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EDITORIAL

Motets

By William Mahrt

The Church acknowledges Gregorian chant as specially suited to the Roman liturgy: therefore, other things being equal, it should be given first place [principem locum] in liturgical services.

But other kinds of sacred music, especially polyphony, are by no means excluded from liturgical celebrations, so long as they accord with the spirit of the liturgical action, as laid down in Art. 30.¹

In the Latin Church the pipe organ is to be held in high esteem, for it is the traditional musical instrument which adds a wonderful splendor to the Church's ceremonies and powerfully lifts up man's mind to God and to higher things.²



The Second Vatican Council reiterated the tradition that Gregorian chant is the fundamental music of the Roman Rite. Indeed, it is constitutive of the rite itself: by tradition, everything to be spoken aloud is to be sung; thus, an introit as it stands in the missal is the text of a Gregorian chant, and not just a text that happens to be set to Gregorian chant; its very entrance into the liturgy was as a chant. Likewise, each part of the liturgy has a particular Gregorian melody to which it is sung, specifying the character of that part and distinguishing it from the other parts.

A sung Mass is thus complete when sung only in chant, with people, choir, lectors, ministers, and celebrant chanting parts suitable to their different roles. The chants differ as their functions differ: for example, meditation chants which accompany the lessons are highly

elaborate settings of their texts, a style conducive to meditation, while processional chants are somewhat more concise and project a greater sense of rhythmic motion, and so on. The tradition of chant is so extensive that there is a normative set of pieces for almost any occasion. In the course of a

Gregorian chant is the fundamental music of the Roman Rite.

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¹ Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, ¶116 <http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html>; Article 30 reads: "To promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes. And at the proper times all should observe a reverent silence."

² *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, ¶120.

year, a choir which sings the whole Mass in Gregorian chant for just the Sundays and holy days of obligation sings well over three hundred pieces for the Proper of the Mass, while a congregation which sings six ordinaries sings about twenty-five different melodies in the course of the year.

Yet the council also gave a privileged place to polyphony and organ music. But if Gregorian chant is normative, what place is there for polyphony? The repertory of classical polyphony suggests answers to that question. Polyphony can be divided into three types: 1) complete settings of the Mass Ordinary, 2) motets, and 3) polyphonic settings of propers, whether for Mass or Divine Office (for the office, settings of Magnificats in all eight modes,³ hymns, psalms, lamentations and a smattering of other genres; for the Mass, polyphonic settings of the chants of the propers, as in the large cycles of Isaac and Dufay; complete cycles of freely composed propers, such as that of Byrd; cycles of one genre for the year, for example, the offertories of Palestrina and Lassus; and settings of individual propers as in the works of Senfl, Gallus, and numerous others).

If Gregorian chant is normative, what place is there for polyphony?

The employment of the polyphonic Mass Ordinary and polyphonic propers is more or less evident: mainly they replace the chants with the same text and function.⁴ But the use of motets is more varied, both in history and present practice, and so is worth some discussion.

“Motet” comes from the French *mot*, “word,” since a motet is a piece based upon an added text. In the Middle Ages, this meant literally that a tenor voice would sing a chant with its own text, while one or more upper parts would sing additional texts, a different text for each voice part. But even with motets of the Renaissance there is still a sense that the motet is an added text, since its text is not prescribed by the liturgy but is chosen voluntarily for the occasion. While the texts of motets, are often drawn from the psalms, the church’s canonical book of songs, the route by which they are adopted passes through liturgical use, many texts having been borrowed from the Divine Office—particularly responsories from Matins, for example, *O magnum mysterium* or *O vos omnes*, and antiphons to the Magnificat from Vespers, e.g., *O sacrum Convivium*. Motets are also based upon favorite prayer texts, for example, *Ave Maria*. Other motets stem from a tradition of devotional texts, for example *O bone Jesu* (by Palestrina,⁵ Ingeneri, Monteverdi, Anerio, Compère, Dering, Schütz, and even Brahms); some of these include a series of brief acclamations, partly drawn from scripture, whose compilation is traditionally ascribed to St. Bernard. A special genre is the gospel motet, whose text is drawn from a gospel proper to a particular day. The liturgical model for such a motet is the occasional communion antiphon based upon the gospel of the day. This, in turn has a precedent in the Divine Office, where that same gospel text recurs throughout the day: the office of Matins has a homily upon the gospel of the day, and the antiphon to the Benedictus at Lauds and the antiphon

³ As a text, the Magnificat is ordinary—it is the same for all vespers; but when sung, it participates in the nature of propers, since its mode is determined by the proper antiphon to which it is sung.

⁴ While the function of the polyphonic Mass Ordinary is clear, there are problems with its employment in the ordinary form; these will be addressed on another occasion.

⁵ There is a setting in six parts of *O Bone Jesu* by Palestrina; one in four parts, often attributed to Palestrina, is by Ingeneri.

to the Magnificat at Vespers are drawn from it. There was in Spain in the sixteenth century a requirement of preaching on the day's gospel text outside of Mass on Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday during Lent, and motets were composed reflecting these same gospel texts; thus the Spanish repertory is filled with motets upon the Lenten gospels, many beginning *In illo tempore*, the formulaic beginning of a gospel reading.⁶

Nevertheless the liturgical sources for the texts do not necessarily reflect the actual occasion of the performance of the motets. Rather, motets have a voluntary character, the place of their performance often not being prescribed, but freely chosen for the particular occasion.⁷ In the history of the motet, there have been a wide variety of such occasions: sometimes motets were composed for particular important observances ecclesiastical or civic, the dedication of a church, the calling of a council, the installation of a bishop or pope, even the meal of a pope; sometimes they were sung during great civic processions or at such devotions as Benediction.

In the liturgy of the Mass, three places were often the occasion for motets: the offertory and communion and the elevation of the Blessed Sacrament. The time of the offertory might be extended by additional ceremonies, such as an offertory procession or incensation, and sometimes

Motets have a voluntary character, the place of their performance not being prescribed, but freely chosen for the particular occasion.

the incensation took extra time, since individuals in the sanctuary were incensed separately. This extra time was originally provided for by melismatic verses to the offertory chant. These began to fall out of use in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries though one, that for the Requiem Mass, *Domine Jesu Christe*; presumably the extra time required for the incensation of the coffin still required it

regularly. In the absence of such verses, the extra time at the offertory was the occasion for a motet; after the proper offertory chant, a motet suited to the day or the season or just to general devotional purposes was sung. The same is true for the communion: when there were many to receive communion, the antiphon was prescribed with verses from the psalm, just as the introit was, to be sung for the duration of the rite. These also fell out of use, and so a motet could serve that function. The elevation of the Mass was the occasion for motets: the French king in the sixteenth century prescribed that in his kingdom, a motet on *O salutaris hostia* should be sung at the elevation. Such "elevations" can be seen in Masses of Josquin Des Prez and Pierre de La Rue and still in the French tradition in Franck's *Panis Angelicus* and Fauré's *Pie Jesu*, in Masses of these composers.⁸

Such use of motets can be maintained today, though the elevation motet has been pretty well replaced by the Eucharistic acclamation. The polyphonic motet can be a voluntary addition to the

⁶ Cf. Todd M. Borgerding, *The Motet and Spanish Religiosity, c 1550–1610* (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1997).

⁷ Cf. Anthony M. Cummings, "Toward an Interpretation of the Sixteenth-Century Motet," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 34 (1981), 43–59.


⁸ Cistercian books of the twentieth century include elevation chants: *O salutaris Hostia, Ave verum Corpus* for feasts of the Blessed Virgin, and *Pie Jesu Domine* for Masses for the dead; cf. *Kyriale seu Ordinarium Missae (ex Graduali Cisterciensi)* [Westmalle, Belgium: Typis Cisterciensis, 1933], pp. 6–7, 13–14; *Graduale Cisterciense* (Westmalle, 1960), p. 123*.

normative chant propers at the offertory and communion. When there is an offertory procession or when the altar is incensed, and the time of the rite is longer than the chant, a motet suffices to provide a musical complement to the liturgical action. Likewise, the communion time in our churches often requires more music than the proper chant provides. Even when the communion chant is alternated with a few psalm verses, there may be ample time for a motet as well.

This suggests a liturgical principle: that music which accompanies a liturgical action should last for the duration of that action, and this explains why, according to Anthony Cummings, the use of motets in the sixteenth century was mainly in the Mass, while the use of polyphonic settings of proper chants was more prevalent in the office⁹—in the office, the music constitutes the liturgical action itself; it determines its own duration; in the Mass the liturgical rite at the altar requires a variable amount of time, and thus music must be adjusted to the requirements of the rite. In present practice, this can be accommodated by additional psalm verses, but also at the offertory and communion by motets.

It should be emphasized that this use of motets is not the same as “*alius cantus aptus*,”¹⁰ the indiscriminate replacement of Mass Propers with practically anything else. Rather, the integrity of the propers is maintained, even though they might be sung to simplified melodies, and the polyphonic music comes as an amplification and a complement to the proper chants. As one congregation member said to me, “the polyphony makes the chant sound so pure, and the chant makes the polyphony sound so rich.”

As a complement to the chant, polyphonic music serves a different function in the liturgy: the complexity of parts and the harmony of the whole convey to the listener a sense of cosmic order that is conducive to an interior order, to a meditation that is in harmony with the Creator and creation. It accomplishes this through counterpoint. The normative musical style of classical polyphony is imitation—each voice takes the subject in turn, moving independently from the others and yet in harmony with them. In the face of new styles in the seventeenth century, this style was maintained as an independent style and came to be known as the *stile antico* or the *stile ecclesiastico* (the ancient or ecclesiastical style). The sense of objective and orderly motion which it projects is the basis of its depiction of cosmic order, and yet the resulting harmonies have a way of touching our innermost souls, allowing us to interiorize that sense of cosmic order.

This is why classical polyphony has a privileged place in the music of the church. The place of the organ is very closely related to it. Music for the organ shows the same principles of imitation as does the motet. In fact the early Baroque included forms that consciously embodied the imitative style and are derivative of the motet—the *ricercar*, the *fantasia*, and the *canzona*—the predecessors of the fugue. Organ music can thus serve the same function of a contrapuntal amplification upon the chant when the occasion requires it. Thus classical polyphony and organ music together complement the chant in its close connection with the liturgical action, “whether it adds delight to prayer, fosters unity of minds, or confers greater solemnity upon the sacred rites.”¹¹ 

⁹ Cummings, “Sixteenth-Century Motet,” 55–59.

¹⁰ *Alius cantus aptus* is the fourth option given in the *General Instruction on the Roman Missal* (¶48) for singing the Propers of the Mass; after giving three clear options, the fourth is “any other suitable song”; this provision has effectively eliminated the singing of the propers, until recently, when they are being recovered again.

¹¹ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, ¶112.

ARTICLES

The Psalmody of the Divine Office: A Path to Holiness for the Apostolic Religious

By Dom Mark Daniel Kirby, O.S.B.



Addressing a large assembly of men and women religious on September 9, 2007, Pope Benedict XVI said:

From the monastic tradition the Church has derived the obligation for all religious, and also for priests and deacons, to recite the Breviary. Here too, it is appropriate for men and women religious, priests and deacons—and naturally Bishops as well—to come before God in their daily “official” prayer with hymns and psalms, with thanksgiving and pure petition.

Dear brother priests and deacons, dear Brothers and Sisters in the consecrated life! I realize that discipline is needed, and sometimes great effort as well, in order to recite the Breviary faithfully; but through this *Officium* we also receive many riches: how many times, in doing so, have we seen our weariness and despondency melt away! When God is faithfully praised and worshipped, his blessings are unfailing. . . .

Your primary service to this world must therefore be your prayer and the celebration of the Divine Office. The interior disposition of each priest, and of each consecrated person, must be that of “putting nothing before the Divine Office.” The beauty of this inner attitude will find expression in the beauty of the liturgy, so that wherever we join in singing, praising, exalting and worshipping God, a little bit of heaven will become present on earth.¹

The Heiligenkreuz address to religious was the first time Pope Benedict XVI spoke so clearly of the place of the Divine Office, or Liturgy of the Hours, in the life and mission of all religious. In affirming that the primary service of religious to this world is their “prayer and the celebration of the Divine Office,” the Holy Father placed the other essential elements of the consecrated life in a compelling and challenging perspective.

Citing a key phrase from the *Rule of Saint Benedict*, Pope Benedict XVI invited all religious to the interior disposition of “putting nothing before the Divine Office.”² The application of this principle

Dom Kirby serves at the Monastery of Our Lady of the Cenacle, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

¹ Benedict XVI, “Visit to Heiligenkreuz Abbey, September 9, 2007,” *Sacred Music*, 135 (2008), 36–39; also found at: <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2007/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20070909_heiligenkreuz_en.html>

² ¶43:3, cf. *The Rule of Saint Benedict in Latin and English*, ed. Timothy Fry, O.S.B. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1981), p. 243.

to the reality of daily life in apostolic communities will, necessarily, oblige religious to review their daily round of prayer and work critically and effectively, so as to give priority to what the Holy Father calls the *primary* service of religious to the world.

Wherever religious rise to meet this challenge by embracing the Holy Father's vision of a consecrated life characterized, first of all, by the worthy celebration of the hours, "weariness and despondency will melt away," and "a little bit of heaven will become present on earth."

PSALMODY

In order to respond effectively to the liturgical vision of religious life articulated by Pope Benedict XVI, I will focus on the single most important element of the Divine Office in its various forms: the recitation of the psalter. The Roman Liturgy of the Hours, reformed after the Second Vatican Council in view of the many demands made on the time and energy of the diocesan clergy and apostolic religious, distributes the entire psalter over four weeks. Each hour contains, nonetheless, an element of psalmody. The psalms belong, then, to the very substance of the Liturgy of the Hours.

The psalms, inspired by the Holy Spirit and entrusted to the Children of Israel in view of the day when Christ himself and, after him, his bride, the church, would pray them, are lyrical poems expressing every sentiment of the human heart and directing those sentiments Godwards. The psalms are, at once, universal and personal. Rowland E. Prothero, writing over a hundred years ago, says:

The Psalms are a mirror in which each man sees the motions of his own soul. They express in exquisite words the kinship which every thoughtful heart craves to find with a supreme, unchanging, loving God, who will be to him a protector, guardian, and friend. They utter the ordinary experiences, the familiar thoughts of men; but they give to these a width of range, an intensity, a depth, and an elevation, which transcend the capacity of the most gifted.³



*Liturgy of the Hours in a monastery of
Carthusian nuns.*

*The single most important element of
the Divine Office in its various forms
is the recitation of the psalter.*

An outsider, attending an hour of the Divine Office in any one of your communities, will notice the preponderant place given to the recitation or chant of the psalms and the manner in which the psalmody is carried out. The traditional way of reciting or chanting the psalms, based on the fundamental principle of Hebrew poetry called parallelism, alternates verses of two or exceptionally

³ R.E. Prothero, *The Psalms in Human Life* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1905), p. 2.

three lines with an interval of silence at the heart of each verse. The church has practiced this form of choral psalmody since the time of Pope Saint Gregory the Great (ca. 540–604). Consider the following examples:

Blessed is the man who does not guide his steps by ill counsel, +
 or linger where sinners walk, *
 or, where scornful souls gather, sit down to rest;
 the man whose heart is set on the law of the Lord, *
 on that law, day and night, his thoughts still dwell.
 He stands firm as a tree planted by running water, *
 ready to yield its fruit when the season comes,
 and never shedding its leaf; *
 all that he does will prosper.⁴

RECITING OR CHANTING THE PSALMS

The traditional Gregorian psalm tones, and the various simplified adaptations to the English text inspired by them, are faithful to the essential characteristics of the Hebrew parallelism reproduced in the Latin psalters of the West. What are these characteristics? Each verse is formed of two clauses; an interval of silence follows the cadence at the end of the first clause and leads into the second clause, closing the verse with a final cadence.⁵

The midway interval of silence (normally indicated by an asterisk) fosters contemplative prayer. It makes the rhythm of the psalmody restful and allows the meaning of the words to descend from the mind into the heart. Almost imperceptibly, and by the grace of the Holy Spirit who intercedes for us with ineffable groanings (Rom. 8:26), one begins to experience while reciting the psalms, a quiet union with the Heart of Jesus, only-begotten Son of the Father and eternal High Priest.

Silence is an integral part of choral psalmody.

The most effective way of reciting or chanting the psalms requires that the text be apportioned verse by verse to two choirs, or to one united choir alternating with two or more cantors. One choir responds to the other with a gentle, rhythmic regularity, taking care to observe midway a notable silence, always of the same length. This silence is an integral part of choral psalmody. Great care must be taken lest it become abbreviated, irregular, or in any way treated as being somehow less important than the verbal element of choral prayer.

⁴ Psalm 1, *The Book of Psalms in Latin and English*, tr. Ronald Knox (London: Burnes Oates & Washbourne, 1948), p. 3.

⁵ The American editions of the Liturgy of the Hours, marketed by Catholic Book Publishing Corporation, and other editions derived from them, break with the church's age-old liturgical tradition by not presenting the psalms and canticles in verses. This indefensible editorial decision reveals an egregious ignorance of what choral prayer requires, and has led to confusion in religious communities attempting to use these editions for their common prayer.

SINGING ON ONE NOTE: RECTO TONO

In the Teresian reform of Carmel, in various other reforms, among institutes founded in the wake of the Council of Trent, and among apostolic institutes founded in the nineteenth century, one finds the tradition of chanting the Divine Office on a single sustained note. This is often referred to as *recto tono*, meaning on a straight or unadorned tone. This practice must not be judged as somehow inexpressive, unnatural, or artificial because it is without melodic modulation. It is, rather, the most unadorned form of chant: chant reduced to its simplest expression. As such, it is eminently suited to the ordinary daily choral prayer of a community engaged in apostolic works. Executed well, the *recto tono* recitation of the hours is restful, and pacifying. It can, in effect, foster a contemplative union with the Heart of Jesus that will bear fruit in every apostolic endeavor.

Until fifty years ago, it was not uncommon for institutes of religious women to chant on a single note the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary or of one of the excellent pre-conciliar vernacular adaptations of the Roman Breviary that were widespread before the Second Vatican Council. Where this was practiced with care, respecting the intervals of silence and embracing a moderate and serene rhythm of recitation, the choral office became a daily immersion in the Word of God and an oasis of contemplation in the midst of activity.

CHANTING THE EVANGELICAL COUNSELS

Choral psalmody resembles, at more than one level, the virtues corresponding to the three vows of religion: poverty, chastity, and obedience. It gives corporate expression to the evangelical counsels and, at the same time, impresses them, day after day, more vividly in the heart.

POVERTY: the melodic formula draws upon very limited musical resources. *Recto tono* has but a single note. Modal psalm tones are limited to a certain number of closely related notes and combinations. By resolutely choosing to pray within the limitations of a certain tonal poverty, one enters sacramentally into “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who being rich, became poor, for our sakes; that through his poverty we might become rich” (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9).

Choral psalmody resembles the virtues corresponding to the three vows of religion: poverty, chastity, and obedience.

CHASTITY: the psalmody of the Divine Office is chaste when it abstains from drawing attention to itself. In liturgical psalmody there is nothing that seeks to entertain, to charm, or to possess. One who surrenders to this form of prayer day after day assimilates its attributes. Choral psalmody fosters chastity; it is a school of purity of heart. Rightly does the psalmist pray: *Eloquia Domini, eloquia casta*, “The words of the Lord are chaste words” (Ps. 11:7).

OBEDIENCE: liturgical psalmody is obedient to the sacred text. It obeys the natural accents and verbal harmonics of the inspired Word of God, embracing it, espousing it, and remaining within the limits that it defines. The musical treatment of the psalmody is an ecclesial expression of Our Lady’s response to the Archangel Gabriel in the mystery of the Annunciation: “Be it done unto me according to thy Word” (Luke 1:38).

The psalmody of the hours, executed in organic continuity with the church's tradition of choral prayer, fosters the evangelical virtues in an almost imperceptible but entirely effective way. Just as one becomes what one contemplates, so too does one become what one sings. The psalmody of the Divine Office, held in honor by the church for centuries, is a humble but strong support of the vowed life.

SIMPLICITY AND ABNEGATION

The musical profile of the traditional psalmody is disarmingly simple. One abstains from any subjective interpretation of the melodic formula or of the sentiments contained in the sacred text. One abstains likewise from giving expression to one's personal sentiments of piety, even when these are in harmony with those of the inspired psalmist. This requires detachment and self-abnegation.

The ascetical element involved in choral prayer makes it a school of life and of virtue. The abnegation demanded by the very nature of choral prayer fosters growth in charity, in humility, in courtesy, and in all the other virtues necessary to community life.

The restraint full of respect for the Word of God that marks choral psalmody, and the unadorned and austere beauty that carries it along, fosters within a religious community an atmosphere that draws the heart into a state of vigilant quietude and receptive silence.

BOOKS FOR CHORAL CELEBRATION OF THE DIVINE OFFICE

In 1942, The Liturgical Press at Saint John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota published *The Short Breviary*. A second edition appeared in 1954, and a third in 1962. *The Short Breviary* was a treasury of authentic liturgical prayer, allowing active religious and layfolk to pray with the church. Explanatory notes by Dom Pius Parsch (1884–1954), an Augustinian Canon of Klosterneuberg, presented each of the hours in the context of the Mystery of Salvation, and cast the psalms in a Christological light. The typography and layout of *The Short Breviary* was conceived in view of choral celebration. *The Short Breviary* facilitated the choral chant of the hours by presenting the psalmody in verses of two or exceptionally three lines, marked by a dagger to indicate the flex, and by an asterisk to indicate the mediant. Although the success of *The Short Breviary* was eclipsed after the Second Vatican Council by the first editions of the reformed Divine Office, it set a standard in Catholic liturgical publishing in the United States that post-Conciliar editions never attained.

