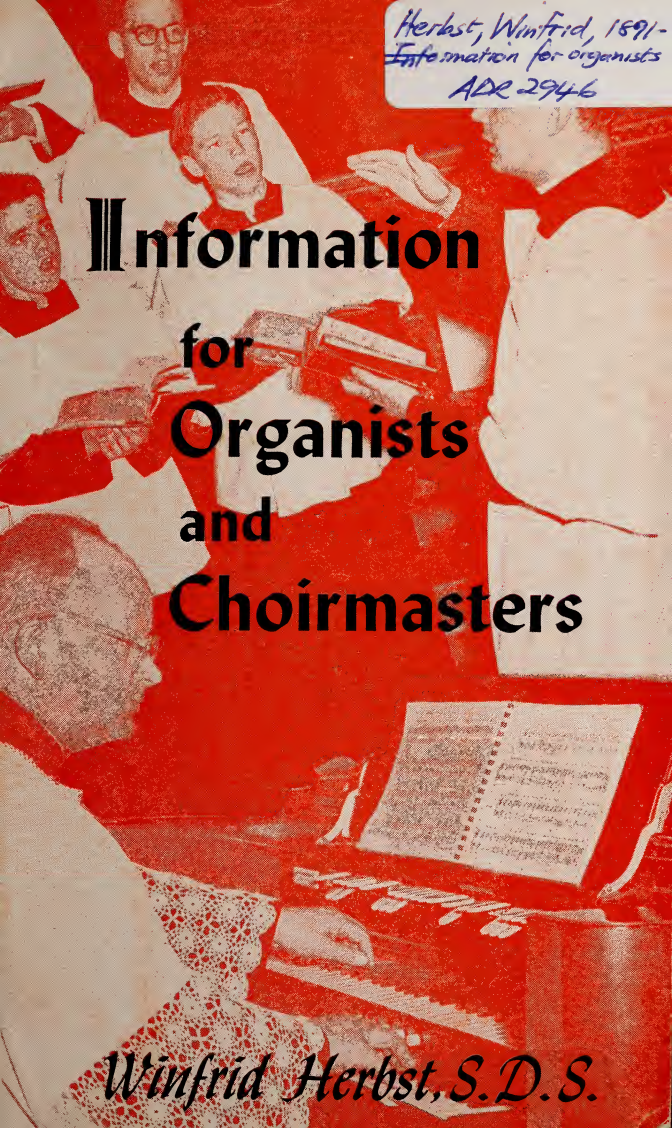


*Herbst, Winfrid, 1891-  
Information for organists  
ADR 2946*



**Information  
for  
Organists  
and  
Choirmasters**

*Winfrid Herbst, S. D. S.*



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**I**nformation  
for  
**O**rganists  
and  
**C**hoirmasters

*Winfried Herbst, S. D. S.*

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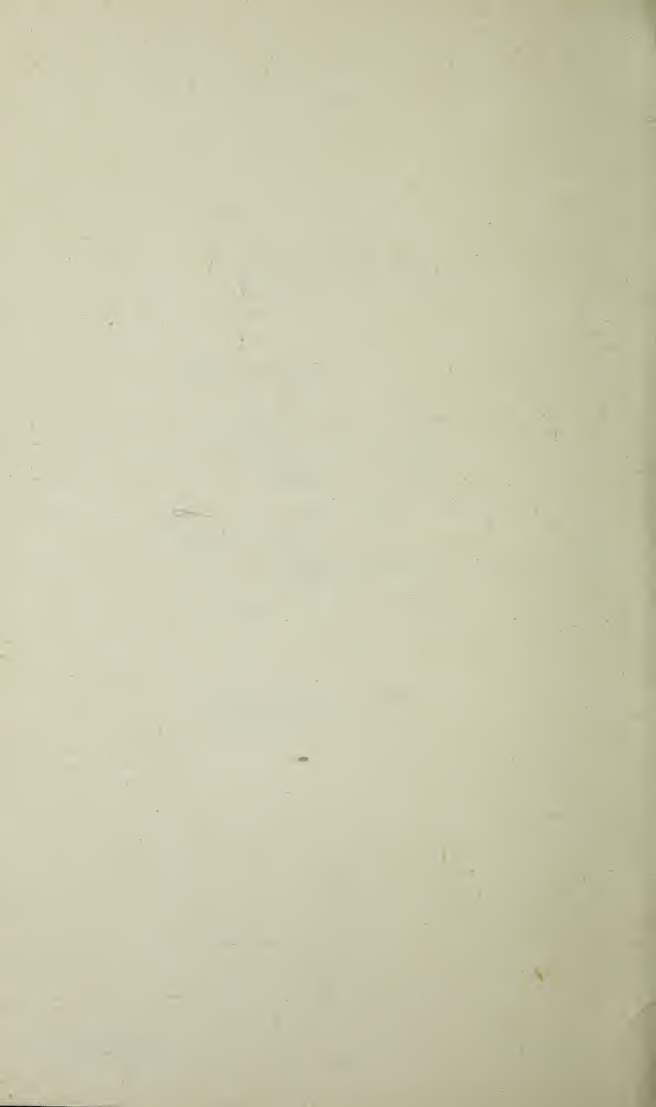
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1. Our pastor has announced that the number of members in our church choir is becoming smaller and smaller and urges parishioners to present themselves for membership. Could you give me some reasons why I should respond and join?

Let your response be a proof of your living faith.

Remember that singers at High Mass have a real liturgical office; they aid, and sometimes entirely replace, the clergy in the music of the Liturgy.

Remember that, though the first portion, the general fruit of the Mass, goes to all the members of the mystical body, the Church, living or dead, who are not unworthy, nevertheless, those who assist at Mass and those who cooperate in it in any fashion whatsoever are the most highly favored. Among such are the singers, who therefore enjoy a *special fruit* of the Mass, in proportion to their cooperation and their dispositions. Most theologians admit that this special fruit is not only impetratory and propitiatory, but also expiatory.

