Environment and Art in Catholic Worship
Still Challenging Fifteen Years Later

December 8 of this year marks the thirtieth anniversary of the promulgation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium). This document has framed the context of Catholic liturgical life and spirituality more than any other document of Vatican II. Its impact is felt still as we continually strive to answer the question, “How do we promote the 'full, conscious, and active participation' of the People of God?” As part of a response to that question, the U.S. Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy in 1978 published a landmark document entitled Environment and Art in Catholic Worship (EACW). While providing guidelines for architects, artists, and consultants in the building or renovation of liturgical space, the document also serves as an excellent reference for all who prepare liturgy - clergy, liturgy committees, environment teams, musicians.

Since EACW was published fifteen years ago, much has been written about it and all its ramifications. It is tempting to go on, to find something new. The joy of this document is however, its seeming simplicity which allows for easy reading and lively discussions, while it challenges us to do what it suggests.

After setting forth fundamentals of Catholic worship - faith, incarnation, transcendence, assembly, mystery, covenant - EACW leads us to an understanding of how environment can facilitate that full, conscious and active participation called for by the Constitution.

Laying a biblical foundation for our understanding of faith and its expression in human worship, the text reminds us that liturgy is the celebration of a relationship between God and his people on a personal-communal level. Thus, the points discussed deal with first, the requirements for worship of God and secondly, the demands placed on worship by a participating assembly. Particulars about the building, furnishings, vessels, and art all flow from an understanding of these two key elements.

Worship of God

Worship of God for us is an ancient tradition with both biblical and ecclesial dimensions. It is rooted in a “God-consciousness” and “God-centeredness” and yet is the celebration of a human community. Herein exists a creative tension. We are a people immersed in mystery—the Incarnation, the Paschal Mystery, the Holy Spirit. At the same time, we are a human community relating to God on a human level. The challenge is to create an environment which welcomes that community while inviting it into contemplation of the Holy within among us.

Liturgy is a door to the sacred; therefore, whatever we do or use must be real and authentic, revealing a depth and beauty required by true worship. EACW suggests two criteria for judgment: quality and appropriateness. Quality is perceived by contemplation of the work itself. The good artist/artisan who is rooted in his/her own spirituality can produce quality work. Good art has the power to evoke deep feelings. I recall visiting the studio of such an artist who was carving a crucifix commissioned by a local parish. Tears spontaneously welled up in my eyes as I looked at the partially completed figure of Jesus. The artist’s hand revealed not only love and care, but also a very deep faith.

Appropriateness suggests that what we perceive is “capable of bearing the weight of mystery, awe, reverence...
The Assembly — The Church

"Among the symbols with which liturgy deals, none is more important than (this) assembly of believers" (#28). Perhaps because of its placement in the document, perhaps because of the simplicity of its wording, this statement can be easily overlooked. How often when we speak of symbols do we list the familiar ones — bread, wine, water, oil, cross. Yet it bears repeating "Among the symbols with which liturgy deals, none is more important than (this) assembly of believers".

Having outlined principles regarding the worship of God and the demands of the assembly, EACW proceeds to more concrete, specific points regarding the building, furnishings, and objects for liturgical celebrations.

A House for the Church

In what seems like a revolutionary statement, but one which is consistent with the Constitution on Sacred Liturgy, EACW states that the "space acquires sacredness from the sacred action of the faith community which uses it... The historical problem of the church as a place need not be repeated as long as Christians respect the primacy of the living assembly" (#41). It is clear — the assembly has primacy; the building is simply the house for the church, its "skin", if you will. The norm for its design is the assembly and its liturgies (#42).

Building a new edifice may seem difficult, but an even greater challenge may face those who are renovating older spaces, for while it is important to retain the best of the structure, it is more important to respect the primacy of the worshipping community. How, then, does a faith community proceed and what does it need to consider in the process of building or renovating liturgical space?

EACW recommends the team approach consisting of the worshipping community with its clergy, the architect, the liturgical-artistic consultant. The community has a tremendous opportunity to experience a renewal as it works to define its self-image and to delineate its liturgical needs. Those involved should take into consideration all the sacramental celebrations of the community, as well as celebrations of the word, morning and evening prayer, and other prayer forms. The more complete the definition, the easier will be the creative task of the architect. The liturgical-artistic consultant works with the architect so that the liturgical demands are met. The end result of everyone's efforts can be a building that will stimulate and inspire the liturgical community as well as the surrounding neighborhood.