The musical profile of the traditional psalmody is disarmingly simple.

In 1974, when Catholic Book Publishing began marketing the first American edition of *The Liturgy of the Hours*, prepared by ICEL (the International Commission on English in the Liturgy), it was evident that no attempt had been made to prepare volumes suitable for choral celebration by religious communities. The complete edition, as well as *Christian Prayer*, an abbreviated edition of the reformed office, were obviously designed and produced to meet the needs of the diocesan clergy and of isolated individuals devoted to reading the breviary. In contrast, *The Divine Office*, produced by the episcopal conferences of Australia, England and Wales, Ireland and Scotland, and first published by HarperCollins in 1974, was designed with an eye to its use in choral recitation by religious communities.

In 2007, rendering an invaluable service to the English-speaking church, and to religious communities in particular, The Liturgical Institute at the University of St. Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Illinois, produced *The Mundelein Psalter*, with chant melodies by Father Samuel Weber, O.S.B. Father Weber's psalm tones are entirely faithful to the tonal color of each of the traditional Gregorian modes. Moreover, they espouse the natural accents of the English text in such a way as to render the psalmody intelligent, regular, and peaceful.



The opening of the Second Vatican Council in St. Peter's.

Apart from presenting the psalms and canticles in verses suitable for choral recitation, *The Mundelein Psalter* also offers, in English translation with suitable melodies, the treasury of the official hymns of the *Liturgia Horarum*. The hymns of the *Liturgia Horarum*, rich in biblically-inspired poetry, in sacramental imagery, and in patristic theology are a goldmine of authentic Catholic piety.

For those communities eager to enter more fully into the church's tradition of choral prayer in Gregorian chant and in Latin, it is now possible (thirty years after the publication of the *Liturgia Horarum*) to sing Vespers on Sundays and feasts from a single volume containing in full all the elements necessary to do so. With the publication of the *Antiphonale Romanum II*, the Abbey of Solesmes has made it possible for religious communities (as well as cathedral and parish churches) to sing the church's evening sacrifice of praise, according to the Liturgy of the Hours, from a book designed to facilitate "plainsong for plain folk."⁶

A SPACE FOR CHORAL CELEBRATION OF THE DIVINE OFFICE

The Divine Office is best celebrated in a sacred space designed for that purpose. If one considers Pope Benedict XVI's injunction that the primary service of religious to this world must be their prayer and the celebration of the Divine Office, it is reasonable to expect that convent chapels and oratories be arranged in function of this primary service. The traditional arrangement of ranks of choir stalls (or similar seating) facing inward across a central aisle facilitates choral prayer with the corresponding liturgical postures and gestures, while allowing for prayer *ad orientem*, or facing the altar, at holy Mass and in times of personal devotion.

Until the Second Vatican Council, many apostolic institutes bound to the choral recitation of the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary benefited from having choir chapels constructed in view of this particular form of prayer. The Venerable Mother Mary Catherine McAuley, foundress of the Religious Sisters of Mercy in 1831, gave an outstanding example of attention to the architecture and dispositions of space that choral prayer requires. Engaging professional ecclesiastical architects, such

⁶ *Antiphonale Romanum*. *Liturgia Horarum Iuxta Ritus Romanum*. Vol. II. *Ad Vesperas in Dominicis et Festis* (Solesmes: Abbaye Saint-Pierre, 2009). (Available on the web site of the Abbey of Solesmes). "Plainsong for plain folk" is an expression used frequently by Adé de Béthune (1914–2002), artist at the service of the sacred liturgy in Newport, R.I. in personal conversations with the author.

as A.W. and E. W. Pugin, Mother McAuley and the women formed by her took a lively interest in providing one Convent of Mercy after another in Ireland and England with chapels of remarkable architectural quality, each one having a choir constructed at a right angle to the sanctuary, precisely in order to facilitate a dignified and worthy recitation of the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary.⁷

It would be opportune then, today, before undertaking the construction, renovation, or restoration of convent chapels, to consider that their design ought to facilitate the choral celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours as a primary, indispensable, and constitutive element of Catholic liturgical piety and of the consecrated life.

THROUGH PSALMODY TO THE TRINITY

Having briefly considered the material supports of choral prayer—the necessary liturgical books and a suitable sacred space or choir—I should like to return to the core of my thesis: that the psalmody of the Divine Office is a path to holiness for the apostolic religious. The fathers of the church have reflected on why and how psalmody engenders interior dispositions favorable to contemplative prayer.

A community engaged in choral prayer is an image of the Mystical Body as defined by Saint Augustine: “one Christ loving himself.”⁸ One-half of the choir offers its verse, not only to God through Christ, but also offers the bread of the Word to those of Christ’s members who form the other half of the choir. In choral psalmody, the daily bread of the Word is continuously offered and received as it passes from choir to choir, providing believers with a compelling image of one Christ feeding himself and, by means of that food, uniting his members among themselves, and to himself, the head of his Mystical



*The Venerable Mother Catherine
Elizabeth McAuley*

It would be opportune before undertaking the construction, renovation, or restoration of convent chapels to consider that their design facilitates the choral celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours.

⁷ Mother McAuley appears to have been keenly sensitive to the aesthetic requirements of community prayer. In addition to building chapels of significant architectural merit, she provided her Sisters with a festive white cloak (patterned after that of the Carmelite Fathers in Dublin) to be worn over their workaday black habits on occasions of greater solemnity. Sacred architecture and sacred vesture are two expressions of the sacramental participation in the divine beauty that, in harmony with the liturgy of the church, should characterize the corporate prayer of apostolic religious.

⁸ St. Augustine, *In Epistolam Joannis Ad Parthos Tractatus Decem*, Patrologia latina, 35, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris, 1845), p. 2055.

Body. This Eucharistic dimension of the Divine Office is, in its own way, a means of communion with the ceaseless prayer that Christ, eternal High Priest, offers to the Father in the Holy Spirit.

SAINT AMBROSE

Saint Ambrose of Milan, rather unexpectedly, in his meditation on the six days of creation, refers to alternation of two choirs when, in a poetic vein, he compares the beauty and the beneficial effect of psalmody to the creation of the sea:

How beautiful and mighty is the sea when the tempest raises her waves. Even more beautiful is she when nothing apart from a light breeze moves over the surface of the waters and her waves break upon the shore with a sound that is gentle, regular, and harmonious, a sound that does not trouble the silence but is happy, rather, to give it rhythm and to render it audible.

Saint Ambrose, in effect, describes the ideal of liturgical psalmody: a sound that does not trouble the silence but rather gives it rhythm and renders it audible. He goes on to say:

What else is that melodic sound of the waves if not the melody of the people . . . as the whole people unite in prayer, there is a whisper of receding waves; the echo of the psalms when sung in responsive harmony by men and women, maidens and children is like the sound of breaking waves. Wherefore, what need I say of this water other than it washes away sin and that the salutary breath of the Holy Spirit is found in it?⁹

The ideal of liturgical psalmody: a sound that does not trouble the silence but rather gives it rhythm and renders it audible.



St. Ambrose of Milan

By comparing liturgical psalmody to a peaceful breaking of waves upon the shore, Saint Ambrose suggests that each wave receives movement from the other and renders movement in return, sustaining all the while a continual rising and receding that remains ineffably tranquil.

TRANQUILITY OF ORDER

The discipline of liturgical psalmody participates in the wise ordering of things that produces the peace. Saint Thomas Aquinas calls this peace *tranquillitas ordinis*, “a tranquility of order.” *Tranquillitas ordinis*, psalmody’s most necessary quality, fosters profound recollection, and so disposes the soul to an unimpeded operation of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in contemplative prayer.

⁹ St. Ambrose, *The Hexameron, Paradise, and Cain and Abel*, tr. John J. Savage, *The Fathers of the Church*, 42 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1961), Homily 4: “The Third Day,” Bk. 3, Ch. 5; pp. 82–85.



St. Basil the Great

Saint Basil describes the sacred scriptures as a general hospital for souls.

SAINT BASIL

In his Exegetic Homilies, Saint Basil the Great profits from his exposition of Psalm 1 to set forth the benefit of all psalmody. Describing the sacred scriptures as a general hospital for souls, he demonstrates the outstanding curative and therapeutic effects that are proper to the psalter.

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful, composed by the Spirit for this reason, namely, that we men, each and all of us, as if in a general hospital for souls, may select the remedy for his own condition. For, it says, “care will make the greatest sin to cease.” Now, the prophets teach one thing, historians another, the law something else, and the form of advice found in the proverbs something different still. But, the Book of Psalms has taken over what is profitable from all. It foretells coming events; it recalls history; it frames laws for life; it suggests what must be done; and, in general, it is the common treasury of good doctrine, carefully finding what is suitable for each one.

The old wounds of souls it cures completely, and to the recently wounded it brings speedy improvement; the diseased it treats, and the unharmed it preserves. On the whole, it effaces, as far as is possible, the passions, which subtly exercise dominion over souls during the lifetime of man, and it does this with a certain orderly persuasion and sweetness which produces sound thoughts.

Saint Basil emphasizes the medicinal and formative properties of psalmody. It is clear from the following passage that the psalmody of the Divine Office is an integral and indispensable element in the initial formation to the vowed life and at every subsequent stage of it.

When the psalmody of the Divine Office is executed with a gentle discipline and a joyful élan, it generates a healing experience of the tranquility of order. A guest listening to the psalmody of the Divine Office in my own monastery related to me later that he had the impression of being seated on the seashore, watching the waves cast themselves one after the other on the sand of the beach to carry far away all its impurities and waste. In the end, he said, nothing more remained apart from the sand made clean.

Psalmody, acting upon the soul in a way not unlike the humble prayer of Our Lady’s Psalter, the Rosary, cleanses the soul of the accumulated residue of impurity and decay that impedes the free circulation of grace and prevents it from becoming “a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting” (John 4:14). It is not uncommon that after an otherwise ordinary celebration of the office, one

finds oneself more peaceful, inwardly more joyous, and more disposed to return with a generous heart to the works of the apostolate. The supernatural value of such choral prayer for religious engaged in demanding professional and apostolic works is, I think, evident. It pertains to the very soul of the apostolate.

When, indeed, the Holy Spirit saw that the human race was guided only with difficulty toward virtue, and that, because of our inclination toward pleasure, we were neglectful of an upright life, what did He do? The delight of melody He mingled with the doctrines so that by the pleasantness and softness of the sound heard we might receive without perceiving it the benefit of the words, just as wise physicians who, when giving the fastidious rather bitter drugs to drink, frequently smear the cup with honey. Therefore, He devised for us these harmonious melodies of the psalms, that they who are children in age or, even those who are youthful in disposition might to all appearances chant but, in reality, become trained in soul. . . .

The psalmody of the Divine Office prepares the soul for union with God by purifying the emotions, by ordering the passions rightly, and by fostering charity, apart from which there is no authentic contemplation. Psalmody accompanies the soul through the purgative, illuminative, and unitive phases of the interior life. At no moment in one's spiritual journey does it become superfluous or redundant.

The psalter is a complete theology.

A psalm implies serenity of soul; it is the author of peace, which calms bewildering and seething thoughts. For, it softens the wrath of the soul, and what is unbridled it chastens.

A psalm forms friendships, unites those separated, conciliates those at enmity. Who, indeed, can still consider as an enemy him with whom he has uttered the same prayer to God? So that psalmody, bringing about choral singing, a bond, as it were, toward unity, and joining the people into a harmonious union of one choir, produces also the greatest of blessings, charity.

Here, Saint Basil adopts a lyrical style worthy of the psalms themselves. His teaching makes clear the value of choral psalmody not only in the context of an enclosed monastic life, but also in the context of apostolic religious life in all its expressions.

A psalm is a city of refuge from the demons; a means of inducing help from the angels, a weapon in fears by night, a rest from toils by day, a safeguard for infants, an adornment for those at the height of their vigor, a consolation for the elders, a most fitting ornament for women. It peoples the solitudes; it rids the market place of excesses; it is the elementary exposition of beginners, the improvement of those advancing, the solid support of the perfect, the voice of the Church. It brightens the feast days; it creates a godly sorrow. For, a psalm calls forth a tear even from a heart of stone.

Finally, Saint Basil presents psalmody as a school of the moral virtues: courage, justice, self-control, prudence, penance, and patience. The psalter is, for the great legislator of the common life a perfect, that is to say, a complete theology.

A psalm is the work of angels, a heavenly institution, the spiritual incense. . . . What, in fact, can you not learn from the psalms? Can you not learn the grandeur of courage? The exactness of justice? The nobility of self-control? The perfection

of prudence? A manner of penance? The measure of patience? And whatever other good things you might mention? Therein is perfect theology, a prediction of the coming of Christ in the flesh, a threat of judgment, a hope of resurrection, a fear of punishment, promises of glory, an unveiling of mysteries; all things, as if in some great public treasury, are stored up in the Book of Psalms.¹⁰

CHORAL PSALMODY: A TEST AND A SCHOOL OF CHARITY

The discipline of choral prayer in religious communities is not merely to produce an aesthetically pleasing sound. It is a means to contemplative prayer, a means tested and tried by tradition, towards attaining unity with oneself, unity with others in community, and unity with the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. Before the grace of unity becomes audible in a community's choral prayer, there must necessarily be an individual and corporate assent to the silence that makes

listening possible. A community in which there is no silence is a community in which there is no listening to God, to one another, or to oneself.

Psalmody has more to do with listening than with producing sound.

Choral psalmody reveals what is going on below the surface in a community. One hears the sound of struggles, rivalries, lack of reconciliation, and want of recollection. When a single voice expresses hostility—either by singing or by not singing—one experiences a kind of acoustical pollution in the choir. Dissonance in choral prayer sounds a call to repentance.

CHORAL PSALMODY AND THE APOSTOLIC MISSION

Psalmody has more to do with listening than with producing sound. If one inclines the ear of the heart to the Word of God, even while it is on one's lips, one begins to experience what Saint Bernard, in a sermon on the Song of Songs, called "visitations of the Word." The presence of the divine bridegroom becomes almost perceptible in the manner of chanting and in a certain presence of the voice, the condition for which is a presence of the whole body, for the voice is the clearest sign of the body made present to the presence of God, especially the body of the woman consecrated to Christ in and by the church.

The voice must articulate the sacred words with care and with reverence. The mission of the voice is to prepare, in a kind of renewal of the mystery of the incarnation, an acoustical body for



Praying of the psalmody.

¹⁰ St. Basil, "Homily on Psalm 1," in *Exegetical Homilies*, tr. Sister Agnes Clare Way, C.D.P., The Fathers of the Church, 46 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1963), pp. 151–153.

the Divine Word. The Word thus chanted and heard is the springboard of every ecclesial mission, and the guarantee of any institute's apostolic fecundity.

An apostolic community resolutely engaged in choral prayer will begin to experience its effect in their apostolic works and professional services. Teaching sisters, for example, effectively prepare a path for souls into the presence of God by their fidelity to choral prayer. The seeds of more than one religious vocation were planted when a student happened by chance to hear the sisters who were her teachers in the classroom, spending themselves for her, in another way, in the celebration of the Divine Office.



Similarly, the Little Sisters of the Poor, the Carmelites of the Divine Heart of Jesus, the Hawthorne Dominicans, and so many other religious dedicated to the care of the elderly and the sick will find that the celebration of the Divine Office, surrounding the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and echoing it throughout the day, has a profound effect on residents and patients, even if they do not participate actively in the hours. I was privileged, some years ago, to visit a nursing community in France where any patient in their hospital can listen to the chant of the

Divine Office from his bed. The number of conversions to Christ brought about simply because a patient lying in bed "tuned in" to the Divine Office being chanted in the chapel is impressive.

The choral celebration of the Divine Office is for all apostolic religious a path to contemplative prayer.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, addressing those of you who are already committed to the choral celebration of the Divine Office, and those of you who are moving towards the renewal of your community prayer by a fresh commitment to the Divine Office, I would reaffirm three principles:

1. The choral celebration of the Divine Office is for all apostolic religious a path to contemplative prayer.
2. The choral celebration of the Divine Office is, according to the teaching of Pope Benedict XVI, your primary service to the world.
3. The choral celebration of the Divine Office assures the supernatural fruitfulness of your apostolic works. ♪



Active Participation and Listening to Gregorian Chant

by William Mahrt

[This paper was an address to the CMAA Fall Pilgrimage, Washington D.C., September 25–26, 2009.]



Active participation of the faithful in the liturgy has been a key theme since the Second Vatican Council, and a consequence of this has been the cultivation of congregational singing, sometimes to the exclusion of choirs, most often to the exclusion of Gregorian chant from our churches. But the council also said that Gregorian chant should have first place in the liturgy.¹ This has always been translated as “pride of place,” but the term is *principem locum*, principal place, first place; “pride of place” sounds a bit like giving an old uncle a place at the table without letting him say anything; when we quote this term from the council we should really say “first place”;² there is a very good reason for that.

The sung form of the liturgy has always been the paradigm, and the council reiterated that priority;³ the foundational music of this sung form is Gregorian chant. How can these things be reconciled—the emphasis on active participation and on Gregorian chant? The answer depends upon what the council meant by active participation. This concept used by the council had a fairly long history in recent papal and church teaching, so it should be examined for the entire twentieth century. Since the teaching stretches over the eras of both the extraordinary and ordinary forms of the Mass, it should apply with equal vigor to both forms. In what follows, I show that the singing of Gregorian chant is thoroughly compatible with active participation, because that participation is hierarchical and because listening to and singing chant are inextricably linked. Pope St. Pius X was probably the first person in modern times to emphasize the concept of active participation; he probably originated the term. In his *Motu Proprio Tra le sollecitudine* he said,

Our most profound desire is that the authentic spirit of Christ may once again be awakened in all its richness and that it may flourish throughout the whole body of the faithful. To this end it is imperative in the first place to give heed to the holiness and worthiness of the temple of God. For it is here that the faithful assemble to draw that spirit from its primary and indispensable source, that is from active

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¹ Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, ¶116 <http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html>

² Cf. William Mahrt, “Editorial: ‘Pride of Place,’” *Sacred Music*, 135, no. 3 (2008), 3–4.

participation in the sacred mysteries and in the public and solemn prayer of the Church.⁴

This document was written in Italian, a rare occurrence for a papal document, particularly a *motu proprio*, which is a legislative document. Certainly it addressed a wide range of potential readers, including those who may not read Latin, and this could explain its use of the vernacular. The Italian term was *partecipazione attiva*, which superficially translates as “active participation.” But it is sometimes overlooked that when the official text of this *motu proprio* was published in Latin, the term was translated as *actuosa participatio*,⁵ that is to say, not just active, but real, fundamental participation. Thus Pius X really speaks about intrinsic participation in the liturgy itself, that it pertains to the holiness and worthiness of the temple of God, that it is participation in the sacred mysteries, and that it specifically mentions that the faithful draw the authentic spirit of Christ through this participation. That is a far cry from the appealing to “active participation” to justify having to sing everything or even being “animated” by the cantor.

Pope Pius XI in his *Divini cultus sanctitatem* addressed directly the singing of Gregorian chant:

In order that the faithful may more actively participate in divine worship, let them be made once more to sing the Gregorian Chant, so far as it belongs to them to take part in it. It is most important that when the faithful assist at the sacred ceremonies . . . they should not be merely detached and silent spectators, but, filled with a deep sense of the beauty of the Liturgy, they should sing alternately with the clergy or the choir, as it is prescribed. If this is done, then it will no longer happen that the people either make no answer at all to the public prayers—whether in the language of the Liturgy or in the vernacular—or at best utter the responses in a low and subdued manner.⁶

In order that the faithful may more actively participate in divine worship, let them be made once more to sing the Gregorian Chant.



Pope Pius XI

³ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, ¶113.

⁴ St. Pius X, *Motu Proprio, Tra le sollecitudini*, introduction; cf. Coleman E. O’Neill, O.P., “The Theological Meaning of *Actuosa Participatio* in the Liturgy,” in *Sacred Music and Liturgy Reform after Vatican II: Proceedings of the Fifth International Church Music Congress, Chicago-Milwaukee, August 21–28, 1966*, ed. Johannes Overath (Rome: Consociatio Internationalis Musicae Sacrae, 1969), pp. 89–110, here, p. 90; for the whole document, see <<http://www.adoremus.org/TraLeSollecitudini.html>>

⁵ *Acta Sanctae Sedis*, 36 (1903), 332ff.

⁶ Pope Pius XI, Apostolic Constitution, *Divini Cultus Sanctitatem* <<http://www.adoremus.org/DiviniCultus.html>>

Gregorian chant is thus the means of active participation (again *actuosa participatio*), but this is a hierarchical participation, one in which each participant, whether, priest, choir, or congregation, plays a proper part. It is also a participation which, by singing Gregorian chant, fills the faithful with a deep sense of the beauty of the liturgy. Such participation in the beauty of the liturgy is a path to God, who is Beauty himself.