Remember that "music, one of God's choicest gifts to man, is as a second, and higher, faculty of speech, the tongue of man's spirit, a language of emotional self-expression phrased in rhythmic sound. In a way that all know but none can fully express, music speaks directly from soul to soul, and though its message often escapes words,

there is not a surer, truer communication of soul with soul than in the medium of the musical art. When this language of music is wedded to man's normal language, and words become an element of the music, we call it song."

Remember that "by common consent of mankind, song is the most exalted expression of emotion, one of the supreme expressions of fellowship."

Remember that "when song becomes an element of worship, as is most fitting and natural, **IT BECOMES PRAYER SET TO MUSIC, BECOMES HOMAGE PAID TO GOD**, through the exalted channel of purest rhythmic sound." (Cf. Ellard, *Christian Life and Worship*. Bruce.)

When you reflect that sacred music is *addressed to God* and not to man, is a high form of prayer, is worship and homage paid to God, you will appreciate the exalted honor offered to you by your pastor's earnest invitation to respond to his call for choir members.

**2. In some parishes the singing of the Propers of the Mass is entirely omitted. I was told that the Propers of the Mass must be sung at every High Mass. Is that true?**

The legislation of the Church regarding sacred music is true law and is *in itself* binding in conscience. After giving the precepts regarding sacred music in his famous *Motu Proprio* on that subject, Pope Pius X says distinctly: ". . . our present instruction, to which, as to a juridical code of sacred music, we will with the fullness of our Apostolic Authority, that the force of law



be given. . .” The Code of Canon Law, which came later, says simply: “The laws concerning sacred music shall be observed” (Canon 1264). Still later, at the close of his Constitution *Divini Cultus Sanctitatem*, in which Pope Pius XI reiterates and emphasizes the precepts concerning Church music, he says: “These things we command, declare and sanction . . . Let no man therefore infringe this Constitution . . . nor dare to contravene it.” And Pope Pius XII in his Encyclical *Mediator Dei* of Nov. 20, 1947, says (191): “As regards music, let the clear and guiding norms of the Apostolic See be scrupulously observed. . . .”

That part of the *Motu Proprio* of Pope Pius X with which we are here concerned is as follows: “As the texts that may be rendered in music, and the order in which they are to be rendered, are determined for every liturgical function, it is not lawful to confuse this order or to change the prescribed texts for others selected at will, or to omit them either entirely or even in part, unless when the rubrics allow that some versicles of the text be supplied with the organ, while these versicles are simply recited in the choir.” (Emphasis added.) This states in effect that the Propers (Introit, Gradual, Tract, Sequence, Offertory, and Communion) may not be omitted. They should at least be recited *recto tono*, that is in a singing tone such as the subdeacon uses in reciting the Epistle, an organ accompaniment being permitted to sustain the voice or voices for this recitation, except on Holy Thursday.

It does not seem to be a moral impossibility in

any parish. We are told that in the diocese of Pittsburgh there is not a single church in which the Propers are omitted at High Mass. And on Oct. 20, 1949, we received the following interesting and edifying information:

At Holy Trinity Church, School Hill, Wisconsin (one of the smallest parishes in the diocese of Green Bay), the Propers of the Mass have been rendered at every High Mass from 1906 on to the present time.

Since 1920 recitative chanting (*recto tono*) has been changed to two-voice or four-voice singing.

The Ordinary, Offertory motets, and Benediction hymns are sung in two, three or four-voice parts or in Gregorian chant.

For funerals the following are sung in Gregorian chant: *Subvenite*; entire Requiem Mass; *Libera*; *In Paradisum*; and the chants at the grave.

### 3. Referring now to Church music, when can one sin in singing?

Merkelbach, vol. 2, p. 759, speaking of divine praises, and quoting Billuart, says that in singing one can sin in various ways, "namely, if profane, vain, or obscene things are mixed together in the divine offices and such things are rendered either by voice or organ, which can be done in different ways:

"(1) If one intentionally inserts vain things as a part of the divine office, for instance, in place of the antiphon, etc.; and that action, in addition to its natural difformity, inasmuch as it is vain or provocative of evil, is besides . . . a mortal

sin . . . both because it is repugnant to the end of divine worship and because one who acts thusly is a falsifier in divine worship, inserting in the name of the Church as a part of such worship what the Church by no means wishes to be inserted.

“(2) When one wishes to give expression to the non-sacred, not indeed by inserting it as a part of the office but only for the sake of pleasure: and if those profane selections are honorable, it will be only a venial sin, because it seems to be but a slight injury to divine worship; but if not honorable, it will be a mortal sin . . . both by reason of scandal and of provocation to evil as well as because it is against religion on account of grave injury done to divine worship and the sacred place.

“(3) If one deliberately sets sacred words to worldly melody; and then it does not seem to be of itself a sin, for the sound of voice or organ is of its own nature indifferent as regards signifying the sacred and the profane, and therefore can be equally referred to both. But by chance it can nevertheless be a sin, namely, if that sound is of such a kind as may be judged provocative of evil; and it will be mortal or venial by reason of the evil to which it leads and of the scandal which it causes.”

#### **4. How about non-Catholics and Catholic church music?**

Non-Catholics may not chant the Office in choir, nor be employed as singers in liturgical

music, nor carry torches or lights in church ceremonies.

A non-Catholic organist may be used as a substitute or be employed temporarily, if it is impossible to secure one who is a Catholic and no scandal is caused.

For special reasons the Holy Office has allowed schismatic girls to sing with Catholic girls at Catholic church functions, especially at Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament (e. g., in convent chapels).

Remember that circumstances vary greatly in different localities and countries and that participation of non-Catholics in Catholic services may take many forms and rarely give scandal. Offense to non-Catholics should not be given needlessly. But we should never give the impression that one religion is as good as another.

### **5. Should or may the organist accompany the singing of the priest at the threefold singing of the alleluia on Holy Saturday?**

There is no law that the organ must be played in church at any time.

The organ may be played at any time during the year at Low Mass, Benediction, and all extraliturgical functions like the Way of the Cross, the Holy Hour, the Three Hours Service on Good Friday, unless, as in the Province of Rome, there are special regulations to the contrary. When the organ is played during Low Mass it is more fitting that the norms governing the playing of the organ at High Mass be followed. To repeat, the general legislation of the Church regarding

sacred music concerns itself only with liturgical services; it does not take into account such things as singing and playing at Low Mass or popular devotions; but it is fitting to observe on such occasions the directions given for liturgical services. When the organ is used it should not overpower but sustain the singing; music is only the humble handmaid of the liturgy.

