



The Principles of Selecting Music for the Sunday Eucharist



Part II – Important Judgments

In the selection of music for liturgical celebrations, the musician will necessarily make certain judgments: musical, liturgical and pastoral.

• Musical Judgments

The musical judgment assesses the technical, aesthetic and expressive qualities of the music. The following questions ought to be asked regarding a piece of music being proposed for use in the liturgical celebration:

- Is there an identifiable musical structure and form?
- Do the melodies and harmony complement each other?
- Do the text and musical rhythm go together, or have they been forced?
- Are the phrases, intervals and harmonies sing-able?
- Is the music pleasing and engaging?
- Does the music have the capacity to transcend the simply aural, indeed, to be symbolic, moving the listeners and singers beyond the concrete to the abstract?
- Is the music able to express the text or the occasion for which it was composed?

Musicians need to consider the style of music which is best suited to the liturgical celebration, the particular assembly, and the instruments available.

• Liturgical Judgments

The liturgical judgment assesses the suitability of the music for the liturgical celebration. The following questions will assist the musician in making a liturgical judgment regarding music for celebrations:

- Will this piece of music enable the assembly to participate fully in singing its praise to God?
- Is the text theologically sound?
- Is this setting in accord with the text provided in the Roman Missal?
- Is this piece of music in keeping with the norms for liturgical music found in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal?
- Is the text consistent with the language of our contemporary liturgical books? For example, does the text use inclusive language in a manner consistent with our liturgical books?
- Is this music suited to the assembly, or to the choir only?

• Pastoral Judgments

The pastoral judgment assesses the suitability of a piece of music for this liturgical assembly and the occasion. The following questions will assist the musician in making a pastoral judgment regarding music for celebrations:

- Will this piece of music help this assembly to express its prayer?
- Are the music and text in accord with the mentality, tastes and cultural expressions of this assembly?
- Does the community know this piece of music?
- Will this piece be a valuable addition to the community's repertoire?
- Can this piece of music be used on more than one occasion during the Liturgical Year?
- Are the musicians and members of the community capable of performing this piece of music?

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