Since the action of the assembly is primary, some basic parameters are set:

- visibility of each other and the sacred action in a space that is...
near and personal;
- audibility as natural as possible providing for both speech and song;
- space that is of human scale, retaining a sense of hospitality and graciously;
- unity of space with ritual focal points: altar, ambo, font, gathering space.

The Arts and the Body Language of Liturgy

Sacramental celebrations are actions of the worshipping community. Sensitivity to the total person within that community must begin with sensitivity to bodily movement. Gestures, postures and processions have specific purposes in a given celebration. They can serve to unite the assembly when they engage the persons as fully as possible. Spatial requirements will allow for ease of movement and comfortability of posture. All of this reflects a spirit of hospitality that translates into a person’s understanding of the graciousness of God.

Because the whole person worships, sensitivity to human posture is important. Spaces need to accommodate sitting, kneeling, standing, and processing in comfortable human scale. Ease of movement in and accessibility to the liturgical focal points are important for all the assembly, including the physically challenged. All of this reflects a spirit of hospitality that translates into a person’s understanding of the graciousness of God.

Furnishings

“The Sunday eucharistic assembly is the most fundamental ecclesial symbol” (#63). Again, the text reminds us that visibility of the liturgical spaces and their furnishings is important; therefore, the community needs visual contact with altar, ambo and chair. Before stating specifics about each furnishing, the document outlines basic considerations. Furnishings should
- possess a dignity and simple beauty worthy of the action;
- reflect the quality of human craftsmanship;
- possess a unity and harmony among themselves and with the architecture.

The text continues with characteristics of the furnishings. I will briefly summarize the more salient points of each.

chairs, benches – maximize the feelings of community with clear view of focal points (EACW)

presider’s chair – clearly part of the assembly yet in a leadership position, non-pretentious (#70)

altar – most noble and beautiful symbol of Christ; table for bread, wine, book; square or slightly rectangular; approachable from all sides; only one (#71-73)

ambo – table for reading word and preaching homily; reflects dignity of word of God; lectern used for all other reading purposes (#74, 75)

baptistry – immersion is the fuller, more appropriate symbol; provide for immersion of infants (at least) and pouring of water over entire body of child, adult; placement facilitates full participation by assembly in Easter Vigil

eucharistic chapel – action of celebrating eucharistic community is norm for Sunday assembly; reserved bread is for the sick and private devotion; space for reservation is separate from major focus to eliminate confusion between active and static spaces; easy access from main space as well as outside garden, etc., conveys warmth and mystery

tabernacle – solid, dignified, properly ornamented, one per building

reconciliation chapel – near baptismal area (if at entrance); simple, austere; provides for face-to-face or behind a screen; cross, table, bible

sacristy – allows for entrance procession through the assembly

music – plan proper space

Objects Used in Liturgical Celebration

It is not necessary for our purposes here to describe all the objects used in worship. Basic principles again apply, especially the two criteria of quality and appropriateness. In addition, it is important to look at how well liturgical symbols are used in the worship space. Multiplicity of symbols diminishes their effectiveness. In a local church on the feast of the Triumph of the Cross, the rather sizable cross from Good Friday was carried in procession and placed in the sanctuary. When a homilist asked the students present to name how many crosses they saw, they managed to count at least 15. So much for impact! We have layered our environment with multiple symbols and words on book covers, vestments, and banners, as well as etched them on walls.

Whether selecting candlesticks, books, vestments, or vessels the norms of beauty, nobility and simplicity are effective. Ask questions. What is the focal point of this liturgical action? Will this (object, image, decoration) enhance that action? Will it distract the assembly’s attention from what is primary?

Conclusion

The invitation of Environment and Art in Catholic Worship is for all of us to do what we can to ensure that “liturgy has a special and unique place in the
life of Christians in the local churches” (#9), that God’s great deeds be made known and celebrated among his people so that the reign of God in peace and justice may be realized.

The closing paragraph of EACW is a fine summary. I leave it for your reflection.

When the Christian community gathers to celebrate its faith and vision, it gathers to celebrate what is more personally theirs and most nobly human and truly Church. The actions of the assembly witness the great deeds God has done; they confirm an age-old covenant. With such vision and depth of the assembly can the environment be anything less than a vehicle to meet the Lord and to encounter one another? The challenge of our environment is the final challenge of Christ. We must make ready until he returns in glory. (#107) 

(Ed. note: The document Environment and Art in Catholic Worship is available from the Worship Office, Archdiocese of Newark, Irvington, NJ.)