Pope Pius XII emphasized the Eucharistic sacrifice:

It is therefore important for all the faithful to understand that it is their duty and highest privilege to take part in the Eucharistic sacrifice; and to take part in it, not passively or negligently or with distracted mind, but with application and actively (*actuose*) so as to be in the closest union with the High Priest, according to the words of St. Paul: "Yours is to be the same mind which Christ Jesus showed" (Phil. 2:5); and to offer it together with him and through him, and with him to surrender themselves.⁷

The pope speaks, even more directly than previous popes, of the faithful uniting themselves with the Eucharistic sacrifice of Christ in the liturgy, fundamentally and actively. So often today active participation is no more than taking part in our own participation; but here the focus is upon the action of Christ.

It is therefore important for all the faithful to understand that it is their duty and highest privilege to take part in the Eucharistic sacrifice.

Under Pius XII, the Congregation on Sacred Rites issued a comprehensive document on sacred music, which emphasized many aspects of *actuosa participatio*. The participation must be interior; from that flows its exterior manifestations. It must be sacramental, and it must be supported by education. These points are summarized by Coleman O'Neill:

The Mass of its nature requires that all those present participate in it, in the fashion proper to each.

a) This participation must primarily be interior (i.e., union with Christ the Priest; offering with and through Him).

b) But the participation of those present becomes fuller (plenior) if to internal attention is joined external participation, expressed, that is to say, by external actions such as the position of the body (genuflecting, standing, sitting), ceremonial gestures, or, in particular, the responses, prayers and singing. . . .

It is this harmonious form of participation that is referred to in pontifical documents when they speak of active participation (*participatio actuosa*), the principal example of which is found in the celebrating priest and his ministers who, with due

⁷ Pope Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Mediator Dei*; cf. O'Neill, "Actuosa Participatio," 92; for the whole document, see <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_20111947_mediator-dei_n.html>

interior devotion and exact observance of the rubrics and ceremonies, minister at the altar.

c) Perfect *participatio actuosa* of the faithful, finally, is obtained when there is added sacramental participation (by Communion).

d) Deliberate *participatio actuosa* of the faithful is not possible without their adequate instruction.⁸

For the Second Vatican Council, it is *participatio plena, conscia, et actuosa*—full, conscious, and actual participation. As a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people, from which they derive the spirit of Christ.

Mother church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation (*participatio plena, conscia, et actuosa*) in the ceremonies which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as a “chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people” (I Peter 2:9; 2:4–5) is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.

In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy this full and active (*plena et actuosa*) participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true spirit of Christ.⁹

“Full and active participation” in the English translation may have led some to assume that the council required the congregation to be “active” by singing all the music of the liturgy. But in the light of tradition the words of the council are unambiguous: fundamental participation in the liturgy means, participation in the profound act of Christ, who in the Mass offers an eternal sacrifice to the Father, and we as members of the Body of Christ are

*The words of the council are unambiguous:
fundamental participation in the liturgy means,
participation in the profound act of Christ.*

united in that sacrifice; we participate in that sacrifice. Whatever there is of external participation is a means to that end, and not an end in itself. Moreover, the “hermeneutic of continuity” so well explained by Pope Benedict XVI and embraced as well by his predecessor, Pope John Paul II, requires reading the council documents in the context of the tradition from before the council. The

⁸ O’Neill, “*Actuosa Participatio*,” 97, summarizing the Instruction of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, *De Musica Sacra et Sacra Liturgia*, ¶22–23 <<http://www.adoremus.org/1958Intro-sac-mus.html>>

⁹ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, ¶14.

examples cited above make it clear that *participatio actuosa* should be understood in terms of the various participants in the liturgy. Thus active participation does not mean just singing everything yourself, not just participation in “songs”¹⁰ but in the depth of the hierarchical liturgy, shared by each part of the worshipping community.

Musicam Sacram, the Second Instruction on the Implementation of the Council’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, thus a document of high authority, emphasizes the hierarchical nature of participation:

The priest, the sacred ministers and the servers, the reader and those in the choir, and also the commentator, should perform the parts assigned to them in a way which is comprehensible to the people, in order that the responses of the people, when the rite requires it, may be made easy and spontaneous.¹¹

Each participant in the liturgy has a distinct but coordinated role assigned by the liturgy. I would add that participation in the liturgy so realized is much more significant when the congregation fulfills just one of several functions in a fundamental interaction, a deeper and more varied manner of participation than the notion of the congregation singing all the parts.

But Gregorian chants are the ideal setting of each particular liturgical function.

How does this fairly abstract notion of participation in the sacrifice of Christ make any difference to whether we sing Gregorian chant or not? The answer depends upon two different levels of liturgical action. One is the fundamental liturgical action, the action of Christ’s sacrifice, in which we participate as members of his Mystical Body. The other is the variety of liturgical actions, in the plural; these are

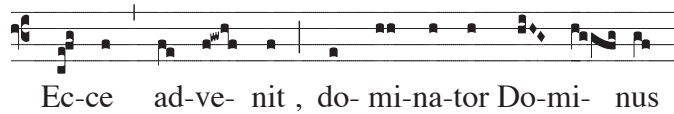
the diverse parts of the ritual that contribute to that fundamental liturgical action: principally, the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the sacrament, but in more detail, various actions—processions, lessons, prayers, hymns, etc.—particularly as they are expressed in music.

The Gregorian chants of the Mass are a fundamental part of these liturgical actions.¹² Once in a while a well-meaning commentator on the liturgy will say “Gregorian chant is the ideal setting of its text.” But Gregorian chants, plural, are the ideal setting of each particular liturgical function. An introit is not a gradual is not a psalm, etc. For example, an office antiphon to a psalm is a rather simple melody that functions as a refrain before and after a whole psalm chanted by an entire community in the Divine Office. An introit has a much different shape and purpose: the introit *Ecce advenit* for Epiphany

¹⁰It is unfortunate that *cantus* in the documents is usually translated “songs,” when it might well have been translated “chants.” “Songs” would better translate *carmina* or *cantilena*; “songs” in a liturgical context too often refers to pieces written in the style of popular music and usually not on scriptural or liturgical texts.

¹¹ *Musicam Sacram*, ¶26.

¹² Cf. the forthcoming article, William Mahrt, “The Propers of the Mass As Integral to the Liturgy,” in *Benedict XVI and Sacred Music: Proceedings of the Third Fota International Liturgy Conference, 2010* (Dublin; Four Courts Press, 2012).



is suited to its function, that is, it accompanies the procession that begins the Mass; it conveys a sense of sacredness, but it is also elaborate enough to convey a sense of a certain solemnity which is suitable to initiating the singing of an entire Mass, more elaborate than an office antiphon would be. At the pope's Masses in Washington and New York, if one thing could have been changed, the metric hymns accompanied by brasses and timpani that went on forever during the entrance procession could have been replaced by a real Gregorian intonation. The hymns emphasized the here and now, suggesting "Here comes a procession; they are all singing and the trumpets are blaring; it is going to be a great occasion!" But if they had sung a Gregorian intonation, it would have suggested "Oh, this is a sacred occasion; this intonation says to us something important is about to happen." It does not say "Here we are, hooray, hooray!" It says, "Everyone turn your attention to the sacred mysteries which are about to be celebrated." That is how Gregorian pieces serve their liturgical functions.

One more thing about the intonation: who should sing the it? Very often it is said that the congregation should sing the intonation. The cantor might say "Let us now greet our celebrant by singing hymn number 54." Aside from the fact that the hymn scarcely ever addresses the celebrant, it is not the function of the intonation to greet the celebrant;¹³ the function of the intonation chant is to accompany the procession, and the function of the procession is not to encounter the congregation but to move to the place where the sacrifice of the Mass is to be offered. The congregation's proper participation, then, is to witness the procession, to see the ascending order of the church in procession—led by the cross, acolytes, lectors, deacon, finally the priest at the end or even the bishop, in an orderly fashion—to see them move purposefully to the altar and incense the altar as a sacred place, setting the stage, so to speak, where the sacrifice is to be offered. The congregation is virtually included in the procession when the procession moves from the sacristy down a side aisle to the back of the church and then up the center aisle to the altar. This traverses the entire length of the church and to some extent encircles it, thus delineating a sacred space and symbolically encompassing the congregation, bringing it with it.

So it is not the function of the congregation to provide the accompanying music for the procession. It is their function to witness and to be moved by the beauty of the procession, by the beauty of the vestments and of the music the choir sings, and by the purposeful motion to the place where something important is going to happen. For the congregation, it is the Kyrie and the Gloria that they should sing; these are the right pieces for them, because these chants are in and of themselves the liturgical action at that moment. They are not accompanying anything else; they are intrinsic acts of worship—litanies, hymns of praise, and a solemn profession of belief, thus appropriately sung by all present together. They are also suited to congregational singing, since their music can be repeated over several Sundays, allowing the congregation to learn them well. Moreover, if the intonation is beautifully sung by the choir, the congregation will be encouraged to sing the Kyrie and the Glo-

¹³ The ordinary form provides a greeting, but it is the celebrant who initiates it, just before the penitential rite, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ . . ." or "The Lord be with you," to which the congregation responds (will soon respond) "And with your spirit."

ria more beautifully.

A different issue is the meditation chants, the gradual or responsorial psalm and the alleluia. I sometimes ask what is the purpose of the responsorial psalm in the modern liturgy? I am often told, “to give the people something to do,” not quite a sufficient discussion of that part of the Mass. I have to acknowledge that the General Instruction on the Roman Missal gives a more purposeful description of it: “It fosters meditation on the Word of God.”¹⁴ And yet, if you test the product that we are given by the commercial sources for the responsorial psalm, it rather better fits the description of just giving the people something to do, because the melodies are banal and uninteresting, and not beautiful—not conducive to meditation. One is reminded of a statement of Pope Benedict, when he was Cardinal Ratzinger (thus not a papal opinion, but still a good one and very succinct), that utility music is useless.¹⁵ These responsorial psalms are utility music; their only purpose is to set the text; whatever melody it takes, it sets it and they sing it. However, the gradual and alleluia, which by tradition were assigned to follow the lessons and are still a legitimate option, are very different. They are melismatic chants, particularly the alleluia.



People sometimes say, “Oh yes, we sing Gregorian chant for the alleluia,” but they are astonished when I tell them “that is not really Gregorian chant.” “Of course it is, it is an antiphon from Holy Saturday.” “That is precisely my point, it is only properly Gregorian chant when sung where the liturgy prescribes it, as a psalm antiphon for Holy Saturday.” If you sing it as an alleluia, it is out of place; this is because the gradual and alleluia present melismatic music that has a particular purpose in the context of the lessons. Compare that little alleluia with this one:¹⁷



¹⁴ GIRM, ¶61.

¹⁵ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Feast of Faith: Approaches to a Theology of the Liturgy*, tr. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), p. 124; see the full quotation below.

¹⁶ *Liber Usualis* (Tournai: Desclée, 1961), p. 776KK.

¹⁷ *Liber*, 1076.

It is considerably longer than the other alleluia, in fact unambiguously too long if it were only a setting of its text. The purpose of this alleluia is embodied in the melisma itself, the jubilus, a melody that has its own internal organization and repetitions and a sense of progress and form, all of which express a kind of wordless jubilation. It is a piece of beautiful music that is based upon the word “alleluia,” but departs from it, transcends it.

I learned something about the purpose of these chants by watching our congregation. When the chants are sung beautifully, there is a still in the church, as is otherwise not heard except at the consecration. But just before the gospel, all are quiet. If five people in the congregation were distracted, moving around, turning pages and various things, just the motion of these few people would make a kind of white noise. Suddenly it all stops (white noise is not noticed until it stops). When it stops, there is an absolute still; no one is distracted; they are all focused on something. They are focused on hearing the beauty of the chant, the purpose of which is recollection. This focus causes them to look inward and to order their souls, one might say, and to be attentive. That is the purpose of these chants, to allow the people to reflect on what they have heard and to prepare them to hear the next lesson; in the case of the alleluia, the jubilus creates a sense of ecstatic expectation of hearing the gospel. If the priest then sings the gospel, this comes as the culmination of everything since the beginning of the introit. The alleluia is saying, “Here comes something really important, something to rejoice over.” In addition, the importance of the gospel is emphasized by a procession to the ambo with candles and incense (and ministers accompanying, if it is a solemn Mass). The gradual and alleluia, then, have the function of creating recollection, making what I call attentive repose.¹⁸ The other proper chants of the Mass do

*When the chants are sung
beautifully, there is a still in
the church.*

¹⁸There are some contradictions between the general principle that, on the one hand, Gregorian chant has first place, and on the other hand, the rubric in the GIRM prescribes that the alleluia “is sung by all while standing (¶62).” This rubric is evidently aimed at a rather simple, non-Gregorian antiphon (like the little three-fold alleluia from Holy Saturday) and a short verse, which is the usual practice in the parishes. The congregation is not capable of singing the entire Gregorian alleluia, yet these melodies are the summit of that art and reflect their own exquisite liturgical function; to rule them out absolutely would be a contradiction of *Sacrosanctum concilium*, which is a more authoritative document than the GIRM. Moreover, the Gregorian alleluias appear in the *Gregorian Missal* (1990 and still in print), which is a book prepared for parish choirs. The liturgical function of the Gregorian alleluia is more complex than the GIRM prescribes (the congregation welcomes the Lord in the gospel and expresses their faith); it is at once a meditation chant which reflects upon the reading just heard and an anticipation of the singing of the gospel. Likewise the duration of the alleluia is considerably longer than a simple gospel procession takes (except at Westminster Cathedral, where at the Pope’s Mass the entire Gregorian alleluia was sung, and it lasted exactly the same time as the procession, which went about a third of the distance of the nave to the great pulpit); if the people stand at the beginning of the singing of a Gregorian alleluia, they are left standing for quite a while, apparently to no purpose. If the alleluia is a meditation chant reflecting upon the previous lesson, then it is more appropriate for them to remain seated. In my own practice, the gospel procession begins toward the end of the alleluia verse, and the people stand approximately at the repeat of the alleluia. This fulfills the status of the Gregorian alleluia as one of the highest of the Gregorian forms, but is in technical violation of the GIRM, since the congregation does not sing any of it. I have proposed a solution for those who wish to observe the GIRM strictly, that the congregation sing the repeat of

not quite do that, because they serve other purposes: the introit, offertory, and communion accompany processions. They project a sense of solemn motion. The gradual and alleluia project a sense of stillness and repose, even though they are very active chants.¹⁹

These effects are achieved through listening, not singing. Pope John Paul II has spoken about the role of listening. In an *ad limina* address to the bishops of the Pacific Northwest, he specifically mentions active participation as including listening:

Active participation certainly means that, in gesture, word, song and service, all the members of the community take part in an act of worship, which is anything but inert or passive. Yet active participation does not preclude the active passivity of silence, stillness and listening; indeed, it demands it. Worshipers are not passive, for instance, when listening to the readings or the homily, or following the prayers of the celebrant, and the chants and music of the liturgy. These are experiences of silence and stillness, but they are in their own way profoundly active. In a culture which neither favors nor fosters meditative quiet, the art of interior listening is learned only with difficulty. Here we see how the liturgy, though it must always be properly inculturated, must also be counter-cultural.²⁰

*Thus listening is an essential component
of active participation.*

Thus listening is an essential component of active participation; listening to a gradual or alleluia is “profoundly active.”

How can music create recollection? Would it not suffice just to say the text? Plato gives a reason in the *Timaeus*, his Genesis—a philosopher’s speculation on how God might have created the universe, accounting for the creation of man and of his senses. In discussing the senses, he says of sight,

God invented and gave us sight to the end that we might behold the courses of intelligence in the heaven, and apply them to the courses of our own intelligence

the intonation of the Gregorian alleluia, after which the choir sings the jubilus. Congregations are able to repeat most Gregorian alleluia intonations without difficulty, and in doing so, they sing almost as much music as the little antiphon seen above, and they listen to quite a bit more.

¹⁹ Organ music can also aid in recollection. I have often thought about the function of an organ prelude at a Mass. There is a practical function: to see if you can keep people from talking before Mass. But how you keep people from talking before Mass is to play something that elicits a sense of recollection, and that is the more fundamental purpose. A contrapuntal piece principally does that better than anything else. The opposite is what is played at the end of Mass. It depends upon what the people are expected to do with it. If they are to stay and pray, then a brief recessional for the procession out of the church can be played, followed by something reflective and introspective. On the other hand, there are pieces often heard, like the *Westminster Carillon*, for instance, which seems to be calculated to drive the entire congregation out of the church immediately, and such an effect can be observed with such pieces; cf. William Mahrt, “Editorial: New Directions for Sacred Liturgy,” *Sacred Music*, 133, no. 3 (2006), 3–5.

²⁰ Pope John Paul II, *Ad Limina* Address to the Bishops of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and Alaska, October 9, 1998 <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father_john_paul_ii/speeches/1998/october/>

which are akin to them, the unperturbed to the perturbed, and that we, learning them and partaking of the natural truth of reason, might imitate the absolutely unerring courses of God and regulate our own vagaries.

And of hearing,

The same may be affirmed of speech and hearing. They have been given by the gods to the same end and for a like reason. For this is the principal end of speech, whereto it most contributes. Moreover, so much of music as is adapted to the sound of the voice and to the sense of hearing is granted to us for the sake of harmony. And harmony, which has motions akin to the revolutions of our souls, is not regarded by the intelligent votary of the Muses as given by them with a view to irrational pleasure, which is deemed to be the purpose of it in our day, but as meant to correct any discord which may have arisen in the courses of the soul, and to be our ally in bringing her into harmony and agreement with herself, and rhythm too was given by them for the same reason, on account of the irregular and graceless ways which prevail among mankind generally, and to help us against them.²¹

In the view of *Timaeus*, the heavens are a display of the order of creation, and upon seeing that order we model the order of our own souls. And then there is the sense of hearing; it is given for the sake of speech, which conveys the products of reason, as does sight, but it is also for the sake of music. There are several kinds of music; one is the kind that we can hear; another is the internal music of the soul, “being in harmony and agreement with herself;” the third is the harmonious order of the cosmos itself. The music we can hear is to model that internal music of the soul, correcting any disorder in it and bringing it into harmony with the music of the cosmos.

Even today we need to heed Plato’s words: the sound of music aids putting our souls into order, an order that is modeled upon heavenly order. We now know something that the ancients did not know, that is, that the universe is quite a bit larger than they thought, and some would say, more disorderly. I would beg to differ. While there may be some

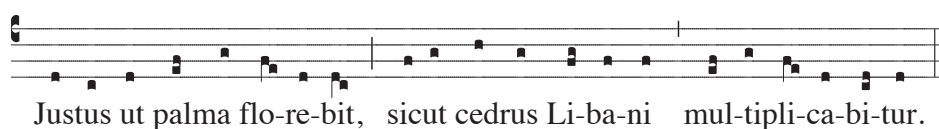
*Even today we need to heed Plato’s
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elements of random activity in this enormous universe, the more that is discovered about it the more it seems that behind it all is a magnificent sense of order. That is not only for the universe on the large. There is also an extraordinary order on the small. The atom is broken apart only to reveal smaller parts that are working in a kind of order. And these are broken apart only to discover smaller parts also working in their own kind of order. So there is in the universe an extensive and magnificent ordering of parts. We have been given free will, which allows us to choose to model our own

²¹ Plato, *Timaeus*, 47, b-e, tr. Benjamin Jowett, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton & Huntington Cairns, Bollingen Series, 71 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1961), p. 1175.

souls upon the order given by the creator or not, and we sometimes chose not, and then we need a remedy, and Plato suggests that music may be one of those remedies: by exemplifying order, music proposes to our souls an ordering model. Plato was an idealist, but I do not believe he said these things just because he had a good idea; he did so because he had the experience of hearing music, because when one hears music one experiences the fact that it affects our souls directly, and that in some sense it calls for us to assent to the order of the music and to participate in it. It allows us to experience something perfectly ordered as a model.

Interestingly, Plato says the sense of hearing is for the sake of both speech and music. Gregorian chant, in fact, represents both of those, because it is a synthesis of text and melody in a more fundamental way than most other music. Consider the psalm antiphon:²²



This sentence has two basic clauses: *Justus ut palma florebit* (the just shall flourish like a palm tree) and *sicut cedrus Libani multiplicabitur* (like a cedar of Lebanon he shall be multiplied). The first clause is given an entire melodic contour; the second has a more complicated contour, that allows the last word to be slightly separated. Medieval theorists of chant speak about the relation of music and grammar: the melody represents the grammar of the text.²³ The melody also reflects the accent of the text, another element of its grammar; as a rule accented syllables either receive more notes, or a higher pitch (at least, are followed by a lower pitch). But, in addition to that, the melody adds harmony. By harmony, I mean that the melody comprises notes that are harmonious with each other. In spite of the fact that it starts on D, it makes a C-E-G-E-C chord-like structure on *Justus ut palma*. Then on *sicut cedrus Libani*, an F-A-F; then to get back to the D, it centers on an E-G-E third, leading back to D. There is thus a sense of a C-triad, an F-triad, then a return to D. That is the harmony of the melody. All Gregorian chants have similar kinds of harmonious constructions and thus a synthesis of language and harmony. As models upon which to order the soul, these Gregorian melodies incorporate language and harmony in pieces intimately linked to their liturgical actions, and thus listening to them can draw the soul into the liturgy, into the liturgical actions, and into the fundamental liturgical action itself, the work of Christ.

How does music work in the liturgy? Cardinal Ratzinger gave us some wise words about the purpose of music, in that passage, in which he criticizes “‘utility’ music”; he says,

A Church which only makes use of “‘utility’” music has fallen for what is, in fact, useless. She too becomes ineffectual. For her mission is a far higher one. As the Old Testament speaks of the Temple, the Church is to be the place of “‘glory,’” and as

²² *Antiphonaire monastique, XIIe siècle, Codex 601 de la Bibliothèque capitulaire de Lucques*, Paléographie musicale, IX (Solesmes: Abbaye Saint-Pierre, 1906; reprint, Berne: Herbert Lang & Cie., 1974), p. 524 [481].

