

MUSICAE SACRAE MINISTERIUM

English Edition

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5) *Finally, the last difficulty: the choir does not have a properly-defined place in the liturgy.*

Does it belong in the sanctuary? Does it belong in the nave? What place does it hold in the liturgy, properly speaking? There are only a few vague documents on this point. Those of 1955 and 1958 are not yet as exact as could be desired, even when they confirm by tradition the importance of the function of the Scholae and the value of repertoires such as plainsong and classic polyphony.

* * *

It is taken for granted that musicians (organists, choir-masters, composers, or the ordinary faithful) all react against these prejudices, which we have outlined as objectively as possible and which it would be a good thing to examine dispassionately. While admitting that a certain number of the accusations enumerated above are well-founded, the greater part of those musicians would not find it difficult to mention one parish or another, one programme or another, which should silence over-hasty generalizations. We observe indeed that many musicians in the service of the Church are genuine technicians, men of everyday realities, who are familiar with the variety and appropriateness of various musical forms. Their attachment to certain types of religious music (classic polyphony, Bach's works for the organ, plainsong) often stems from a profound religious and liturgical sense, far beyond a simple privileged sectarianism.

A great number of them, and especially the plainsong enthusiasts, are very keen on their ideal of « the singing nave ». It is enough to remember the work carried out in several countries by the plainsong movements and the Ward Method to popularise among the faithful the practice of a repertory which they can consider their own.

But many musicians, and among them are those who are most concerned about the congregation's singing, are preoccupied by the mediocre quality and inadequacy of many new works, as compositions firstly, and even more perhaps from the way in which they are interpreted. They call for an effort in the teaching of singing, better technique in performance and accompaniment, the training of competent choir-masters ..., but their dialogue with pastors is often difficult.

(To be continued)

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Chief Editor: JOSÉ LÓPEZ-CALO, S. J.

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