The use of the organ at *liturgical* services is *forbidden*:

a) during Advent and Lent, at Mass and Vespers, except as accompaniment, when the office is "de tempore," except on "Gaudete" and "Laetare" Sundays and the Vigil of Christmas;

b) during Holy Week, except up to the intonation of the "Gloria" on Holy Thursday and during a part or the whole of it, if that is the custom, but not for the whole Mass, and except after the intonation of the "Gloria" on Holy Saturday;

c) when the celebrant sings the Preface and the "Pater Noster";

d) during Offices and Masses of the Dead, including the Absolution that often follows, except as accompaniment. The organ is silent when the singing ceases. (Cf. AA)

The answer to your question, then, is "No."

Perhaps it would suffice to say that at all other times the organ *may* but *need not* be played. However, it might help you to recall some of those times, as follows:

In liturgical services the organ *may be played*:

a) on all Sundays of the year, except the Sundays of Advent and Lent, not including "Gaudete" and "Laetare" Sundays;

b) on all feast days throughout the year, when the rubrics allow the celebration of a feast;

c) on all ferial days throughout the year, except those of Advent and Lent, not including the Vigil of Christmas; but it is more fitting not to play at Ember Day Masses in purple;

d) on the Ember Days of the Pentecost Octave;

e) to accompany and sustain the voices of the chant, at any time, except for the last three days of Holy Week, between the "Gloria" of Holy Thursday and that of Holy Saturday;

f) before High Mass and after High Mass and at moments during a function *when nothing is being sung*, but in such a way as not to delay the celebrant;

g) during the Elevation, in a subdued and grave manner, and during the distribution of Holy Communion;

h) during the blessing of the priest at the end of the Mass, but softly, so he can be heard, and during the last Gospel;

i) during the blessing given with the monstrance;

j) at the First Communion of children, even if it take place during Lent, and at devotions in honor of St. Joseph during the month of March;

k) at Vespers on Sundays, feastdays, and other days, when not forbidden as above;

l) when the bishop enters the church for an ecclesiastical function or when he leaves after it is over;

m) whenever there is a special solemnity with joy for some grave and public cause of the Church;



- 
- n) before and after the Asperges;
  - o) in answering the orations, "Dominus vobiscum," etc., "Ite, missa est." (Cf. AA)

## 6. I like music and singing in Church services. Is there any imperfection in that?

When we hear those airs, in which the words of God breathe life, sung with sweet and measured voice, we do indeed find a certain satisfaction in them. When we receive them into ourselves along with the truths which give them life, we give such airs a place of no small honor in our hearts; and it may be that at times we give them greater honor than is their due, as, for instance, when we feel that by those holy words our mind is kindled more religiously and fervently to a flame of piety because we hear them sung than if they were not sung, when the varying emotions of our spirit are made more alive by them because of some secret affinity of soul and voice and song but in a rather inordinate way, inasmuch as these airs, having been admitted to aid reason or our reasonable devotion, strive to run ahead and take the lead. Thus what should be a help may become the principal thing and the pleasures of the ear in this matter become an imperfection.

But this is perhaps over-severity. When we reflect on the tears that are shed by such as have been moved by the songs of the Church; and when we consider how many are moved not by the singing but by the things that are sung—when they are sung with a clear voice and proper modulation—we recognize the usefulness of

Church music. Not many, we would be inclined to say, are of such strong and sturdy mental caliber that they are not more aroused to a feeling of devotion by Church music than by the bare and unsung words of the liturgy. (Cf. *Confessions of St. Augustine*, Book X.) That is why the Church has cultivated that kind of music which springs from the sacred text itself and assumes the form of the spoken word, the melody being a musical illumination of the sacred words and the movement identical with that of ideal text delivery. This form of ritual music is the closest possible union between speech and song.

In the *Motu Proprio* of Pius X, Nov. 22, 1903, we read: "The chief duty of Church music is to clothe the liturgical text which is presented to the understanding of the faithful, with suitable melody. Its object is to make that text more efficacious, so that the faithful through this means may be more roused to devotion, and better disposed to gather to themselves the fruits of grace which come from the celebration of the sacred mysteries."

Pope Pius XI in his Apostolic Constitution on the sanctity of divine worship says that "the faithful come to church in order to derive piety from its chief source, by taking an active part in the venerated mysteries and the public solemn prayers of the Church." And again: "The people's liturgical and musical formation are wedded to Christian doctrine; let the entire clergy, both secular and regular, sweat over the task in seeing that this formation is provided."



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## 7. What should the playing and singing be like at Holy Mass?

It should be austere, reverent, and prayerful, as is evident when we consider that the Mass is the sacramental replica of Calvary, the memorial of Christ's death, the great Sacrifice of the New Law, offered also in atonement for the sins of men. So Church music must never be pleasurable diversion that turns people away from the real purpose of Holy Mass. It must not have in it anything of sensuous charm that beguiles the faithful into purely sentimental devotion, which is only a refined manner of self-seeking. It must not be of such a kind that they seem outwardly to attend Mass but inwardly are far from the spirit of prayer, self-oblation, and union with Christ. The music in church should rather be of such a religious character that it *fosters* the spirit of prayer, self-oblation, and union with Christ. In a word, any music, however beautiful in itself, which by reason of its character, or by its independence of form, attracts to itself the attention due to God, cannot be held as the ideal Church music. The ideal Church music is rather the kind that raises the mind and heart to God in such a way that one almost forgets the music that is doing the good work and thinks only of God. Any music that is not a help to prayer should be banished from church. How sad if one who goes to services is obliged to say: "Oh, I simply cannot pray; that spectacular, operatic, sentimental, bold, arrogant, conceited music spoils all my prayers." (Cf. Huegle, *The Spotlight on Church Music*.)