²³ Calvin M. Bower, “The Grammatical Model of Musical Understanding in the Middle Ages,” in *Hermeneutics and Medieval Culture*, ed. Patrick J. Gallacher & Helen Damico (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1989), pp. 133–145.

such, too, the place where mankind's cry of distress is brought to the ear of God. The Church must not settle down with what is merely comfortable and serviceable at the parish level; she must arouse the voice of the cosmos and, by glorifying the Creator, elicit the glory of the cosmos itself, making it also glorious, beautiful, habitable and beloved. . . . The Church is to transform, improve, "humanize" the world—but how can she do that if at the same time she turns her back on beauty, which is so closely allied to love? For together, beauty and love form the true consolation in this world, bringing it as near as possible to the world of the resurrection.²⁴

The beauty of music is perceived first of all in listening, and singing is based upon the foundation of that listening.²⁵ Music begins in silence; this is a really important point. If we have sounds—noises—around us all the time, including the television and the radio, we have no experience of silence. But silence is that place where recollection is possible. How can we have a sense of recollection when sounds are impinging upon us? Recollection is a necessary predisposition for an awareness of the presence of God. It is difficult to receive, create, recall, or respond to a sense of the presence of God if words continue to impose themselves through loud music. Silence, then, is absolutely important. But there are dead silences and live silences. Sometimes we are told that there must be silence in the liturgy, and so the priest sits down and nothing happens, and everybody waits for him to stand back up again; that is a dead silence. On the other hand, in a concert of a great piece of sacred music, at the end of the piece there is a hushed silence; no-one dare applaud for several seconds; this is the first instant in which the entire piece has been heard and its full beauty recognized. At that point everyone can say, "Oh, that is what the whole piece looks like, its beauty is awesome." That silence is a very important instant, a communal activity. It is a live silence that is full of meaning, so much so that one might be tempted to despise the person who starts the applause and breaks the silence. Similar silences occur in the liturgy, for example, at the consecration, after communion, and after the gradual and alleluia.

How can music "elicit the glory of the cosmos," as Cardinal Ratzinger puts it? First of all, music gives harmony, not just the harmony of chords, but the harmonious motion of melody, rhythm, and counterpoint, and when we hear this, they resonate within us, because they have an affinity with the way we represent order and purpose, and they suggest order and purpose to us. That feeling of affinity, then, helps us to model our own sense of order and purpose. This is how and why we internalize music. We make the music we hear our own; listening and hearing are very active processes. We respond in an active way to the beauty which is intrinsic to the music. That beauty is an aspect of all reality, of God and all his creation. That beauty embodies the integrity and persuasiveness of things whose inner essence freely shines forth.

Listening is aided by memory. We hear a piece and we remember it. When we hear it again, our memory is renewed and deepened; upon repetition, these pieces become our own. I sang chant for many years, before I recalled that in the Middle Ages, chants were always sung from memory, and I determined to experiment with it. I memorized some chants and sang them and realized that the

²⁴ Ratzinger, *Feast of Faith*, 124–5; this is in specific reference to music, since the chapter is entitled "On the Theological Basis of Church Music" (pp. 97–126).

²⁵ These ideas were developed briefly in William Mahrt, "Editorial: Listening and Singing," *Sacred Music*, 136, no. 2 (2009), 3–4.

experience of singing from memory is very different from singing from notation; we sing from something that belongs to us. We sing by heart; to sing by heart, technically, means to sing from memory, but why then do we not say “singing by brain?” Because to say “singing by heart” means singing from our very interior selves.

Singing flows from listening, just as speech does. A young child, hears words first, and then begins to reproduce them. The beauty of music which we perceive and internalize and make our own—just like the child who speaks with the words he heard—becomes the resource from which we sing. To the extent to which our hearing makes us aware of the Creator and all his works by hearing music, to that extent we can praise him with our return of singing.

So by singing, we exercise upon our own thoughts a kind of ordering and give them a beautiful external form, and if this form is compelling enough, if it is truly beautiful, it creates the external unity that Pope Pius XII talked about, that external unity of the voices singing. The beauty of the external form is also sufficiently persuasive to create an internal unity of minds, a concord of hearts. It is something that can simply be observed: when a congregation sings a part of the Mass, they do so quite together, but when they must respond speaking, they do not respond as well together. When prayers are spoken, there is not the same kind of ordering principle as there is with music. One sometimes hears in the Mass, at “Orate fratres,” when it comes time to make the response “Suscipiat Dominus sacrificium,” there is always someone who rushes ahead and sounds like he is trying to get there before everyone else, and then there are a few who are dragging behind. So the recitation of the text without chant is not as orderly, not as beautiful; it does not elevate the mind or unite the hearts as well.

In the liturgy, when we hear pieces of Gregorian chant and internalize them, they unite us intimately with the liturgical action, since the chants themselves are intrinsic to the action. An introit is an integral part of the rite, and it consists of a synthesis of text and music. It is not just a text to which someone happens to have set music; rather, what is in the missal as an introit is the text of a chant; the chant itself, both music and text, is the fundamental constituent of the liturgy. Hearing such a chant provides the basis for the subsequent singing of other parts; this is our proper participation, our *actuosa participatio*, and not just “active” participation.

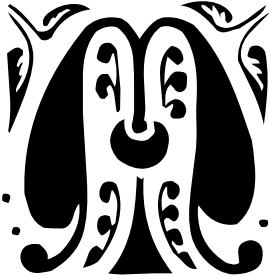
Just a brief word about the chant and the sacred. Gregorian chant is unique, there is nothing like it; it does not belong anywhere else but in church. Even if some people use it for mood music, its proper place is in church. I once heard Gregorian chant played in an up-scale clothing store and thought, “Why this is in the wrong place?” It is like incense: as soon as you catch a whiff of it, you know where you are. There is thus something that is unambiguous about the sacredness of Gregorian chant. I think ambiguity is not a necessary part of the beauty of sacred music. In fact, clarity is a necessary part of sacred music. Clarity means that its purpose is unambiguous. So Gregorian chant has an exclusive use as sacred music and an unambiguous purpose.

But in addition to that, it has a different relationship to time. For a metric hymn, the passage of time is regular, fixed, and emphatic. For a Gregorian chant, the passage of time is in fact irregular; it evokes a sense of the suspension of its passage; it evokes a sense of the eternal. A good friend of mine, who is an ethnomusicologist, and has spent decades studying the music of India and the sacred musics of the world, says there is something common to all sacred music, that it is always seeking; it is always going forward; it is not stopping here and now. I think this also means that it is a kind of music that is not its own object of attention, but in fact focuses attention upon another object, which is divine worship and the ultimate object of that worship. As we listen and respond to it in singing, we then have our real *actuosa participatio*. ♪

On Music and Faith

by Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev

[This lecture was delivered at the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.,
February 9, 2011]



r. President, esteemed members of the Academic Senate, professors, teachers, students, dear friends!

First of all, permit me to express my profound gratitude for this invitation. It is a great honour for me to be within the walls of the Catholic University of America once again and to be addressing you. I was last here five years ago and at that time I spoke on Orthodox-Catholic relations. But today you have invited me in my dual capacity of churchman and a representative of culture. Acknowledging that I am not only a hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church but also a composer, you have asked me to address you on the connection between music and faith as experienced by past and contemporary composers as well as by myself.

MUSIC AND FAITH

I would like to begin with a thought on the relationship between music and creativity. I am convinced that culture and creativity can enhance faith, but they can hinder it too. The artist, composer, writer and representative of any creative profession, can, through his artistry, glorify the Creator. If creativity is dedicated to God, if the creative person puts his efforts into serving people, if he preaches lofty spiritual ideals, then his activity may aid his own salvation and that of thousands around him. If, however, the aim of creativity is to assert one's own ego, if the creative process is governed by egotistical or mercenary intentions, if the artist, through his art, propagates anti-spiritual, anti-God or anti-human values, then his work may be destructive for both himself and for those about him.

I am convinced that culture and creativity can enhance faith, but they can hinder it too.

We are familiar with Fr. Pavel Florensky's view that "culture" comes from the notion of "cult." We may add that culture, when divorced from cult, is in fact opposed to cult (in the broad sense of the word) and forfeits the right to be called culture. Genuine art is that which serves God either

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directly or indirectly. The music of Bach—though not always intended for worship—is clearly dedicated to God. The works of Beethoven and Brahms may not directly praise God, yet they are capable of elevating the human person morally and educating him spiritually. And this means—admittedly indirectly—that they also serve God.

Culture can be the bearer of Christian piety. In Russia during the Soviet years when religious literature was inaccessible, people learnt about God from the works of the Russian classics. It was impossible to buy or find in a library the works of St. Isaac the Syrian, yet we did have access to the writings of the elder Zossima in *The Brothers Karamazov*, which were inspired by the works of St. Isaac. Russian literature, art, and music of the nineteenth century, albeit secular in form, preserved a deep inner link with its original religious underpinnings. And nineteenth-century Russian culture throughout the Soviet period fulfilled the mission which, in normal circumstances, would have been the work of the church.

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Now that religious persecution has ceased, the church has entered the arena of freedom: there are no obstacles to her mission. A wall, artificially constructed in Soviet times, isolated the church from culture. But now that it is no more, church ministers are free to co-operate closely with people from the world of the arts and culture in order to enlighten the world. Church, culture, and art share a common missionary field and undertake the joint task of spreading enlightenment.

J. S. BACH

I would now like to pause and reflect on certain composers whose works exhibit a combination of organic, creative inspiration with deep religious faith. I find the most obvious illustration of this mutuality in the creative work and indeed the destiny of Johann Sebastian Bach. Bach is a colossus; his music contains a universal element that is all-embracing. In his monumental works he manages to unite magnificent and unsurpassed compositional skill with rare diversity, melodic beauty, and a truly profound spirituality. Even Bach's secular music is permeated by a sense of love for God, of standing in God's presence, of awe before him.

Bach is a universal Christian phenomenon. His music transcends confessional boundaries; it is ecumenical in the original sense of the word, for it belongs to the world as a whole and to each citizen separately. We may call Bach an "orthodox" composer in the original, literal sense of the Greek word *ortho-doxos* for throughout his life he learnt how to glorify God rightly. Invariably he adorned his musical manuscripts with the words *Soli Deo Gloria* (Glory to the One God) or *Jesu, juva* (Help, O Jesus). These expressions were for him not merely verbal formulae but a confession of faith that ran through all of his compositions. For Bach, music was worship of God. He was truly "catholic," again in the original understanding of the Greek word *katholikos*, meaning "universal," or "all-embracing," for he perceived the church as a universal organism, as a common doxology directed towards God. Furthermore, he believed his music to be but a single voice in the cosmic choir that praises God's glory. And of course, throughout his life Bach remained a true son of his native Lutheran Church. Albeit, as Albert Schweitzer noted, Bach's true religion was not even orthodox Lutheranism but mysticism. His

music is deeply mystical because it is based on an experience of prayer and ministry to God which transcends confessional boundaries and is the heritage of all humanity.

Bach's personal religious experience was embodied in all of his works which, like holy icons, reflect the reality of human life but reveal it in an illumined and transfigured form.

Bach may have lived during the Baroque era, but his music did not succumb to the stylistic peculiarities of the time. As a composer, moreover, Bach developed in an antithetical direction to that taken by art in his day. His was an epoch characterized by culture's headlong progression towards worldliness and humanism. Center stage became ever more occupied by the human person with his passions and vices, while less artistic space was reserved for God. Bach's art was not "art" in the conventional meaning of the word; it was not art for art's sake. The cardinal difference between the art of antiquity and the Middle Ages on the one hand and modern art on the other is in the direction it takes: pre-Renaissance art was directed towards God, while modern art is orientated towards the human person. Bach stood at the frontier of these two inclinations, two world-views, two opposing concepts of art. And, of course, he remained a part of that culture which was rooted in tradition, in cult, in worship, in religion.

In Bach's time the world had already begun to move towards the abyss of revolutionary chaos. This tendency swept over all of Europe from the end of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth. Forty years after his death, the French Revolution broke out. It was the first of a series of bloody coups which, conducted in the name of "human rights," stole millions of human lives. And all of this was done for the sake of the human person who, once again, proclaimed himself to be, as in pagan antiquity, the "measure of all things." People began to forget God the Creator and Lord of the universe. In an age of revolutions people repeated the errors of their ancestors and began to construct, one after another, towers of Babel. And they fell—one after another—burying their architects under the ruins.

Bach remained unaffected by this process because his life flowed within a different perspective. While the culture of his age became more and more removed from cult, he entered ever more deeply into the depths of cult: the depths of prayerful contemplation. As the world was rapidly becoming humanized and de-Christianized and as philosophers achieved further refinement in formulating theories designed to bring happiness to the human race, Bach sang a hymn to God from the depths of his heart.

We citizens of the early twenty-first century can affirm that no upheaval could either shake our love for Bach's music or our soul's love for God. Bach's oeuvre remains a rock against which the waves of the "sea of everyday affairs" break.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MUSICAL ART AFTER BACH

Some opine that Bach was the last of the great religious composers and that sacred music in general, a legacy of antiquity, belongs exclusively to the past. Bach's artistry indeed marked the



Johann Sebastian Bach



*Brahms (top) at 33 years old and
Beethoven at 24 years old.*



works of Stockhausen and Ligeti or in those of John Cage who combined noise with silence. Important and groundbreaking was Cage's piece entitled *4.33*, which is nothing more than four minutes and thirty three seconds of complete silence, accompanied only by natural sounds (for example, the coughing of the audience in the auditorium). The appearance of this

work in 1952 bore witness to the fact that the musical avant-garde had completely exhausted itself—as if it had nothing more to say. Cage's silence has little in common with the spiritual silence that burgeons from the depths of religious experience: his was simply a soundlessness which testified to the complete spiritual collapse of the musical avant-garde.

SHOSTAKOVICH AND THE MUSIC OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

It is my personal view that, in the history of twentieth-century music, there is only one composer who, in terms of talent and depth of inspired searching, comes close to Bach, and that is Shostakovich.

threshold beyond which Western music distanced itself from its religious roots and took the path of secular development. Chronologically, the divorce between music and religion coincided with the Age of Enlightenment, and, having taken this radical step, musicians did not turn back until recently.

This does not mean that church compositions were abandoned in the Classical and Romantic periods. Far from it. Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, and Brahms, to name but a few, wrote, for example, masterly settings of the Mass and the Requiem. After Bach, Brahms occupies second place in my list of favorite composers, and the third place is Beethoven's.

I am very fond of the music of the Romantic period—of Schubert, Schumann, and others. Their works, however, bear a secular spirit even when the texts are religious. Undoubtedly their compositions are outstanding, highly emotive, and compelling; nevertheless they are fortified by a worldly air and by styles and forms foreign to associations of sanctity.

During the epochs of impressionism and the avant-garde, interest in anything to do with religion seems to have faded altogether. Avant-garde composers renounced the final elements that linked music to faith—the elements of harmony and of beauty as fundamental for musical creativity. Cacophony and disharmony became the constructive fabric with which musical works were built.

The mid-twentieth century saw music styles that turned from atonality and dissonance to aleatoric music and random sonorities, as heard in the

*The texts of the Romantic period
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texts are religious.*

Bach's music is dedicated to God and permeated by an ecclesiastical spirit. Shostakovich, on the other hand, lived at a different time and in a country where God and the church were never spoken about openly. Yet at the same time all of his creative work reveals him to have been a believer. While he did not write church music and apparently did not attend church services, his music nonetheless confirms that he felt deeply the disastrous nature of human existence without God and that he experienced profoundly the tragedy of modern society—a godless society—which had renounced its roots. This yearning for the absolute, this longing for God, this thirst for truth prevails in all of his works—in his symphonies, quartets, preludes, and fugues.



Dimitri Shostakovich

Shostakovich was someone who could not be broken by repression or condemnation by the powers that be. He always served the Truth. I believe that, like Dostoevsky, he was a great spiritual and moral example, whose voice, like that of a prophet, cried out in the wilderness. This voice, however, evoked and continues to evoke a response in the hearts of millions of people.

In the twentieth century, the art of music was wrenched from any religious association. Of course, throughout that century spiritual works were written, even in atheist Soviet Russia. Recently, music manuscripts of Nikolai Golovanov, chief conductor of the Bolshoi Theatre and a major figure in Soviet music, were discovered hidden in a drawer. We now know that throughout his entire life he composed sacred music which he knew he would never hear performed. Only today, half a century after his death, are we able to appreciate his works.

The real return of composers to the sphere of faith came only at the end of the twentieth century

Many modern Western composers have written music to religious texts. It suffices to recall Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*, Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*, and the church music of Honneger, Hindemith, and Messiaen.

The real return of composers to the sphere of faith, however, came only at the end of the twentieth century when, in place of discord, formless noise, aleatoric music, and content-free silence, there appeared a newly devised harmony for the absolute spiritual silence of musical minimalism. What was least expected in musical art was a religious renaissance, but it was precisely this that surprised and satisfied the hopes of composers and the public. Following the possible and impossible innovations of the avant-garde, characterized by abundant external effects within a glaring inner emptiness, audiences yearned for a music that united simplicity and profundity—a music simple in language and style but deep in content; a music which would stir people not so much by its strident themes and stark originality, not even one that would necessarily touch the soul, but a music that could transport one beyond the boundaries of earthly existence into communication with the world above.

It is not fortuitous that by the end of the twentieth century the West experienced an upsurge of interest in church music, in particular Gregorian chant. The *Canto Gregoriano* CD, recorded in 1993 by Spanish monks from the Abbey of Santo Domingo de Silos, became an international bestseller: by the beginning of the twenty-first century more than seven million copies had been sold. The producers

could only guess as to what drove people to buy this disc and how the unison, monophonic tone of monastic plainchant surpassed in popularity the hits of the stars on the world stage.

Among living composers there are three in the West who enjoy considerable popularity—the Estonian Arvo Pärt, the Pole Henryk Górecki, and the Englishman John Tavener. These composers vary in importance; they each write in an original style, each has own signature, his own characteristic, his uniquely recognizable modality. Nevertheless, much unites them both on the musical and the spiritual planes. They have all experienced the profound influence of faith and are “practicing” Christians: Pärt and Tavener are Orthodox; Górecki is Catholic. Their remarkable productivity is permeated by the motif of religion, replete with deep spiritual content and inextricably linked to the liturgical tradition.

ARVO PÄRT

Arvo Pärt is a composer whose visionary work is religiously motivated by the language of his music, rooted as it is in church tradition. Pärt is not only a faithful Orthodox Christian, but also a committed church man who lives an intense prayer and spiritual life. The abundance of his inner spiritual experience acquired in the sacramental life of the church is fully reflected in his music which is sacred and ecclesiastical both in form and content.

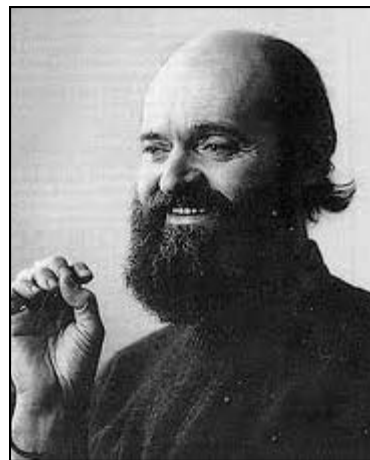
Arvo Pärt’s genius and destiny are characteristic of his era. He began writing in the 1960s as an avant-garde composer working in serial techniques. In the 1970s, withdrawing from composition in search of a personal style, he undertook a study of early polyphony. The period of his voluntary silence and seclusion ended in 1976 when he wrote *Für Alina* for piano and *Trivium* for organ: his first pieces in a new self-made compositional technique which he labeled “tintinnabulation” (from the Latin *tintinnabulum*, a bell). In 1977–78 these pieces were followed by *Fratres*, *Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten*, *Tabula Rasa*, *Arbos*, *Summa*, and *Spiegel im Spiegel*.

The “tintinnabulation” style, which aimed at utter simplicity in its musical dialectic, is based on the consonance of thirds and developed from the musical minimalism typical of postmodernism. Pärt believes that just one sound, one tonality, and one or two voices are enough to engage the listeners.

Pärt’s music correspond to the spiritual search of contemporary man.

“I work with simple material—the triad, the one tonality. The three notes of the triad are like bells. That is why I call it tintinnabulation,” explains the composer.

Such an explanation, however, will hardly assist us in understanding why Pärt’s music exerts so strong an impression on listeners, including those unfamiliar with classical music. It may be that the straightforwardness, the harmony and even the palpable monotony of Pärt’s music correspond to the spiritual search of contemporary man. Twenty-first century music lovers, weary of change and



Arvo Pärt

self-indulgence, find consolation and repose in these undemanding triads. The listener, having grown out of tranquility, acquires a desired inner calm through these gentle chords. Yearning for “angelic music,” he communes with the world above through this semblance of monody akin to the regularity of church services.

After his emigration from the Soviet Union in 1980, Pärt devoted himself to sacred music composition, but specifically for concert performance. Between 1980 and 1990 he wrote many pieces to accompany traditional Catholic texts, including *St. John's Passion*, *Te Deum*, *Stabat Mater*, *Magnificat*, *Miserere*, *Berliner Messe*, and *The Beatitudes*. The influence of the Catholic tradition is evident in his use of the organ and orchestra along with chorus and an ensemble of soloists.

