

## IS THERE A COMMISSIONING RITE FOR MUSICIANS?

A formal rite of commissioning is a way of acknowledging the centrality and importance of music in the liturgy. Chapter 62 of the *Book of Blessings* has an Order of Blessings for various ministers, including musicians.



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## THE MINISTRY OF LITURGICAL MUSIC QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



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OFFICE FOR PRAYER, WORSHIP, AND EVANGELIZATION

## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE MUSIC IN THE LITURGY?

Liturgical music is an art placed at the service of communal prayer. “Music should assist the assembled believers to express and share the gift of faith that is within them and to nourish and strengthen their interior commitment of faith. It should heighten the texts so that they speak more fully and more effectively. The quality of joy and enthusiasm which music adds to community worship cannot be gained in any other way. It imparts a sense of unity to the Assembly and sets the appropriate tone for a particular celebration.” (*Music in Catholic Worship*, #23.)



## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE LITURGICAL MUSICIAN?

The entire worshiping assembly exercises a ministry of music. Some members of the community, however, are recognized for the special gifts they exhibit in leading the musical praise and thanksgiving of Christian Assemblies. These are the pastoral musicians, whose ministry is especially cherished by the Church. (*Liturgical Music Today*, #56.)

## WHAT BASIC SKILLS ARE NEEDED FOR THE DIRECTOR OF MUSIC MINISTRY?

The musician must have the musical skills needed to sing or play or direct a choir as needed. The director must also have a comprehensive understanding of the various liturgical rites, especially the Mass and the liturgical year. The Scriptures, in particular the psalms, should have a central role in the musician's formation. Finally, the director should be able to make sound pastoral judgments, work well with a wide variety of people, and develop his or her own personal prayer life.

## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CHOIR AT MASS?

The choir remains at all times a part of the gathered assembly. It can serve that Assembly by leading it in sung prayer and by reinforcing or enhancing its singing. Occasionally, the choir may appropriately sing alone more elaborate music that can aid the prayerful reflection of the congregation. (*Introduction to the Order of Mass*, #18).

## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CANTOR?

The cantor's function is to lead and encourage the congregation in singing. Often the cantor has the special task of drawing all present into the proclamation of the word of God through the psalm. The cantor may also teach new music to the congregation. Cantors also serve as leaders of the musical prayer at funeral vigils and other sacramental rituals. Cantors need to be able to sing the text well with a pleasant voice.

## HOW DO INSTRUMENTALISTS SERVE THE ASSEMBLY?

The organ and other instruments not only support and encourage participation through song but also, in their own right, can powerfully assist contemplation and express praise and a variety of human feelings before God. (*Introduction to the Order of Mass* #18).

## WHAT BASIC RESOURCES SHOULD THOSE IN CHARGE OF MUSIC MINISTRY BE FAMILIAR WITH?

Familiarity with the *General Introduction to the Roman Missal*, with the *Introduction to the Lectionary* and with each of the ritual books for the sacraments is essential. Official universal documents to be studied include the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* and *Musicam Sacram (Sacred Music)*. The primary statements from the bishops of the United States are *Music in Catholic Worship* and *Liturgical Music Today*. Two other useful national statements (not official resources) include *The Milwaukee Symposia for Church Composers: A Ten-Year Report* and *The Snowbird Statement on Catholic Liturgical Music*.