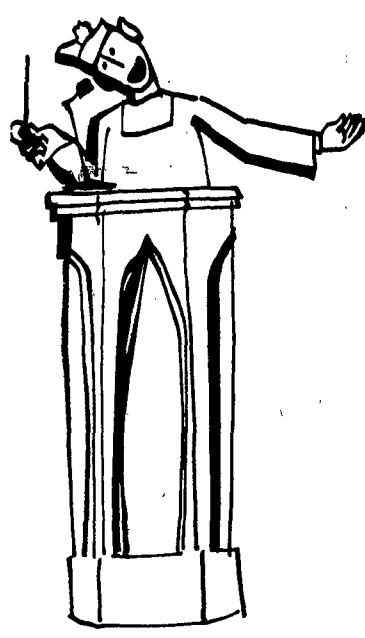


Singing, Best Cure for 'Praying Robot' Syndrome

SINGING, THE BEST CURE
By VIRGINIA BOGDAN PADOS

This is the fifth in a series of articles on church music. Mrs. Karoly Pados, a member of the diocesan music commission, is nationally recognized for her many masses and other compositions for divine service. She is currently music-director and organist at Assumption Church in Fairport.



It has been observed that the human mind, when once stretched by a new idea, can never revert to its former dimension. This can easily be seen in the case of parish congregational singing by a random sampling of replies made in a recent survey.

"Considering past congregations, we've come a long way. When you're singing together, you really can pray with greater feeling, from your heart, because you can't rush the words then." "We save and sacrifice and build architecturally magnificent churches, then fill them with zippidydoohah music." "Even the ancient Greeks appreciated the powerful, formative influence for the good that music can exert."

Another encouraging note was sounded in the midst of the confusion and "labor" pains occasioned by the new emphasis on singing together at Mass. People are not really against the idea or the change as such. They seem to be protesting more against the all-too-hasty and sometimes incoherent manner in which the changes have been introduced.

Unfortunately they have been expected to cram the undoing of centuries' inertia into a few months' rehabilitation as an active, vocal congregation. It is a time for patience and understanding on the part of all concerned. The situation can greatly be improved by closer cooperation and proper coordination of the disparate elements: people, organist, the music programs in the schools. It is a time of integration under the intelligent and permissive guidance of the pastor and with the good will and spontaneity of the people.

What is really intriguing about the new emphasis on congregational singing is the fact that it shows a decided preference for "the active participation of the faithful in song, as being the noblest form of worship." Does this mean that we can be content with bad or mediocre music if that is the

norm in one parish or another? Are we faced with an alternative: either good music sung by a skilled, monopolizing choir or second-rate music apathetically sung by all? A further complication is added by the "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy."

How are we to interpret its admonition to preserve the treasures of the Church's sacred music? We are obviously in a time when we must proceed cautiously with due reverence for our church's musical heritage and great care for present development of those treasures. The well-meaning assistant pastor who shrugged his shoulders saying "anything, just so long as they sing" is really taking the line of least resistance.

He will probably settle for the second-rate and the mediocre. No wonder one little boy wrote a letter to God saying, "Dear God, Church is alright. But you sure could use some new songs."

The Role of the Choir

A very good solution to this dilemma, and one which does not sacrifice intrinsic artistic values to popular viability, is proposed in the new diocesan Liturgical Guidebook. In a section which clarifies the roles of the various members of the liturgical assembly we read: "Choirs are not being phased out by the 'Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.' The parish choir is to be maintained. Its role in the renewed liturgy is now greater than ever. The singing of the congregation is no substitute for the choir. The choir's monopoly of the congregational parts for over 400 years is at last broken.

It is not the intention of the Vatican Council that any other congregation should take its place." In other words, we have not been freed from our straight-jacket only to be neatly capsuled into another!

The Liturgical Guidebook for the diocese of Rochester continues: "The role of the choir in the new liturgy is specific and ample. There are choral works for the choir alone, others for the choir and congregation, not necessarily always in unison, but also in alternation and with harmony. For more festive occasions, the choir may sing a more elaborate setting of a piece which normally belongs to the congregation; for example, the Gloria—and this need not always be in the vernacular, but may well be in Latin, and thus serve to keep alive the fine music of the past. It is not forbidden that they should be one or more such Latin pieces in a vernacular Mass."

The preceding remarks seem to call here for a word about organs and organ accompaniment for congregational singing. The accompaniment of a congregation demands a much more incisive and brighter organ than many churches have gotten along with in the past. No organist, not even a Virgil Fox or Jean Langlais with all their ingenuity, could provide on these the proper registration and tone texture necessary to support a congregation with some of the mosquito-like sound which comes from the very small organ or cheaper, inadequate electronic organs. Even granting that the organist has certainty of attack and the proper knack for introducing hymns, he still needs at his disposal adequate brilliance of sound in the organ to provide an accompaniment with acuteness and "bite."