Since the early 1990s, the inspiration of Orthodox Church singing and the Orthodox spiritual tradition has become appreciable in Pärt's oeuvre. He has produced many compositions on Orthodox texts, mostly for choir a capella, including *Kanon Pokajanen* (The Canon of Repentance) on verses by St. Andrew of Crete, *I am the True Vine* and *Triodion* on the texts from the Lenten Triodion. His pieces for orchestra, such as *Silouan's Song* for string orchestra, are also marked by a profound influence of Orthodoxy.

Personal acquaintance with the late Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov), disciple and biographer of St. Silouan, the greatly revered Athonite elder canonized by the church, has exerted significant influence on Arvo Pärt. When he lived in the Soviet Union, Pärt met a well known father-confessor who advised him to abandon music and begin work as a church watchman. Following his emigration, Pärt, as yet an unknown composer, encountered Fr. Sophrony, who gave the opposite advice: “Continue to write music,” said Fr. Sophrony, “and the whole world will know you.” And indeed, this is precisely what happened.

In spite of his advanced years, Elder Sophrony maintained an interest in the artistic work of the composer and kept in touch with him. There is a photo of the elder with earphones listening to Pärt's music. Arvo Pärt used to spend several months a year in a house near the Monastery of St.

John the Baptist in Essex, Great Britain, founded by Archimandrite Sophrony. There he attended monastic worship every day.

Silouan's Song is based on words by St. Silouan: “My soul yearns for the Lord and I tearfully seek him out. How am I not to seek thee? Thou didst seek me out first and granted that I may rejoice in

The influence of the Catholic tradition is evident in Pärt's use of the organ and orchestra along with chorus and an ensemble of soloists.

thy Holy Spirit, and my soul loved thee. Thou dost see, O Lord, my sadness and my tears. . . . If thou didst not bring me to thee through thy love, then I should not have sought thee as I now seek thee, yet thy Spirit granted that I may come to know thee, and my soul rejoiceth that thou art my God and Lord, and unto tears I yearn for thee.”

These words are not actually narrated in Pärt's work, rather they seem to be hidden in the melody played by strings. The entire composition is imbued with profound longing for God: grief and yearning for him. We are left with the impression that the violins and cellos sing songs to God, praise him and pray to him.

After the separation of secular and church music in the Age of Enlightenment, composers seem

to have lost the ability to compose in this fashion. Who would have imagined that at the dawn of the twenty-first century the best representatives of the art of music would bring this skill back to God, praising him “with strings and pipe”?

MY OWN CREATIVE WORK

Allow me to tell you something of my own musical creative work, not because it is worthy of comparison with that of the aforementioned composers, but because the sponsors of my lecture asked me to do so.

My career as a composer has been somewhat strange and unconventional. On one occasion I intentionally abandoned music forever because I was caught between ministry to music and to the church, so I chose the church.



Bishop Hilarion Alfeyev

My life as a musician began when I was a young child. My parents discovered that I had perfect pitch and decided to send me to a specialist musical school. I began playing the piano at the age of three, and the violin at six. Composing started when I was twelve, and by the age of seventeen I graduated from the musical school's composition class and entered the Moscow Conservatory.

It was assumed that I would become a professional musician. However, I began to attend church as well as classes, and with every passing day the church attracted me more and more while music did so less and less. For some years my mind was not exactly divided, but I did ask myself where I should devote my life. Finally, I realized that I wanted to serve the church most of all.

I was called up during my student years at the conservatory and, having served in the army, became absolutely clear about devoting my life completely to God; so I took monastic vows. I felt then that I had broken my ties with music once and for all. Renunciation of the world was first of all the renunciation of music. I neither composed nor played musical instruments, nor even listened to recorded music.

I was then in my twentieth year and was possessed by a somewhat radical outlook. I had abandoned music, I imagined, forever. Still, man proposes, but God disposes. I became a priest and spent many years serving God and the church. The period of radicalism was over, and I began to permit myself to listen to classical music, though I was not actively engaged in music making.

In 2006 something changed in me, and I began to compose again. This is how it happened. As ruling bishop of the Vienna diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church I was invited to a festival of Orthodox music in Moscow. A composition written by me twenty years before was on the program. Listening to my own music, something stirred inside me, and I began to compose again almost at once. Apparently, I had lacked some kind of outside impetus. So I returned to creative work. Musical themes and melodies began to proliferate of their own accord and with such speed that I scarcely managed to record them. At first I had no manuscript pages so I scored sheets of paper by hand in order to write down the notes. Before long I equipped myself with staff paper and later mastered a computer programme that allowed me to plot the notes and listen to my recorded music digitally. I

wrote quickly, though at odd moments, as I had no special time slot devoted to composition. Some pieces were composed in planes or in airport waiting halls.

I composed *The Divine Liturgy* and later *The All-Night Vigil* in this way, as also the *St. Matthew Passion*, *Christmas Oratorio*, and my latest, *The Song of Ascent*.

The Divine Liturgy was completed during the first decade of June 2006, when I took official flights from Budapest to Moscow and from Vienna to Geneva. Much music was composed en route: at the Moscow and Geneva airports, and on board a Moscow-Budapest plane. As a church minister I can never be indifferent to the quality of music used in church. I have heard many different choirs during my twenty years of service at God's altar. Very seldom could singing at the liturgy be deemed satisfactory. More often than not the sound interfered with prayer, rather than assist at it. In order to focus on prayer I had to distance myself from the choral performances. Typically a precentor would select hymns by different composers from different epochs, written in different styles. This resulted in conflict between the inner structure of the liturgy as a single whole and the unrelated items being performed. Word and music were entirely disconnected. This is why I decided to compose a full-scale liturgy for worship. I wanted to compose a kind of music that would not distract either the celebrant, the reader, or the worshippers, all of whom were praying at the divine services.

My musical settings of the hymns in the liturgy are simple, easily memorized, and bear a resemblance to common chant.

The *St. Matthew Passion* is an attempt at an Orthodox reading of Christ's passion. Among the forty-eight pieces in the composition there are four fugues for orchestra, four arias, numerous choruses and recitatives. Unlike Bach's passions, there is no libretto, only the Gospel account which is narrated by a protodeacon in Russian and in a manner familiar in the Orthodox Church. In addition there are texts in Church Slavonic from divine services of Holy Week which are set to choral music. This passion lasts for two hours and consists of four thematic movements, namely, the Mystical Supper, the Trial, the Crucifixion, and the Burial. Certain pieces in the third movement are performed by male voices and low stringed instruments (violas, cellos, and double-basses). According to some critics, this musical composition for choir and string orchestra is unprecedented in the Russian musical tradition. It follows Bach's format except that it is filled with Orthodox content. It may well be the case that, to a certain extent, I managed as best as I could, and in all modesty, to make the dream of the great Russian composer, Mikhail Glinka, a reality, namely, to "marry" a Western fugue with Russian church singing. Certainly, it was a risky endeavor, but as this composition was not intended for church use, I thought I could allow myself the challenge. May the public judge how successful this is.



*Bishop Hilarion Alfejev as
Metropolitan of Volokolamsk*

My musical settings of the hymns in the liturgy are simple, easily memorized, and bear a resemblance to common chant. Worshippers praying at the service and listening to this music would feel that they are hearing familiar sounds. There is nothing novel or strange that would distract the faithful. I followed the same principles in my *All-Night Vigil*.

The *Christmas Oratorio* is shorter than the *St. Matthew Passion*. A musical drama, it lasts some seventy-five minutes and is based on the theme of movement from darkness to light, from the Old Testament to the New. The “Oratorio” begins with rather somber music, meant to guide the listener to the Old Testament. Since the Gospel texts of the Annunciation and the Nativity of Christ are narrated, boys’ voices are introduced. After this, choral and orchestra sections alternate with solo arias. The music is intended to illustrate the entire story of Christ’s Nativity. The composition ends with a jubilant finale in which the combined forces of the two choirs and the orchestra lead into a glorification of the Lord with the words “Glory to God in the highest.” I am pleased to recall that the world premiere of this composition took place at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. The oratorio was performed at the Church of St. John the Baptist in Manhattan, on December 18 of the same year, and at Memorial Hall, Harvard University, on December 20.

My latest composition is called *The Song of Ascent*. It is a symphony for choir and orchestra and was composed during the course of a week in August 2008, when I was on a short holiday in Finland. The libretto is based on the texts of the last seven psalms in the Biblical Psalter. Two of them are called “Song of Ascent” in the Bible.

The psalm texts are extremely rich in content and they express a variety of emotional and spiritual experiences such as sorrow, repentance, tenderness, contrition of heart, joy, and exultation. In this sense, the psalter constitutes a universal collection of devotions in which all the fundamental conditions of the human soul flow into prayerful lamentations addressed to God. The symphony has five movements, each with its own drama. Its overriding theme lies in the ascent from the depths of despair to the heights of prayerful exultation to the rapturous praise of God. Written for a large orchestra, it consists of a string group, woodwind, brass instruments, percussion, harp, and organ. A mixed choir divided into men’s and women’s groups is placed on either side of the stage.



Bishop Alfeyev meeting Pope Benedict.

The premiere of *The Song of Ascent* took place at the Grand Hall of the Moscow Conservatory in November 2009. The symphony was also performed at the Vatican on May 20, 2010 in the presence of Benedict XVI, Pope of Rome. Carlo Ponti, son of the famous actress Sophia Loren, conducted the Russian National Orchestra and the Moscow Synodal Choir. After the performance, the pope expressed heartfelt words about the music. He considered that the concert opened a window to the “soul of the Russian people and with it the Christian faith, both of which find extraordinary expression precisely in the Divine Liturgy and the liturgical singing that always accompanies it.” Benedict XVI, himself an accomplished musician, noted the “profound original

bond” between Russian music and liturgical singing. “In the liturgy and from the liturgy is unleashed and to a great extent is initiated the artistic creativity of Russian musicians to create masterpieces that merit being better known in the Western world,” added the Pontiff. Drawing a deeper meaning from the concert, the Bishop of Rome affirmed that in music there is already a certain fulfillment of the “encounter, the dialogue, the synergy between East and West, as well as between tradition and modernity.” In his new book of interviews the Pope of Rome speaks very warmly of the performance.

CONCLUSION

I have said much today about classical and sacred music, as I compose and listen to it. Certainly, I am well aware of the insignificant number of young people who listen to classical music, whereas almost everyone listens to popular music. This I consider to be a real tragedy.

There are compositions in popular music imbued with high spiritual content and are written skillfully.

I believe, however, that secular musical art is possible within Christianity, including that which exceeds the limits of classical music which I love so much. Christianity is inclu-

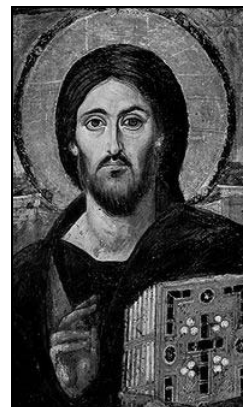
sive; it does not set strict canonical limits to art. Christianity can even inspire a secular artist who, using the means available and known to him and his milieu, will be able to convey certain sacred messages equally in the language of modern musical culture.

This applies also to modern, popular, and youth music. There are compositions in popular music imbued with high spiritual content and are written skillfully (for instance, the famous rock opera *Jesus Christ Superstar*). No doubt, this composition is not in keeping with church criteria, but the author did not purport to present the canonical image of Christ. He achieved his objective outstandingly well by telling the story of Christ's passion in a language understandable to the youth and through the medium of contemporary music. I appreciate this music more emphatically than I do the works of many avant-garde composers, since the latter sometimes eschew melody, harmony, and inner content.

Some believe that there cannot be works of art dedicated to Christ except those created within the church. I do not completely agree with this. Of course, the church is the custodian of Christ's teaching and the place of his living presence, but the church should not seek to "privatize" Christ or declare him to be her "property." We should not repeat the mistakes the Catholic Church made in the Middle Ages. The image of Christ can inspire not only church people, but also those who are still far from her. One should not forbid them to think, speak and write about Christ, unless they are moved by a desire deliberately to distort Christianity and to insult the church and the faithful.

If a composition is bright, impressive, and grips the listeners, if it makes them empathize emotionally with the Gospel events and even weep, if it arouses profound feelings in them, then it deserves high praise. It may be that we meet professionalism and musical skill in works which do not touch our hearts. It may also happen that a composition based on a religious subject turns out to be secular in its content and lacks spirit.

The way to the Christian faith often begins with a discovery of the living Christ, rather than a recognition of the church's dogmatic truths. Christianity is a religion focused on the living Man, a historic person. The person of this Man appeals astonishingly. It may well be the case that a composition on a Gospel subject, though written by a non-churchman, is imbued by a veneration of Christ. Many may begin their way to Christ and to the church through such a composition, even if it were not altogether "canonical." ❧



REPERTORY

Mozart's *Ave Verum Corpus* and Eighteenth-Century Musical Style

by Paul Mathew Weber



Among the most fascinating qualities of Western music is its harmonic language, with its tensions and dissonances, contests and progression. By establishing a home base (the tonal center or key) the harmonic world of Western music is one in which consonance is defined by the dissonance it creates. By choosing a point of reference one necessarily identifies any other point as foreign, even in competition with the referential. This basic tension between “home” and “away” is found in the very notion of the key, where the expectation that the tonic harmony will govern the departure and closure of any given piece is elemental to the language of every composer from Bach to Brahms. This dichotomy is so fundamental to the Western musical tradition that the opposition of two polar pitch loci was already an important part of plainsong pitch organization.¹

The hierarchical tonal system thrives on the expectation that the tonic and dominant harmonies will have special prominence. Other harmonies depart from the tonic and return through the dominant in normal patterns and cadences. In the eighteenth century, the possibility of reinforcing or thwarting these expectations gave composers great communicative powers, aided by the post-baroque, melodic, periodic style. It is in the special moment of the late eighteenth century, when a pan-European style built on the mature Western tonal system had taken hold, that Mozart produced the music that would for centuries live on in cherished ubiquity.

The harmonic world of Western music is one in which consonance is defined by the dissonance it creates.

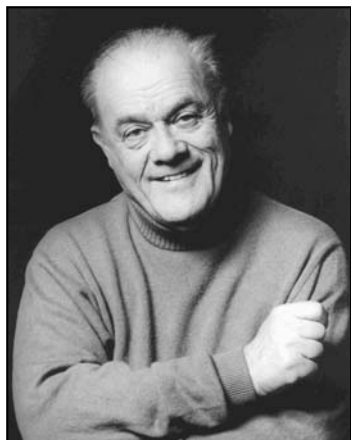
This article will further examine the harmonic style of the period, followed by a brief analysis of Mozart's *Ave Verum Corpus*, KV618, that will explore the interaction of its musical structure and text.

SONATA STYLE

The term “sonata style” was coined by Charles Rosen as a way to identify the shift in instrumental composition from the sectional, ornament-heavy music of the Baroque toward a style concerned

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¹Think of a solemn psalm or canticle tone, which begins on the final, ascends to the dominant for the recitation of the verse, and comes to rest on the final at the end of each verse.



Charles Rosen

with a simple surface texture wedded to a continuous, linear and dramatic structure.² The new style communicated with the listener almost linguistically, leading from one well-defined idea to another through a series of stable and unstable harmonic regions. A basic assumption of the style is that the surface ideas gain their importance through the underlying harmonic progression. Because of the logic of the musical process itself, sonata style created forms that were “completely written out (unlike the *da capo* aria which left the decoration to the singer), its shape was always definable by a simple contour (unlike the additive and easily extensible forms of the *concerto grosso* and the variation), and it was totally independent of words (unlike the madrigal and the opera).”³

The trajectory of a sonata style piece involves five basic harmonic motions in the following order: 1) establishment of a home key, 2) departure from the home key, 3) establishment of a secondary key, 4) motion back to the original key, and 5) reestablishment of the original key and final cadence without departure. Naturally, the proportions of these motions vary in late eighteenth-century pieces, and the fluidity of formal procedures should be stressed.⁴ For instance, the motion to a secondary key may not be terribly elaborate, consisting only of a common chord modulation between periods. However, the contrast between two or more tonal centers and the basic alternation of stable and unstable sections is a convention of the style. Stability is achieved by harmonic clarity (one knows what key one is in) and clear phrase structure (one knows the tune one is supposed to whistle). Instability is marked by modulation, sequence and a lack of periodicity. Thematic material is found in stable sections, while unstable sections tend to make use of motivic imitation, fragmentation, and figuration.

The new sonata style communicated with the listener almost linguistically.

The two basic types of sections (stable, thematic areas contrasting with unstable, non-thematic areas) are what give sonata style the ability to be declamatory, confrontational, tuneful, contradictory, expansive, and conversational all within one piece. It is essentially communicative. As Rosen puts it, “it is the structure . . . that confers meaning on the themes.”⁵ Words are not required for this music to communicate powerfully. On the other hand, the sonata style can be an effective vehicle to amplify and augment the meaning of texts. To take a well-

² Charles Rosen, *Sonata Forms*, rev. ed. (New York: Norton, 1988), p. 10.

³ Ibid.

⁴ For a lengthy discussion on the arguments surrounding generalizations in sonata form theory see James Hepokoski & Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁵ Rosen, *Sonata Forms*, 12. The argument that late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century music does not require extra-musical imagery to impart meaning is related to the ability of instrumental music of the period to communicate to a wide audience. The monumentality and individualism of the romantic sonata style in the nineteenth

known example from the period, the Kyrie of Haydn's so-called "Lord Nelson" Mass presents the image of *Kyrie* in a forceful D minor with *Christe* in a lyrical F major, sung suddenly by a solo soprano. The contrast between two divine persons is dramatic, and the characters of the Lordly and

Mozart is able to create a rich depiction of salvation history in only forty-six measures.

the Merciful are brought out by the tonal contrasts inherent in the formal procedures. The reconciliation of these powerful contrasts does not come easily, and a furious, wild fugue introduces another dramatic counterpoint to the earlier thematic sections of the Kyrie and *Christe*. The final Kyrie reintroduces the fiery power of the first, now incorporating a soaring solo soprano in one of the more tremendous

examples of the fearful force of the late-eighteenth-century masters. The dramatic images of the Kyrie and *Christe* are made possible by the monumental nature of the underlying structure. Such procedures are at the heart of the late-eighteenth-century style and central to the language of the First Viennese School. On a much smaller scale than the Haydn example above, Mozart is able to create a rich depiction of salvation history in only forty-six measures.

AVE VERUM CORPUS

We have all experienced Mozart's short Corpus Christi motet many times. A staple of every church choir's repertoire since it was written in 1791, it gets hauled out a few times each year to demonstrate that Mozart's music is indestructible despite our best efforts to the contrary. Its allure is striking partly because the piece is so short and unassuming. It is the work of a mature composer of the sonata style and captures the essence of eighteenth-century compositional procedures in a piece of great economy and elegance.



The oldest version of the text comes from a Florentine manuscript from 1293 accompanied by the rubric *oratio ad hostiam*. Because of the brevity of the prayer and the rhyme scheme it was most likely conceived as a private devotion, perhaps intended as a prayer at the elevation at Mass. While it was not included in official liturgies of the Mass or office until the sixteenth-century, the text had long been associated with the feast of Corpus Christi. There are numerous variations of the text

century produced heated arguments about the relative merits of absolute and representational musical art. Of particular note, see, Eduard Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music*, tr. Gustav Cohen (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1957), p. 28: "Many music lovers think that it is an exclusive characteristic of the older, 'classical' music that it does not represent feelings, and it is immediately admitted that nobody seeks a feeling as the content of any of the forty-eight preludes and fugues of J. S. Bach's Well-Tempered Keyboard. However, this distinction is both simplistic and arbitrary."

that were available in Mozart's day, some following local traditions unique to Austria.⁶ The text used by him, however, is given below with a translation.

1 Ave, verum corpus natum	1 Hail, true body born
2 De Maria virgine,	2 Of the Virgin Mary,
3 Vere passum, immolatum	3 Which truly suffered, immolated
4 In cruce pro homine.	4 On the cross for man.
5 Cuius latus perforatum	5 Whose pierced side
6 Unda fluxit et sanguine:	6 Flowed with water and blood:
7 Esto nobis prae gustatum	7 Be for us a protection
8 In mortis examine.	8 In the trials of death.

Those of us familiar with other settings of this text, particularly the plainsong setting, will notice the absence of the closing exclamations *O dulcis, O pie, O fili Mariae*. This was a common variation in Austria and Bohemia,⁷ as we already find in Jakobus Gallus' eight-voice setting published in 1587.

Mozart wrote KV618 in June of 1791, six months before his death. It was written for the choir-master of the parish church in Baden, Anton Stoll, and scored for four-voice choir, strings, and continuo. He had had a productive spring after an unproductive 1790. Since January, he had written a new piano concerto, a series of children's songs, his final string quartet, and a number of dances to fulfill his responsibilities as imperial chamber composer. At the time he wrote *Ave Verum Corpus*, Mozart was in the midst of writing *Die Zauberflöte* and had just received an anonymous commission to write a Requiem Mass in remembrance of Count Franz Walsegg's wife, Anna.

This last year of Mozart's life marked a return to a number of genres he had not engaged with in a number of years: piano concerto, German-language opera, Masonic music, and, of course, church music. The return to church music has led some to speculate that Mozart may have had a reawakening of faith, or perhaps experienced a repentant impulse around this time.⁸ There have long been questions about how serious his marital problems were, while we know his financial situation had deteriorated in 1790–91, particularly after an unsuccessful trip to Berlin. Whatever the impetus for these pieces, however, the tiny motet he wrote for the choirmaster of Baden has been among his most widely known and domesticated works for over two centuries. Perhaps only "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" and the KV545 C-Major Piano Sonata surpass it in this regard.