Carol Willis
Liturgical Consultant
Pastoral Associate:
Holy Trinity Church, Westfield, NJ

BCL Update

Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist is a collection of the rites and texts for use during the solemn exposition of the Holy Eucharist. The collection is arranged so that it may be used for a period of one or several days, according to local custom or pastoral need. In order to provide for liturgical prayer during the period of exposition three types of services are included: The Liturgy of the Hours during the Period of Exposition, Eucharistic Services of Prayer and Praise, and Celebration of the Eucharist during the Period of Exposition. Two forms for the Closing Celebration for the Solemn Exposition are also given, one taking place during Mass, and a second when Mass is not celebrated. A listing of suggested Scripture readings, some optional litanies, and music resources are given in the appendices. It is available in both a hardcover Minister’s Edition (7 1/4 X 10 1/2, 176 pp., $34.95) and a People’s Edition (5 3/8 X 8 1/4, 144 pp., $3.95) from: The Liturgical Press, Saint John’s Abbey, Box 7500, Collegeville, MN 56321-7500. Telephone 1-800-858-5450.

A Ritual for Laypersons: Rites for Holy Communion and the Pastoral Care of the Sick contains those rites at which a layperson is able to preside in the absence of a priest or deacon. It gathers into one book rites excerpted from Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass, Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum. Part III contains rites that pertain to the pastoral care of the dying: Commendation of the Dying (Chapter Five) and Prayers After Death (Chapter Six). Part IV presents a broad selection of scripture readings and psalms for use in the celebration of the various rites and Part V contains a collection of prayers for the dead and for mourners adapted to a variety of circumstances. The book is available in two-color printing (4 1/2 X 6 3/4, 200 pages), for $14.95 from The Liturgical Press, Saint John’s Abbey, Box 7500, Collegeville, MN 56321-7500. Telephone: 1-800-858-5450.

History of the Mass, authored by Robert Cabie and translated by Lawrence J. Johnson, shows how the custom of Christians gathering on Sunday to celebrate the Eucharist has it origins in the early days of the Church. Cabie shows how this is a living tradition which through the centuries has been shaped by various cultures and languages, spiritualities and theologies. The book details the history of the Mass as it unfolds throughout five major periods: the Mass before the formation of liturgical books (Chapter I); the creative period in which various structural elements of the celebration were expanded (Chapters 2-4); the changes that appeared during the Carolingian period concerning the priest’s role in the Mass (Chapter 5); the changes that began in the twelfth century and had a large effect on eucharistic piety (Chapter 6); the Mass as it appeared in the missal published by Pius V after the Council of Trent (Chapter 7); the popular devotions and piety that accompanied the implementation of this missal (Chapter 8); the liturgical movement that began in the nineteenth century and culminated in the Second Vatican Council (Chapter 9), and the Mass as it was reformed in the missal of Paul VI in 1970 (Chapter 10). The book is available in paperback from: The Pastoral Press, 225 Sheridan Street NW, Washington, DC 20011. Telephone: 202-723-1254.

Staff
Editor: Rev. Robert Laterrera
Design/Layout: Rev. Michael C. Santoro
Contributors: Carol Willis, Rev. James Weiner and the staff of the Worship Office

Subscription Information
One year subscription to Word on Worship, 4 issues, $10.00. Special Bulk rate, five or more issues to the same address, $8.50 per year per subscription. Foreign subscription, $13.50 per year. To begin your subscription call 201-596-4280
Seasonal Decorating

How often have you visited a church and found the flowers just placed in front of the altar? Or a candle? I was at a conference recently relating to this area of environment and art. One of the speakers was commenting on how much easier it is to “decorate” an environment as opposed to creating one. There is a great deal of truth in this statement. As I reflect on the various liturgical seasons of the year I feel that it is easier to create an environment for the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter than for Ordinary Time. Ordinary Time just seems so ordinary!

The environment for Ordinary Time can be very exciting and should be life-giving. Environment and Art in Catholic Worship recognizes the importance of images, paintings, sculptures, as well as tapestries, banners and wall hangings. The document encourages their use and recommends consulting with an artist or others who have a background in art and liturgy. The purpose of liturgical art is to appeal to the senses. We should strive to develop a good sense in regard to using images, banners, and decorations in general. I feel it is so important to the worship space to provide decorations that truly enhance rather than detract or overpower the environment and its appointments. So often when we speak of decorations in the worship space the first thing we think of is flowers — more often than not gladioli and football mums. There is so much more to be considered in this area, and I hope to be able to share with you some new and creative ideas.

