

Congregational Singing at the Cathedral of Saint Paul

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Sing to the Lord

As the Mother Church of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, the Cathedral of Saint Paul has the sacred duty of promoting the guidelines on liturgy and music published by the Committee on Divine Worship of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, a revision of *Music in Catholic Worship*, was developed by the Committee on Divine Worship. On November 14, 2007, the Latin Church members of the USCCB approved these guidelines. These guidelines are designed to provide direction to those preparing for the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy according to the current liturgical books (in the ordinary form of celebration). The following excerpts are taken directly from the document, which can be viewed in its entirety at <http://www.usccb.org/liturgy/SingToTheLord.pdf>

I. WHY WE SING

1. God has bestowed upon his people the gift of song. God dwells within each human person, in the place where music takes its source. Indeed, God, the giver of song, is present whenever his people sing his praises.²
2. A cry from deep within our being, music is a way for God to lead us to the realm of higher things.³ As St. Augustine says, “Singing is for the one who loves.”⁴ Music is therefore a sign of God’s love for us and of our love for him. In this sense, it is very personal. But unless music sounds, it is not music, and whenever it sounds, it is accessible to others. 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.

²“Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for the temple of God, which you are, is holy” (1 Cor 3:16-17).

³ See St. Augustine, Epis. 161, *De origine animae hominis*, 1, 2; PL XXXIII, 725, as quoted in Pope Pius XII, Encyclical *On Sacred Music (Musicae Sacrae Disciplina)* (MSD), no. 5, www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf_pxii_enc_25121955_musicaesacrae_en.html.

⁴ St. Augustine, *Sermo* 336, 1 (PL 1844-1855, 38, 1472).

5. Obedient to Christ and to the Church, we gather in liturgical assembly, week after week. As our predecessors did, we find ourselves “singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in [our] hearts to God.”¹³ This common, 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. Faith grows when it is well expressed in celebration. Good celebrations can foster and nourish faith. Poor celebrations may weaken it. Good music “make[s] the liturgical prayers of the Christian community more alive and fervent so that everyone can praise and beseech the Triune God more powerfully, more intently and more effectively.”¹⁴

¹³ Col 3:16; see *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM), no. 39 (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB], 2003). See Eph 5:19.

¹⁴ MSD, no. 31; see no. 33. passages come from the Flannery edition.

Participation

10. Holy Mother Church clearly affirms the role within worship of the entire liturgical assembly (bishop, priest, deacon, acolytes, ministers of the Word, music leaders, choir, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, and the congregation). Through grace, the liturgical assembly partakes in the life of the Blessed Trinity, which is itself a communion of love. In a perfect way, the Persons of the Trinity remain themselves even as they share all that they are. For our part, “we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another.”²¹ The Church urges all members of the liturgical assembly to receive this divine gift and to participate fully “depending on their orders [and] their role in the liturgical services.”²²

11. 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, for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit.”²³

12. 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.”²⁴ Even when listening to the various prayers and readings of the Liturgy or to the 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.”²⁵ “In a culture which neither favors nor fosters meditative quiet, the art of interior listening is learned only with difficulty. Here we see how the liturgy, though it must always be properly inculturated, must also be counter-cultural.”²⁶

²⁰ Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes Divinitus* (*Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity*) (AG), no. 5.

²¹ Rom 12:5-6

²² Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*) (SC), no. 26.

²³ SC, no. 14.

²⁴ Sacred Congregation for Rites, *Musicam Sacram* (*Instruction on Music in the Liturgy*) (MS), no. 15, in Flannery, *Vatican Council II*; see SC, no. 11.

²⁵ MS, no. 15.

²⁶ Pope John Paul II, (Address to Bishops of the Northwest Provinces of the USCCB), in *Ad Limina Addresses: The Addresses of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to the Bishops of the United States, February 1998–October 1998* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1998), no. 3.

13. Participation must also be external, so that internal participation can be expressed and reinforced by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes, and by the acclamations, responses, and singing.²⁷ 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.

²⁷ See SC, no. 30.

