

# WORK OF THE PEOPLE: THE CATHOLIC MASS

## SNAPSHOT 5: SINGING AS PRAYER

### VIDEO SUMMARY

Singing is one way of praying together, and it is an integral part of our Sunday Mass. Song enlivens our worship and gives glory to God. Our full, conscious, and active participation in the singing helps us grow in our relationship with God and one another. Singing together as an assembly accomplishes three things. First, it adds beauty to our liturgy. Our Catholic musical tradition is rich and diverse, and liturgical texts take on new life when set to music. Second, singing reminds us of our unity – we make one joyful noise together. Singing at the liturgy is not for entertainment or comparison with others. Our individual vocal talents vary, but the sound of a unified assembly is greater than the sum of its parts. Third, singing adds solemnity to our worship. A beautifully sung text reveals Christ to us in a special way.

### KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Song heightens our prayer by adding beauty and solemnity.
- Singing together unifies us as a community and reminds us that we are one Body of Christ.
- Some texts of the Mass are really made to be sung.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What are the most important parts to be sung in the liturgy? Can you do these “by heart”?
- Does your assembly sing well? If not, what are some ways to improve this?
- Do you ever find yourself singing or humming something from Mass long after it is over? Do you find that texts stick with you longer if they are sung?

### PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- Listen to the voice of the assembly at Mass. When the whole community is singing, try to blend your voice with the others.
- Take some time before Mass to read and pray the text of one of the hymns to be sung.
- After Mass, identify a sung phrase (for example, the refrain of the Psalm) to mentally carry with you through the coming week.

### WHAT DOES THE CHURCH SAY?

- “One cannot find anything more religious and more joyful in sacred celebrations than a whole congregation expressing its faith and devotion in song. Therefore the active participation of the whole people, which is shown in singing, is to be carefully promoted.” (*Musicam Sacram*, no. 16)
- “The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art. The main reason for this pre-eminence is that, as sacred song united to the words, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy ... Sacred music is to be considered the more holy in proportion as it is more closely connected with the liturgical action, whether it adds delight to prayer, fosters unity of minds, or confers greater solemnity upon the sacred rites.” (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 112)
- “The Christian faithful who come together as one in expectation of the Lord’s coming are instructed by the Apostle Paul to sing together Psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles (cf. Col 3:16). Singing is the sign of the heart’s joy (cf. Acts 2:46). Thus St. Augustine says rightly, ‘Singing is for one who loves,’ and there is also an ancient proverb: ‘Whoever sings well prays twice over.’ Great importance should therefore be attached to the use of singing in the celebration of the Mass.” (*The General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 39-40)