Essentially, liturgical art is art before which we say our prayers. Its chief function is to make visible the unseen presence of God, although the image can never be confused with that which it depicts. It is art that commands us to take off our shoes as we recognize that the ground on which we stand is holy, that we are in the presence of God. No ordinary art will do this. We do not produce a photographic likeness of God, but a representation that points beyond itself to what the inner eye alone can see. Thus there is a transcendent One . . . God is present; we simply need to be reminded of this reality, and liturgical art helps to do this (Church Architecture—Building and Renovating for Christian Worship, James F. White & Susan J. White).

Banners and hangings are capable of providing this type of experience. When we think of banners why do we jump back to the sixties and visualize big felt banners with catchy slogans? Perhaps they are the only experience we have of banners, but we have come a long way. Banners and hangings are capable of creating a feel for the seasons of the year just by their color, texture and design. They don’t need words; they are capable of speaking without them.

We should not be afraid to introduce color, especially during Ordinary Time. While green is the color for vesture during Ordinary Time, that is not to say that we cannot introduce other colors in our use of textiles to add life to the worship space. We should allow for more generous sizes in banners and hangings. Depending upon the worship space, one large, well-done textile, carefully chosen to reflect the season or occasion, can say more than many small ones. We use textiles in a variety of ways in worship. Textiles are capable of movement and expression; as a vestment, textile art moves as an extension of the body itself.

Vestments should also be viewed as a vital part of the ritual experience. The above mentioned principles apply to vestments as well — let the vestments speak for themselves. The use of quality fabrics, tapestries and trims can provide for a beautiful vestment that will add to the festive nature of the liturgical celebration. The vestments we use on a daily basis may be simpler than those used for Sundays, feasts and major celebrations; the quality must always be consistently good.

When selecting fabric for the altar cloth, the General Instruction of the Roman Missal #268 states: “It’s (altar cloth) shape, size and adornment should be in keeping with the structure of the altar.” This would seem to imply that the altar cloth should be tailored to the altar in a particular worship space. It may be appropriate to cover just the top of the altar for some occasions and the entire altar for others. The fabric chosen should be of good quality in its design, texture and color.

The guidelines emphasize that suitable decoration should not be confined to the altar area; rather decoration should serve as a means of uniting the celebration space. Banners and hangings are excellent for just this purpose. Flowers, plants and greenery can be used creatively. They can add life to a given area in the worship space.

During the fall months, mums, other potted plants and flowers, can be clustered and placed throughout the church as opposed to cut flowers in paper-mâché containers confined to the steps of the sanctuary. If cut flowers are used, ceramic or terra-cotta pots might be purchased to improve the appearance of the arrangement and add to the richness of the environment.

The area for decoration moves beyond the sanctuary and assembly area. It includes gathering space, shrine areas, and even outside. For example, wreaths on the exterior doors or walls of the church can extend the environment. It might be helpful to consult with a liturgical artist in developing the worship space.

Developing an environment for worship even for Ordinary Time challenges us to use our creative abilities. Let us accept this challenge with great joy and enthusiasm, as together we create environments that are beautiful and fitting for the worship of God.

Rev. James Weiner
Parochial Vicar
St. Catharine Church, Glen Rock
Sing a New Song: Adding Music to the Parish Repertoire

Denise Boychuk Gorman and Patrick Gorman

The periodic learning and singing of new music (that is, music previously unknown to the assembly, not necessarily music that has been recently composed) can energize a parish and promote growth. But a delicate balance between the new and the familiar is needed to facilitate the assembly’s singing. Unfamiliar pieces must be introduced with forethought and sensitivity, or the new music may overwhelm some people and discourage active participation. Introducing new music and encouraging the assembly to make it its own is not an exercise in indulging fads or keeping the music ministers amused, but rather a systematic way of enlarging the parish repertoire — an act of pastoral care.

Charting the Parish Repertoire

The backbone of a healthy church music program is a basic parish repertoire. Every parish more than two weeks old has a repertoire — it is simply the body of music that the assembly knows and sings. If parish musicians and the liturgy board do not periodically evaluate the parish repertoire, then the assembly may end up knowing an abundance of settings of acclamations, for instance, yet not know enough hymns to sustain the joy of the Easter Season or to get through those long summer months. By keeping records, a musician — or someone from the liturgy board — can compile a list of all that the parish sings at present. Before deciding to teach new music, compile such a list according to categories: service music, psalms, hymns and songs.