Mozart was born in 1756 and christened *Joannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus*. Mozart himself, would later prefer "Wolfgang Amadé."

⁶ For the history and development of the *Ave Verum Corpus* text, see: Bernd Edelmann, "Dichtung und Komposition in Mozarts 'Ave verum corpus' KV 618," *Mozart Studien*, 2 (1993), 11–55.

⁷ Edelmann, "Dichtung," 14.

⁸ Maynard Solomon, *Mozart: A Life* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), p. 418.

KV618

Motet, Ave verum corpus

K 618, Baden, June 17 1791

Wolfgang Amadé Mozart
(1756-1791)

Adagio
sotto voce

Soprano
Alto
Tenore
Basso

Reductio partiturae

A - ve, a - ve ve - rum cor - pus, na - tum
A - ve, a - ve ve - rum cor - pus, na - tum
A - ve, a - ve ve - rum cor - pus, na - tum
A - ve, a - ve ve - rum cor - pus, na - tum

8

de Ma - rí - a vír - gi - ne, ve - re pas - sum im - mo - lá - tum in cru -
de Ma - rí - a vír - gi - ne, ve - re pas - sum im - mo - lá - tum in
de Ma - rí - a vír - gi - ne, ve - re pas - sum im - mo - lá - tum in
de Ma - rí - a vír - gi - ne, ve - re pas - sum im - mo - lá - tum in

16

- ce pro hó - mi - ne. Cu - jus la - tus
cru - ce pro hó - mi - ne. Cu - jus la - tus
cru - ce pro hó - mi - ne. Cu - jus la - tus
cru - ce pro hó - mi - ne. Cu - jus la - tus

2

24

per - fo - rá - tum un - da flu - xit et sán - gui - ne, es - to
per - fo - rá - tum un - da flu - xit et sán - gui - ne, es - to
per - fo - rá - tum un - da flu - xit et sán - gui - ne,
per - fo - rá - tum un - da flu - xit et sán - gui - ne,

31

no - bis_ prae - gu - stá - tum in mor - - tis ex - á - mi - ne, in mor -
no - bis_ prae - gu - stá - tum in mor - - tis ex - á - mi - ne, in
es - to no - bis_ prae - gu - stá - tum in mor - tis ex - á - mi - ne, in
es - to no - bis_ prae - gu - stá - tum in mor - tis ex - á - mi - ne, in

39

- - - - - tis ex - á - mi - ne.
mor - - - - - tis ex - á - mi - ne.
mor - - - - - tis ex - á - mi - ne.
mor - - - - - tis ex - á - mi - ne. tr

The text Mozart uses consists of eight lines grouped into four couplets. He respects this formula in the music, which, despite an instrumental introduction, interlude, and coda, consists of eight choral phrases grouped into four periodic structures. As was stated earlier, there are five basic tonal motions in a sonata-style composition: 1) establishment of a home key, 2) departure from the home key, 3) establishment of a secondary key, 4) motion back to the original key, and 5) reestablishment of the original key and final cadence without departure. These events occur in *Ave Verum Corpus* as outlined in the Figure 1:

Figure 1

A

- 1) Establishment of a home key—D major: mm.1–2, introduction; mm.3–6, *Ave, ave verum corpus*, imperfect authentic cadence;
- 2) Motion away from the home key—mm.7–10, *natum de Maria virgine*, half cadence;
- 3) Establishment of a secondary key—A major: mm.11–14, *vere passum immolatum*, deceptive cadence; mm.15–18, *in cruce pro homine*, perfect authentic cadence; mm.19–21 instrumental codetta, perfect authentic cadence;

B

- 4) Motion back to the original key—A major, modulation to F major: mm.22–25, *Cujus latus perforatum*, imperfect authentic cadence; modulation to D minor: mm.26–29, *unda fluxit et sanguine*, half cadence;
- 5) Reestablishment of the original key—D major: mm.30–37, *esto nobis praegustatum in mortis examine*, deceptive cadence (on IV6); mm.38–43, *in mortis examine*, perfect authentic cadence; mm.44–46, instrumental coda, perfect authentic cadence.

The piece is divided equally into two halves, the second half beginning in measure 22 with the text *cujus latus*, and coinciding with the moment where the motion back to D major begins. This is analogous to the binary division of eighteenth century sonata-form pieces, in which the exposition closes in a stable secondary key and the second half of the work begins with the unstable development section. This is an important formal division that is present in many works of the period and later. The effect is that the first large section of the piece contains some of the most consonant, stable areas, despite the fact that two contrasting keys are presented. The second section, then, contains the most unstable section, that section in which the stability of the secondary key is disturbed and undermined in the attempt to reestablish the original tonal center.⁹

Each half of the *Ave Verum Corpus* is also neatly divided into two halves. In order to make discussion a little easier, the two large sections have been given the formal designations A (mm.1–21) and B (mm.22–46) (see Figure 1). The two subsections of A each consist of two choral phrases and all four phrases are four measures in length. This illustrates what we referred to earlier as “periodicity,” namely the regular, predictable flow of phrases and clear cadential arrivals. In fact, the four

⁹We should note that not all sonata-style pieces have two halves of equal length. In most sonata-form pieces, the second half is appreciably larger than the first. This is due to the typical presence of a recapitulation that restates the ideas from the exposition in the original key.



Mozart during the 1880s.

phrases create two antecedent-consequent relationships, forming two structures that we term “periods.” Both periods together form a contrasting double period, namely two periods that themselves form an antecedent-consequent relationship.

The unmuddied periodicity found in the A section is not found throughout the B section. Here, the first two phrases continue the four-bar organization established in the previous four, however, beginning at *esto nobis*, Mozart breaks the mold with eight-bar and six-bar phrases. Having created the expectation of predictable regularity in the flow of the piece, he introduces longer stretches of expansive musical lines at the close of his short work. Finally, we note that the two large sections are buttressed by short instrumental sections that serve to reinforce the larger tonal arrivals at the beginning, half-way point and closing of the piece.



From an unfinished portrait by his brother-in-law Joseph Lange. Mozart's wife, Constanza, said this was the closest likeness to her husband.

TEXT AND STRUCTURE

Now, all that having been said, we turn to the more compelling connection between the music and the text. As we have already discussed at some length, the power of this music is drawn from the relationship between stable and unstable regions. We also noted that some of the most stable sections are to be expected in the first half of the piece and the most unstable moment normally occurs at the beginning of the second half. With that in mind, we will pass through the *Ave Verum Corpus* with an eye toward moments in which Mozart interrupts the consonant nature of this piece.

The two-measure introduction sets the stage for a consonant D-major choral entrance. Only twice in this piece does Mozart repeat the text, and the two *Ave's* at the beginning allow his second phrase to begin on a strong syllable at *natum de Maria virgine*. It also allows for the contrast found between these phrases, in which the “True Body” is juxtaposed with its human source: *Ave verum corpus/natum de Maria virgine*. Mozart also allows the violins to deviate from the soprano line only once in the first two phrases, setting the name *Maria* in relief by reaching briefly up to double the sopranos in octaves (ex. 1). There is nothing unsettling about these first phrases, and the basic tonal motion highlights the two pillars of any key, namely the tonic and dominant.

Goffigny Amadi Mozart

EXAMPLE 1

m. 7

Choir

na - tum de Ma - ri - a Vir - gi - ne,
na - tum de Ma - ri - a Vir - gi - ne,
na - tum de Ma - ri - a Vir - gi - ne,
na - tum de Ma - ri - a Vir - gi - ne,

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello
Contrabass

In the third phrase, Mozart reinterprets the dominant from the end of the second phrase, and A major becomes the new tonic. This sunny secondary key governs the rest of the A section. We do not find much conflict here, aside from the expectation that we will return to D major at some point. However, the text begins to depict a more troubling scene in the third and fourth lines: *vere passum immolatum in cruce pro homine*. Tonic and dominant motions continue to predominate throughout the rest of the A section, although Mozart introduces the first signs of musical conflict with a deceptive cadence, reached via a diminished seventh chord that tonicizes the arrival (ex. 2). The most dissonant of sonorities within any key, the diminished seventh chord ($\text{vii}^{\circ}_7/\text{vi}$) highlights the word *immolatum*, foreshadowing the more elaborate harmonic conflict to come.

EXAMPLE 2

m.11

ve - re pas - sum, im - mo - la - tum in
 ve - re pas - sum, im - mo - la - tum
 ve - re pas - sum, im - mo - la - tum

ve - re pas - sum, im - mo - la - tum

A: I V₃⁴ 7 vii^o7/vi vi

The A section ends firmly in A major, and that is the first sonority heard at the outset of the B section (m.22). However, chromatic alterations and diversions immediately distort our sense of key, and the subsequent cadence in far-away F major sounds anything but consonant. The next phrase redirects us again into D minor, where we come to rest on the dominant via two diminished seventh chords accompanying the word *sanguine* (ex.3). The text in these two phrases is perhaps the most bleak of the prayer: *cujus latus perforatum unda fluxit et sanguine*. Naturally, any composer would choose to introduce some unpleasantness into the setting of this text. However, the logic of the form and the conventions of the style dictate that the motion back to the original key, occurring at the beginning of the second half of the piece, is the moment of the greatest dissonance. It was Mozart who planned for this moment,¹⁰ the moment when the arrival on the word *sanguine* would come at the end of a swimmingly chromatic pair of phrases and harmonized by diminished seventh chords.¹¹ The only other such harmonies in this piece, by far the most dissonant, occur on *immolatum* and at *mortis* in the last phrase of the piece.¹² With the exception perhaps of *perforatum*, the most disturbing images in the text are coupled with extremely dissonant harmonies at moments of structural importance.

¹⁰ If Mozart had chosen to include the final acclamations *O Jesu, O pia, O Fili Mariae*, this line of text would not have fallen so neatly at the division between the two halves of the piece.

¹¹ The tonal plan of these two phrases in mm.22–29 is governed by the keys of A, F and d, the notes of which outline the minor tonic, although the bass does not arrive on D until the next phrase. The use of the minor tonic in a major key piece carries numerous associations in the literature of the Viennese Classic, none of which indicate happiness.

¹² There are instances of the vii^o₆ chord at in *cruce* and *fluxit*, which might be included in the discussion here. However, even as late as 1791, tritones with the bass were carefully controlled and constitute a higher level of dissonance in this analysis. The vii^o₇ at *latus* occurs briefly on an unaccented syllable and it proceeds immediately to V₃⁴. The importance of the three instances of diminished seventh chords discussed here is established by their appearance at prominent cadences, their placement on strongly accented syllables, and their significance in the aural experience of the entire work.

EXAMPLE 3

m. 22

Cu - ius la - tus per - fo - ra - tum un - da flu - xit et san - gui - ne;
 Cu - ius la - tus per - fo - ra - tum un - da flu - xit et san - gui - ne;
 Cu - ius la - tus per - fo - ra - tum un - da flu - xit et san - gui - ne;

A: I vii°₃/iv V₃ V₇ I V₂/V vii°₆ VI₆ V₆ 7 vii°₂ i₄ vii°₇/V V

F: vii°₅⁶ d: IV₂⁴

The arrival back in D major occurs in m.30 and is accompanied both by the only moment of real polyphony in the piece as well as the longest phrase. Initiated by a sequence and imitation between the upper and lower two pairs of voices, the arrival on the tonic is met by an expansive and soaring setting of the text *esto nobis praegustatum in mortis examine*. This long phrase, which reestablishes the original key, culminates in a deceptive cadence that replaces the expected minor vi chord with the cheerier IV₆.¹³ It is here that the second text repetition occurs with the words *in mortis*. These are sung over a six-bar phrase that introduces the afore-mentioned diminished seventh chord. However, this time the dissonance does not participate in a structural disturbance, as it did in the two previous examples. In this case, the dissonance leads to a final resolution, and the former conflicts are undone as the piece proceeds to a close in the consonance with which it began.

We should also note here, that the surface layer of the music contains an important link between the end of the A section and the end of the B section. At *in crucis* and at *mortis*, the sopranos leap up to an unaccompanied D that leads to a closing melisma, while the rest of the choir enters beneath them (ex. 4). The motivic connection is perhaps the easiest to perceive and it can be no accident that the two words, set so poignantly in relief, carry a related meaning. At the end of the A section, we are contemplating the death of Christ; at the end of the B section, we are imploring Christ for aid in our own death. The structural transformation from D major to A major at the moment of *in cruce* is given a mirror image¹⁴ at the moment when we have decisively transformed A major back to D major at *mortis*.

¹³ Some writers have tried to make a connection between the soprano-alto-bass part-writing here and the Landini cadence of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. While the part-writing is similar, numerous examples of replacing the vi with a IV₆ can be found in the literature of the period and later, with the same part-writing results. Naturally, the fact that the bass note is the same for both chords gives rise to frequent substitutions of one for the other. For these arguments see: Wolfgang Hoffman, "Satztechnische Bemerkungen zu Mozarts 'Ave Verum Corpus' KV 618," *Mozart Studien*, 8 (1998), 118–120. Also, Edelmann, "Dichtung," 47–8.

¹⁴ The cadence structure between the two halves is also identical, despite the fact that the keys in which they occur are not, nor are the phrase lengths: section A= D: imperfect authentic cadence, half cadence; A: deceptive cadence, perfect authentic cadence; section B= F: imperfect authentic cadence, d: half cadence, D: deceptive cadence, perfect authentic cadence.

EXAMPLE 4

m.14 m.37

la - tum in cru - ce ne, in mor - tis

la - tum in cru - ce ne, in mor - tis

la - tum in cru - ce ne, in mor - tis

la - tum in cru - ce ne, in mor - tis

The style of the late-eighteenth-century symphonists and opera composers does not usually call to mind Catholic church music. Their penchant for solo arias in some orchestral Masses and the large ensembles required to perform these works are not normally among most people's expectations regarding sacred music. Aesthetic conventions and parochial conditioning aside, the ability of this style and these composers sensitively to engage and project sacred texts and themes is without qualification. As we have seen, in a mere forty-six measures, and using the conventions of the musical language of his day, Mozart depicted musically the Virgin Birth (*verum corpus/Maria Virgine*), the connection between the cross and the final judgement (*in cruce/mortis examine*), and the application of the bloody sacrifice of the Crucifixion to mortal sin and death (*immolatum/sanguine/mortis*). To steal a phrase from the Second Viennese School, this piece is a sacred symphony in a sigh. Once we learn their language, the composers of the First Viennese School can move us in church as well as they do in the concert hall. ♪

Once we learn their language, the composers of the First Viennese School can move us in church as well as they do in the concert hall.



Primary composers of the First Viennese School (l to r): Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Franz Schubert, Joseph Haydn, and Ludwig van Beethoven.

Kyriale on the New Texts

by Fr. Samuel Weber, O.S.B.

SAINT LOUIS GRADUAL

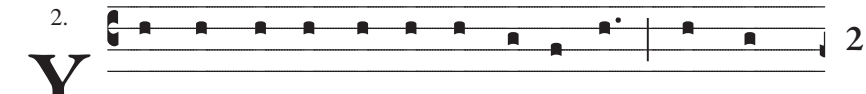
Chants from the Kyriale

Fr. Samuel F. Weber, O.S.B.


Kyrie

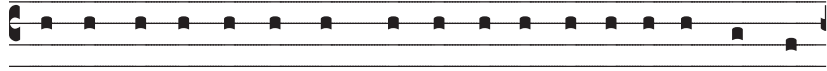
1.  1

K Y-ri-e e-le-i-son. *ij.* Christe e-le-i-son. *ij.* Ky-ri-e e-le-ison. *ij.*

2.  2

Y OU were sent to heal the con-trite of heart : Lord have
 mer- cy. *R̄.* Lord, have mer- cy.

 You came to call sin-ners : Christ, have mer-cy. *R̄.* Christ, have
 mer- cy.

 You are seat-ed at the right hand of the Fa-ther to in-ter-cede for
 us : Lord, have mer-cy. *R̄.* Lord, have mer- cy.

Fr. Samuel Weber, O.S.B., is director of the Institute of Sacred Music, St. Louis.

3 1.

YOU were sent to heal the con-trite of heart : Lord, have
mer- cy. R. Lord, have mer- cy.

You came to call sin-ners : Christ, have mer- cy. R. Christ, have
mer- cy.

You are seat-ed at the right hand of the Fa-ther to in-ter-cede for
us : Lord, have mer-cy. R. Lord, have mer- cy.

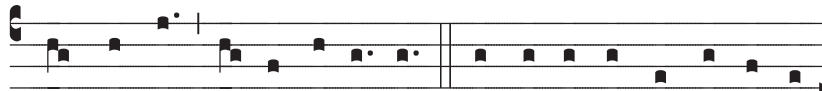
Gloria

4 8.

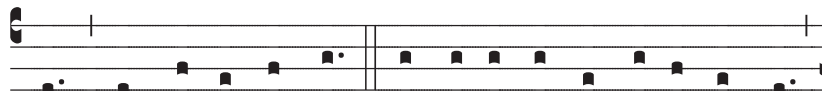
GLo-ry to God in the highest, and on earth peace to
peo-ple of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we
a-dore you, we glo-ri-fy you, we give you thanks for your
great glo-ry, Lord God, heav-en-ly King, O God, al-might-y



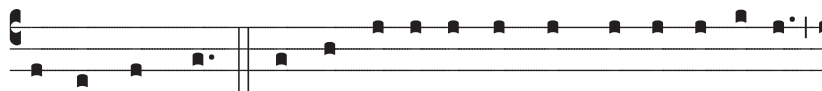
Fa-ther. Lord Je-sus Christ, On-ly Be-got-ten Son, Lord God,



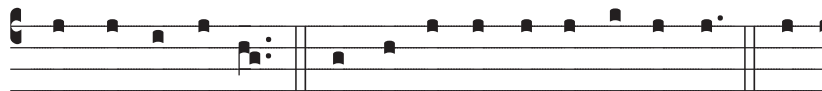
Lamb of God, Son of the Fa-ther, you take a-way the sins of the



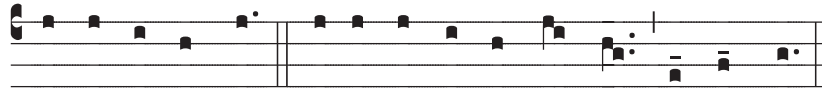
world, have mer-cy on us; you take a-way the sins of the world,



receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father,



have mer-cy on us. For you a-lone are the Ho-ly One, you

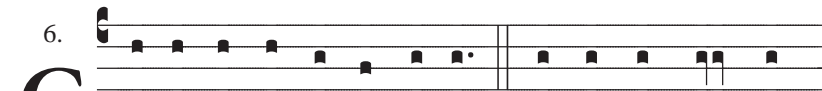


a-lone are the Lord, you a-lone are the Most High, Je- sus Christ,

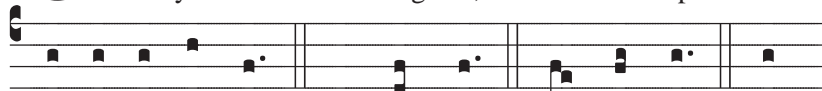


with the Ho-ly Spir-it, in the glo-ry of God the Fa-ther. A-men.

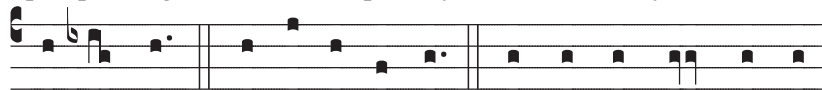
6.