14. Our participation in the Liturgy is challenging. Sometimes, our voices do not correspond to the convictions of our hearts. At other times, we are distracted or preoccupied by the cares of the world. But 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.

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Singing in the Cathedral of Saint Paul by Marilyn Biery

Marilyn has been Associate Director of Music at the Cathedral since 1996.

There is no sound quite so inspiring as the glory of three thousand voices lifted in sacred song at the Cathedral of Saint Paul. Our building combines stunning architecture, inspirational artwork and thrilling acoustics, and the addition of a multitude of voices lifted in praise is a glorious tribute of praise and honor to our God. Many times during the year the Cathedral is filled with vibrant, joyous congregational singing during Archdiocesan and Cathedral Parish liturgies, confirmations, and other grand-scale events. Such singing is a dynamic and obvious way to “Sing to the Lord”.

However, any building of such grand and monumental size will present challenges to congregational singing, when the building is full as well as when the attendance is smaller. Such challenges at the Cathedral of Saint Paul include: organs which are not big enough for the building, organs which need restoration in order to maintain proper tuning, and organs which were not built at a time when the Church was vigorously promoting congregational singing. In addition, other challenges include the nine-second reverberation time, which causes delay between the organs and singers, and the practice of using the entire building for liturgies, causing the assembly to be spread widely through the nave, disseminating the sound of the congregational singing. None of these challenges are insurmountable, and indeed could be overcome with a dedication and commitment by all who attend liturgies at the Cathedral to “Sing to the Lord” with loud and cheerful voice. There are many ways to show enthusiasm and commitment to this form of prayer, such as carefully following the liturgy guide, making effective use of the Worship III hymnal for the congregational hymns as well as the service music, and lifting your voice in praise no matter what your level of musical training or vocal expertise, as we all strive to “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord.” (Psalm 100:1)

Some thoughts on the Roles of Cantors and Song Leaders by James Callahan

James Callahan is Professor Emeritus at the University of St. Thomas, where he taught in the Department of Music for 38 years. He has been a parishioner at the Cathedral since 1976.

It seems commonplace these days to have a leader of song, standing in front of a microphone, at every mass in which music is sung. Perhaps some thought might be given as to why this musical assistant and soloist is there at all.

To begin with, a distinction can be made between the roles of a song leader and that of a cantor.

The cantor is a kind of soloist who primarily has dialogues with the assembly. Given the musical nature of the liturgy today, with its use of Psalms and litanies, such a role seems an essential element in today's celebrations. This role has a long history and tradition.

On the other hand there is the song leader whose role was primarily defined in the years following Vatican II. Given the need for new religious and liturgical music in the vernacular, composers used a musical style that was borrowed from music in the popular culture of the time. This folk music style was frequently easy to learn and comfortable with the less formal approach that many thought was conducive to new ways of worshiping. From the musical point of view, this folk music style required a song leader because of the rhythmic complications of the melodic line, its slow harmonic rhythm, which, for various reasons, required the rhythmic activity of the strumming guitar or the accompanying activity of other instruments. Two examples from this vast repertoire are "O Taste and See" by Marty Haugen and "One Bread, One Body" by John Foley.

Traditional hymnody is another style of music sung at liturgies. Hymnody is characterized by a melody with simple rhythms, a regular and consistent harmonic rhythm, and traditional tonal harmonic language. Because of the faster harmonic rhythm and consequently a regular bass line, the leadership can easily be taken care of by a sustaining instrument such as the organ. This centuries old tradition of hymnody predates the invention of electricity and the rise of loudspeaker systems and it never depended upon a single individual who was a 'song leader.' Two examples of this style would be "Holy God we praise Thy Name," and the "Community Mass" by Richard Proulx.

Leadership of hymnody needs to come from one source. That source needs to be from a sustaining instrument such as the organ. If there is also a 'leader' singing on a loud-speaker system, this presents a second source of leadership sound. Because the organ, (and even the organist) and the song leader are seldom located near each other, it is

almost always difficult if not impossible to attack their sounds simultaneously. (A clear attack sound is one of the essential elements of leadership.) The problem for someone sitting in the pew is wondering if they should try to follow the singer or try to follow the organ. It can be very confusing and frustrating.

