

The Ministers of Music

Yours is a share
in the work of the Lord's Spirit
who draws us together into one,
who makes harmony out of discord,
who sings in our hearts
the lyric of all that is holy.

Yours is the joy of sounding that first note
which brings the assembly to its feet,
ready to praise God.

Yours is to impart
a "quality of joy and enthusiasm"
that cannot be gained in any other way.

Yours is a ministry
that reaches the deepest recesses
of the human heart;
your work is soul stirring.

Yours is none other than the Lord's song;
you draw us into that canticle of divine praise
sung throughout the ages
in the halls of heaven.

You help us to respond to God's word,
to acclaim the Gospel,
to sing of our salvation in Christ.

Yours is a ministry
that gathers our many voices
into one grand choir of praise.

Come to your work
from your personal prayer.

Let your rehearsals begin
with prayer in common.
Let your practice be marked
by unanimity in spirit and in ideals.

Be gentle in correcting one another:
the kingdom will not fall on a flatted note.

Open your choir to those
whom the Lord has blessed with musical gift;
help the not so gifted
to discern the talents that are theirs.

Rehearse the Lord's song
with the reverence it is due.

Take care
to study the scriptures for the liturgy
in which you will serve:
know well the word that calls forth our praise.

Let the lyrics of your songs be strong,
true, and rooted in the scriptures;
those who sing the Lord's word
sing the Lord's song.

Make no room for the trite,
the maudlin, the sentimental.

Open your hearts and voices
to new songs
worthy of God's people at prayer.

Let your repertoire change
as all living things must,
but so much
that the song of God's people is lost.

Be ambitious for the higher gifts,
but not beyond your gifts;
respect the range of talent
the Lord has given you and your community.

Think first of the assembly's song,
for this is the song you serve.

Let your music
be always the servant of the Lord,
of God people,
of the divine service they offer.

Let the service of your music
always compliment
but never overshadow
the people's ritual prayer.

Let your performance become a prayer,
and your art a gift.

Let technique become no idol,
but simply a tool
for honing the beauty of your gift.

Remember that your ministry
is ever an emptying out of yourself;
when the solo is assigned to another,
let that singer's offering
become your prayer.

When no one comments on the new motet,
be thankful that your work
led the people to God,
not to you.

When the assembly will not sing,
be patient with them
and with yourselves;
the Lord's song is sometimes a quiet one
and silence precedes every hymn.

Waste no time wondering,
"Do you think they liked it?"
but ask at all times,
"Did it help them all and us to pray?"

When your ministry leads you to music,
it has led you astray.
When your ministry leads you to the Lord,
it has brought you home.

When your brothers and sisters
thank and praise you for your work,
take delight in the song their prayer has become,
and rejoice in the work
the Lord has accomplished through you.

Be faithful in the work you do,
for through it the Lord saves His people.