

parlors, is to be devoted entirely to parish purposes. The second floor will contain five class rooms and a room for domestic science purposes. On the third floor there will be seven class rooms perfect in every way. Five large windows open into each one so as to furnish an abundance of light and air. Under the supervision of Father Dominic Donnelly, O. P., one of the assistant pastors, the work is steadily progressing. Father Donnelly, whose ability as an architect is well known in the Dominican parishes of the West, has been concerned with the erection of other buildings, most notable of which was the new priory of St. Dominic's parish in San Francisco.

The sixty-two years existence of St. Vincent Ferrer's as a parish, has been a period of unparalleled progress. In its beginning it possessed a small wooden church, whose proudest boast was whitewashed walls. Today its stately church and school may be accounted the pride of the city of Vallejo. Divine Providence which in the past fostered and cared for this parish in a remarkable manner will not fail it in the future. The work that is being carried on by the humble servants of the Lord, is God's work, and God, the Giver of all good things, is always mindful of His own.

—William McClory, O. P.

### DOMINICANS AND THE "MOTU PROPRIO"

**W**HEN, in 1903, Pius X issued his decree, "Motu Proprio," regarding church music, the Catholic musical world was more or less taken aback. True, staunch defenders of its principles arose. But the great number of dissenters only proved the crying need of just such legislation. These people either did not or would not see conditions as they were—and ought to be. The Holy Father, on the contrary, realized that the churches were being desecrated by displays of profane music. Choirs seemed to have lost sight of the fact that they were participants in a religious service. In short, Truth was being assailed in a very flagrant though subtle way. Hence it behooved the Guardian of Truth to protect It and demand Its rights.

This is why the "Motu Proprio" is a question of interest for Dominicans—Truth's "watch-dogs." The Dominicans, who have always been foremost in the war on error, both as defenders

of Truth as well as exponents of a special liturgical chant, ought especially to be energetic in bringing about the fulfilment of the "Motu Proprio."

When Pius X issued this decree, he wrote: "We will with the fulness of our Apostolic Authority that the force of law be given and we do by our present handwriting impose its scrupulous observance on all." The General of Truth's forces has given the command. Is it not a duty for his army to follow his instructions? God having placed him in the watch-tower, he can see when error is at hand and just how deadly are her blows. We, below on the battle line sworn to Truth's defence, have merely to obey orders.

In this case, Truth is being assailed by inartistic and inappropriate music in churches. In fact it is inartistic largely because it is inappropriate, since art is but one of Truth's manifold expressions. Art to be art must be true. And art of any kind must be perfect accord with its surroundings. For

example, there is no question but that the rendition of "Celestial Aida" by John McCormack would be real art—taking art in itself. But it makes a great difference whether he sing it at the Metropolitan Opera or in St. Patrick's Cathedral. There would be a jarring of our sensibilities should he execute it during a Solemn High Mass in the latter place. It would be out of harmony with the surroundings and consequently fail in attaining the end of all art—the good, the true, the beautiful.

It is for the express purpose of attaining the essence of these, God Himself, that music is permitted and introduced into liturgical functions. By music's power the Church desires to aid those attending her services to reach to a better knowledge and acquire a more fervent love of God. The Church, to accomplish this, varies her music according to her liturgical moods, having the music accentuate the meaning of the various texts and sounding the dominant note of every service. Whether it be the haunting beauty of the "Dies irae" beseeching mercy for a departed soul, or the florid "Alleluia" announcing Christ's Resurrection, the music of the Church has but one aim—to praise and honor God by uniting our souls to Him in prayer. Like everything else connected with liturgy, music is prayer. If it is not, it has no place in church. "My house is a house of prayer" (St. Luke xix, 46).

Keeping this in mind, there is little, if any danger of introducing the cheap, and often sentimental secular music into liturgical functions. Only too often those connected with our choirs seem to forget the liturgical part which music must play in the church service. They imagine a solemn service is a mere opportunity afforded them for the

display of their talent or power. But instead, by discarding the Church's standard, display to much better advantage their very bad taste, if not their insubordination. Surely nothing but cheap sentiment and maudlin display can supplant the exquisite offertory of the "Requiem" or the "Benedictus" and "Ego sum" by "Face to Face," or the expressive processional antiphons of Palm Sunday by "The Palms."

