

**RESOLUTION OF THE MEMBERS OF THE
DIRECTOR OF MUSIC MINISTRIES DIVISION (DMMD)
ON THE USE OF PRE-RECORDED MUSIC
IN THE LITURGY
July 12, 1991**

We, the member of the National Association of Pastoral Musicians, Director of Music Ministries Division (DMMD), take the position that the singing of the liturgical assembly should be led by live musicians, and not by devices that provide pre-recorded accompaniment.

Because the liturgy is an encounter between the God of Life and the human beings created in God's image, its modes of expression ought to be authentic expressions of living persons.

"The liturgy is a complexus of signs expressed by living human beings. Music, being preeminent among those signs, ought to be 'live.'" While recorded music, therefore, might be used as an aid to teaching of new music, it should, as a general norm, never be used within the liturgy to replace the congregation, the choir, the organist, or the instrumentalist."¹

In the absence of instrumental accompaniment for the song of the congregation, the singing of the liturgy should be led by an unaccompanied cantor or groups of singers, using the "live" human voice.

We recognize that the liturgical documents provide some exceptions to the norm of live music in the liturgy. "Recorded music may be used to accompany the community's song during a procession out-of-doors and, when used carefully, Masses with children. Occasionally it might be used as an aid to prayer, for example, during long periods of silence in a communal celebration of reconciliation. It may never become a substitute for the community's song, however, as in the case of the responsorial psalm after a reading from Scripture or during the optional hymn of praise after communion."²

"A pre-recorded sound track is sometimes used as a feature of contemporary 'electronic music' composition. When combined with live voices and/or instruments, it is an integral part of the performance and, therefore, it is a legitimate use of pre-recorded music."³

To replace live musicians with pre-recorded music would be akin to replacing live homilists with recordings of theologians. Just as the homilist must hear the word of God and proclaim it with a knowledge and understanding of the community, so too is the musician to lead the assembly's song with a sensitivity both to the text and to the particular assembly that is singing. Different times and seasons affect the way that a particular piece of music is to be sung. Tempo and volume or accompaniment may vary according to the size of the assembly. The different thoughts and moods expressed in a hymn call for different ways of accompanying and leading the congregation from verse to verse. Pre-recorded music cannot take any of these factors into account.

We therefore find no use for devices that provide pre-recorded organ or other instrumental accompaniments via a musical retrieval system (i.e. record player, tape player, compact disk player, etc.). In particular, we deplore the manufacture, advertising and sale of devices designed explicitly to provide pre-recorded instrumental accompaniment for the singing of the assembly during liturgical celebrations.

We call on other organizations, such as the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, the Federation of diocesan Liturgical Commissions, Conference of Roman Catholic Cathedral Musicians, the American Guild of Organists, as well as diocesan liturgical and music commissions, to join us in the effort to promote live musical leadership in the liturgy.

1 Liturgical Music Today (1982), 60.

2 LMT 61.

3 LMT62 - An example of "contemporary 'electronic music composition" is Creation by Daniel Pinkham, and Richard Feliciano's Pentecost Sunday.