

Some General Musings from a Liturgical Music Journal

Participation is one of the watchwords of good liturgy (Vat. II)

This does NOT mean Everyone 'bawling' everything all the time. Cantor and choir with the assembly bring variety and contrast: Cantors point up the importance and the significance of the text for our prayer.

"Involving" the people can often mean singing anything they know irrespective of whether it has anything to do with the liturgy of the moment; it is often a text which is not even relatively close to the liturgical text: sometimes it is just poor music and therefore unworthy of the rite.

Choice is sometimes based on what the publishing people are throwing at us just NON rather than what the season, texts, liturgical rites are asking of us.

New Text settings excite people. Old traditionals do not appeal to youth.

Both old and new must be explored and nurtured to maintain good health. Stay with the old -where feasible - and introduce new ones slowly and carefully with great sensitivity.

Check quality rather than accept something because it is "new".

Problems with the repertoire of sane youth/folk liturgies is their lack of ritual sense: they sing anything they like or anything they know - where repertoire is limited.

One gem from a letter:

"Palestrina and Bach will be around for a long time after this Mary Haugen is forgotten"!

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The Psalm in our Liturgy of the Word:

The Chants during the liturgy of the word were designed as a way for the people to "make God's Word their own". GIRM 33

The more important song is the psalm following the first reading.. . it is an integral part of the liturgy of the Word. Lect.Intr. 19

Responsorial psalm should be sung simply because it is a SONG - a Hebrew song. To recite/say a song can rarely express it adequately.

Hebrew word for Psalm TEHILLIM means "songs of praise";

Greek word for psalm PSALMOI means "songs to be sung to the psaltery". The singing of the psalm focuses on understanding the message of the words - as with any song. Therefore the music is the vehicle for the text and should not overwhelm it. cf Lect. Intr.20

To foster the assembly's singing of the psalm every means is to be employed - especially the relevant options - such as the use of the "Common Psalms" from the Lectionary.

The scriptural chants - including the psalm - as well as the readings themselves are not to be omitted, shortened, or worse still replaced with non biblical readings..... Lect. Intr. 12

Avoid metrical or 'hymn' settings - the form of the psalm is important contrast and variety apart from its poetic and artistic format.

Cantors proclaim the psalm from the lectern OR some other suitable place. GIRM 36

EACW 74 says that there should be a lectern for the liturgy of the Word and some kind of stand for commentators or song leaders: Cantors can often sing from the front of the choir if the choir position is towards the front of the assembly.

To sing is to Pray twice - remember the primary aim of the music minister is to Assist and encourage and ENHANCE the PRAYER OF THE ASSEMBLY.

Understanding Liturgy is not so much about getting it into your head, as grasping in with your heart. C.D. Smith