

## MUSIC AND THE MASS

Music occupies a unique position in a liturgical celebration. The use of music is not strictly required during Mass, and it is possible to celebrate the Mass with no music whatsoever. Despite this, music remains an integral part of the liturgy because it serves a purpose which can not be replaced or duplicated by any other means of human expression.

The role of music in liturgy has long been celebrated and encouraged by the Church. Since Biblical times, the Christian Church has used music in prayer and worship. More than words alone, music elevates the soul and directs the mind towards prayer. The emotion of the liturgical celebration and of individual liturgical actions, whether jubilant or meditative or sorrowful, is demonstrated and supported by music more effectively than by most other means of communication.

Music also fulfills a very practical role in a liturgical celebration. In almost every world religion, music is consistently the most efficient means of encouraging people to pray the same thing at the same time, reinforcing the most important truths of the religion by allowing the faithful to easily repeat the prayers at every celebration. As we see in the Mass, almost all of the moments when the assembly is meant to be participating in an external way are moments when music is typically used. Similarly, the participation of the assembly in the Mass is encouraged first through the use of music.

If music is the most important means of encouraging the participation of the assembly, then the most important musician at a liturgy is always the assembly. Because our society has almost no tradition of spontaneous group singing, we must have music ministers to lead and encourage the assembly in song, to plan the music for liturgical celebrations, and to ensure that the musical needs of the liturgy are met. Aside from a few specific occasions when the music ministers may provide music without the assembly's participation, therefore, liturgical music is meant to be congregational. Music draws us into the liturgy by enabling our prayers and supporting our participation.