



I. INTRODUCTION

While there is no place in the liturgy for virtuosity for its own sake, artistry is valued, and an individual singer can effectively lead the assembly, by attractively proclaiming the Word of God in the psalm sung between the readings, as well as leading the assembly in other singing. However, the voice of the cantor should never dominate or overshadow the voice of the assembly.

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (2003) speaks of two distinct roles which we have come to know as the combined duties of the cantor. The first role, (psalmist), is to sing the Psalm or other biblical canticle that comes between the readings (*GIRM* #102).

The second role, (cantor), is to lead and sustain the singing of the faithful in other parts of the mass when there is no choir. (*GIRM* #103). There is no mention in *GIRM* of solo singing as part of the cantors' duties.

Especially when there is no possibility of setting up even a small choir, provision should be made for one or two trained cantors. "The singer will present some simpler musical setting, with the people taking part, and can lead and support the faithful as far as is needed. The presence of such a singer is desirable even in churches which have a choir for those celebrations in which the choir cannot take part, but which may fittingly be performed with some solemnity and therefore with singing." (1967, *Instruction on Music In the Liturgy*).

Although a cantor cannot enhance the service of worship in the same way as a choir, a trained and competent cantor can perform an important ministry by leading the assembly in common sacred song and responsorial singing.

Because singing is an integral part of the Eucharistic celebration, the role of the cantor is a very important one.

II REQUIREMENTS

To fulfill their function correctly, cantors should possess singing talent and an aptitude for correct pronunciation and diction (*GIRM* #102). They should be fully initiated members of the community and be of sufficient maturity and competency to undertake this ministry.

III SEATING AND ATTIRE

The cantor is used to animate the singing of the entire assembly. This requires visual contact between the song leader and the congregation.



Norms for the Ministry of Cantor/Psalmist

Apart from the singing of the Responsorial Psalm, which normally occurs at the ambo, the stand for the cantor or song leader is distinct from the ambo, which is reserved for the proclamation of the Word of God.

In the Diocese of the United States of America, acolytes, altar servers, readers, and other lay ministers may wear the alb or other suitable vesture or other appropriate and dignified clothing (*GIRM* #339). Cantors should dress appropriately for this important leadership role.

IV. TRAINING

Cantors should have the basic musical skills necessary for this artistic ministry. This would include the ability to sing clearly, in tune, and in the language of the assembly. Additionally, cantors should have a basic knowledge of the Church's liturgical norms and regulations as well as a basic understanding of the Church's liturgical ministries and arts. A knowledge of the development of the liturgical year would also be beneficial.

Since a great portion of the cantor's most important duties are in proclaiming the Word of God, reference should be made to the *Diocesan Norms for the Ministry of Reader* for those portions, which are applicable.

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