## 8. What kind of hymns should be sung at Low Mass?

There is no music prescribed for Low Masses, so one must choose what is fitting for this service. It is proper to sing hymns from an approved hymnal, in Latin as well as in the vernacular. One may sing hymns of the Blessed Sacrament, of the Sacred Heart, of the liturgical season, i.e., Advent, Christmas, Lent, etc. Some hymnals contain special hymns assigned to the principal parts of Holy Mass; and there are some who consider such grouped hymns as responding most accurately to the liturgical spirit. Indeed, certain church musicians sometimes go so far as to say that if anything at all is sung at Low Mass it should be group hymns, each one of which corresponds to that part of the Mass at which it is sung. But it seems that the advocates of such singing overlook certain disadvantages connected with the use of such hymn groups. The first disadvantage is monotony; the second is estrangement from the liturgical seasons. It has, accordingly, seemed preferable in many circles to select hymns in keeping with the different liturgical seasons and feastdays. So there is considerable freedom in the selection of hymns. We think that the most important point to bear in mind in this connection is that the hymns sung have the qualities of simplicity, freshness, reality of feeling, a consistent elevation of tone, and a rhythm easy and harmonious. With the liturgical revival has come also a better understanding of hymnology. Catholics are beginning to realize that hymns should not differ from the spirit of

the sacred chant; both have been admitted into the sanctuary of the liturgy, we may say, and both must bear the stamp of austerity and sanctity. Mere grandeur and pathos will not satisfy the demands of sacred liturgy.

It is to be noted that, in addition to any possible diocesan regulations regarding singing at Low Mass, it is forbidden to sing in the vernacular parts of the Proper or of the Ordinary of the Mass. It is permissible, however, to sing any of these strictly liturgical parts in Latin. If the *Gloria* is sung the intonation is added by the choir. But remember that there are certain things which may be permitted and which just as well may be forbidden. In many things it lies with the Bishop to permit or to forbid certain practices. (Cf. *op. cit.*)

### **9. When may the organ be played during High Mass?**

We merely give a general answer to this question.

1. During High Mass the organ may not be played to accompany the singing of the priest at the altar.

2. The responses at High Mass are sung either with or without accompaniment, as indeed the whole Mass may be sung without accompaniment.

3. During High Mass in Advent and Lent, as well as on Vigils and Ember Days, and also at Requiem High Masses, the organ is silent when the singing is done, without the customary pre-

ludes, interludes, and postludes, to bring home to the faithful that we are in a season of penance or at an occasion of mourning.

4. During Mass on the Ember Days which occur during Pentecost Week, however, the organ is played in a festive manner, because those are festive Masses with *Gloria* and *Credo*.

5. During the Rogation Masses preludes and postludes, in keeping with the purple color and the spirit of the liturgy, are permitted.

6. Otherwise the organ may generally be played. (Cf. *op. cit.*)

#### **10. What, in addition to the Propers and the Ordinary of the Mass, may be sung during High Mass?**

1. After the Offertory as well as after the *Benedictus* some appropriate hymn in Latin may be sung, provided that nothing prescribed by the Liturgy is on that account omitted. General Decree 3827 (May 22, 1894) states that between the *Benedictus* and *Pater Noster* something may be sung, provided that all the prescribed portions of the Liturgy be sung, that the celebrant be not kept waiting, and that what is sung refers to the Blessed Sacrament. Nothing is said in this Decree about the nature of what may be sung after the Offertory. It would manifestly be more appropriate if what is then sung be in the spirit of the Offertory of the day.

2. Solos that breathe the liturgical spirit are not forbidden; what the Church has always condemned is the profane, operatic, worldly spirit of

solos. Everything that is not holy, beautiful, universal, reverential, and edifying must be kept out of Church music; but in some dioceses solos of all kinds are expressly forbidden. What those solos should be can be deduced from the following official declaration: "Solo singing should never predominate to such an extent as to have the greater part of the liturgical chant executed in that manner; the solo phrase should have the character or hint of a melodic projection and be strictly bound up with the rest of the choral composition." (*Motu Proprio* of Pius X, sec. 5, par. 12.) Evidently reference is here made to polyphonic singing of a group and to a solo within a composition; for the singing of Gregorian Chant by one cantor is not considered solo singing.

3. It is not forbidden by any decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites to sing one or two stanzas of the *Veni Creator* before the sermon; for since the sermon is a legitimate interruption of the Mass and the *Veni Creator* is simply a short preparation for the sermon itself, it is not an unlawful addition to the liturgical text of the Mass. But it may be forbidden by diocesan regulations.

4. There is no rule forbidding the singing of a Latin motet or hymn while Communion is being distributed to the faithful. It seems that to our forefathers the Eucharistic Banquet without music and singing was inconceivable. They used to sing psalms and hymns; and the Church will never forbid this practice at the time when God's chosen children come forward to receive the Bread of Angels.

It is to be noted that it is absolutely forbidden to sing in any language other than Latin during High Mass, in all churches of the Latin Rite. This prohibition includes the Midnight High Mass on Christmas Day and High Masses during Christmastide also. However, hymns may be sung in the vernacular before or after High Mass. (Cf. *op. cit.*)

11. I am the organist in our church and I would like to know the regulations regarding the singing and playing at a Sung Mass and at Benediction.

There are many abuses in this matter, in disregard of the *Motu Proprio* of Pius X, published at the Vatican on Nov. 22, 1903, and confirmed by Pius XI on Dec. 20, 1928. Pius X says, among other things: "We speak of abuses in the matter of singing and of sacred music; for there certainly is a constant tendency in sacred music to neglect the right principles of an art used in the service of the Liturgy, principles expressed very clearly in the laws of the Church, in the decrees of the general and provincial councils, and in the repeated commands of the sacred congregations and of the Supreme Pontiffs, Our predecessors."

But we pass on to a concise answer to your query. The following summary of specific regulations for the Sung (or High) Mass and for Benediction has been compiled chiefly from the *Motu Proprio* of Pius X, the Apostolic Constitution of Pius XI, the decrees of the Sacred Con-



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gregation of Rites, and the Roman Missal and Ritual.

A. The Sung Mass (*Missa Cantata*) and High Mass (*Missa Solemnis*).

1. It is forbidden for the choir to omit any of the Ordinary or Proper; these parts must be sung (or at least distinctly recited) when directed by the rubrics, and each in its entirety.

