



## Pope to Choirs: 'Help community sing, don't replace its voice'



Pope Francis invites choirs and singers around the world to promote the Church community's participation and prayer during liturgical celebrations, rather than replacing its voice.

By Devin Watkins

"You have awoken the Vatican!"

With those joyful words, Pope Francis expressed his appreciation for the musical art shown by participants in the 3rd International Meeting of Choirs, during a Saturday audience in the Paul VI Hall.

"Your music and song are truly an instrument of evangelization to the extent that you bear witness to the depth of the Word of God, which touches people's hearts, and to the extent that you assist in the celebration of the Sacraments, in particular the Holy Eucharist, allowing us to perceive the beauty of Paradise."

Some 7,000 musicians and singers are participating in the Meeting of Choirs, a three-day event organized by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization.

### Liturgical animators

The Pope encouraged the choristers to continue giving voice to the emotions that lie at the heart of the Church community.

“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.”

Pope Francis warned choirs against the temptation of letting their talent outshine the Church community, discouraging the people in the pews from actively participating during Mass.

“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 commended the choral singers for studying ways to “promote prayer in liturgical celebrations.”

### Popular piety

Pope Francis also invited them to give space to more popular forms of religious expression. “Feasts of patron saints, processions, dances, and the religious songs of our peoples are themselves a real heritage of religiosity that is worth appreciating and supporting, because they are nonetheless an action of the Holy Spirit at the heart of the Church.”

Finally, Pope Francis said music should act as an instrument for promoting unity. He said music can help “make the Gospel efficacious in today’s world, through a beauty that still captivates and makes it possible to believe, entrusting ourselves to the love of the Father.”