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Liturgical Singing and the Role of Choir in the Liturgy

“Awake, my soul! Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn! I will give thanks to you, O Lord among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations. For your steadfast love is great to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds.” (Ps.57:8-10)

“Music and song can often make certain moments unique in a person’s life, because they become a precious memory that has marked their lives” With these words Pope Francis encouraged the choristers to continue giving voice to the emotions that lie at the heart of the Church community. At the same time he warned them saying, “ You are the musical animators of the whole congregation. Don’t take its place. Depriving the people of God of the chance to sing with you and bear witness to the Church’s communal prayer.” The Holy Father also commended the choral singers for studying the ways to “promote prayer in liturgical celebration.”

The Syro-Malabar liturgy is one which gives great importance to music and singing. The active participation of the community makes the liturgy lively and promotes Divine experience. The role of the choir members is very important to give leadership to the singing and prayer. I gratefully appreciate the choir members in the various Parishes/Missions/Proposed Missions for their selfless service in making the Liturgy lively and active.

Liturgical Music flows from love. The singing of the Church comes ultimately out of love. It is the utter depth of love that produces the singing. As St. Augustine says, “ Singing is a lover’s thing. In so saying, we come again to say the Trinitarian interpretation of Church music. The Holy Spirit is love and it is He who produces the singing. He is the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit who draws us into love for Christ and so leads to the Father.” Ultimately liturgical music rises up out of the love that responds to God’s love made flesh in Christ, the love that for us went unto death. It is a higher form of proclamation of the Word.

The Liturgical Music is different from other religious Music. There are many devotional songs which are used in various occasions, which also help people to pray and also to go deeper in to the Word. But there should be a clarity of the Liturgical songs. The Council of Trent made a norm that liturgical music should be at the service of the Word; the use of instruments was substantially reduced; and the difference between secular and sacred music was clearly affirmed. Pope Francis said, “I recommend that you help the whole people of God to sing with conscious and active participation in the liturgy. This is important: closeness to the people of God.”

With all these in mind, the Eparchial Commission for Church Choir is arranging an online training programme (Meeting ID: 920 5284 3796, Passcode: Choir, <https://zoom.us/j/92052843796?pwd=OE5LWGY4MnM5Uys5TXM0a1JRWUp5UT09>) for all those who are part of the Church choir in the Parishes/Missions/Proposed Missions and for all those who wish to be a part of it. It is mainly to learn the importance of liturgical singing and the role of choir in the liturgy. Rev. Dr. Pauly, St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor, has agreed to take class on Saturday, 30th January 2021 from 5.30 pm to 7.30 pm. Please share this message with all the choir members and those who wish to be part of the choir and encourage them to participate in the class. It will be great if you encourage the children also to join the programme.

With the assurance of my prayers and good wishes,

Yours in Lord and our God,

+ Joseph Srampickal

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NB: This circular must be reached to all the faithful of our Eparchy on or before 29th January 2021.