2. When the rubrics prescribe a Sequence, it must be sung (or at least distinctly recited) in its entirety by the choir.

3. The *Gloria* and *Credo* should be relatively short and must be rendered in their entirety. Neither may be omitted when the rubrics prescribe that they be sung.

4. After the Proper Offertory has been sung a supplementary hymn or motet, not too long, may be sung, but in Latin only.

5. In solemn liturgical functions, compositions in the vernacular are not to be tolerated. The language of the Roman Church is Latin. This prohibition extends to the use of the vernacular during a Sung (or High) Mass. The vernacular may be used during Low Masses.

6. The custom of singing, in Latin, only the responses at a Sung (or High) Mass, while during the rest of the time vernacular hymns are sung, is forbidden. The singers must sing (or at least distinctly recite) all that is in the Roman Gradual.

7. The custom of singing an aria in the vernacular language during a Sung (or High) Mass is an abuse and is to be eliminated.

8. It is not permitted to sing hymns in the vernacular alternately with liturgical hymns at a High Mass when the distribution of Holy Com-

munion lasts a long time. But hymns in the vernacular are permitted during the distribution of Communion in Low Masses.

9. Organ accompaniment to the Preface and *Pater Noster* is expressly forbidden. There is to be no singing during the Elevation.

10. The responses of the Sung (or High) Mass have their proper notation and rhythm in Gregorian Chant, and the *traditional* manner in which they are sung is without accompaniment.

11. The responses *Deo Gratias* after the Epistle, and *Laus tibi, Christe* after the Gospel, are not sung by the choir.

12. Once the celebrant intones the *Asperges* (or *Vidi Aquam*) on Sundays, or the Gloria, or Credo, that intonation is in nowise to be repeated by the choir.

13. There is no regulation forbidding the singing of vernacular hymns before or after a High Mass except in the instance of a funeral, wherein the *Subvenite* is the prescribed processional, and *In Paradisum* is the prescribed recessional.

We have said a number of times above, "or at least distinctly recite." As regards this we quote from Father O'Connell's excellent work, *The Celebration of Mass*, vol. 3 (Bruce): "When possible the texts of High Mass should be sung in full, even such long parts as the Gradual or Sequence. If, however, it happens that singers cannot be provided, or that they are not sufficiently capable, the organist is allowed not only to supply alternate verses of the *Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus*, and *Agnus Dei*, but also to supply one or more of the texts of the Proper. In such cases, while the organ plays the melody of the text in



question or another melody, the words of the entire text must be recited in an intelligible voice (or better still, sung) by one of the choir. It is never permitted to omit completely in High Mass any of the texts that should normally be sung—*each must at least be recited*. This method of supplying a text—alternately with the singers or completely—is neither prescribed nor recommended. It is merely allowed when it is customary or because of the lack of trained singers.” On the occasions when the use of the organ is not permitted, it may, if necessary, be played to accompany the singing and sustain the voices, but it must cease to play the moment the singing (or chanting) ceases. But one may not play the organ even to accompany the singing from immediately after the *Gloria* on Maundy Thursday until the beginning of the *Gloria* on Holy Saturday.

We know, too, that one of the plain-song melodies that the Sacred Ministers may sing, and unaccompanied, as given in the Missal, is the *simple ferial tone*, in which the prayer is chanted from beginning to end on the same note (*recto tono*); there is no inflection, but at the colon, at the semicolon, and at the end of both the prayer and the conclusion, the note is prolonged a little and softened. It would seem, then, that if the parts mentioned above are chanted in this way they are not only recited but even sung.

## B. Exposition and Benediction.

1. Immediately before the actual blessing the *Tantum ergo* with versicle, response and oration are to be sung—in that order, with nothing intervening. (Benediction is included among the

liturgical services because the part that begins with the *Tantum ergo* and ends with the prayer is found in the Ceremonial of Bishops.)

2. During the actual blessing there is to be no singing.

3. Immediately before the *Tantum ergo* no particular hymn is prescribed to be sung, although it is customary to sing something which has reference to the Blessed Sacrament. It is recommended that such hymns be in Latin, though there is no specific law forbidding the use of the vernacular as regards the hymn *before* the *Tantum ergo*.

4. At the conclusion of Benediction no particular hymn is prescribed, nor is there any general law requiring that a hymn sung at this time be in Latin. (The use of *Adoremus in aeternum*—*Laudate* is recommended.)

5. To delay the reposition of the Blessed Sacrament for the insertion of a hymn after the Divine Praises is an unwarranted innovation. The final hymn should be begun after the Blessed Sacrament has been reposed in the tabernacle.

6. During Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament (that is during the time the Blessed Sacrament is publicly exposed and during which a liturgical service is not actually in progress; for example, during the Holy Hour or the Forty Hours' Adoration) the choir is permitted to sing hymns in the vernacular, provided there be no question of the *Te Deum* or any other liturgical prayers which may not be sung at that time except in Latin. (S.R.C. 3537-3.)

7. The Divine Praises may be sung, though usually recited. Then wait with singing till the Blessed Sacrament has been reposed.

8. In a solemn Eucharistic procession it is not allowed to sing anything in the vernacular alternately with the liturgical hymns.

Remember, by the way, that the highest position of distinction in sacred music has been assigned to Gregorian Chant—the only official music of the Church. Next, in order of preference, comes Classic Polyphony, especially of the Roman school as exemplified in the compositions of Palestrina and similar composers. Finally there is the modern style of composition, in the use of which, for sacred church music, great care must be exercised, since it involves a tendency to make the Liturgy appear secondary to the music. (*Liturgy* means the official worship of the Church in contradistinction to *Rubrics*, which comprise the directions for properly conducting that worship.)

Remember, too, that secular music has no place in church, that sacred music is not to be fashioned after secular music, and that setting religious words to secular music does not constitute sacred or liturgical music.

In the Regulations of the Cardinal-Vicar for Rome, No. 23, it is stated: "In accompanying, organists should take particular pains not to drown the voices by a too florid use of the stops, and especially to avoid the abuse of the reed stops. This rule should be specially observed in accompanying Gregorian plain-chant, and it should also be kept in the case of other approved musical compositions which may be rendered during the service."