G Lo-ry to God in the highest, and on earth peace to



peo-ple of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we



a-dore you, we glo-ri- fy you, we give you thanks for your

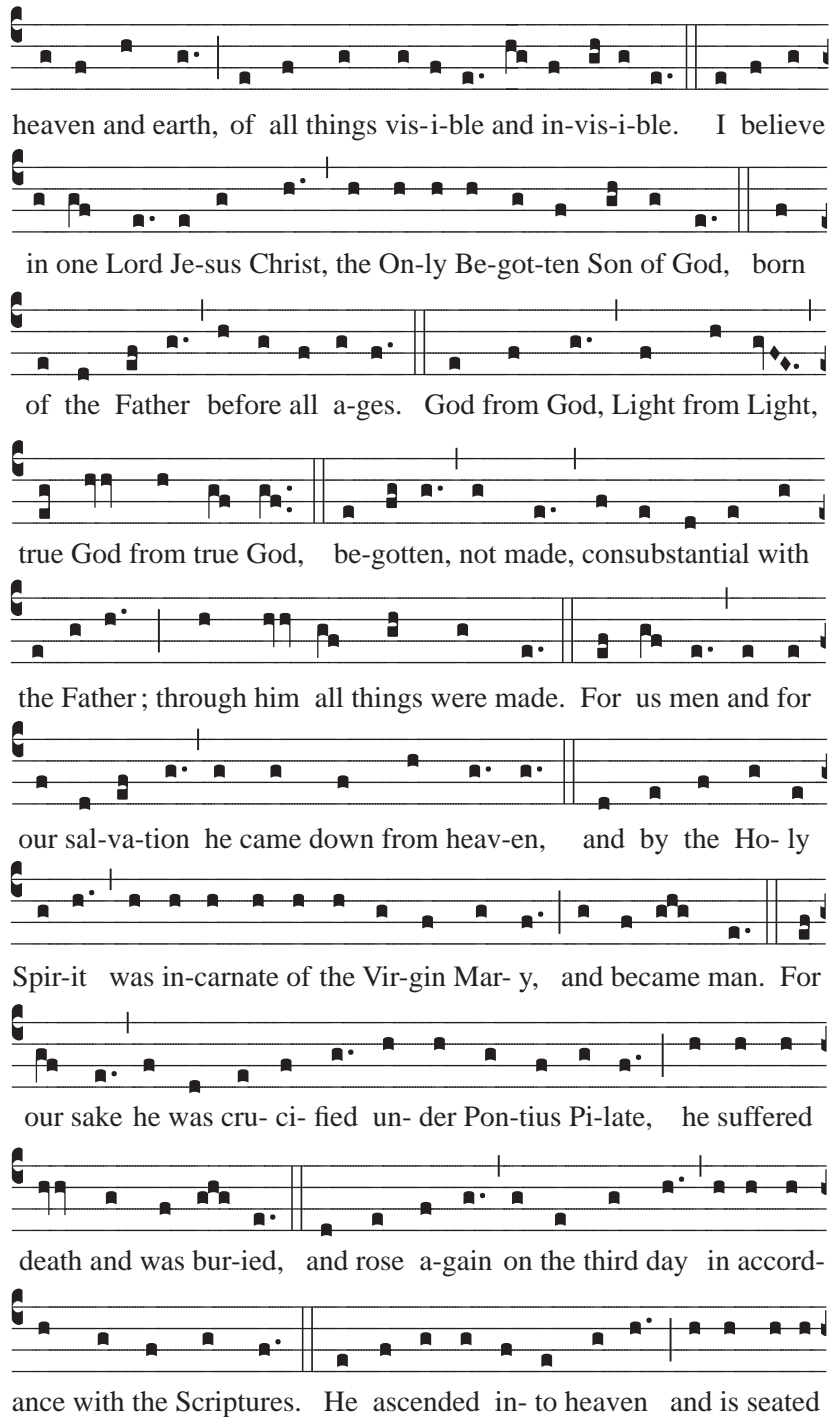
5

great glo- ry, Lord God, heaven- ly King, O God, almight-y
 Fa-ther. Lord Je-sus Christ, On- ly Be-got-ten Son, Lord God,
 Lamb of God, Son of the Fa-ther, you take a-way the sins of the
 world, have mer-cy on us; you take a-way the sins of the world,
 receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
 have mer-cy on us. For you a-lone are the Ho- ly One, you
 a-lone are the Lord, you a-lone are the Most High, Je- sus
 Christ, with the Ho- ly Spir- it, in the glo-ry of God the Fa-ther.

A- men.

Credo

6 4. **I** believe in one God, the Father almight-y, mak-er of



heaven and earth, of all things vis-i-ble and in-vis-i-ble. I believe
in one Lord Je-sus Christ, the On-ly Be-got-ten Son of God, born
of the Father before all a-ges. God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God, be-gotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for
our sal-va-tion he came down from heav-en, and by the Ho-ly
Spir-it was in-carnate of the Vir-gin Mar-y, and became man. For
our sake he was cru-ci-fied un-der Pon-tius Pi-late, he suffered
death and was bur-ied, and rose a-gain on the third day in accord-
ance with the Scriptures. He ascended in-to heaven and is seated

at the right hand of the Father. He will come a-gain in glo-ry
 to judge the liv-ing and the dead and his kingdom will have no
 end. I believe in the Ho-ly Spir-it, the Lord, the giv-er of life,
 who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father
 and the Son is a-dored and glo-ri-fied, who has spok-en through
 the prophets. I believe in one, ho-ly, cath-o-lic and ap-os-tol-ic
 Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I
 look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the
 world to come. A- men.

Sanctus

7 8. **H** O- ly, ho- ly, ho- ly * Lord God of hosts. Heaven and

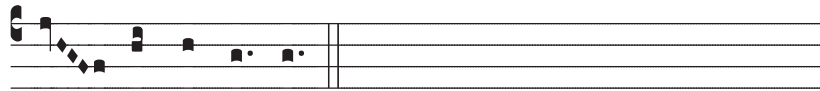
earth are full of your glo- ry. Ho-san-na in the high-est. Bless-
 ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san-na in
 the high-est.

2. **H** O- ly, * ho- ly, ho- ly Lord God of hosts. 8

Heaven and earth are full of your glo- ry. Hosanna in the high-
 est. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-
 san-na in the high- est.

8. **H** O- ly, * ho- ly, ho- ly Lord God of hosts. Heav-en 9

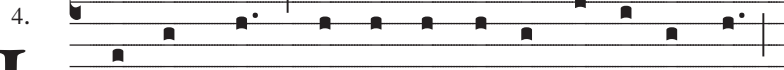
and earth are full of your glo- ry. Ho-san-na in the high- est.
 Bless-ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san-



na in the high-est.

Lamb of God

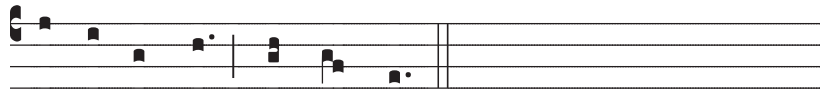
10



LAMB of God, * you take a-way the sins of the world,

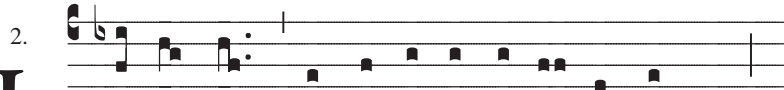


have mer-cy on us. *ij.* Lamb of God, * you take a-way the



sins of the world, grant us peace.

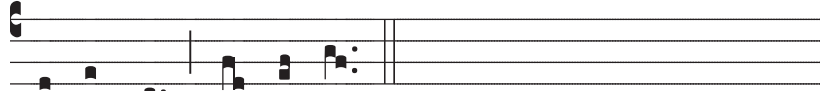
11



Lamb of God, * you take a-way the sins of the world,



have mer-cy on us. *ij.* Lamb of God, you take a-way the sins



of the world, grant us peace.

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REVIEW

Sing Compline with Fr. Weber

by Jeffrey Tucker

The Office of Compline by Fr. Samuel F. Weber, O.S.B. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010. 148 pp. ISBN: 978-1586174552



What do average Catholics know of the Divine Office? Very little, I'm sorry to say. And what do Catholics know of the psalms? Very little apart from the paraphrases one hears in pop songs at Mass or the "Responsorial Psalm" that is too easily tuned out. Indeed, Mass is pretty much the only liturgical experience that Catholics know now, and they are completely unaware of the full range of the history of Christian prayer centered on the psalms as embodied in what is now called the Liturgy of the Hours.

The Second Vatican Council hoped to inspire a new movement in parishes the world over that would embrace the Divine Office. Chalk that up to yet another unfulfilled aspiration of a council nearly swept away in a cultural tidal wave after it closed. Today the office is so unknown that parishes with limited access to a priest invent new services just to receive the Eucharist in the absence of a priest. It never occurs to anyone that a gathering to say the office might be just the thing.

Well, rather than making this yet another long complaint about what might have been that didn't happen to come to be, let's turn this in a positive direction. A resource has become available for



A resource has become available for Catholics that has not previously been available in modern times.

Catholics that has not previously been available in modern times. It is a simple and inexpensive book that allows any individual, family, or group to pray Compline or Night Prayer in a manner very close to the way it has been prayed since the fourth century.

It strikes me that it would be a wonderful thing for Catholics to get this book and start using it during Lent this year. The book is called *The Office of Compline* and it is published by Ignatius Press, as prepared by Fr. Samuel Weber, O.S.B., in parallel English and Latin, each with musical staff and psalms completely pointed for singing. It is a small and very beautiful book. Ignatius should be commended for publishing it, for there are far too few Catholic music publishers putting out quality work like this.

Compline can be sung by the family after dinner or before bedtime. Or it can be sung by just one person alone. It is not necessary that a priest be present to receive the graces that come from

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singing Compline. It might feel strange at first but after forty days, it will become a normal part of life, the psalms beginning to become part of your daily routine and the hymns associated with the office becoming part of the music that enters your daily spiritual reflections.

The idea of Compline is to complete the day with final prayers in hope of a peaceful sleep. It includes beautiful words that remind us of eternal life, with sleep as a kind of metaphor for mortality. All told, singing these night prayers takes about ten minutes but it is very valuable use of time, a way to remember what is important at the end of a busy day and before we close our eyes. In the monastery, Compline often signals the beginning of the great silence that lasts the remainder of the night until morning prayer.

Sometimes people are reluctant to begin something like this because it is an unfamiliar routine. We do not know the songs and we do not know the drill and how it works. We find ourselves turning here and there in the books, confused about what to do next. I know of several enthusiastic converts to Catholicism who bought the multi-volume set of the Liturgy of the Hours with every good intention of developing a daily prayer life. But then confusion sets in and the person bails out before getting the hang of it.

This is why Compline is really the best beginning for saying the office. Its structure is simpler than Lauds or Vespers, with fewer changing parts. It seems easier to approach, and this is especially true with Fr. Weber's book.

For those with a musical inclination, it has been very difficult to find notated versions of anything in the Liturgy of the Hours. Thankfully, this has started to change. An English book came out a few years ago called the *Mundelein Psalter*. Then last year, Solesmes released its *Vespers book for Sundays and Feasts*. More are coming out in the years ahead.

But truly, this Compline book from Ignatius is a blessing. It has Latin on the left and English on the right throughout. Where the antiphons and psalm tones could be maintained and fit with the English, they are maintained. Where this is too awkward, Fr. Weber uses special tones designed to make the terminations work in English while maintaining the feel of the Latin. This approach is in keeping with the hermeneutic of continuity emphasized in this pontificate, helping everyone to see the relationship between the old and new.

I'm sorry that it has taken forty years for such a book to appear and be

made accessible to laypeople, but we are blessed to live in times when such resources are now available to us. We should not take this for granted. We should snap up these books and use them, integrating them into our lives and helping to revive the sound and feel of Catholic liturgy as it has always been known to Christians—and that means more than just weekly attendance at Mass.

It is not just Muslims who face an obligation to turn to the Lord throughout the day. They got this idea from us. Lent is a great time to begin to revive this beautiful tradition. ♪



*The idea of Compline is to complete the day
with final prayers in hope of a peaceful sleep.*

COMMENTARY

The Ineffable Word

by Fr. Anselm Ramelow, O.P.

[This sermon was preached on Christmas Day, 2010, at St. Thomas Aquinas Church, Palo Alto]

I.



How can we speak a word that spoke us first? How can we dare to utter the Word that was with God before anything else existed? How can we speak the verbum ineffabile, the “ineffable Word,” as one of the prayers of Advent puts it?

Even under God’s inspiration, prophets have tried through the ages but only gotten so far; as the Letter to the Hebrews says: *In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets.* “In partial and various ways”—that means: they grasped only in parts and splinters that one Word through which everything was created:

*. . . through whom he created the universe,
who is the refulgence of his glory,
the very imprint of his being,
and who sustains all things by his mighty word.*

or with the Gospel of John:

*All things came to be through him,
and without him nothing came to be.*

The Word of which the Gospel speaks is *the* Word: it is the *last* and ultimate word after which nothing else can be said anymore, because everything has been said. But is also the first and only Word, the one Word in which incomprehensible God grasps his very self at once and as a whole, in utter simplicity.

All our human conceptions of it remain just that: *human* conceptions, and conceptions in the plural; they are many thoughts, attempting to find God through the many names, but always missing the One Name, the Word itself.

As soon as we have begun to speak, it is already past and has escaped us, because whatever we say, we think and say in time, not in the simplicity of the eternal now. The divine word is indeed ineffable, unspeakable and will forever elude us. It is not surprising then, that people would not grasp it:

Fr. Anselm Ramelow, O.P., chair of philosophy at the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology, Berkeley, California.

*He was in the world,
and the world came to be through him,
but the world did not know him.
He came to what was his own,
but his own people did not accept him.*

II.

Already in our own experience we find some things unspeakable: a great love that reduces us to stammering; pain and grief that cannot really be communicated to others; an awesome sight that consigns us to stupefied silence.

One response might be to try and express ourselves in art, especially music. After all, in heaven man and angel sing in the presence of the ineffable God, in awe of the Beatific Vision. And the angels sang the *Gloria in excelsis* at the birth of our Savior. Christians have produced a rich heritage of Christmas Carols in response to the same event; there are probably more hymns for Christmas than for any other liturgical season.

Yet even here there seem to be limitations: The pianist Arthur Schnabel once said: "I only play music that is better than one can play it." What he meant by this is not that the music is too difficult for the pianist's fingers, but that even what can be done technically does not really express what this music truly wants to say; the expression will always limp behind the meaning. Or we might think of Beethoven's somewhat gruff comment to a violinist, who had complained that his music was too difficult to play: "What do I care about your silly fiddle, when the Spirit speaks to me!" We can also recall a thought of ancient philosophy, possibly going all the way back to Pythagoras, that there is some kind of a celestial music: the planets in their spheres have orbits of a particular distance and speed, which relates them to each other in a certain mathematical harmony. These relations would be akin to musical pitches, and therefore produce a harmonious sound. However, this celestial music, this music of the heavens is too ethereal to be audible to our ears. And so again: the most sublime and heavenly meanings seem inexpressible to us, even in the beauty of art and music. The Word must remain ineffable.

The Word must remain ineffable.

III.

Yet, to say that it is an *ineffable* Word is strange as well. It is in some way an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms: how can a word be unspeakable, if words are precisely that which we speak?

And indeed the Word *can* be spoken. It just cannot be spoken *by us*. But it can be spoken by God. And so God inspired the long sequence of prophets to receive at least splinters of this Word. John the Baptist was the final "voice in the desert" that he inspired, after the long line of prophets. Yet John was not himself the Word, only the voice. Nor was the angel Gabriel the Word, when he brought the message to the Blessed Virgin Mary. He was the "angel," the *angelos* or messenger, not the message itself. *For to which of the angels did God ever say:*

"You are my son; this day I have begotten you?"

Gabriel is only the “occasional cause,” the one at whose message the Blessed Virgin Mary does indeed receive what has not entered anybody’s mind and heart before: the Divine Word itself. But it is God himself who has to speak the Word in her heart; it is the Holy Spirit who has to make it present. The Blessed Virgin Mary in turn has to give her consent, pondering the Word in her heart and responding to it in song: the *Magnificat*, the hymn of the redeemed.

IV.

But neither is the *Magnificat* that ineffable Word. What, then, *is* the utterance of this Word? It is not a translation in more and mere human words—they could not grasp it. God did not become scripture or human talk, *God became man*.

This is something that should astound us: *we are ourselves* the only adequate expression of God’s divine word. Our very own human nature was designed from all eternity to give flesh to the unutterable, ineffable Word of God. We were made as the *imago Dei*, the image and likeness of God, and in this *nova nativitas* (new birth), human nature becomes the very embodiment of God’s presence.

And so the truly adequate expression of the ineffable Word are we ourselves. This means that we do not need to speak the Word; we just need to be ourselves. Yet who are we? *Can* we “be ourselves” apart from the one Word, through whom all things are made? Only in him do we truly come into our own; we come “into focus,” being made new in the simplicity of the one eternal word. Only in him can we become the adequate expression and our lives a response of praise, a song in praise of God, as St. Augustine puts it somewhere. Nothing is unspeakable now, everything has been said; we are liberated from the always frustrated quest for the one Word.



Ein Karem Church of the Visitation. This is the site where tradition tells us that Mary recited her song of praise, the Magnificat. Verses from the Magnificat are engraved on the columns of the church, and on the wall opposite it are forty-two ceramic tablets bearing verses from the Magnificat in forty-two different languages.

V.

And what happens, if this Word is withdrawn again, once this possibility has dawned on mankind? We can see it today in the secular West, especially in Europe: there is no word, no language for faith, there is no way to talk about God anymore. A culture that cannot articulate ultimate things anymore creates an environment that is suffocating for the human soul. Especially *after* the Word has been spoken, the stifling of its expression is felt as an enormous despair and emptiness. The light has disappeared again, darkness covers the earth, while people attempt to console themselves with many distractions, and otherwise curse the darkness. Is it a surprise that people do not sing in their homes anymore? That music comes at best only technologically prefabricated? What reason is there to sing, if God is dead? And when the ineffable Word is silenced, what else is worth saying?

VI.

But we Christians, we do not curse the darkness, we light the candles again. It might be a quiet light, sometimes overshadowed by grief and anxieties; yet it is a flame that we need to shelter by faithful lives that sing the praises of God. And so we sing together with the Blessed Virgin Mary the *Magnificat*, and with the angels the *Gloria in excelsis*; we sing Christmas carols and Gregorian chant, because the Word has been made flesh. It has taken up our nature and our lives and liberated them from the shadows of death.

VII.

Maybe the darkness fell only, because we thought that we could say it all on our own; that we could speak the ineffable Word by our own powers; that we had the technology to transport information through computers, while having lost the meaning that was to be transported—the Word from on high. Maybe we have the technique by which we can play the notes of every music, but we do not believe that there is music “that is better than one can play it.” Nor do we think that we are dependent on God’s inspirations. And so we cannot praise God anymore, because one can do so only knowing that he himself is the one, who has to do the singing in us and that on our own the Word remains ineffable.

VIII.

The fact that we are here today, celebrating and singing our hearts out to God, shows that God is alive, that he is singing in us, that he wants to come to life and be born anew in each one of us, saying: *I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me.* The *nova nativitas* is our own as well. Baptized we are born anew—children of God by adoption and transformation; God is our Father, we are his children. We, too, are the ones who lie in the manger with Jesus; we are the ones over whom the angels sing *Gloria in excelsis*, in whom God speaks the Word, and over whom God himself says: *You are my son; this day I have begotten you.*

*And how do we respond? We respond in song:
Break out together in song,
O ruins of Jerusalem!
For the LORD comforts his people,
he redeems Jerusalem. ❧*

Stop, Look, and Listen

by Mary Jane Ballou



n old railroad crossing warns: “STOP, LOOK, and LISTEN,” but it is equally applicable to the choral endeavor. It is those final moments before the music begins that make all the difference. If you take the time right then to stop, look, and listen, many choral disasters will be averted.

In this essay, I will focus on the director’s role. Singers will learn how to do their share of the work next time.

I. STOP!

Choir directors are always in a hurry. How often do we jump up in front of the choir, open the music, give the pitch and away we go? How often do we wonder why everything crashes and burns around the fifth measure? The first step is simply to stop. Slow yourself down. Take the time to make sure that your music is in order. Take the time to settle your own breathing. Take the time to consciously let go of the tension around your eyes and open your ears. Yes, you have the time to do this because it can be accomplished in less than thirty seconds. Doing this simple step will set you free from the chaos that may be surrounding you.

If you’re in rehearsal, there may be singers fluttering around with their music, adjusting their chairs, searching for cough drops, or complaining about how far they had to walk from their cars. Your demonstration of poise and recollection won’t be lost on them. Instead, it will radiate out

towards them and help them pull themselves together. (The back row of basses is often immune to this, but don’t let that deter your efforts.) Ideally, the rustling, shuffling, and chattering will stop and attention will shift to you.

Don’t stand like a soldier at attention, but an easy and confident posture will reassure the singers.

If it is the beginning of Mass or the start of the offertory or communion chant, you need to move into

place with enough time to do these steps and not cause unnecessary delays. Even if your choir is relatively settled down, there can be sonic and visual distractions behind or next to you from crying children and wandering ushers.

You don’t need to stand like a soldier at attention, but an easy and confident posture will reassure the singers that you know what you’re doing. It will also ensure that you are really one hundred per cent “there.” After you’ve taken that minute to stop and get yourself centered, it is time for the second step—looking.

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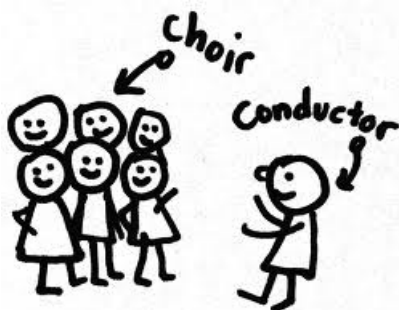
II. LOOK!

Take a moment to look at the music in front of you. For openers make sure you're actually looking at the piece you wish to perform.

Review the first several measures and remind yourself of the key, the tempo, the structure of the motet, chant, or hymn. Sense the movement of the work internally before you start your singers. If you are directing the piece without a score, think through these steps. Only a few seconds are needed.

Now look at the choir. *Truly* look at them and don't simply see a herd of singers. Acknowledge them as individuals who have taken time from their own lives to bring sacred music to life. It is neither necessary nor desirable to make "goo goo" eyes at the choir; however, this connection is essential. Choral music, whether it is created around the campfire or in the world's greatest cathedrals, is a collaborative project.

If you have had the good fortune to sing with a great conductor who truly connects with his or her singers, take a moment to recall the experience. Yes, it was hard work, but it was joyful work. It was tiring, but it was a happy exhaustion. You found yourself singing, listening, responding, and performing at a higher level than you thought possible. See if you can remember the moments immediately preceding the singing. It's those last few seconds when the conductor sends the message of "engaged optimism" to the singers—and it's all done with a look.



If your singers are not truly engaged with you in this work, you will never achieve the result you desire. Instead, you'll either drag or cajole your singers from the beginning of the piece to the end. The result will often be a lackluster performance, followed by exhaustion and irritability. So take that moment to connect.

