

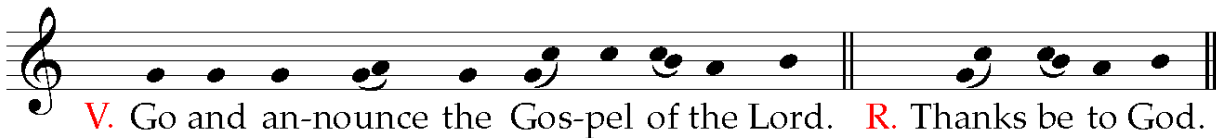
THEOLOGIA PRIMA

by Timothy Johnston, Director of the Office of Liturgy, Diocese of Salt Lake City

#29 SINGING IS FOR THE ONE WHO LOVES

I love to sing! Music has been part of the Church's story from the very beginning (e.g. Ex 15:20-21) and continues to be a vital part of our worship. So, why are so many people afraid to sing out in the Eucharistic assembly?

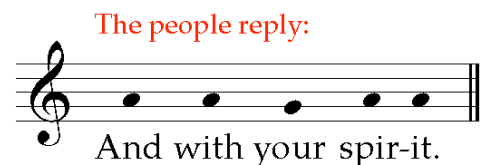
Examining my own experience, I ponder the various opportunities I have encountered, which helped break-open and deepen my relationship with Christ. Music, I think, is the first place I can actually recall encountering Christ. Music was important at home and certainly in the parish, where I eventually joined the choir and learned to be a music minister. In the midst of the singing assembly at St. Joachim, I learned what it meant to praise God no matter the circumstances. Today, when I encounter young or old alike who resist singing in the liturgical assembly, I often wonder why and I am often saddened by the responses I hear, because people have been made to feel that they do not have something to offer the assembly.



St. Augustine says, "Singing is for the one who loves,"

and when we gather at Eucharist, we gather as a people united in God's love to offer God praise and thanks. In a sense, the Eucharist is our love note to God and singing is one way we express our love for God (*Sing to the Lord* 2). Singing is a crucial way we engage and actively participate in the liturgical prayer. Music in the liturgical assembly is not the role of specialists, but of all the people – a sign of unity as the Body of Christ offers its prayers to the Father.

One hope the Bishops' conference has for the revised texts is that assemblies will sing more of the liturgy more often. The changes give us an opportunity to re-energize our sung prayer and to better prepare all our musicians in this very crucial ministry. The liturgy is meant to be sung, especially on Sundays and Solemnities (see *STL* 111). With the new translation, each parish will have to learn new Mass settings (e.g. music for the Gloria and Holy) so be prepared to work a little before Mass in the coming months. Some changes that won't be so obvious are the slight changes in the chant tones for the presidential prayers. Two changes that are strongly encouraged are the singing of the opening dialogue (i.e. The Lord be with you.) and the Gospel on major feasts.



I am sure you have seen people who stand blank-faced as the assembly sings the Gloria or Sanctus. We must think of ways to gently invite and encourage everyone to participate in the sung parts of the Mass. It will not be an easy task and will take some creative measures to form the entire assembly and catechize them on the importance of sung prayer. I believe I love to sing today because both of my parents sang and encouraged me to sing with them. Each of us in the assembly can be a role model.