

**RECOVERING THE FULL
CELEBRATION OF THE LITURGY
LITURGICAL MUSIC**

The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value...as sacred song closely bound to the text, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy.

—Sacrosanctum Concilium, 112

Music is all around us in every aspect of our lives. It accompanies us in our cars and on our walks. It is playing overhead in stores, salons and even elevators. It has been around since the first person hummed a tune, perhaps trying to imitate the chirps and songs of birds.

Music is an integral part of the Church's worship. Unlike much of the music heard in daily life, liturgical music is live and it invites participants to sing. The use of live church music is a reminder of the importance of authenticity in the liturgy. No artificial flowers; no artificial symbols; and no prerecorded music! It is also key to the participation of the assembly in the liturgy.

Many parishes were forced to reduce the amount of singing or even eliminate it altogether during the height of the pandemic. Now that post-pandemic life is emerging, a moment of grace lies before us calling parishes to revitalize music; to return to fuller celebrations of the liturgy and fulfill the teaching of the church which requires that "Every care should be taken that singing by the ministers and the people not be absent in celebrations that occur on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation" (GIRM, 40).

Music in the liturgy fulfills many purposes. It often accompanies liturgical action like the opening song of Mass which is sung during the entrance procession or the Lamb of God which accompanies the breaking of the bread. Music itself can be a prayer as in the singing of the Gloria or the Holy, Holy, Holy. Liturgical music shapes the liturgy and the seasons of the church year. It can voice hope at a funeral and joy on Easter morning.

Music in liturgy is also key to participation. The assembly is united as one body when it sings together the hymns and acclamations of the Mass. Most of the vocalizing done by the assembly in a liturgy is singing. When the entire assembly sings along at Mass, it makes for a vibrant community of faith, which draws others into the church.

The US Bishops' document on music, *Sing to the Lord*, says that "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'" (STL, 5). It is time for parishes to restore vibrant music and robust singing to their liturgies. It is time to promote rich, full celebrations which increase the faith and participation of all who come to worship.