time music Director. This person takes the Ancient role of *Cantor*. The term *Cantor* signifies music leadership, in whatever forms it takes. This is the person responsible for the assembly’s song, for the community’s musical prayer. He or she organizes the community’s repertoire, encourages the assembly, teaches new music, and embodies the community’s song in his or her presence and actions. In our parish this person serves principally as *organist*. In the Catholic Church the organ holds pride of place among other musical instruments². More than any other instrument, it has the capacity of filling the worship space with sound capable of leading the assembly in song.

Distinct from the role of cantor is the role of *psalmist*. This person is a trained singer responsible for the Responsorial Psalm, the Communion Psalm and other scripture texts sung in cooperation with the assembly. Principles guiding the ministry of Lector should be applicable here as well. The Psalmist needs to know and understand the text, and appreciate its place in the community’s prayer. The Word of God needs to be proclaimed in a clear and intelligible voice that is appropriate to the genre of the text. At St. Edward this person assists the assembly with the Responsorial Psalm, The Communion Psalm, The Verse at the Gospel Acclamation, and at the tropes for the Kyrie, the Fraction Rite and other litanies.

A *Choir* or Schola of singers heightens the beauty and solemnity of any liturgical event. They encourage and provide support to the assembly song, and they add their own part that enhances the community’s prayer.³ They embody the communal nature of this music bringing together in one voice a diversity of gifts in the assembly song.

Other Instrumentalists, Guitarists, percussionists, pianists, brass and wind instrumentalists also serve the assembly's song. They add to the beauty and solemnity of the liturgical action. On Solemnities and major Feasts, they heighten our awareness of the special day and add to the celebration in significant ways. For example, a guitar, by itself, is not capable of leading Sunday worship, even if amplified. It needs to be used in an *ensemble* with a variety of gifts that imitate the voices of the organ, including bass support, and soprano instrument. The Piano may accompany some types of music, but the desire to hear the entire assembly sing must remain paramount.

Worship and Music Performance

Along with the Universal Church, we are in a time of transition. This parish has operated on the "Performance Model" for so long, and as we move away from it, there is bound to be some discomfort⁴. That is only normal, and patience is needed by all as we feel our way through this.

In our recent past, both as a local Church and nationally, there has been a compartmentalizing of "types" of Masses based on style of music. The differential terms of "classical," "traditional," "contemporary", "folk", "adult" music, "children's" music, have not served communities well. In many instances this music entertained people, but they were not drawn into community, or involved in the faith life of the community. Enriched and somewhat entertained by one type or exclusive style of church music, they felt out of place and unfamiliar with the territory when invited to the Sacred Triduum which is the center of our community's liturgy. Children were entertained by simple and sometimes trite music, but they grew out of it and as they entered church as adults they found nothing there that they recognized or made them feel at home. In the Liturgy, musical decisions must always be accompanied by pastoral and liturgical concerns.

Our Church building was built in 1958. It was built for a musical liturgy for which one part of the assembly performed and another part of the assembly participated in silence. Now the Music ministers must be made part of the assembly and sing with it. This is difficult in our space, because placing a large number of singers downstairs is tantamount to placing them on stage and again placing the assembly in a passive mode. In the transitions the self-perception and feelings of the choir and psalmists need to be transformed. Though in their new roles they may feel separate and cut off from the assembly, they need to view their roles in service to the assembly. In the transition, the ministry of psalmist, their relationship with the assembly, the manner and style of their movement is extremely important.

The principles of good assembly singing do not require that a music minister be placed in front of, in place of, or perform on behalf of the assembly. Whatever it takes for the assembly, as assembly, to claim ownership of their music and to sing with generous hearts, that is what we shall do.

Music of the Assembly

Song Practice is not a part of the tradition of Christian worship and should be avoided whenever possible. Assembly song can be introduced gradually at less important times in the liturgy. Repetition is the greatest teacher. The greeting and introduction to the liturgy belongs to the role of the presider. If the introduction of the liturgy is delegated to another individual, it takes place after the Sign of the Cross and the greeting of the Liturgy.

The Gathering Song is always to be a song or hymn that the assembly knows. A Psalmist is not necessary to enable the assembly to sing. With a printed worship aid it is not necessary for the psalmist to invite the assembly to stand or to sing. The manner in which the Cantor/organist introduces the song will be enough to invite the assembly to stand and pray in song. Psalmist interventions at this point indicate that the assembly is not capable of singing as assembly, or that they do not know their role in the liturgy. Psalmist actions or words at this point can be perceived as intrusive, manipulative, or preachy.

Our Assembly knows three setting settings of the *Gloria*, in the verse/refrain and is learning a through composed Gloria. There is a need to learn a traditional Latin Gloria for use at multi-lingual masses.

