

Waiting Patiently

Toni Sickmann, of Krakow, Mo., mother of U.S. Marine Rodney V. Sickmann, one of the 50 hostages being held in the American Embassy in Teheran, displays her faith and patriotism as she smiles from a decorated window of her home. She plans to leave the Christmas touches in place for a delayed celebration when her son returns home.(RNS)

Insights in Liturgy in one voice. Because of the

Musical **Priorities**

By Sister Nancy Burkin, SSJ

Planning any liturgical celebration involves the sorting out of priorities. This is particularly true in the planning of music for a Eucharistic celebration. Music has several functions at Eucharist: it can accompany an action, be the vocalization of our faith, set a mood, or impart a sense of unity to the assembled congregation. In a word, music is part of our prayer as a faith community.

Faced, then, with the responsibility of planning prayer that happens to be sung for our assembled congregation, and with the many functions music can have in a given liturgical celebration, where does one . begin? What are the musical priorities?

The general priority to be examined is music itself. Is music in liturgical worship a priority? Is it important to

nature of these parts of worship and because we wish to proclaim in one voice, together; we use rhythm and melody, much the same as football fans use them to show their united support of the favored team. Not only does the use of song help us acclaim together forcefully and meaningfully, but the very nature of what we are. saying calls for the use of music. Because, then, of who we are and what we are about at Eucharist, and because of the very nature of what we are saying, the first priority is the acclamations.

These acclamations are found at the most significant moments of the Mass — the Gospel, Eucharistic. Prayer and Lord's Prayer. They are specifically: the Gospel Alleluia, the Holy, Holy, Holy, the Memorial Acclamation, the Great Amen and the doxology to the Lord's Prayer. In each of these acclamations we are called upon to make shouts of joy which express our recognition of God's Word and. Action and our assent to what has been done or is about to be done at our worship. Mumbling "alleluia, alleluia, alleluia;" assenting to the great Eucharistic Prayer by an unintelligible "amen" lost somewhere between the pages of the missalette; reciting "holy, holy, holy..." always a bit behind or ahead of everyone else says very little about our faith experience, and only serves to weaken it. In planning Eucharistic prayer, the acclamations are top priority as sung prayer and should be sung at every celebration. Also included in this group. of top priority are the entrance and communion processionals. It is important to begin any celebration with song since it helps people become aware of themselves dividuals who happen to find themselves together in one room. The communion processional expresses the joy

and the fulfillment of the mystery being celebrated. Of equal priority with the

processional songs - is the responsorial psalm. A psalm is essentially a song, and singing it more fully expresses our response to God's Word.

Of all the parts of the Mass that could be sung, the three above are of highest priority. Reciting acclamations, entrance and communion antiphons or psalms is artificial and leaves much to be desired by way of authentic expression and sign value.

The second group of songs that ought to be examined in order of priority is that group we call ordinary chants. These include: Lord Have Mercy, Glory To God, Lord's Prayer, Lamb of God and the procession of faith. Any of these chants may or may not be sung. Certainly singing all of them would make for an overload of music.

Last on the list of priorities is a group called supplementary songs. It is interesting to note that no. specified text is available for these songs nor are they part the essential word or action of the Eucharist. This group includes: Preparation of the Gifts, thanksgiving song after communion, and the recessional. Instrumental music, if any is to be used at these times, is the more preferable. Song is not a priority here.



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nave su prayer at every Eucharist? Is music part and parcel of each liturgical celebration or just "window dressing" for Sunday liturgies? Certainly the celebration of a Sunday Eucharist in a parish is the liturgical celebration of the week for that pairsh. Therefore, it shoud be more festive, more jubilant and thus more musical than a weekday. celebration of Eucharist. But - and we move now to more specific priorities — are there parts of the Eucharist that are expressed more freely, more authentically in song?

The congregation assembled at any liturgical celebration is united by a common purpose, the worship of God. But, more importantly, they are united by being who they are, a people of faith, the Church. Though they come from various places, various circumstances as a people, rather than inand even various levels of faith, there are parts of the Eucharistic celebration when they are called upon to proclaim, to assent, to praise of unity in the Body of Christ

One final consideration regarding priorities must also be understood when preparing liturgical celebrations, namely the role of the congregation. There is a direct relationship between the role of the congregation and the three groups prioritized above. As the acclamations have top priority as parts to be sung, likewise the entire assembly has top responsibility to participate in their singing. As we move down the list of priorities, the responsibility of the entire congregation taking a vocal role lessens. However, at no time does the priority of assembly response in song rule. out creative use of a choir and/or cantor.

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