Even if that practical matter can be resolved, it seems that a hymn is a collective proclamation of those words, not a solo song. Or to put it another way; any song leader who is loud enough to predominate, who colors the sound in such a way that gives the primary impression of being a soloist, does not allow the assembly its proper, and collective role. Nor does it allow for the congregation to have its own authentic voice.

Another musical tradition in use is Gregorian Chant. While it developed as un-accompanied singing, mostly in monastic settings, artful accompanying of this music provides assistance when larger and less skilled groups perform it. Today, the assembly is required to use only a small portion of this vast repertoire. There are a number of beautiful hymns that have remained familiar. Two of these are “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” and “Adoro Te Devote.” Much of chant that is used is in a dialogue format between the priest and the congregation or the cantor and the congregation.

In addition there are many other styles, such as Hispanic religious music, which is closer to the folk-style mentioned above, the music of the Taizé Community, which in spirit if not technique is closer to Gregorian Chant, as well as other styles, each with their own leadership and performance requirements.

Cantors: Rethinking the Ministry of Cantor by Michael Silhavy

Excerpted from an article in the GIA Quarterly, Summer, 1999, by Michael Silhavy, a member of the Parish Services Team of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and former Director of Music for the Archdiocese.

As our congregations become more musically sophisticated and comfortable, hasn't it come time to rethink the role of cantor? I do not call for the total elimination of the role of cantor. There is a need for someone to sing litanies, psalmody, gospel acclamations, and other liturgical pieces of a dialogical nature; yet, I do contend that the musical sophistication of our congregations has brought us to an age where it may be time to diminish the role of the cantor in our liturgies. As we rethink the ministry of cantor, let us consider how the sophistication of our congregations merits a decreased presence of cantors both aurally and visually.

Aurally: Back Off the Mike

There is simply no need to have a cantor sing everything into the microphone. In fact, there is no need to have a cantor visible and gesturing for all musical moments in the liturgy. At times, a heightened aural presence of the cantor may seem appropriate; these situations would include the use of unfamiliar or brand new music, during unaccompanied singing, in buildings with too little or too much reverberation, or in situations where the instrumental accompaniment or leadership is inadequate.

In both essence and form, the liturgy is a dialog. In essence, God speaks to us, and we respond. In form, the liturgy is a series of dialogs. The presider greets us, and we respond. The deacon leads the penitential rite, we respond. The lector ends the reading, we respond. The psalmist sings the refrain, we respond. The cantor sings the gospel acclamation, we respond. The intercessions, the preface dialog, the Eucharistic prayer, the fraction rite, the dismissal are all dialogical. Cantors can assist in effectively conveying this dialogical essence and form of the liturgy. After intoning the psalm or gospel acclamation there should be no need to sing the response again with the congregation.

Visually: A Hands-Down Approach to Effective Cantoring

Lucien Deiss, in his *Visions of Music and Liturgy for a New Century*, includes the following principles for effective leadership of congregational song:

When a phrase suffices, don't
give a speech.
When a word suffices, don't
utter a phrase.
When a gesture suffices, don't
utter a word.
When a look suffices, don't
make a gesture.¹

Gesturing is necessary at times. Gesturing may be needed when the hymn singing is augmented with creative introductions and interludes. If gesturing is used, it should convey the tempo of the music and the emotion of the text. It should also allow the congregation to take a choral breath.

Robert Batastini frequently tells the story of a conversation he had with Brother Roger of the Taizé Community. Brother Roger said that liturgical music should be like John the Baptist: never calling attention to itself, but pointing the way to Christ. Cantors, too, need to be like John the Baptist, diminishing their role so that the role of the congregation may be increased. I am convinced that cantors who are willing to rethink their liturgical role will prepare the way for even more vigorous congregational singing.

¹ D. Julien, "Direction du chant d'assemblée," in *Eglise qui chante* 81 (1967) 15. Cited in L. Deiss, *Visions of Liturgy and Music for a New Century* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996) 50.