Look across the choir, moving your head gently. Smile with your eyes, give a slight nod, and then begin. Again, this is an activity that should take approximately fifteen to twenty seconds maximum. You can afford the time to make this initial connection. You and your singers are now joined in the same project. Remember to reestablish this connection throughout the piece. Don't bury your head in the score or gaze over their heads as though waiting for divine intervention. Stay with your singers.

III. LISTEN!

This is the third and most difficult step. In the "busy" business of directing, listening can easily disappear. Before starting to rehearse, many directors rattle off directions, exhortations, and cautions, not noticing that half the choir is still looking for the right page. Once the singing begins, the anxious director of an amateur choir leaps from one part to another. Are the altos lost? Give them their note. Are the basses creeping up to the soprano line? Are the altos and tenors merging into a part that doesn't exist? Never fear—the director is here! With Gregorian chant, directors attempt to drive the rhythm with their voices or correct sagging pitch with personal effort.

In her delightful book, *Conducting a Choir*,¹ Imogen Holst said: "Two warnings which will apply

¹ Imogen Holst, *Conducting a Choir* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 35.

on any occasion, whatever the music may be. DON'T TAP WITH YOUR FOOT while you are beating time, and DON'T SING while your choir is singing" (emphasis in original). If you are singing along with the choir, it will be difficult to gauge accurately what is going on.

Yes, I know it is also very hard to remain silent. However, it is the only way to get a clear understanding of the choir's mastery of a piece. Furthermore, if singers know that the director will bail them out at a moment's notice, they need not take responsibility for their singing. If you are part of a very small ensemble, your own voice is an essential component. Even there, you should step back and listen on a regular basis.

When you listen to your singers during rehearsals, you will know where praise is due and work is needed. If you rehearse in the space in which you will be singing, try listening to the choir at a distance to see if the acoustic of the environment affects blend or balance. You may respond, "If I don't sing, they won't make it." You may need to rethink and simplify parts of your repertoire. Perhaps you simply need to give listening a try. Your singers may find it refreshing not to have the director singing at them. You may be pleasantly surprised.

*Listening can be very humbling—
and very rewarding.*

Listening is hard work. Listening and responding to what you hear means helping your singers achieve their best, instead of singing over their voices. Listening also means recognizing and correcting the shortcomings of your own conducting style and ability to communicate your wishes to the singers. Listening means sacrificing the pleasure of hearing your own voice. Listening can be very humbling—and very rewarding. When your singers know you are paying attention to them, they will begin to pay attention to themselves.

It is in performance that looking and listening are combined to great advantage. The listening skills you have acquired in rehearsal will keep you alert to the problems that pop up in the course of performance. Your sharpened ears will pick up that missed or faulty entry and it is then that you can jump in and save the day. (Of course, you will remember to jump back out and keep listening while you direct.)

Maintain eye contact with your singers to the best of your ability. Since you've reminded them regularly during rehearsals to keep their music up and their eyes on you as much as possible, chances are some of them might actually *be* looking at you. Make sure that your body language is always positive, no matter what is happening. You may be dying a thousand deaths inside, but you must appear confident. Your own energetic and calm demeanor will steady your singers when they hit a rough patch and bring them back together. Never show fear, disgust, despair, or anger during or after the piece. Your singers already know where there's been a problem and they want to do better next time.

IV. Conclusion

STOP, LOOK, and LISTEN to refresh your own work as a director. When you take a minute to be fully present and attentive to the music and your singers, you may first see much work to be done. Do not lose heart. By consistently communicating focus, engagement, and attention, you will build a collaborative spirit and your ensemble will make steady progress. "Train wrecks" will indeed be minimized. What's more—you will all be much happier. ♪

The Implausible Triumph of the Reform of the Reform

by Jeffrey Tucker



uch to my own delight and, to some extent, shock, the reform of the reform has become the most exciting and operative movement in the liturgical world today. After having been in the planning stages for longer than a decade, and even several, the reality has swept upon us with an astounding speed. The most conspicuous sign is the new translation that is to be implemented this coming Advent, but there is even more to it than this. The reform is touching every aspect of the liturgical face of the Roman Rite.

Let me take a step back and explain why this has come as quite the shock and why it represents the fulfillment of something seemingly impossible.

Since the first days of the first liturgical reform, the reaction has been mixed and contentious. Some were happy, some so disgusted that they walked away, some were indifferent, and there was a last group that stuck around but has been very disgruntled. Among those in the last group, there were two warring tribes: those who believed that it was possible to do better within the context of the reformed liturgy and those who saw no choice but to completely revert to the previous release from 1962.

The reform of the reform is touching every aspect of the liturgical face of the Roman Rite.

These two sectors of people who saw the profound problems associated with the first reform were seriously at odds. Within Catholic punditry throughout the 1980s and 1990s, it was war zone. You had to choose sides, landing firmly in one camp or another. The ethos dictated that you could not be neutral, at least not if you were serious. The split occurred down family lines, and Catholic magazines and institutions had to decide one way or another. Very few in those days had the vision of Benedict XVI, who imagined a peaceful coexistence between the camps, which is the vision embodied in *Summorum Pontificum*. Such a possibility was just not an option in those days.

For my own part, living in what is now called the ordinary form world, I was pretty sure that the traditionalists were correct, and my judgment was based on personal experience with the way bureaucracies work. For years I had heard arguments about how the reform of the reform should take place. Some imagined the re-institution of the last gospel while others said it was completely unneeded. Yet, others surmised that the real problem was just that celebrants were improvising too much; if they would just stick to the books, all would be well. That same time of argument persisted in nearly every aspect of the reform, from the choice of language to the choice of vestments.

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Given this situation, I figured that a consensus would never arrive. I imagined a room of liturgists arguing about these finer points and never coming to any kind of agreement. The result would be deadlock and a decision just to keep the current structure and also translation in place as is, simply because the status quo is always the result of bureaucratic deadlock. To my way of thinking, the reform opened the can of worms and they multiplied to the point that no one would ever get them back in again. Hence, the only way forward was the way backward: straight to 1962 as the goal.

I can recall the moment when my thinking began to shift. It was about eight years ago when I first sat down with William Mahrt who asked me a very pointed question. “Is it your view,” he asked, “that Gregorian chant and polyphony can never be restored within the reformed liturgy?” I said, yes that is my view and cited a host of sociological and structural reasons. He paused. Then he said bluntly: “I disagree.” That got my attention! He proceeded to explain how he had managed to do this in his own parish and how he sings the full propers of the *Graduale Romanum* with his choir in a regular parish, and how the congregation sings from the Kyriale, and how he also uses full Mass settings in Latin from the Renaissance. And he showed me his repertoire list to prove it.

That one conversation made me realize something important. As I had become more “hard core” on issues of liturgical politics, I had become gradually less able to envision opportunities for reform within the reformed liturgy. Maybe I had been making excuses for myself to do nothing? For all the differences in the new rite, it is still the Roman Rite and hence it embeds a sensibility that is

crying out to be united with its native music. The relationship had been broken asunder mostly due to cultural convention and convenience; we had a job to do in going forward. I gradually began to see the light here and began the hard work of making some contribution to the effort.

We are about to experience the biggest upgrade to the reform yet.

Also, I began to realize something about any long-standing choice with regard to reform: dreaming of some idyllic past can be easily coupled with a casual despair to create a kind of gloss on lethargy. The real hard work comes with embracing a realistic hope and committing time and energy to make it happen.

Apparently much smarter minds than mine had been thinking along the same lines and for a much longer time, and I thank God for this. For in our own time, we are about to experience the biggest upgrade to the reform yet. The new translation is absolutely thorough and pervasive from the first words of Mass to the end. It is dazzling to compare what we’ve lived with for so long with what we are about to experience.

For one thing, if you look through the critiques of the reformed rite of 1969 and ’70—some profoundly sensible and some unnecessarily vitriolic—you find that a major portion of them deal with the language that is about to be abandoned in favor of a translation that actually reflects the content of the Latin. Whole libraries of criticisms of the *Novus Ordo Missae* are about to be made defunct with this one action. That’s not to say that there are not remaining problems in the Latin or the forthcoming English Missal. It is only to say that the most dreadful issues of all are on the verge of being eliminated.

About the current translation of the missal, I’ve long been a critic, some would say bitter critic. But let me say this. There is a way in which the current translation is brilliant. It likes the active voice.

The sentences are short. It eliminates repetition. It speaks very plainly and is always to the point. It is also humane and connected to our lives. This is good writing, excellent writing. It is perfect for novels, newspapers, scripts, and advertising. Would that more people would write this way. However, as a method of liturgy, it doesn't work. The idea was to make the liturgy more directly communicative; but the approach did not stand the test of time and, in the end, managed only to make the liturgy tedious. It was a brilliant but colossal error.

The adoption of a new framework for language has already given life to a new approach to imagining new and beautiful things within the ritual structure. I've received countless notes from directors of music who are planning dramatic changes with the new missal, starting with the adoption of the missal chants themselves. The Simple Propers Project fits in nicely here. Many priests have written with great excitement about how the new missal will give them a fresh start with their musicians, liturgy teams, and every manner of lay volunteers. In my own parish, many people have given money specially earmarked to make this transition possible.

In short, one way to look at the current moment is that the reformed liturgy is being given another chance to succeed, and this time it is happening at a time when the ritual of 1962 is more pervasive in the lives of Catholics than it has been in forty-five years. Traditionalists have always been correct on this point: the Mass of the Ages must be the guiding framework, the bedrock from whence all reform must flow. In liturgy, there is no such thing as starting from scratch. Many people

apparently forgot that somewhere along the way.

The ordinary form is on its way to being worthy of being held up as a legitimate expression of the Roman Rite.

Thus are we experiencing the reform of the reform even as we are seeing a flourishing of the old rite. The ordinary and extraordinary rites are living side by side in a way that hardly anyone really imagined could happen back in the 1980s. More

than that, the ordinary form is on its way to being worthy of being held up as a legitimate expression of the Roman Rite, and recognizable as such to any generation. As to people like myself who doubted that this could ever happen: we should all take note of our onetime lack of faith and observe that glorious things are possible with work and prayer. ❧



NEWS

The Renaissance Weekend

by Gregory Hamilton



he Renaissance Polyphony Weekend under the direction of Dr. William Mahrt celebrated its twentieth anniversary February 18–20.

Each year, lovers of great polyphony gather together in Dallas for a full weekend of singing music of the great European polyphonic masters. This year, in honor of the four hundredth anniversary of the Vespers of 1610 by the Venetian master Claudio Monteverdi, director William Mahrt chose a late mass setting of Monteverdi, a motet by his forerunner Luca Marenzio, motets by other lesser-known but fine composers including Sebastian de Vivanco (1550–1622), Jacobus Gallus (1550–1591), and the proper chants for the Seventh Sunday in Ordinary time.

The value of such a weekend intensive lies in the opportunity to learn and know the music of the great polyphonic masters from the inside out. To understand this music, to experience it fully, it must be sung. This year, we were able to experience a mass by a master of both the *prima prattica* and the *seconda prattica*, terms as Dr. Mahrt pointed out, were coined by Monteverdi himself. The mass is a fascinating amalgamation of the two styles, both the “old” polyphonic species counterpoint, and the “new” homophonic/basso continuo style where text painting was key. Although the *Nuove Musiche* originated in the development of the solo song and madrigal, by such composers as Caccini and Marenzio (represented this weekend by his motet *O Sacrum Convivium*). It is clear that Monteverdi was the most important representative of this style, and truly innovative in bringing it into church music.



Claudio Monteverdi circa 1597

Fr. Ralph March, O.Cist, chant scholar and long-time professor of music at the University of Dallas, celebrated the *Novus Ordo* in Latin at Holy Trinity Seminary, on the campus of the University of Dallas. Fr. March presented a thought-provoking homily on the nature of God reflected in beauty and music for the liturgy, and our response and participation in this mystery.

The choir, from all over Texas and the Southern United States, numbered about forty. Thanks go to the organizers of the weekend, and especially the seminarians of Holy Trinity Seminary. ♪

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A Discography of Western Plainchant Online

By Fr. Jerome F. Weber

Catholics living in America today have few opportunities to hear the Mass and Office sung in Gregorian chant. Less than fifty years ago, it was normal to hear at least a Requiem Mass sung in Gregorian chant at most parish funerals, and that is only one example of changing times. The lucky few who belong to a parish today that uses chant even to a small degree should not think that the vast majority of their fellow Catholics have the same opportunity.

Ever since the 1930s, however, recordings have made chant audible to the many. This first took the form of a large RCA Victor double album of shellac discs sung by the monks of Solesmes that set the standard for chant interpretation for two decades. Then, beginning in the early 1950s, the monks of Solesmes (on Decca/London) and Beuron (on Archiv) could be heard on vinyl recordings of high quality. Not a year has gone by down to the present day that has not seen new recordings from countless sources on labels both major and minor. Most of them are hard to find, though, and many of them are unknown to those who seek chant on records.

In 1990 *A Gregorian Chant Discography* appeared, eight hundred pages in two volumes. A relational database was used to organize every record made since 1904 that could be found on the market or in numerous libraries and archives. Given less than complete information on most liner notes, it was necessary to identify each piece, locate it in a modern edition or other source, determine the timing, and make note of such details as the number of verses in a hymn. The first volume listed each record in numerical order, whatever the label, and identified the contents. The second volume listed each chant in the page order of the modern editions, citing each recording of the piece. The second volume also had a list of each performing group with their records and an alphabetical index of chants. All of these lists were produced from the database. Each recording was listed just once; reissued records were cross-indexed in the first volume, and *Graduale Triplex* pages were cross-indexed to the *Liber Usualis* page numbers in the second volume. If most users could not find most of the records, they might at least identify one or another record that would include the chant they were looking for.

An attempt has been made to keep up with new releases once a year in Plainsong and Medieval Music.

Since then, an attempt has been made to keep up with new releases once a year in *Plainsong and Medieval Music*, but these record lists did not provide contents or analysis. A second edition was planned, originally as a new and expanded print edition, later as a database on CD-ROM. But the

Fr. Jerome F. Weber is a retired priest of the diocese of Syracuse and the outstanding expert on recordings of Gregorian chant. He was president of the Association for Recorded Sound Collections from 1994 to 1996. He is on the editorial board of *Plainsong and Medieval Music*, and writes regular reviews of chant recordings for *Fanfare*.

best advice was to build a new relational database on a web site. The web site was ordered in November 2009 and data entry began in February 2010. By the time this appears, there will be over five hundred CDs analyzed and listed. At least as many more are now being done, and after that the con-


The goal is to find every chant recording, analyze it, and enter it into the database.

tents of the 1990 edition will be entered. The goal is to find every chant recording, analyze it, and enter it into the database, a goal that may be as distant as the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Even so, a record can be entered into the web site only after listening to it and analyzing its contents.

There are several ways to benefit from this reference material. If one has a disc or wants to order one, one can search for a keyword under the record title, the issue number, the choir or the director. A link will produce the precise contents of the disc, listed in greater detail and accuracy than any label, booklet, catalogue, or other source.

If one is looking for a particular chant, the search will produce a list of all known recordings of that chant with a link to the complete contents of each disc. The simplest approach is to enter the first word or two of the incipit, then search again on the book/page of the desired chant among the listings. The repeat search provides a neater and more precise list. The point of the exercise is not that all the listed recordings can be found at arm's reach, but rather that in a long list one will find some recordings that are available.

In 1990, non-Gregorian chants were listed summarily in an appendix. Now they are listed in the unified database, as are the chants of St. Hildegard of Bingen. Another appendix listed as much information as was known about records that were not available for analysis, but since 1990 most of the records in that list have been found. The comment field for a non-standard interpretation noted only a vague "manuscript variant," but now every effort is being made to cite the precise source of such interpretations.

The Web site's home page is www.chantdiscography.com, but entering the words "chant discography" into an internet browser will readily bring up the site. 



International Sacred Music Competition for Composers

by Kurt Poterack



Several of my colleagues and I, in the area of sacred music, were asked by James Flood of the Foundation for Sacred Arts to judge a competition for composers of sacred music. There were two categories: one was for non-liturgical sacred choral works, and the other was for Mass settings involving the new English translation. Category I included a choice of seven texts and the judges were myself, James Flood, and Mark Nowakowski. The judges for Category II, which involved setting the Ordinary of the Mass in English, were Dr. William Mahrt, Dr. Susan Treacy, and Richard Rice. Interestingly, the texts for the Ordinary of the Mass involved not only the traditional five prayers considered a part of the genre known as the “Mass” (Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei), but also a Gospel Acclamation, Alleluia, Memorial Acclamation and Great Amen.

As a Category I judge, I had to look at and listen to about twenty-five different submissions of widely different skill levels. (Fortunately, every composer was required to submit a CD recording of his work.) Conferring with my two fellow judges by phone, we were somewhat surprised to learn that we all had selected the same three pieces for the top three slots. The only problem was that we had placed each of them at a different position within those top three slots. This required some more thought (and prayer) and—another phone conference.

In the end, Daniel Knaggs was awarded first place for his *Amen, Alleluia*, and third place for his *He Who Eats This Bread*. Second place was awarded to Frank La Rocca’s *Credo*. In Category II, Daniel Knaggs also won second and third place for his *Mass of St. Theresa of Avila*, and *Missa Sancti Johannes Apostoli*, respectively. First place went to Jeffrey Quick’s Mass in Honor of St. Maximilian Kolbe. (Incidentally, the scores and recordings only had titles and identification numbers. Judges did not know the names of the composers when they were judging the works.)



The final decisions were made in June, however the great pleasure was to attend a concert of all the compositions at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on August 14, 2010. The works were premiered by the famous Shrine Choir under the competent direction of Peter Latona. In addition to the winners, an excellent *Ave Maria*, specifically written for the concert by Mark Nowakowski, was included. Finally, four honorable mentions from Category II, Masses by Paul Ayres, Audrey Faith Seah, Mary John Henderson, and Amanda Jacobs, were also sung.

Judging from the winning entries, the current stylistic direction in sacred music seems to be some sort of combination of Arvo Pärt and Morten Lauridson. This is definitely a more agreeable basic sound for sacred music for the general populace than, say, the spikey dissonances of a Jean Langlais. It remains to be seen, however, if a compositional depth and richness is achieved and maintained over time in this stylistic approach. Nonetheless, we owe an enormous debt of gratitude to all the composers involved and to James Flood of the Foundation for Sacred Arts for the important contribution to the development of sacred music that this competition was. ♪

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THE LAST WORD

Ars Celebrandi

By Kurt Poderack

I must confess. I am the director of liturgical music at a Catholic college. We have a decent set-up with a Latin Novus Ordo Mass every Sunday. In addition to this we have weekday Masses in English and Latin which are celebrated according to a “progressive solemnity” (i.e., more music and ceremonial depending on whether it is a memorial, feast, or solemnity). We have chaplains who preach excellent homilies. We have Sunday Vespers. Overall, things are very good. We even have Mass in the Extraordinary form from time to time . . .

When on break I will sometimes go to visit family and friends in another part of the country. On Sunday I will go to the local extraordinary form Mass. The music can be quite wretched, the preaching (depending on the priest) is fair to rambling, and the ceremonial is so-so. I muse on how the art of celebrating (the *ars celebrandi*) at a weekday, ordinary form English Mass at my college can be so superior to what I am experiencing at a Sunday, extraordinary form Mass. Then, sometimes, I will have to listen to a friend of mine after Mass rave about the superiority of the extraordinary form. “Just examine the collects. See how mutilated and stripped down they are in the Novus Ordo. The reform of the reform is dead in the water . . . the Novus Ordo doesn’t have a future!”?

I wonder if we have just attended the same Mass.

At still another extraordinary form Mass which I sometimes attend when the college is not in session, I struggle to hear the collect. Having forgotten my missal, I have no idea what the priest is saying—and it is not because I do not understand Latin. This particular Sunday Mass is conducted as a *Missa privata*, in front of a congregation of over five hundred, and mumbled between priest and servers in what is, presumably, the Latin language. However, it is very hard to tell.

Now what am I getting at? It is this. One can make arguments about the superiority of this particular form of the Mass over that form. However, it does not really matter if the actual celebration of the Mass is poor. Some may respond that the church teaches that the grace of the Mass, *ex opere operato*, is not dependant on mere human effort. That is true; however, our receptiveness to that grace



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and the fruitfulness of it are indeed effected by the environment in which we receive it. If not, then why argue about the superiority of this form of the Mass over that form?

However, the mere superiority on paper of a particular rite is not enough. It is kind of like arguing for the superiority of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony over Haydn's Third Symphony, but refusing to recognize that a stupendous performance of the Haydn may indeed be more inspiring than an extremely poor performance of the Beethoven.

Why did the Latin Mass disappear so quickly in North America after Vatican II? There is a whole series of reasons, but—from what I have heard—one of them is that it was celebrated so poorly. From what I understand, the typical Mass experience of most in North America before Vatican II was that of the mumbled *Missa privata*. In Europe, however, the liturgical movement had made more progress before Vatican II. People were saying and singing their parts in Latin, participating in scholas and choirs. It certainly seems that, having been taught to love and, yes, even enjoy the experience of the Mass, this was something that they wanted to continue. And it is a fact that you could find Latin High Masses, albeit in the ordinary form, continuing in European cathedrals, basilicas, and other major churches after Vatican II long after these had been abandoned in North America.

I do not want to close off debate, however I want to stress the importance of the “art of celebrating.” Simply arguing for—and even getting—structural reforms will not be enough if a culture of liturgical excellence is not built up. This will be the true contribution of a new liturgical movement. ✠