As part of the inventory, determine how often and at what times of year each piece is sung. Some pieces need only be sung once or twice each year in order for the assembly to remember them (for example, the spiritual “Were you there?”). Others must be maintained by being sung more frequently or else they effectively drop out of the repertoire. The list-maker may think that the assembly can sing “Now the green blade rises,” but if it was taught and then sung once two years ago, the assembly may be unable to sing it now. Put any such pieces in a “questionable” or “may need refresher” category.

Evaluating the Present Repertoire

After compiling the repertoire list, the musicians and/or the liturgy board first should look for gaps. What’s missing from the parish repertoire? A well-rounded, basic repertoire might look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Music</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kyrie</td>
<td>1 setting, perhaps in Greek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rite of Sprinkling</td>
<td>1 setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>1 or 2 settings (perhaps a simple through-composed setting for Ordinary Time and a festive one for Christmas/Easter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psalms, Hymns and Songs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gospel Acclamation                                1 for Lent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercessions                                    1 or 2 for the year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eucharistic acclamations                          2 may be sufficient; people should know these from memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord’s Prayer                                    Do we need one in addition to the chant?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamb of God                                      See eucharistic acclamations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptismal antiphon                                1 antiphon (optional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCIA responses                                   1 set (optional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnificat                                       1 through-composed setting (good for vespers and Marian feasts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total                                             approximately 15 - 20 pieces</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six seasonal psalms, if the assembly cannot sing the assigned psalm

Hymns and songs for the Triduum and the seasons

Several general hymns and songs: praise, thanksgiving, repentance, lament

Several hymns and songs that can be used at various rites: penance services, vespers, weddings, funerals (these may be taught and used occasionally at Mass, too)

Several hymns and songs that can be sung without music personnel (at parish meetings, some daily liturgies)

Communion songs (maybe a limited number in order to foster processional singing without hymnals)

Any “parish songs” (one referring to the titular saint or appropriate to the dedication anniversary, or one appropriate to the current parish mission statement, for example)

These are the basic categories of minimal needs. With the inventory taken, mark the categories in which the parish now knows little or nothing. Then prioritize the needs: Is it more important to teach a Gloria or a good communion hymn right now in order to round out the repertoire? Parishes that currently fill all of these categories at least minimally can build up their repertoires by learning more pieces in each category. Notice the relatively limited numbers of acclamations. These ought to be sung from memory because they are the assembly’s part of liturgy’s holy dialogue. Although frequent alternation of Mass settings is popular with some ministers, and new settings are regularly published, a parish can easily get by with one — or else two that are changed seasonally — allowing the assembly to concentrate on learning hymns and songs. A parish can easily have enough music for the year with as few as 75 pieces spread out in these basic categories. After noting the gaps and prioritizing the needs, evaluate the pieces on the repertoire list. Do pieces within a category show enough diversity in terms of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psalms, Hymns and Songs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 - 20 pieces</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Denise Boychuk Gorman and Patrick Gorman
CHOOSING NEW ADDITIONS

A careful examination of the present repertoire will make plain what kinds of new music the assembly needs to learn. But how do musicians choose particular pieces to plug the gaps in the repertoire?

The first criteria is the assembly — its responsibility — and its ability — to "sing a new song" to God. Choices should be made with the particular assembly in mind. This means that more research may need to be done than simply reaching for the latest "greatest hits" catalog.

The durability of a piece is an issue. Many of our most cherished hymns and texts were composed centuries ago, yet still work well. We must consider, then, whether or not the parish will be singing in ten years this piece that we intend to introduce today. Although no one can see into the future, perhaps an initial evaluation of the repertoire and a list of new additions will lead to a two- or three-year plan for teaching the new pieces. A delicate balance between the new and the familiar needs to be maintained to keep the assembly singing.

CHOOSING NEW ADDITIONS

The first criteria is the assembly — its responsibility — and its ability — to "sing a new song" to God. Choices should be made with the particular assembly in mind. This means that more research may need to be done than simply reaching for the latest "greatest hits" catalog.

The durability of a piece is an issue. Many of our most cherished hymns and texts were composed centuries ago, yet still work well. We must consider, then, whether or not the parish will be singing in ten years this piece that we intend to introduce today. Although no one can see into the future, it is worthwhile to ask whether a piece has enduring musical value as well as a text that will speak for years to come, or whether it is faddish.

