

LITURGY CORNER: *What Guides our Choices for Ritual Music? Part 3 of 3*

Last week we looked at some principles which guide a parish's choices with regard to music during Mass. Today, we'll look at one more principle which governs liturgical music:

Sometimes music accompanies the ritual action. For example, the song for Communion lasts as long as the procession lasts; it accompanies the rite. Sometimes music *is* the ritual action. For example, when we sing the Gloria, nothing else is happening; the Gloria *is* the rite.

The Entrance Song is a hybrid of rite and rite-accompanying; its purposes are fourfold: to open the celebration, to foster unity within the assembly, to announce the feast, and to accompany the ministerial procession.

There is never a time during Mass when music is a break in the action or an interruption. Because recorded music is everywhere in our world, this can be a tricky thing to understand. Recorded music is (1) usually passive and (2) often a thing to be purchased, a commodity.

But in Catholic ritual, music is neither passive, nor can it be obtained.

Ritual music can only be made.

By us.

During Mass, music requires our participation or the ritual doesn't happen. Imagine that when the time comes to share in the Body and Blood of Christ, no one receives. In that case, Communion didn't happen that day.

Similarly, if it's time for the First Reading, but the reader does not come forward, and we just skip to the Responsorial Psalm, then the First Reading was not proclaimed. By the same reasoning, if the assembly is to be singing, but the assembly is not singing, and only the cantor is singing instead of the assembly, then singing is not happening.

When music is the ritual action, as during the *Glory to God*, the *Responsorial Psalm*, the *Holy, Holy*, we must sing. (This is not to say that at other times singing is optional.)

But what about those of us who don't have good voices or who can't sing?

Even those people should sing. Your voice is not as bad as you think it is. And you can sing.

God gave you a voice to praise him.

Add your voice to the singing. No one in the assembly is asked to sing a solo or to sing something too difficult.

Just sing. If you sing a little bit, you will encourage the person next to you to sing a little bit. We all sing just a

little bit and our collective contributions add up to a mighty sound: God's people, united with one voice, singing God's praises.

The Parish Liturgy Board

Should you wish to see the previous article from last week's bulletin, please go the Liturgy Board page on the website or call the parish office for a copy.