In many cases these abuses are due to ignorance. But in many more those responsible will tell you, "it is the only way to get the people," or "it is very effective." The one statement is a calumny; the other a frank confession of vitiated taste. For when our people begin to go to church for no other reason than to hear the music, it is time either to close the church or throw out the organist. The church is not a concert-hall; it is the temple of God. And within its sacred walls no music is more effective than the liturgical chant. And no efforts on the part of clergy and choirs ought to be spared to have its full and proper interpretation.

While all these principles governing church music are general in their scope, they apply in a special way to us Dominicans. This is so not only because of our duties as defenders of Truth, but also because of our own traditional chant. By reason of the fact that we have the care of parish churches in this country, we have exceptional opportunities for making this chant known and loved. In fact, our parish choirs are about the only places that offer us an opportunity of using our chant, or of making it generally known. Because of its distinctive features—for instance, the manner of responding to the priest—its use must create a very real Dominican atmosphere in our churches.

And to have a Dominican atmosphere is to feel God's presence on the altar. Thus, in our official capacity as "watch-dogs" of Truth we can exert no small influence in bringing about the fulfilment of the late Pontiff's decree, which, by the way, was endorsed in the first encyclical of the present Pope.

In this work, however, it is evident that success depends on the cooperation of the choirs, especially that of the choir-director and organist. Hence, a few suggestions for them may not seem amiss. Let every choir-director and organist at least read the "*Motu Proprio*." If they cannot get a copy of it, it is an easy matter to read the excellent commentary on it in the "*Catholic Encyclopedia*." Then, in setting about to carry out the decree's instructions, let them take special note that the Pontifical regulations forbid the Prayers, Preface, Pater noster, etc., being accompanied; that the organ must not be used during Advent, Lent and requiem Masses, except to accompany the chant. Special attention, also, is called to the withdrawal of women from the choirs. They are the best of workers to be sure, and can be relied on for rehearsals. But that is not the point. If no other singers could be obtained, it might be a good point. But in our parishes where the men's societies are so well organized, there ought to be little difficulty in persuading enough men to offer their services for choir work. Allied to this is the matter of training the choir boys. This particular phase of the work, however, —training the children in liturgical chant—is worthy of a special article.

But the most important point of all is that the organist or choir-director have sufficient knowledge of Plain Chant to put a choir through Mass creditably. They owe it to their position. What business have they playing or directing in a Catholic church if

they do not know what they have to play and direct? In this regard, non-Catholics put us to shame. They know the services of every sect, so they will be prepared to do credit to themselves in case they are ever called to the respective churches. In some cases, even, they know the Catholic service, and that much better than many of our own organists. For such people it is a matter of business. For us it is more—it is a matter of religion.

This fact seems very generally to be overlooked—in spite of Rome's words. Those in charge of our choirs make it too much a matter of personal like and dislike. The contrary cannot be too deeply impressed on them. The Church is the one to decide what ought to be and what ought not to be done during her religious services. All the participants need bother about is carrying out the Church's commands in this regard. Let all, therefore, in regard to this "*Motu Proprio*," heed the decree's closing words:

"It is recommended to choir-masters, singers, members of the clergy, superiors of seminaries, ecclesiastical institutions, and religious communities, parish priests and rectors of churches, canons of collegiate churches and cathedrals, and above all, to the diocesan Ordinaries to favor with all zeal these prudent reforms, long desired and demanded with united voice by all, so that the authority of the Church, which herself has repeatedly proposed them, and now inculcates them, may not fall into contempt."

"Rome has spoken; the case is ended," say we with St. Augustine. She has pointed out to us what is true and what is false in church music. Consequently, as defenders of her Truth our line of action is evident.

—Clement Donovan, O. P.