



**OFFICE FOR DIVINE WORSHIP
ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA**

**A PASTORAL SUGGESTION WITH REGARD
TO THE USE OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS DURING LENT**

There is a long standing liturgical practice, which is also described in the current edition of the *Roman Missal* (2000/2003), that the use of the organ and other musical instruments be used during Lent only to support the sung parts of the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy. *Paschalis Sollemnitatis* (Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, January 16, 1988), number 17 gives the reason for this practice, "This is in order that the penitential character of the season be preserved."

Number 313 of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* states, "In Lent the playing of the organ and musical instruments is allowed only in order to support the singing. Exceptions, however, are *Laetare* Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent), Solemnities, and Feasts." And in the Proper of Time for Lent of the *Roman Missal*, number 4 states, "During Lent, it is not permitted to decorate the altar with flowers, and the use of musical instruments is allowed only so as to support the singing. Nevertheless, *Laetare* Sunday (the Fourth Sunday of Lent), Solemnities, and Feasts are exceptions to this rule."

Some pastoral direction on this liturgical practice is opportune for several reasons. Effort should be made to follow the direction of the *Roman Missal* on the use of musical instruments during Lent only to support singing. This has not been the typical practice in many parishes and institutions for some time. And, liturgical music is an integral element in the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy and following this norm fosters the penitential character of Lent in combination with the biblical readings, prayers and color of the prescribed for this "venerable and sacred time" (Prayer over the Offerings, First Sunday of Lent).

So, as a rule during Lent, instrumental music should not be planned for the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy. However, when instrumental music is employed to complete the purpose of the sung music to accompany a liturgical rite or to introduce and resolve a hymn, then instrumental music is acceptable. During Lent, preludes and postludes are more appropriately sung pieces.