Specific criteria in the matter of organists is provided by the American Bishops' Commission on the Liturgical Apostolate: "A full-time musician employed by the Church (should) be considered as carrying the same workload and hence to be paid on the same salary scale as a full-time teacher in the local public school system. Length of service, experience, and academic qualifications should be likewise considered and adequately compensated for."

Many churches will never be capable of paying the proper "living" wage. In these cases the pastors must pay as generously as their resources permit and the ability of the musicians warrant. It is only in this way that our parishes will be able to attract people who have studied music and approach the tasks of church mu-

parish liturgy. Only then will it be of profit to assist at workshops such as the three conducted throughout the diocese by the music commission last year. Necessary guidance in such an evaluation will also be found in the commission's music bulletin, "Renewal," which is scheduled to appear shortly with about six numbers a year. The commission is also planning a centrally located liturgical music reference-library. It

has initiated sing-sessions in parish churches and will probably add a workshop for organists.



Members of the commission are also available on a consulting basis regarding the musical problems of a particular parish. Parish priests and musicians, moreover, can hardly keep abreast of the latest "disturbing" liturgical developments without regularly consulting such thought-provoking periodicals as "Worship" or "Ave Maria," "Liturgy" the newsletter of The Liturgical Conference or "Sacred Music."

One parish, of which we heard, convenes one night a week in its own special little "council" in order that its members can exchange new lights, suggestions and complaints about the liturgical life. This also serves the wonderful purpose of cementing a real bond of unity when the people come to the altar to sing together.

It is not a matter of doubling or tripling the volume, but one of providing an instrument designed to support congregational sound. This latter is what is needed to give a dragging congregation, as Dom Ermin Vitry once said, "a kick in the pew." It might even be that a good pipe organ will in the future really serve the congregation's needs better than any other, especially if it is located nearer to the center of the liturgical action.



Parish Family Planning
The modus operandi suggested above will not just happen according to the principle of "I show an arrow into the air, it fell to the earth I know not where." It will begin with an evaluation, at grass-roots, of the task set us by II Vatican, our parish's liturgy and the clear-cut roles of those involved in

Priests OK Clergy Senate

St. Cloud, Minn. — (RNS) — Priests of the Roman Catholic Diocese of St. Cloud have voted overwhelmingly for the establishment of a diocesan Council of Priests.

The vote came in response to a suggestion made by Bishop Peter W. Bartholome, head of the diocese.

In balloting, the priests selected 12 of their group to

serve on an ad hoc committee to draw up a constitution for the Council. Three additional members were appointed by Bishop Bartholome.

Establishment of a Council of Priests in each diocese to advise the bishop was recommended by the Second Vatican Council.

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Pope Paul Warns On Rush Reforms

Vatican City—(RNS)—Pope Paul VI, speaking at his usual midweek general audience, warned that the Catholic faith has become the "target of a host of negative attacks, the field of many a controversy even among believers."

As on several occasions, the Pope cautioned against changes in the Church contrary to reforms mapped by the Second Vatican Council.

He told hundreds of pilgrims and visitors in the Hall of Benediction that "echoes of erroneous opinions" have reached him which, he said, "dare to uphold arbitrary interpretations offensive to the sacrosanct truth of the Catholic faith."

The pontiff said that "reports are heard—few, to speak truly—but from all over the world, of those who are trying to reform fundamental doctrines clearly professed by the Church of God."

Such beliefs are being questioned, he said, as "the Resurrection of Christ, the truth of His presence in the Eucharist, and even the virginity of Our Lady and consequently the mystery of the Incarnation."

"What is so terrible," he said, "is not so much the seriousness of these false affirmations, as the irreverent and rash audaciousness with which they are made."

This gives the impression, he continued, that the truths of the faith are being judged "according to one's own capacity of

understanding them and one's personal tastes in having a say in the theological and religious domain."

The Pope said that "this unfortunate phenomenon that is troubling post-Conciliar renewal and disconcerting ecumenical dialogue makes us sadly thoughtful and understanding of the difficulties the modern mind encounters in giving clear form and consent to the sole and true faith. It also confirms us in the persuasion that faith is not possible without the extra—and very different—concurrent help that grace can give."

Pope Paul began his discourse by observing that faith is a term that "can be made to express a hundred different things. Not all have an exact idea of the meaning of the word that is at the center of our religion."

"Even those who use it according to its true and authentic sense realize that the world 'faith' may refer to the subjective and supernatural virtue by means of which we believers adhere to what has been revealed."

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