Remember that, although "easy access" music may be very appropriate and quickly learned by the assembly, a steady diet of it becomes monotonous. Don't be afraid to introduce strophic hymns or songs, or service music in which the assembly sings the entire text. These will take longer to learn but may be more musically and spiritually satisfying in the long run. Helping the assembly to sing the texts that belong to them is, after all, the greatest service parish musicians can give a parish.

Plan far in advance what is to be introduced. By taking time in the summer, for example, to decide specifically which new piece will be used on which exact day, plans can be made to ensure careful preparation. New music should not be taught every Sunday; after deciding all of what needs to be learned, the parish's saturation point must be determined and respected. Perhaps an initial evaluation of the repertoire and a list of new additions will lead to a two- or three-year plan for teaching the new pieces. A delicate balance between the new and the familiar needs to be maintained to keep the assembly singing.

INTRODUCING NEW MUSIC

There is no single correct way for introducing new music. It will help the assembly, though, if a routine or standard procedure is eventually established. The routine will maximize participation and, by its occasional repetition, assure the assembly that it is not going to all this trouble to sing this song only once.

Some musicians or choirs will play through or sing a piece in the weeks prior to its introduction to the assembly. This may be helpful, but it is not substitute for the assembly's own singing. The assembly is less apt to sing a piece it has vaguely heard before than one it has actually sung, line by line.

Those who teach the assembly should be sincere, never condescending, and able to lead with strong, clear voices. While learning, the assembly should be supported instrumentally, both melodically and harmonically. Often, in an attempt to "help" the congregation, the organist or ensemble plays only the melody, but the lack of harmonic foundation may make this a less effective way of learning. When people become more confident with the piece, let them hear their own voices rather than the amplified voice of the cantor.

Here is one example of a plan for the thorough introduction of a new hymn:

One week prior to use: Before Mass, teach the hymn one phrase at a time. Then sing through the whole work. Briefly dwell on harder phrases as needed.

First week that the song is used in worship: Rehearse the piece before Mass again. Sing all the verses when it is used in the liturgy (this reinforces the learning).

The next week: Use the hymn if possible. Again, sing all the verses. If necessary, sing through the hymn before Mass begins.

The third week: Don't use the hymn.

The fourth week: Use the hymn (all verses) in the liturgy, but with no rehearsal before Mass. Several weeks later: Use the hymn (all verses) in the liturgy, but with no rehearsal.

VARIED REPETITION

One key to building and sustaining the parish repertoire is varied repetition. When preparing music for the year's liturgies, creatively work in the "standards" so that they stay fresh in the people's minds. Don't be afraid to repeat successful pieces, familiar or new — they become the foundations of the repertoire. At the same time, don't abandon an unfamiliar piece for an extended period of time and expect it to remain on the tips of people's tongues until it is used again. Repetition is important to the assembly's learning new music. It may be tedious to some, particularly the music who ministers at several Masses each weekend, but it ensures that the congregation will be able to fulfill its ministry as singers. Just as a choir should never sing an under-rehearsed piece, so the assembly should not be expected to sing without the necessary preparation.

SINGING A NEW SONG

Throughout the listing, categorizing, prioritizing, planning, learning, teaching and rehearsing, we should not forget why we need to build and sustain a good parish repertoire for liturgy: As members of the body of Christ, we are called to rejoice in our new life in Christ. Filled with that life, we seek to make all things new. Our liturgy — especially its music — both reflects and fuels this constant renewal. Through care and sensitivity on the part of parish musicians and the liturgy board, assemblies can learn new music without difficulty. Given good, solid music to learn and thoughtful ways by which to learn it, the people of God can indeed take great joy in singing a new song to the Lord.

Article appeared in Liturgy 90, vol. 24, #7, a publication of Liturgy Training Publications, 1800 No. Hermitage Ave., Chicago IL 60622-1101. Reprinted with permission Copyright © 1993 Archdiocese of Chicago. All rights reserved.
Word on Worship
Newsletter

In This Issue:

• Environment & Art in Catholic Worship
• BCL Update
• Seasonal Decorating
• Adding Music to a Parish Repertoire

Future Issues

• The Creative; The Usual?
• The Spirit of the Lectionary of Masses with Children

Worship Office
100 Linden Avenue
Irvington, NJ 07111