12. Since I am an organist and have charge of directing choirs, I would like to know if it is correct to play "Mendelssohn's Wedding March" or the "Bridal Chorus from Lohengrin" for weddings in the church. If these are incorrect, what music would you suggest for processional and recessional wedding marches?

Children of Holy Mother Church should think with the Church. Hence, in every discussion that concerns the Church it is most important to recall what the Church, the Holy See, has to say about the subject. This principle is valid also with regard to Church music, or music played or sung in church and on the occasion of church functions.

In the famous *Motu Proprio* on the reform of Church music, issued by Pope Pius X in 1903, we read, among other things: "We speak of abuses in the matter of singing and of sacred music, for there is certainly a constant tendency . . . to neglect the right principles of an art used in the service of the Liturgy. . . . Consequently We think it Our duty . . . to lift Our voice in order to reprove and condemn everything in the music of divine worship that does not agree with the right principles so often laid down. Therefore, We publish this instruction . . . and We desire with all the authority of Our Apostolic Office that it have the force of law as a canonical code of sacred music, and We impose upon all by Our own signature the duty of most exact obedience to it." Twenty-five years later, in 1928, Pope Pius XI issued an Apostolic Constitution in

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which he confirmed the law laid down by his predecessor.

Now, the question of what to play at church weddings has time and again proved to be a vexing one for those organists who seriously and honestly wish to comply with the desires (or, rather, observe the laws) of the Holy See in these matters. The frequent demands of the people for the above-mentioned compositions of Mendelssohn or Wagner at the wedding amounts to nothing less than a demand for secular music at a function of the sacred liturgy. What has the Holy See to say about this? We again quote from Pius X: "Sacred music, being a complementary part of the solemn liturgy, participates in the general scope of the liturgy, which is the glory of God and the sanctification of men; it must be holy and, therefore, exclude everything secular not only in itself, but in the manner in which it is presented by those who execute it." Obviously, then, music, or songs, which are secular, or have been borrowed from theatrical or operatic sources, are certainly not approved by the Holy See.

To illustrate, let us consider:

1. Mendelssohn's Wedding March. It is incidental music made for Shakespeare's comedy "A Midsummer Night's Dream." It is the march which the orchestra strikes up just before the fifth act and which leads onto the stage the four lovers whose mistaken-identity adventures form the theme of this comedy. There is no wedding here, at all!

2. The Bridal Chorus from Lohengrin by Wagner. This is taken from his opera Lohengrin.

The scene is a bridal chamber. The ladies enter conducting Elsa, while the king and the men escort Lohengrin. To the well known melody the chorus sings: "Friends at your side, bridegroom and bride; enter the chamber, where love waits to bless." The pair embrace; then they are relieved of their heavy upper garments. The two groups re-form and walk out in procession. There is no wedding here either.

It is quite evident, then, that both these pieces of theater music accompany scenes that are in no way connected with any kind of a religious ceremony, much less with the Catholic ceremonies that form a part of the administration of the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Music in church must breathe the spirit of prayer, "the quality of the liturgy itself," and in the case of vocal music it must be song-prayer, because the church is the House of God and not a concert hall or an opera house or a place of entertainment; the church is the dwelling place of the living God, where people congregate in order to pray and to worship Him.

Now, having briefly and, we hope, satisfactorily answered your question concerning the wedding marches mentioned and having quoted norms laid down as preceptive laws by the authority of the Church, let us consider what may be played and sung on the occasion of a church wedding. For processionals and recessionals the organist may choose any prelude or postlude of appropriate length and solemnity which has been written for use in church, even a piece without a specific name or title, as, for example, one of



the magnificent fugues by Bach—if the organist is capable and has the proper instrument at his disposal. A name or title manifestly does not change the character of a piece which is otherwise not fit to be played in church. We recommend specifically the following collections:

*Wedding Music.* Two volumes. For organ (or reed organ), arranged by the Rev. Carlo Rossini. Fischer & Bro. The first volume contains also appropriate hymns and motets for various voice combinations.

*The Liturgical Organist.* Four volumes, arranged by the same Father Rossini for organ or reed organ. This work contains a great number of suitable pieces of various lengths. Fischer & Bro.

*The Parish Organ Book.* Volume One, arranged by Philip G. Kreckel. Fischer and Bro.

For your further information we also recommend the periodicals *Caecilia* and *The Catholic Choirmaster*. We likewise refer you to the White List of Approved Church Music, published by the Society of St. Gregory, which also contains a black list of unsuitable music.

13. I would like to know whether there is any objection to using the beautiful hymn "Rock of Ages" in a Catholic church. And then there are other hymns, like "Nearer, My God, to Thee," which I like very much and which seem to be very devotional. If such hymns may not be sung in a Catholic church at Catholic services, may a Catholic sing them together with

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others at civic gatherings, or at the meetings of nonsectarian fraternal organizations?

The hymns that you mention and various others like them may indeed be religious and beautiful, both from the musical and poetic standpoint. But because they are lacking in Catholic sentiment and style they should not be used in Catholic worship. Only Catholic hymns should be used in a Catholic church; and even a Catholic hymn must be churchly in all that the term implies. Here we might keep in mind what Dreves beautifully writes: "Works of art that are destined to come into the most immediate neighborhood of the sanctuary; hymns that are to be sung during the Eucharistic Sacrifice, must be not only thoroughly sacred, but so worthy and dignified, too, that they fit the dignity and sublimity of the sacred function, resembling and harmonizing with what is strictly liturgical." In this connection we might add that "Lead, Kindly Light" is not an acceptable Catholic hymn. True, this poem is loved by everyone, and it also has many musical settings of real merit; but, though most beautiful in sentiment and exquisite in poetic form, it cannot be classified among Catholic hymns. Cardinal Newman composed this poem before he became a Catholic; and he tells us himself that his subject matter had no reference to his conversion and entrance into the Catholic Church.

There is no objection, however, to joining in singing such hymns when they are sung by groups on civic occasion or at the meetings of fraternal organizations, provided they are not



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sung at what could be called non-Catholic services and provided that there is nothing in the text of the hymns contrary to Catholic faith and morals.

**14. What schools are available for choir directors, organists, and for both?**

We mention the following four, which are considered among the best such schools;

The Pius X School of Liturgical Music, Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart, New York, N. Y. (During the year and summer sessions.)

Department of Liturgical Music, Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C. (During the year and summer sessions.)

The Gregorian Institute of America, 2132 Jefferson Avenue, Toledo 2, Ohio. (A yearly home-study course supplemented by summer sessions in various Benedictine abbeys and other schools during the summer.)

The University of Montreal, Department of Liturgical Music, Montreal, Canada. (Canadian school during the year—no summer sessions.)

**15. Is it true that in the mind of the Church the mixed church choir of men and women does not exist, having neither historical background nor liturgical significance or purpose?**

Yes; that is true. And the same holds good for mixed choirs of boys and girls. The tradi-

tional *schola cantorum* excludes women and girls from the choir; and permission to the contrary has never been unreservedly granted in the United States. Women and girls may sing the *Kyriale* parts in the congregation but the male choir alone is permitted in the sanctuary or loft. Concisely stated, women are forbidden to sing during the liturgical services except as members of the congregation. And congregational singing is highly recommended. The singing of children, boys and girls, at High Masses and other ecclesiastical functions is most edifying and devotional; but the children then sing in a body and their singing must be styled congregational.

#### **16. How about the choirs of nuns, then?**

Canon 1264 of Church law states: "Religious women, in as far as they are allowed by their constitutions or the liturgical laws and the permission of the local Ordinary to sing in their own church or public oratory, shall sing from a place where they cannot be seen by the people." Choirs composed of nuns and/or their pupils singing in their own convents are therefore permitted; but they are not church choirs in the liturgical sense. It is recommended that they give preference to Gregorian chant, which should, if possible, or as far as possible, be rendered by the entire community.

**17. May nuns act as organists for choirs composed of nuns or of girls or women singing in their own convents?**

Yes. But if you further ask whether a Sister may act as organist for a mixed choir of men and women or for a choir of girls or women only, outside of the convent, the answer must be that in the mind of the Church the mixed choir of men and women does not exist and that women are forbidden to sing during liturgical services except as members of the congregation, in congregational singing, with the exception mentioned above for religious women and their pupils in their own convents. A Sister alone at the organ and presumably out of sight, could doubtless play for all-congregational singing, or for the congregational singing of the boys and girls down in the church.

**18. Where can I get a complete list of Catholic church music publishers?**

Information of this kind can be obtained from *The Caecilia*, 45 Franklin Street, Boston 10, Mass. This Catholic Review of Musical Art is issued bimonthly and organists and choir directors would do well to subscribe to it—and to present to it their problems also.

Another magazine that you may want is *The Catholic Choirmaster*, a quarterly, published by the Society of St. Gregory of America, 119 West 40th Street, New York 18, New York. For information in that particular field, for instance as regards white lists, black lists, etc., you may turn to that source.

19. You say that there should be nothing theatrical or worldly in church music. As regards playing the organ, what organ stops might be theatrical or worldly?

It is definitely out of place to use the *vox humana*, *vox celeste*, or *tremolo* for any accompaniment. Any good organist will realize this since it gives an uncertain tone to the choir and is thoroughly in bad taste. For preludes, interludes, and postludes, these stops should be used sparingly and in accordance with the artistic interpretation of the organist. A well-trained organist will realize this, especially if his instrument is electronic, in which case the above stops give an overemphasized emotional tint to the music. Only austere and grave music is worthy of the temple of God. For the accompaniment of Gregorian Chant, the organist should never use other stops than the *strings*, and he must be very cautious in the use of any *mixtures*. The accompaniment to the Chant is a subtle art. For this reason, we quote the following passage: "The primary purpose of accompaniment is to assist and support the voices. The secondary purpose is the provision of the proper musical foundation upon which the chant melody may proceed. This foundation must be diatonic and not chromatic, and based on modal intervals rather than on modern harmonic chords. These intervals must be consonant in nature unless one or more notes of the interval are (1) appoggiaturas, which must resolve correctly, or (2) passing notes, or (3) neighboring notes. The modal intervals to be used in the accompaniment con-

sist of notes of the modal scale and are the upper and lower dominants and tonics or inversions of either, or passing or neighboring notes. Neighboring notes may be likened to fields of magnetic influence attracted to poles. The cadences are therefore a logical musical development of the basic intervals in each modal range. A judicious and sparing choice of accompanimental notes is essential if the primary purpose of the accompaniment is to be attained. The simplicity of the accompaniment will enhance the secondary purpose, that of providing a suitable foundation upon which the chant melody is superimposed."—Dr. Lapierre, *Gregorian Institute Drill and Study Manual*, Series II, p. 65)

**20. Is it true that a church organist ordinarily does not get much of a salary?**

In reply to this query we quote the following from the *Gregorian Institute Newsletter*, Spring, 1951:

The previous issue of the *Newsletter* evoked a complaint from an organist of 30 years' experience who observed that (1) the "career" of parish organist "is generally the open door to the poor house"; (2) "ordinarily only those who expect to pursue a religious vocation should take it seriously"; (3) "the renaissance . . . must, of necessity, be delayed until such time as a fire is built under the clergy." Since our friend has undoubtedly recorded the opinion of many others of the profession, we take this opportuni-

ty to reply publicly for their benefit as well.

When a pastor engages a parish organist this is not to be construed as a "career," but rather a vocation, and a religious vocation at that. What greater responsibility can a musician have than to lead others in prayer through his music? And is this not a "religious" vocation?

No organist with ambition, zeal, ability, education, Catholic-mindedness, has ever, to our knowledge, been forsaken economically by the Church, unless he did not have the initiative to improve himself and his economic status. There are more pastors today in need of organists with the above qualifications than there are available applicants. A capable, qualified musician is the only "fire" any pastor needs. No pastor will pay a living wage to a janitor who can't fire the boiler, nor to a school teacher who can't teach. Neither will he pay a living wage to an organist who shows no more ambition than a "let's-get-this-over-with" attitude every time there is a service or a choir rehearsal. Organists who fulfill their part of the bargain have, in our experience, been highly respected in their communities and able to support their families comfortably. There is ample opportunity in America for all who are willing to learn and put in a decent day's work. (Blunt end of blunt quotation!)

**21. What is the role of the organist as regards congregational participation in sacred song?**

In *Orate Fratres* for Nov., 1950, p. 565 ff., the Rev. Maurice C. Herman has an article entitled



"Organist and Congregation." It is really a must for church organists. But because back numbers may be hard to get, we reprint the greater part of it here as an answer to your question.

"Congregational participation in sacred song is a primary objective in any parish program. . . . Sometimes a pastor decides to employ an organist in his parish with the hope that great things will be accomplished through him, only to find later that the art of music as a result takes precedence over the salvation of souls in his parish. As Dr. Eugene Lapierre says in his *Gregorian Chant Accompaniment*: 'An organist may have a thorough musical training and a sound or even remarkable technique at the organ and yet not be efficient at the service of the Liturgy. At the same time, organists of less preparation and skill may possess the instinctive taste and acquire the true sense of prayer-like music and thereby become first-class church organists (Page 12).'

"It sometimes happens that an organist considers it beneath his dignity and talent to be content with merely accompanying the congregation in the singing of an English hymn. This should, however, be the real test, because it is an extremely difficult task. As Christopher Hausner states in an article in *Caecilia*: 'Technique alone will not suffice, but there is required with it an exceedingly keen intuition, a feeling for balance, a living into, as it were, as to how congregational song is to be accompanied and led, how to establish that mental contact between the congregation and the organist (January, 1937, p. 571).'

“In most parishes it will not be possible to have someone stand before the people and direct the singing — unless the pastor himself wishes to do it, or one of his assistants. Usually the one who plays the organ must assume the role of both accompanist and director or leader. This makes it imperative that he use an organ registration which will give a firm background to the singing, one which will cover up defects in untrained voices and give a feeling of assurance to those who have a fear of hearing their own voices. It is of paramount importance that every one in the congregation feel that he may give forth his soul freely in prayerful song to God. Whether he sings perfectly or not and is able thereby to please his neighbor is not a primary consideration. Good sense is to be admired in the following statement of Mario Salvador in his *Method of Organ Playing* (p. 85): ‘The organist should be able to hear the singing and, for this reason, he should not use the excessively loud stops, such as the trumpets, trombones, tubas, and stenterphones. However, if the organ is small and all its resources are necessary to support the singing, the full organ should be used without any hesitancy. (This is generally true of any organ smaller than fifteen ranks.)’

“Herein lies the reason why men are usually more successful with congregational singing than women when they preside at the organ. Women are commonly afraid of loud singing and loud playing. One should not ordinarily fear loud singing unless it is tantamount to yelling. The tendency to yell is caused by the character of certain hymns rather than by the sincere and



free expression of religious sentiment. Some hymns necessitate yelling, or at least occasion it, by the too great intervals in the melodic line. We must choose hymns that proceed step-wise and are a natural outgrowth of the text.

“There are three important considerations in producing good congregational participation in reference to the role of the organist: 1) the introduction of the hymn; 2) the caesura or pause; 3) the phrasing of the hymn.

“*The introduction to the hymn* should serve not only to give pitch to the singers, but also to indicate the pace that they must take. The pitch must be low enough for the men to sing, because upon the men must rest the chief burden of divine worship in congregational singing. Some pastors place the whole burden upon the Sisters and the children, and this is occasioned to some extent by the fact that all the books for congregational singing are written in a tonality or key which is suitable only for female voices. The men refuse to sing because they cannot. The organist must learn a facility in transposing, or he must have before him an accompaniment which will have been written for men.

“In addition to the proper pitch, the introduction to any hymn or chant for congregational singing must have depth suitable to sustain the voices and likewise give the pace or rhythm desirable in the singing. A poor introduction is sure to produce poor singing. The organist should indicate by the first few measures what is the character of the hymn, whether it should be sung spritely, or slowly and devoutly. He must have sufficient understanding and imagina-

tion to indicate by his playing his own desire to contribute to the sung prayer of the congregation. It is impossible for a man of dissolute character to become a good organist for the church. There is room for a real and a special apostolate among the organists and choirmasters of any diocese, and it is with wisdom that the Holy See, through the recent encyclicals, has directed that in every diocese there be set up a special commission for sacred music. The choirmaster has a position in a parish comparable in importance to that of the clergy themselves. This makes it imperative that he be exemplary, not only in his ideals of sacred music, but in every phase of his life.

“A second very important consideration for the organist in producing good congregational singing is the *use of the pause*. The organ must breathe, so to speak, together with the singing, and although it is most important to keep the proper pace throughout the hymn, the organist need not fear to introduce proper pauses according to the exigencies of the hymn and of the singers. Because of the larger number of singers in congregational song, the pace of the hymn must necessarily be somewhat slower than would be desirable in a choir of trained voices. If, however, the hymn has a tendency to drag, the organist can overcome this by making added breaks in the melodic line and by a judicious use of staccato, especially in case of the use of a heavy organ registration.

“A final point for the organist to accomplish is the matter of *proper phrasing*. We speak in phrases and not in whole sentences. Likewise,

we must sing in phrases, and the strict time value of a given selection must bend to the demands of the text. It is in this way that the hymn will begin to live and to breathe the spirit of prayer which is the objective of congregational song.

“The psalmist David has said: ‘I have run the way of thy commandments, when thou didst enlarge my heart’ (Ps. 118:32). In order to ‘run the way of God’s commandments’ we all need inspiration. This can largely be supplied by the satisfaction that we experience in participating in divine worship. It is up to the organist to make a large contribution to the fullness of worship and create in the congregation a desire to sing. A singing soul is a saintly soul, and therefore the organist has a grave responsibility toward God and toward his neighbor in reference to sacred song. Let our churches resound with the sincere song of ‘the young, the mature and the old,’ and thus every year will become a Holy Year for the clergy, the laity, and for all the people of God. ‘*Laudate eum in chordis et organo*’ (Ps. 150) is a fitting motto for the organist, upon whom depends in large measure the success of congregational song.”

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