The Psalm is to be proclaimed from the Ambo. The Psalmist is essential to this proclamation of the Word of God. The psalmist observes a significant silence after the first reading before beginning. This is where the Music teaches the assembly to know the Scriptures "by heart." There are more than 900 Psalm responses in the Lectionary. There is no way that any assembly can ever learn to pray all of them. The Cantor, consulting with the people, the liturgy commission and the musicians of the parish determines the repertoire of psalmody for the parish. If it is quality music, the settings of these ancient texts can be repeated over many years enabling the assembly to make these prayers their own. The Psalmody of the Liturgy supports the parish in our frequent celebrations of the Liturgy of Hours.

The Gospel Acclamation is begun when the presider rises for the Gospel. The Psalmist is needed for the scripture verse sung. The new Lectionary now has an appointed verse for each Sunday which is to be used.

Music for the Preparation of Gifts is the least important musical event in the liturgy. It is a time of transition from the Liturgy of the Word to the Liturgy of the Eucharist. At this point there can be congregational song, instrumental selections, vocal or choir selections. Important music should not be used here. Music that can accompany or serve the action is needed. The music is to continue through the washing of hands. After the action is complete, the musician proceeds immediately to the earliest cadence. The music used here is not to overshadow in solemnity the Gospel Acclamation or the Eucharistic acclamations that take greater precedence.

The Eucharistic Acclamations are among the most important musical prayers of the assembly. Optimally they are to be sung by heart. The Psalmist should not be needed for the acclamations unless they are new. The Assembly knows five sets of Eucharistic Acclamations.

- The Proulx Community Mass
- The Schubert Deutsche Mass is used for Lent
- The Missa Emmanuel is used for Advent

The "Our Father" the assembly knows is the chant version in English.

The Music for the Fraction rite is for the breaking of the Bread, It is a litany and is to continue until the presider is ready for the invitation to communion.

The Communion song is to be sung by the assembly. A short, memorable refrain as an antiphon to a psalm proclaimed by the psalmist is the best choice. Again repetition is the best teacher. The assembly should be able to sing the refrain by heart.

The practice of frequent mediation songs as a regular part of the liturgy is a practice not employed at St. Edward. The documents on the Liturgy did not seem to foresee this innovation. It is to be preferred to have the Psalm of Thanksgiving sung by all.

The closing song is not an important part of the Mass. It is used to bring the liturgy to a close and accompany the procession to Doors. Again this is a good place to teach new music to the assembly.

Postludes and Prelude are excellent tools used to set the tone of the season or feast and to prepare the assembly for worship.

The Microphone

The enemy of Assembly singing is the microphone. It is the principal tool of the performer. Its principle use in the liturgy for the Psalmist would be for the Responsorial Psalm, The Communion Psalm, The Verse at the Gospel Acclamation, and at the tropes for the Kyrie, the Fraction Rite and other litanies. The presider or Cantor/organist provides animation for other musical prayers.

From The Catechism

Singing and music

1156

"The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art. The main reason for this pre-eminence is that, as a combination of sacred music and words, it forms a necessary or integral part of solemn liturgy."²⁰ The composition and singing of inspired psalms, often accompanied by musical instruments, were already closely linked to the liturgical celebrations of the Old Covenant. The Church continues and develops this tradition: "Address . . . one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart." "He who sings prays twice."²¹

1157

Song and music fulfill their function as signs in a manner all the more significant when they are "more closely connected . . . with the liturgical action,"²² according to three principal criteria: beauty expressive of prayer, the unanimous participation of the assembly at the designated moments, and the solemn character of the celebration. In this way they participate in the purpose of the liturgical words and actions: the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful:²³

How I wept, deeply moved by your hymns, songs, and the voices that echoed through your Church! What emotion I experienced in them! Those sounds flowed into my ears, distilling the truth in my heart. A feeling of devotion surged within me, and tears streamed down my face—tears that did me good.²⁴

1158

The harmony of signs (song, music, words, and actions) is all the more expressive and fruitful when expressed in the *cultural richness* of the People of God who celebrate.²⁵ Hence "religious singing by the faithful is to be intelligently fostered so that in devotions and sacred exercises as well as in liturgical services," in conformity with the Church's norms, "the voices of the faithful may be heard." But "the texts intended to be sung must always be in conformity with Catholic doctrine. Indeed they should be drawn chiefly from the Sacred Scripture and from liturgical sources."²⁶

¹ See also Music in Catholic Worship(MCW), 21

² Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 120

³ see also MCW 36

⁴ "The function of music at liturgy, however, is to support the community prayer, not to entertain.

This is sometimes difficult for teens to understand." par 65, "From Age To Age" National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry