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EDITORIAL

The Fiftieth Anniversary of the CMAA

by William Mahrt



The summer of 2014 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Church Music Association of America and its journal *Sacred Music*. But this was not a new society then, far from it. It was the amalgamation of the Society of St. Cecilia (1874) and the Society of St. Gregory (1913). In view of the importance music played in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* from the Second Vatican Council, church musicians of the two societies saw the need to join forces to take advantage of the directions the council had indicated for the integration of the treasury of sacred music and substantive participation in the sacred action. The great heritage of Gregorian chant and classical polyphony should enhance the participation of believers in the action of Christ in the Mass and should form a precedent for the composition of new sacred music. And so at a meeting in late September in 1964 at Boy's Town, Nebraska, members of both societies together founded the CMAA as a continuation of the work of both their groups.

In 1966, the CMAA joined with the Consociatio Internationalis Musicae Sacrae, a papally-founded organization to support the cause of sacred music through the whole church, to sponsor an international congress on sacred music in Milwaukee and Chicago.¹ After that, new directions in Catholic Church music were not as expected—the use of music in styles borrowed from popular music and so-called “folk music” eclipsed the traditional music, so that Gregorian chant and classical polyphony faded from view rather quickly, except in certain centers where the tradition was maintained.

The journal *Sacred Music*² was a continuation of the journals of the two societies, *Caecilia* and the *Catholic Choirmaster* (1915). *Caecilia* had been founded in 1874 and published continuously ever since; *Sacred Music* as a direct continuation of *Caecilia* is the oldest continuing music publication in the United States. In the eclipse of the treasury of sacred music, the journal was the principal activity of the CMAA, particularly under its long-time editor Msgr. Richard Schuler (1975–1998), who insisted that the society and its journal be maintained, however small, because sometime it would be needed again.

From the last decade of the twentieth century, there was a growing realization that the liturgy was in need of greater beauty and sacredness; there was a natural turn toward tradition once again for inspiration. The revitalization of the association centered upon the summer colloquia, first held at Christendom College in 1990 and moved to the Catholic University of

¹ *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).

² The issues of *Sacred Music* beginning 1975 can be seen online at <<http://musicasacra.com/journal/archives/>>

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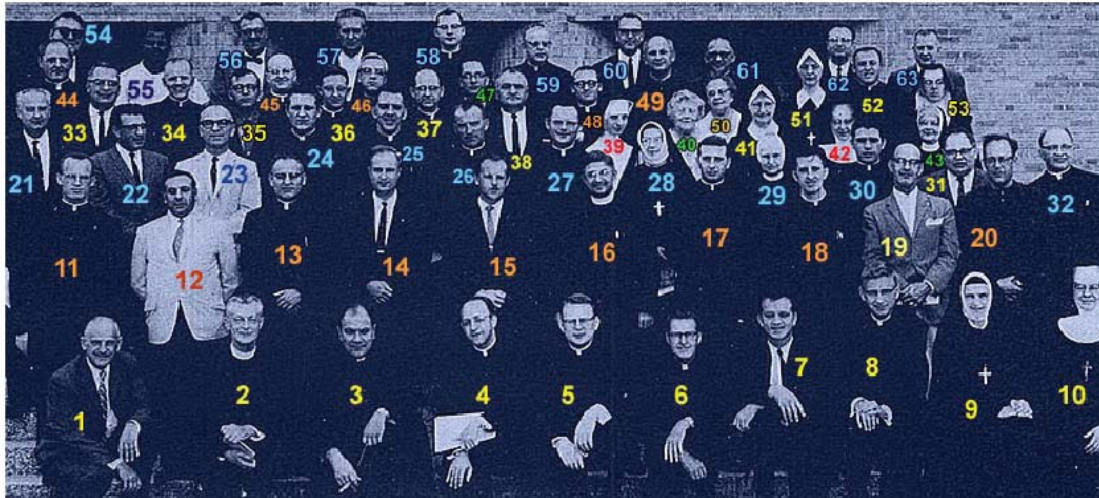
America in 2003. From that time, the colloquium grew to be the vital focal point of the best of our sacred music tradition and its renewal in both Latin and English practice. The colloquium presents the best of the treasury of sacred music, in as ideal a form as possible; those in attendance go back to their parishes and make manifold application of the sense of the beauty and sacredness of the liturgy experienced at the colloquium.

To observe this fiftieth anniversary, *Sacred Music* devotes the current issue to a brief retrospective of the journal, presenting articles from its history by presidents of the CMAA and editors of the journal. They span the history of the journal, and so reflect views from across this history; they are presented here because they also represent perennial values concerning the liturgy and its music, preserving and fostering its sacredness and its beauty. Many more views will be seen in future issues of *Sacred Music*. ❧

1964 Organizational Meeting for the Church Music Association of America (CMAA)

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|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. J. Vincent Higginson | 12. Mario Salvator | 23. Paul Manz |
| 2. Rev. Joseph Foley, C.S.P. | 13. Rev. Albert Carman | 24. Rev. Robert Skeris |
| 3. Very Rev. Francis P. Schmitt | 14. Lavern Wagner | 25. Rev. Norbert Dorsey, C.P. |
| 4. Rt. Rev. Rembert G. Weakland, O.S.B. | 15. Paul Parthun | 26. Rev. Robert Hayburn |
| 5. Very Rev. Richard B. Curtin | 16. Very Rev. Joseph L. Mroczkowski | 27. Rev. Eugene Lindusky, O.S.C. |
| 6. Rev. Cletus Madsen | 17. (unidentified) | 28. Mother C.A. Carroll, R.S.C.J. |
| 7. Frank Szynskie | 18. Rev. Joseph Rogusz, C.S.C. | 29. Sr. M. Mathilde, B.V.M. |
| 8. Rev. Richard J. Schuler | 19. Paul Koch | 30. Rev. Peter D. Nugent |
| 9. Mother Josephine Morgan, R.S.C.J. | 20. Childs Wolfe | 31. Omer Westendorf |
| 10. Sr. M. Theophane, O.S.F. | 21. Feliks Gwozdz | 32. Rev. Francis A Brunner, C.Pp.S. |
| 11. Rev. Morris Cahill, C.P. | 22. Noel Goemanne | |

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|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 33. Norbert Letter | 44. Rev. Elmer Pfeil | 54. James Welch |
| 34. Rev. Benedict Ehman | 45. Rev. Robert Novotny | 55. Malcolm Breda |
| 35. George Carthage | 46. Rev. Thomas Reardon | 56. Rene Dosogne |
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| 38. Ralph Jusko | 49. Rev. Ralph March, O.C. | 59. Rev. Robert Ryan |
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| 40. Mrs. Winifred Flanagan | 51. Sr. Alphonse Marie, C.Pp.S. | 61. Rev. Irvin Udulutsch, O.F.M.Cap. |
| 41. Sr. Remigia, C.Pp.S. | 52. Rev. Ambrose Karels | 62. Robert Blanchard |
| 42. Sr. M Leonette, O.S.F. | 53. Sr. M. Matthias, I.H.M. | 63. John Gavin |

ARTICLES

Gregorian Chant, a Liturgical Art Form¹

by Theodore Marier



This segment of our discussion today will center around a definition of terms. In so doing, we hope to provide a commentary on what is an extremely sensitive subject in liturgical circles. To begin with, it seems important to clarify what is meant by Gregorian chant and thus benefit from a precision of terminology. The word liturgy, too, should be analyzed and its true meaning understood. There are those who question placing Gregorian chant in the category of an art form. These same people have no difficulty in considering Gothic cathedrals and stained glass windows as art forms. But Gregorian chant?

Most of us are aware that the music we call Gregorian is named after St. Gregory the Great, who died in 604 A.D. His role in the composition of the chant is obscure. It is possible, however, that the chants we know as Gregorian were composed, compiled, and performed in the era that surrounded and followed his reign.

In the ensuing centuries, this chant enjoyed widespread use throughout the Holy Roman Empire due largely to Charlemagne's insistence that the liturgy and its song should be unified everywhere. Later, with the experimentations in metrics and part-singing that emerged in the later Middle Ages, the chant fell into decline as the church's universal song and yielded its place of eminence to the musical innovations of the times. A brief but unsuccessful attempt was made to restore the chant in the late sixteenth century with the preparation and publication of the *Medicæan Gradual* of 1615, but it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that a genuine effort was made on the part of churchmen, musicologists, and musicians to restore the Gregorian chant to its pristine purity.

When we pick up the *Graduale Romanum* and/or the *Liber Usualis*, or any of the chant books published in recent years, we might think that these books have always existed. Not so. It was the period of restoration of the chant that began in the mid-nineteenth century that resulted in the chant repertory that we know today. This work of restoring the chant to its authentic form has an exciting adventure—one filled with extraordinary discoveries and revelations.

But I do not intend to make this presentation a lecture in musicology. I would like, however, to single out one engaging aspect of this work of chant restoration that occupied many knowledgeable collaborators over the period of more than a century. There exists a famous Gregorian chant bilingual manuscript known as the Montpellier H159, dating from the eleventh century. It was discovered in a medical library in Dijon in the year 1845. This precious

¹*Sacred Music*, 127, no. 1 (Spring 2000), 13–20. Theodore Marier was president of the CMAA, 1966–73.

manuscript is the work of a fastidiously systematic music teacher named St. Benigne of Dijon who left to posterity a book that is perhaps the only complete, pitch-specific collection of the Propers of the Mass from this early period. Without this manuscript, the work of restoring the chant might have taken many more years than it did.

Up to the time of the discovery of the Montpellier manuscript, the significance of the neumatic signs was only known vaguely. Now, with this as a key, to every neume could be ascribed a definite pitch: Re-Fa, Ti-Do-Re, etc. The mystery of the signs was solved. The neumes could now be transcribed into exact notation with all the correct pitches assigned. But there was another problem with the manuscript. The chants were arranged according to modes and not liturgical function. So the entire repertory had to be unscrambled and each chant had to be assigned to its proper place in the Liturgical Year. No easy task.

The Vatican Gradual, which came out more than fifty years after the discovery of the Montpellier manuscript, contained the basic repertoire as found in the manuscripts of the ninth and tenth centuries. Of course in later editions, it included new chants mostly centonized from older melodies to accommodate the new feasts that had been established meanwhile. Speculation widely exists that this repertory came from the time of St. Gregory, several centuries prior to the date of the manuscripts themselves.

The discovery of the Montpellier bilingual manuscript in 1845 caused a sensation in the musicological world for the simple reason that it clarified the musical meaning of the hitherto indecipherable musical signs. Its discovery was as significant to the musical world as

was the discovery of the bilingual Rosetta Stone found in Egypt in 1799. This stone contained the Egyptian hieroglyphics, which up to that time no one could decipher, plus their Greek equivalents. With this Greek language key, the way to understanding and interpretation was relatively easy. So, by definition, what we call Gregorian chant, is the repertory

The discovery of the Montpellier manuscript in 1845 was as significant in the musical world as was the discovery of the Rosetta Stone.

published in the Roman Gradual and Antiphony of the early 1900's and, some thirty years later, the Monastic Antiphony.

Musicologists have written and these days are writing much about Gregorian chant. Some years ago a friend of mine, a monk very much concerned about the passing of Gregorian chant from the liturgy of the universal church, said: "You know, when the chant leaves the church it will enter the halls of the universities." How very prophetic those words! Much is being written, as we have said, and much debated as to the chant's proper notation, interpretation,

and function. In spite of debates over technicalities, all agree that the place held by Gregorian chant in music history is a significant one such as to merit well the attention of ecclesiastical historians, musicians, and laity alike.

GREGORIAN CHANT AS LITURGY

Granted that the chant has its roots deeply imbedded in the history of the church. How can we justify calling it “liturgical” in today’s context? First, let it be said that there appears to be some confusion today as to the implications of the word “liturgical.” We find the work attached to almost anything and anybody that is closely or even remotely associated with a church setting. For example, we have liturgical altars, books, committees, vestments, chairs, railings, priests, musicians; we even have a liturgical press. To be exact, the word liturgy refers to the public acts of the church, past, present, future, French, German, Ugandan, American, Australian, praying in the name of the church all together uttering praises and supplications to her sovereign Lord. Liturgy, then is strictly a matter of prayer, solemn, official, and performed by all in the name of the church. In fact, by definition, the Pius X motu proprio states that the chant shares the same qualities as the liturgy itself.

The Pius X motu proprio states that the chant shares the same qualities as the liturgy itself.

This is a gigantic concept. The contemporary musician or liturgist whose formation in music has been the missalette, has a problem here. You know his question. “But how does Gregorian chant express the sentiment and spiritual posture of the universal church today?” Well, let us consider how the church answers this question. Let us hear how Pope John Paul II has underscored the vital role that Gregorian chant must play in the church’s public acts of worship:

To the extent that the new sacred music is to serve the liturgical celebrations of the various churches, it can and must draw from earlier forms—especially from Gregorian chant—a higher inspiration, a unique sacred quality, a genuine sense of what is religious. (*Jubilare Feliciter*, Apostolic Breve ¶72, 1980)

That this makes Gregorian chant “official,” there can be no doubt. But is this the only reason that wherever and whenever possible, Gregorian chant should be given “pride of place?” (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, Ch. 6). To be sure a good reason is that the church’s strong recommendation for its use is official, one that merits our attention because the church has a right so to declare her intentions to us in this matter, and we who are her constituency should be inclined to defer to her and to follow the declarations so set forth.

There is another reason, often advanced, for devoting ourselves to this music in worship. It is that Gregorian chant is very old. It is a music whose roots are imbedded in the early church and has enjoyed a long tradition. Thus, when we sing it, we span the barriers of time to link

Gregorian chant is out of place anywhere outside the church.

ourselves with our forefathers, to make community with them in prayerful action. Surely, this reason for singing the chant is also a good one.

Furthermore, we ask ourselves: “Shall we study and sing the chant because if we travel to non-English-speaking countries, we shall feel at home with our

worshipping neighbors when we sing the chant and thus share in our common heritage? A worthwhile investment on that score also.

But there is yet another reason. To put it simply—when in the presence of an artistic rendition of the chant, in the context of worship, we find that it is *beautiful*. For me, this is the most cogent. What we offer to the Lord in song should be beautiful. In the case of the chant, it radiates its own beauty. No need to rationalize about it. This music *belongs* in the liturgy. The elements of prayer and reflection—the very purpose of the liturgy itself—are structured into its musical design in such a way that no other music known is structured.

At the 1980 International Colloquium of Musicology in Louvain, Olivier Messiaen had this to say:

Music can adapt itself to what is sacred in many ways. There is first, liturgical music. This follows the structure of the office strictly. It finds its true meaning only in the context of the office. Viewed from this perspective, there is only one kind of liturgical music: Gregorian chant.

What Messiaen is saying is that Gregorian chant is out of place anywhere outside the church. That is its unique quality and meaning, like altars, vestments, ritual, etc. Such a statement cannot be said of most of the music that is being composed and performed in worship services today. Set forth in a great variety of styles, though some of the new music has merit as church music, much borders on the ridiculous. I am reminded here of a published composition by an eminent contemporary composer which I came across recently designed for children’s liturgies. The texts of the Mass are set to “Three Blind Mice.” I suppose we are supposed to call this “folk” music and accept it because this musical style is established in the church at the present time. I like to think that the real “folk” song of the church, however, is Gregorian chant because of its authenticity, goodness of form, anonymity, universality, appropriateness, and beauty.

GREGORIAN CHANT AS AN ART FORM

Because it stirs our imagination in its own special way, evoking in us sentiments of prayer and reflection, and because the intellect does not have to reason to its acceptance—because, in

short, this music is beautiful when performed well—we can also consider Gregorian chant as a musical form of art and as such it should be fostered, studied, and preserved in the church.

If we consider the music content of Gregorian chant, for example, we can readily conclude that the words, with which the music shares an intimate partnership, do not have a monopoly on the chant's ability to communicate its message. The music, apart from the words, also shares in this function of communication. Something should be said about this because it is commonly believed that when we speak of ideas as expressed in any art, visual or aural, we have our thoughts solely on *verbal* communication as if only in this way can the mind receive information. This need for verbal articulation before acceptance may be due to our educational formation which has been fused to this concept through lectures, written exams, and verbal literature. In fact, it is perhaps this very stance of the dominant role of the *text*, without a consideration of its musical content, that resulted in the demise of Gregorian chant in the 1960s, following the council's decree permitting the vernacular tongue in liturgical worship.

The message that arises out of a well-prepared rendition of Gregorian chant is very special. In their indigenous ways, the simple chant lines, tonal succession of varying intensity, pitch, and fluid movement, wrapping themselves around texts as embellishments and rhythmic energizers, disclose their meaning to the hearer immediately upon perception. And this happens even when the literal meaning of the text may not be clear to the listener. The listener or singer apprehends the chant's message in the ordering of sounds during their passage through time into the sense of hearing. In perceiving this message he may not always be able to articulate his reaction to it in verbal terms. He knows, however, by its tranquil flow of the ordered movements of sound patterns that avoid sudden or brusque shifts of rhythm or dynamic stress and in the unfolding of its musical lines, the chant gives him a feeling of peace and, at the same time, induces interior reflection. The melodic designs of the chant, that rise and fall in even succession also reveal vocal nuances that change and vary with each vowel coloration of the text. The resulting mind-set, affected by the music itself, enhances the quality of the hearer's worship-response to the mystery of faith that is about to be offered him.

With chant, the basic meaning is prayer.

What we are saying here is that music has a power of its own apart from words. It is its own art and language. To be sure, in the chant, music and poetry are closely linked, often inseparable. Yet, we know from experience that a message is often communicated in music when the literal sense of the words is not full, or even partially apprehended. Most of the best-loved operas, for instance, are sung in non-English languages. Their popularity seems unwaning. A few years ago there was a strong trend toward "Englishing" opera. Much money was spent on this venture and elaborate preparations made to render the operatic masterworks in the vernacular. The projects failed. It was clear that the composer's thought was so closely linked to the word meaning in his own language that the disruption

of the union of words and music resulting from casting the text into another language frame destroyed—or at least weakened—the dramatic thrust of the composer’s original thought.

So, too, with chant. The basic meaning is prayer. And in the rendition, the music and the text enjoy a partnership in which each shares its proper role with the other. Even when every syllable is not communicated to the intellect, our response is strong because the music bestirs the emotions or the imaginative facet of our receptivity. Mind and feeling are activated by the aural perception of musical sound. The most perfect communication is achieved, of course, when the mind grasps the meaning of the words at the same time the imagination and emotion are aroused by the meaning of the music, each sharing in providing the maximum response in the listener.

If chant is to be considered a liturgical art form, we must consider its place in the liturgy.

But let us consider the action of music communication for a moment, apart from the words. There are many examples of this in which music acts as a mind-setting agent to bridge the gap of feeling and understanding between the listener and what is taking place visually or aurally. Is this not the function of the introduction to a song, an overture

to an opera or choral work, namely to prepare the listener for what is about to be unfolded before him? No words are involved. The organ in a church does not play English or French, nor does a marching band need words. Guitars do not play in Spanish any more than accordions speak Schweitzer Deutsch. In the chant during the unfolding of an Alleluia melisma, the music rolls on without benefit of words. The music alone is reaching out beyond the barriers of words to express the praise of God in a way that words cannot do. Here it has its communicative power as music alone. It was this power of the musical phase of the chant that was ignored when permission was given to make use of the vernacular tongue in the liturgy. Verbal enthusiasts were willing to sacrifice the meaning of the music for the literal meaning of the words. The appeal to the intellect became dominant, the appeal to the emotions was shunted to one side.

GREGORIAN CHANT AS A LITURGICAL ART FORM

Though we declare Gregorian chant to be a musical art form we may not stop there. If it is to be considered a *liturgical* art form, we must consider also its place in the liturgy, the public worship of the church. And it is here that the partnership between words and music achieves its cohesive unity. Music added to words can make the plain meaning of words glow with a radiance that words alone, so to speak, cannot do. Music can reveal an inner meaning to these words that would not be present were it not for the composer’s sensitive insight and artistic skill. The composers of the chant—whoever they were—steeped in daily prayer and community singing, knew and felt the meaning of every syllable of the prayers and in making the musical settings that we know as Gregorian chant poured their innermost souls into the creation of what has been effectively termed their “imponderable reinforcements of the human spirit.”

Listen as Paul Hindemith rhapsodizes about this musical miracle in his book, *A Composer's World* (1961):

Take one of the more florid melodies, such as those sung at Easter time or on Whitsunday, which will doubtless be considered by every musician of some taste the most perfect, the most convincing one-line compositions ever conceived. In order to understand fully their overwhelming power, you cannot restrict yourself to just reading or hearing them. You must participate in singing these melodic miracles if you want to feel how they weld the singing group into a spiritual unit, independent of the individual prompting of a conductor, and guided only by the lofty spirit and the technical excellence of the structure.

A word about performance practice will show another phase of Gregorian chant as a liturgical art form. Where does this begin? In a sense, it begins with the composer. Let us say, for example, that he is preparing to make a setting of a given text for the liturgy. He thinks about the meaning of the words and proceeds to write what is, in effect, a musical commentary on that text. A homily, in fact, is as good a way of saying it as any. He decided what sentiment or mood is to be evoked in the listener or singer when the dead notes on paper are activated into living sound. Now it is up to the director or the singer to find this meaning and interpret it as closely as he can to the composer's intention. At this point, the conductor may not force his own idea as to what the piece means, or should mean, in violation of the composer's wishes.

A more subtle insight into the meaning of the music in relation to the words set forth by the composer is needed to render the chants effectively. Let us consider the introits for Christmas, the one for the Midnight Mass and the one for the Mass in the Day. The music of these two chants suggests a meaning that the words could not possess by themselves.

Dominus dixit: for Midnight Mass. A simple rendition in the mystical second mode. On the surface, it seems like a cradle song, perceived in the gentle rocking movement of the music between Re and Fa. The birth of the Lord is revealed in the intimacy of the Holy Family, Mary, Joseph, and the animals present. Minor mode—feeling of silence, but there is a more profound meaning.

D

O- MI- NUS *di- xit ad me :

Fi- li- us me- us es tu, e-

go hó- di- e gé- nu- i te. Ps. Qua-re fremu- é-

Puer natus: a proclamation to the world. Major mode—formal announcement, indicated by wide intervals; forward, rhythmic movement, a strong declaration of the presence of the Lord; the Word made flesh and dwelling among us.

Introitus. 7.

U-ER * na- tus est no- bis, et fi- li- us
da- tus est no- bis : cu- jus impé- ri- um su- per
hú- me- rum e- jus : et vo- cá- bi- tur no- men
e- jus, magni consí- li- i An- ge- lus. Pz. Can- tá- te

The repertory of chants abounds in such meaningful musical homilies, and it is the responsibility of the conductor to search them out and communicate them to his singers and to his listeners. In his search for this meaning, the conductor must place himself before the composition he is to interpret as if he were the composer. He must first study the meaning of the words and reflect on their meaning. Then he must consider the musical statement and its relation to those words. He must search for the music’s “greater rhythm,” to use Dom Mocquereau’s terminology, to find the high point of the musical phrase and the tonal relationships between the smaller divisions of that phrase. For example, is the composer saying:

- In TE, Domine, speravi, non confundar in aeternum, or
- In te, DOMINE, speravi, non confundar in aeternum, or
- In te, Domine, SPERAVI, non confundar in aeternum, or
- In te, Domine, speravi, non CONFUNDAR in aeternum, or
- In te, Domine, speravi, non confundar in AETERNUM?

In each case, the focus of the reflection is different. It is the composer who determines that focus through his use of the elements of music. The interpreter ought not try to recast the musical phrase in order to impose his own meaning on that phrase and thus violate the intention of the composer.

Apropos of this search for the “meaning” of the music in order to set forth the composer’s “homily” on a given text, the interpreter is also faced with the complex problems of performance practice. If the sentiment of the music is to be expressed in a manner that allows the text to achieve its fullest communication, one must come to grips with the performance practice of the times. In the case of Gregorian chant, what is the performance practice? How can we know how to recreate these melodies exactly as they were sung in the Golden Age? Much discussion has and is taking place concerning this aspect of the chant. We have no “live” performance from the period on which to base our decisions, no aural Montpellier manuscript, so to speak, no model in sound. Though speculation is rife as to the correct interpretation of the chant, in the monastic houses where the chant is still sung daily in the Office and at Mass, there is general consensus that the tones out of which the melodies are constructed are to be sung in a more or less even manner, that is, of equal duration. Using this as a basic principle of interpretation and giving attention to the purely technical elements of interpretation such as accurate pitch, musical as well as verbal rhythm, varying intensities to place the high points in appropriate relief, many choirs have provided convincing evidence of validity of the approach.

If it is true that we have all experienced a certain spiritual nourishment and peaceful reflection in the presence of a disciplined and artistic rendition of the chant, why was this music relegated to virtual oblivion after the Second Vatican Council? Perhaps in a world seeking excitement and

Why was chant relegated to virtual oblivion after the Second Vatican Council?

new emotional “highs,” the sobriety of the chant could not compete with the noisy musical utterances that entered the sacred environments of worship. If there was one reason, however, adduced for the rejection of chant, a reason that was accepted by choir directors, priests, and even bishops, it was that the Latin language stood in the way of understanding. And since the chant made use of the Latin language, they said, it must recede to a second place in the hierarchy of musical values. Confusion existed here between verbal and musical language and the decision was made in favor of verbal language.

The result of that decision in favor of the vernacular was to issue a challenge to composers to provide musical settings of the new ritual texts using the vernacular language. Many composers accepted the challenge and have given us numerous and excellent commentaries on liturgical texts. Others have been so preoccupied with finding notes to support the texts, that they have resorted to the idioms of a musical language that is far removed from the spirit of worship as we know it. In such cases, when the texts, even the vernacular texts, are not understood when they are sung (and this is frequently the case) musical language is the only means of communication left. If this musical residue reminds us of a cowboy song or the latest hit song on the hit parade, the moment of spiritual reflection on the meaning of the text is diverted to some other meaning extraneous to the religious focus for which the piece was written in the first place. The musical language dominates and, at the same time, destroys. If in the instance of the chant,

assuming an artistic rendition is in progress, even if the verbal language of the chant is not known, the residual musical language proposes reflection that is not chained to worldly meanings and offers serene meditation on the quiet sentiments of peace and joy. No one could have predicted that in our time the Latin language together with its musical handmaid the chant, would be virtually discarded overnight and the contemporary language of the people substituted.

Why is the teaching of the chant, which has roots in the primitive church and which does indeed relate directly to our prayer lives, so neglected?

At the same time, we have witnessed the explosive and widespread hostility to Latin and the chant, so much so that many dioceses officially banned their use at parish liturgies. This hostility still persists in some quarters. For example, only a year ago a musician priest of my acquaintance was given the assignment as music director at a major seminary *with the proviso* that neither Gregorian chant nor the music that sounded like Gregorian chant was ever to be performed in the confines of the seminary!

It seems to me that the value of chant as a liturgical art form in the context of Christian life is enormous. In our teaching of the catechism and religion from the earliest grades, we strive to inculcate into the growing and expanding minds of the children and adults a sense of the meaning of Jesus' message to the world. The beautiful tradition that has been developed over the centuries as a result of his giving us that message, and in this case music, should be taught side by side and with equal conviction and enthusiasm as our teaching of the facts and norms of Christian life. If we teach philosophy, science, medieval history, literature—most of which has no direct relationship with our prayer lives—then why is the teaching of the chant, which has roots in the primitive church and which does indeed relate directly to our prayer lives, so neglected? ❧

Theodore Marier (left) translates as his friend Dom Joseph Gajard of Solesmes gives a chant lesson to the Schola at St. Paul's Choir School in Cambridge, Mass., summer 1965.



Are You a True Minister of Music?¹

by Rev. Ralph S. March, S.O.Cist.

In many of the non-Catholic churches, the music director is addressed by the respected title of “minister of music.” The more I think about this noble title, the more I like it. If you read some of the instructions written by the last half-dozen popes, you will find that this word is not new to Catholics; indeed, choir directors, cantors, soloists, and choir members are considered in these documents as true ministers (albeit minor ones) and with reason.

In this article I have tried to organize a few ponderings concerning the role and qualifications of the music minister as well as a few personal reflections on the joys and problems connected with his office. Some of these ideas claim no originality; others might have been explored less frequently.

First of all, I would like to mention a few indispensable technical qualities that every minister of music should possess. The first of these is, obviously, adequate musical skill. Good foundation in theory, average or better keyboard facility, some voice training, and a minimal ability in score reading seem essential together with more than a smattering of compositional techniques and a good understanding of the basic elements of choral conducting. These skills must be constantly updated and improved by participation in choral clinics, seminars, and workshops. No dentist would expect to survive on the knowledge he acquired twenty or thirty years ago in dental school.

Church musicians should also acquire a solid theological background. My checklist would include here at least some regular reading in the following fields: church history, dogma, prayer-life, ascetic authors, and, obviously, the Sacred Scripture.

Liturgical background is equally important. This should not be confined to the knowledge of the innovations and frequent changes of the past ten years. I am often amazed by the incredible naïveté and lack of information some church musicians exhibit in this field. Ignorant of the fundamental principles of liturgical prayer, they are easily swayed by the slogans of starry-eyed liturgical “reformers.” The studying of a few solid classical works on liturgy (published during the last fifty or sixty years) would have equipped them with an invaluable insight into the church’s prayer. It is actually their duty to improve their knowledge of the liturgy. The *Instruction on Sacred Music* (1967) prescribes that “besides musical formation, suitable liturgical and spiritual formation must also be given to the members of the choir, so that the proper performance of their liturgical role will not only enhance the beauty of the celebration and be an excellent example for the faithful, but will bring spiritual benefit to the choir members themselves” (§24).

¹*Sacred Music*, 99, no. 4 (Winter, 1972), 3–13. Fr. Ralph March was editor of *Sacred Music*, 1966–75.

A music minister should be familiar with the most important historical, cultural, and artistic events and their influence upon the musical styles of any given century. He must understand the fascinating relationship that exists between the styles in any art form and music, e.g., the parallel between the clean lines of a Gothic cathedral and the austere sound of early polyphony, the twisted bodies of Baroque statues and the florid music of the same period. He must be thoroughly at home with the theory and practice of chant and classical polyphony and must have a working knowledge of the Latin language that opens the door to these eternal masterpieces. He should be able to see through the absurd arguments repeated over and over again that professional church musicians are only for the old music (preferably in Latin) whereas the people of God clamor desperately for the new. The responsible Catholic music minister must always prefer the good and worthy music of all periods and abhor the cheap and shoddy imitations. He may prefer the old (which, incidentally, I do not consider “old” but timeless, such as chant and polyphony), but he must also incorporate much of the contemporary—if it is valuable and corresponds to the norms set by the popes and the council. Alas, such intimations and innuendos are easily swallowed by the uncritical minds of some of the laity, and those music ministers who have a respect toward tradition are frequently branded as backward dreamers of a past age. It is hard to keep one’s serenity and not to protest from the rooftops, which will be a waste of time anyhow. I have actually met outstanding musicians who, demoralized and intimidated by such slogans, began to doubt their own sincerity and pastoral attitude almost to the point of becoming apologetic for the music they try to perform in obedience to the wishes of the church. A thorough familiarity with the music legislation of the church is, therefore, a must for them.

A music minister should be familiar with the most important musical styles of any given century.

Another fallacious argument pits the earnest musician’s honest preoccupation with the best music he can offer against “pastoral concern.” Having studied the church’s documents on sacred music, he will know that dignified music is essentially pastoral since it exerts a long-term effect on the soul by generating and fostering those badly needed attitudes of awe, wonderment, recollection and—ultimately—contemplation of the Infinite. The temptation of harvesting immediate “pastoral results”—such as the elated feeling resulting from a rousing

hymn sung by the entire congregation—is indeed alluring. But frankly, is such a hymn, or *any* hymn for that matter, really *the* Mass? Can it be considered as an integral part of the liturgy or is it only a filler, a musical background while something else is being done at the altar? At the risk of being vehemently criticized, I must ask whether the *liturgical* participation of the hymn singers is really deeper than of those who listen meditatively to the texts of the Mass sung by the priest and the choir? Let us admit however, that a well-known hymn, sung by the congregation is, indeed a good thing; but where, in heaven’s name, is the pastoral and liturgical gain

resulting from a Simon and Garfunkel song performed by three guitar players and shouted by a half-dozen teenagers from the sanctuary? So much for that.

Alas, today's church musician cannot avoid the chores of handling yearly music budgets and must often fight for adequate allocation for organ repair, sheet music, choir robes, instrumental help, and many trivia of that kind. He may get solace from the example of J. S. Bach and his frequent clashes with the parsimonious vestrymen of the Thomaskirche concerning his music budget. The music director must be, therefore, a shrewd planner and must become familiar with financial technicalities.

Last but not least, a minister of music must be in good or, at least, adequate health. Late rehearsals, travels, intense mental and physical work, and continuous pressure use up incredible quantities of energy and require more than average stamina. An anemic organist or song leader will have anemic responses from

the congregation and a weary choir director should not attempt to lead others at all. It goes without saying that he must also be well-balanced emotionally and usually in control of his temper.

The music minister must be a student, an educator, and a diplomat.

It is not enough for the music minister to possess these technical qualities. He must also be a student, an educator, and a diplomat. Both learning and teaching are continuous, never-ceasing processes that require determination and enthusiasm. The successful student is always eager to learn, to discover, to widen his own horizons. The good teacher is thrilled by the challenge of imparting knowledge and of sharing the love of things he himself holds in high esteem. Teaching always involves a trade, an exchange. Something from the priceless intellectual, spiritual, or artistic heritage is communicated to new recipients. Indeed, during this process, new treasures are sometimes discovered. They must be evaluated, weighed, distilled, and tried against those of the past. A music minister, as a teacher, must be therefore, thoroughly familiar with the music of the past yet open to the exciting serious music of the present. He must assiduously study scores and increase his own repertoire every day. Then, after judicious selection, he must communicate the result of his study with his students. Needless to say that he needs great prudence in this and his musical taste must be flawless. He must constantly bear in mind that he is called not merely to entertain but to worship with the best music.

Yet, all this is still not sufficient. Even if the music educator is equipped with all the technical tools of his craft and has a firm determination, something more is needed: a spark of humor without becoming a clown; he must be an attractive person whose entertaining companionship is sought and enjoyed by his singers and collaborators. Moreover, he ought to know instinctively when to scold or encourage, correct or flatter, bribe if it is needed, or even cajole in some cases. Above all he must love and respect his singers and their spiritual yearnings. This sense of diplomacy combined with charity will help him to smooth out possible conflicts

between rectory and choir loft, convent and organ console, and probably more frequently, frictions among choir members.

The co-workers of such an ideal music minister will always be eager to do anything for him and will forgive him his temperamental flair-ups, for they understand that while he may be exacting at times, he is trying always to be fair with them. They will trust him as a competent musician and they will love him as a person. If he makes mistakes now and then, he can and does admit them without grumbling and blaming others. At the same time his good-natured self-criticism will give him a free hand not to let his singers get away with mistakes—if they can be prevented. His co-workers realize that he is on their side and they are glad to be on his. They look back with gratitude to the many hours of his unselfish work in the congregation. Most of all: they include him in their prayers regularly and frequently. And God knows how much music directors need that!

In insisting on this need for diplomatic touch, I do not wish to use the word in the cheap sense of wheeling-dealing, but I take it in its ideal connotation: a diplomat to me is a uniting, pacifying force. My ideal music minister unifies and never divides; he builds and never destroys. He is a friend and he does not feel that he is wasting his time or his precious talents in teaching you to praise God.

The ideal music minister unifies and never divides; he builds and never destroys.

I suppose that all of this is more or less common knowledge. I would not have taken your time and all this paper just to remind you what are the minimal requisites for the vocation of a music minister. The reason for this article goes deeper. I would like you to think for a moment very seriously

about this divine calling. A minister's most basic duty is to minister, to serve. A servant is not lording over his co-servants, but collaborates with them. A servant of Christ does His will and sets out to imitate Him. "If a man serves me, he must follow me; wherever I am, my servant will be there too. If anyone serves me, my Father will honor him" (John 12:26). But the music minister's service to Christ is manifested also in serving his Mystical Body first of all with his own exemplary life. *Nemo dat quod non habet*. Every minister, including the music minister, must excel in the community with a profound, mature, individual spiritual life. He must be a true Christian and parishioner himself. If married, he should stand as a model for married people; if single, his (or her) life must be above all reproach. St. Paul warns us of the empty-sounding cymbals. Since ministers must spend themselves without restriction, they must possess a treasure house of goods before they can think of giving some of it away. A true minister of music knows that he is not called to train concert singers (even though his singers may approach the perfection of a professional group) but to form worshippers and saints. Here is where his ministry really blossoms, for here he comes closest to the role of the spiritual director. One of the main reasons for our existence on this earth is that we praise God, especially in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It is the responsibility of the music minister, together with

the pastor of the church, to lead the congregation and the choir toward that lofty goal. His is a difficult but extremely rewarding task: to teach others to pray and help them to become better Christians. He cannot do this unless he, himself is a man of prayer. A man of prayer radiates his inner sanctity around him without ostentation and advertising but also without shyness or false modesty.

If I were asked to point out some of the most frequent reasons for failure in a music director besides musical incompetency I would certainly think of his timidity in this field. Surely no one likes to listen to sanctimonious preaching. But to radiate piety does not mean lecturing and preaching but to stand as a living witness to the fact that liturgical music is indeed a

*The music minister must live, breathe,
dream sacred music.*

powerful means of sanctification and a source of grace both for those who competently perform it and for those who meditatively listen to it. One could quote the Fathers of the Church, several of the popes and, indeed, St. Paul himself, to prove the truth of this statement.

Why do we fail in this respect?

I can see two different reasons. The first is that we, music ministers, are not really convinced of the truth of this fact, and our own behavior shows nothing or very little of the fruits of liturgical prayer. The second reason may be that we are reluctant to “intrude” on others’ spiritual privacy. So we adopt a no-nonsense, routine attitude and posture during liturgical functions and are very cautious not to show any signs of recollection, adoration, reverence, or any outward indication of a genuine religious and spiritual experience.

Let us suppose, however, that the music minister is truly a man of prayer and his inner life radiates around him. It is still not enough. He must be imbued with a strong, all-pervading urge and need for apostolate. Obviously, such zeal cannot replace a solid musical education: it will not provide him with skills for his craft but lacking it he will certainly miss his goal: and by far. He must love “the splendor of the house of the Lord: with a relentless yearning; indeed, he must be obsessed by it. He must live, breathe, dream sacred music. If he is only half-hearted, his congregation or his choir will be half-hearted too. A true music minister must realize, with humility, the awesome mission he has undertaken, a mission that ought to take precedence to most other things that will try to crowd his life. Social obligations, “free days,” a night at the theater, or other legitimate forms of entertainment will frequently conflict with his work. He will have to decline invitations, miss concerts and television shows, face possible arguments even in his own family. Yet, if he has a strong will and determination, he will carry on his apostolate against all odds, for the greater glory of God. Often he will be called a foot-dragger, a leftover from the sixteenth century or he will be criticized for his modernism. Still, he must stand fast, *opportune, importune*, for he knows and loves the purpose of his life. He may choose St. Paul as his model and will look for inspiration in the ardent conviction and the almost stubborn drive of that great apostle. He will need to develop a true devotion toward

St. Pius X who, probably more than any other pope in this or any other century, understood the sanctifying value of the liturgy and sacred music that helped to shape his own spiritual life.

Now we may consider some of the frustrations and joys of the music minister. They form a long list, indeed.

First of all, there is the material aspect. It is an undeniable fact that about ninety percent of Catholic church musicians are underpaid whether they are trained or non-professional musicians. Few are the pastors who are willing to understand that a musician, like any other professional, must eat, drive a car, clothe his family, pay his bills, and that he too is entitled to live a dignified human life. Some of our dioceses (I know of three in the Middle West) have published salary scales based on qualifications, seniority, and the services rendered. But are these observed? And what to say about the other dioceses?

St. Pius X, probably more than any other pope in the twentieth century, understood the sanctifying value of liturgy and sacred music.

Another frustration is particular to choir directors: mediocre singers. In our American system about anyone with a small voice and lots of good will may join his parish choir, only to discover that the learning of even the simplest four-part Mass involves more musical background than he actually has. Most of these good souls are very faithful in attending rehearsals, and they never miss a performance. But

they are the ones who blur the rhythm, have pitch difficulties, and are allergic to difficult intervals. It is hard to suggest any method of dealing with them. If they are still young, they may learn and will improve, if not so young . . . well, that's exactly my point.

Absenteeism is another irritating problem that tests the patience of the music director. It is bad enough on a regular Sunday, but when it happens on great feast days such as Christmas, Holy Week, or Easter, the weary director is ready to throw in the towel. How many times were you forced to change your program during the warm-up rehearsal because your best two best basses were out of town or the number of altos fell below the minimum, making it impossible to achieve a decent balance in a polyphonic number? Here, I am practically helpless, for I know that we are not dealing with professionals, and families like to take their vacation when school is out. About the only suggestion I can make is this: inquire months ahead about possible absences during feast days and select your music accordingly. It is also a good idea (perfectly in tune with the worshipping, amateur status of your group) to have at least one professional or semi-professional voice in each section. Voice students at neighboring colleges are often looking for chances to sing regularly with a choral group at a small fee that may pay, let's say, for their voice lessons. But . . . the frustration is there.

Another aggravation has little to do with music. It would be unfair to categorize but, for the sake of honesty, I must mention this also: pastors, assistants, Reverend Mothers, and the "liturgy committee"—not necessarily in that order—can be a source of frustration, greater than any of the others mentioned thus far. Obviously, musical training and artistic taste are not

among the requirements when a priest is appointed pastor of a parish. But his ignorance in this field will not absolve him from the responsibility and moral obligation he has concerning the quality of music in his church. Most American pastors adopt a benevolent attitude of neutrality and serene indifference when it comes to music. But this is precisely my point: they should not be neutral and disinterested, but zealous supporters and promoters of good liturgical music by encouraging the choir, the organist, the congregation, and the entire music staff.

If only half as much attention were focused by pastors on music and its place in the liturgy as on boy scouts, Holy Name societies, parish councils, altar societies, youth groups, etc., a great deal of this frustration would vanish. Do not misunderstand me: these groups are important in the life of the parish—one way or another. But the main mission of the church—and the pastor—is most assuredly the worship of God, and since music is an integral part of that worship it certainly deserves a great deal of attention—and adequate sums of money.

Younger assistants and some sisters are an altogether different breed. You hardly can hold them back! Many of them are convinced of their mission to update everything in the parish and quite a good number of them seem to be obsessed with the young or, to be exact, with a certain type of youngster. They are fanatic promoters of high decibel “pop” Masses, bongo drums, guitar strumming, and “multimedia Eucharists.” Not content with these gung-ho happenings for the reluctant youth of the parish, they begin to invade the other Masses with their balloons and banners and, totally ignoring the spiritual need and intelligence of adults, they are determined to foist their kind of “participation” like liturgical drill-sergeants on the bewildered congregation and the intimidated organist. What follows in their wake is total liturgical disaster and chaos. No need to go any further since I am sure that you got the message. A clear, unequivocal definition of the role of the music minister and the precise indication of the extent of his authority are a must. No musician should be forced to perform or accompany music that he feels is against his artistic standards. The arguments may become very pointed but, at least on this question, the music director must stand firm. One concession will lead to another and bitterness will grow in the parish that will profit no one and will cause great scandal.

As to parish “liturgy commissions,” their role must be strictly defined and limited, and under no circumstances should they be allowed to interfere with the type and quality of music, since this is usually outside of their competence.

Pressure groups are the next nuisance on my aggravation list. As long as we have human society, we shall have groups on the left and on the right, traditionalists and reformers, busy bodies and passive, inert individuals. A parish is a small but complete human community that includes extremists at each end and an overwhelming, well-balanced majority in the middle. The ideal music minister will not forget that he has also a mandate to educate the entire congregation and will try and try again to perform inspiring music, unobjectionable to most, except the hard-core extremists. He knows the mind of the church in this matter; he will mix the old with the new and—above all—he will show great charity toward all groups. Without giving up his principles and his artistic integrity he will bend here and there but will continuously strive to raise the artistic level and will aim at fostering the piety and devotion of the faithful which is his foremost duty as a true minister.

A last headache is purely technical and practically unsolvable. It has nothing to do with principles, politics, or diplomacy. It is the weariness and strain resulting from the tight schedule and rush that precedes the great feasts: Christmas, Holy Week, Easter, Confirmation, and other distinguished parish celebrations. Time seems to be always too short to rehearse all the new music. If it is customary in the parish to use instruments on such solemn occasions, the director faces new worries about rehearsal schedules, stipends, seating arrangements in the choir loft, discipline, etc. Here his calm equilibrium and professional experience will come in good stead.

One could continue this check-list for pages: the organ that is inadequate or in bad repair; the unsatisfactory rehearsal room; the torn sheet music and soiled choir robes; the celebrant who sings out of tune and confuses both the choir and the congregation; the tardiness of some singers; the wobbly vibrato of certain sopranos; the excessive length and dullness of the sermon; and so on.

But let us turn our sights to some of the joys of music ministry. Thank God, they are many and long-lasting. Some of them cannot be measured or described, for they radiate inside the soul; moreover, some are immediate while others will be manifest only on the day of judgment. These hoped-for rewards encourage the music minister to bear his frustrations and headaches with patience and equanimity.

It was St. Augustine, I think, who said: *bis orat qui bene cantat*. I have learned this phrase as a child and it still gives me comfort. Its message rings clearly: all things being equal, the prayer of the singer who does his best (!) has a greater intrinsic value than the prayer of those who just recite. Taken with a grain of salt, the saying hits the nail right on the head. The musician's sacrificial offering is considered of greater merit since it cost him endless work, effort, self-denial, and, frequently, sheer pain and suffering. This is one of the reasons why I am so appalled by some of those dreary hymns, not to mention the inane, silly ditties called erroneously "folk songs," as our offerings to God. What effort and preparation are needed to sing a current teen-age hit song in the Holy of the Holies? Would the performers of such inept songs dare to present them at a school concert? Should we give less to God than to the audience of the school choir? It was a Protestant musician who said:

You just don't expect to hear Gregorian chants or Bach chorales in a ballroom or a corner tavern, and music indigenous to such environs should be just as out of place in church. There needs to be a distinction. Yes, indeed, to give one's best to God does result in a heart-warming satisfaction.

Another source of joy is found in the *esprit de corps* manifested spontaneously by the collaborators of the music minister. We are all human and yearn for that friendly tap on the shoulder; "We are with you, Doctor." "The choir is behind you, Father." Bless those troopers! They come to worship and they know that, as a group, they can achieve what they could not do alone. They are grateful for the richer share in the grace they receive as ministers. They realize that they are part of the congregation but, just the same, they sense that their offering is more than that of the man in the pew. Obviously, this spirit should not produce factions, for then it would become a divisive force within the congregation. A good music minister will,

therefore, frequently remind his singers of their ministerial and apostolic role *within* the parish community.

On blue days, meditation on the parable of talents usually cheers me up. God gave us talent for different purposes. He gave *charismata* to the members of the Mystical Body, to be used for the benefit of the community. A music minister's *charisma* is an apostolic gift; it should not serve selfish purposes. "These charismatic gifts, whether they be the most outstanding or the more simple and widely diffused, are received with thanksgiving and consolation, for they are exceedingly suitable and useful for the needs of the Church" (*Dogmatic Constitution of the Church*, ¶12). The music director's depression will soon disappear, if he realizes that he is trying to do just that: to use his God-given *charisma* to praise Him and to teach and lead the members of Christ's Mystical Body to do the same.

Even frustrations may become a source of joy for the music minister. Granted that mortification is not fashionable today, and the idea of purgatory is not a favorite topic among avant-garde theologians; I am, nevertheless, a firm believer in both and like to think that the generous Lord will consider my musical frustrations and will shorten my tenure in purgatory because of them. If Christ is willing to reward us for that glass of water, he will, surely, do as much or more for the help we have given to hesitating singers who try to improve the quality of their sung worship.

I may seem overly optimistic or even naïve in all this, but I sincerely believe in what I have just said. The main difference between the work of an ordinary music teacher (let's say in a college or high school) and that of a music minister is that the latter does it uniquely for the glory of God. As a conclusion I would like to advance a few personal thoughts on the future of liturgical music and music ministers in the Catholic Church.

1. I have a feeling that the musical atmosphere is beginning to change, due mostly to the growing dissatisfaction of the faithful with many of the melodies that overzealous pastors and assistants have been trying to force upon them and the boring mediocrity of much of the disposable "new music" found in the various leaflet-missals or missalettes. It is becoming more and more evident to me that in less than ten years the once-bubbling waters of the unauthorized liturgical pseudo-reforms have become stagnant puddles, and many of the never-never land dreams of the particularly wild experimenters have turned sour under the pounding realities of every-day life. Those with wider visions have foreseen this from the start but many Johnny-come-lately "liturgists" persist in the simplistic view that still more changes and more lowering of artistic standards will bring about a greater enthusiasm of the faithful. I sympathize with the bind they are in: they mistrust the past and are uncertain of the future. Desperately, they throw themselves on the "now," emptied of tradition and barren of future promises. Without the moderating influence of the civilization of past centuries they are unable to plan for the future and must, therefore, remain in a rebellious liturgical puberty until some great cataclysm or schism will finally open their eyes.

It is also likely that the official changes will continue to be slowly assimilated both by the clergy and the faithful, more by obedience than by enthusiasm, but the excesses—heavily weighed with shallow and frequently embarrassing theatricalism—will either disappear or will crawl underground again.

2. The trite, juvenile ditties will linger around for some time in a few places, not so much because our youngsters desire them, but because some musically retarded adults will keep them alive artificially. Moreover, one should be careful not to underestimate the influence of a few publishing houses that have a vested interest in their weekly or monthly publications, sold by subscription to thousands of American parishes. Nevertheless, these inferior hit-songs will fade away, to no-one's regret, not even to the misled young. Brought into our sanctuaries from picnics and juke-boxes, these melodies and texts never quite succeeded in becoming relevant to the liturgical action, and their narrow, almost exclusive obsession with "luv" and brotherhood has long become a source of boredom for almost everyone with a modicum of judgment and critical ears.

Thanks to Catholic music ministers the glorious and powerfully majestic song of the church will soar heavenwards.

3. From the ruins and smoldering ashes left behind by the noisy barbarians a new House of the Lord must be built again, reverence must be restored, and spirituality must be deepened, so that the long-frustrated and senselessly

derailed dreams of Vatican II of a genuine liturgical and musical Renaissance will have a chance to come true, at last. I like to think that the worst is over, the muddy detour has come to an end and sanity is on its way back to our temples. We must give immense credit for this to the "people of God" and their common sense: they simply cannot be fooled too long. Their mighty yearning for orderly liturgy and calm, civilized beauty in their worship should not remain unanswered by the pastorally minded church musician. He must do his best that all these passing fads—annoying blemishes on the adorable face of the *Ecclesia Orans*—disappear as they came. Few will shed a tear upon their demise except the most smugly radical innovators and professional liturgical revolutionaries who seem beyond help.

4. Composers must be attracted again by the renewed stability and beauty of the liturgy to reinforce the ranks of the few who have been carrying the load during these years of turmoil. They will resume the task of enriching the musical treasures of the church both in Latin and in English. They must be provided, however, with more inspiring and more poetic vernacular texts than the present pedestrian ones. Undoubtedly, this will take time, patience, and hard work.

5. In the meantime, the music minister must not abandon ship but must hold fast, despite frustrations, ridicule, sarcasm, and verbal tirades. He should take comfort in the fact that he is not alone; he has a calling from God and a growing support from his long-suffering colleagues and the faithful. Thanks to Catholic music ministers—reliable, determined, and faithful servants—the glorious and powerfully majestic song of the church will soar again heavenwards, more sublime than ever before. ❧

The Sacred¹

by Monsignor Richard J. Schuler

For more than twenty-five years, in this country, since the close of the Second Vatican Council, we have witnessed a disintegration of the Roman Catholic liturgy, a decline in church attendance, and a general erosion of the Faith, seen clearly by a drop in ordinations to the priesthood, vocations to the religious life, and the numbers of children and youth under instruction in Catholic schools. One logically asks what is the cause. Why has this happened?

Some erroneously would like to say that it is the result of the changes ordered by the conciliar fathers. Others attribute it to a maturing of American Catholics who do not need the previous practices. Others deny that there is any problem and hail the present situation as a great success.

All of these are out of touch with reality. The general observer can see a falling off of Catholic life. Note the recent surveys of Mass attendance and the statistics on Catholic school enrollment. The facts are undeniable. We are part of a waning church, a disintegrating community, an eroding faith. And we must ask why.

My thesis is that the concept of “sacred” has been eliminated from Catholic life and practice. With such a denial, the corresponding reverence, which is the normal attitude in the presence of the sacred, has disappeared. All the arts which are sacred have suffered, not least sacred music. I would like to investigate the concept of “sacred,” its existence and its essence, and its role in liturgical worship, especially in music.

We can begin by looking at ourselves. The union within man of the spiritual and material—his body and his soul—is one of the mysteries of human life. The centuries are filled with philosophers and saints who by word and by act have attempted to reconcile the dichotomy. Manicheans, Iconoclasts, and Puritans dot the records of Christian history in one-sided efforts to adjust the physical and the spiritual; just as Hedonists, Materialists, and Humanists have falsely moved in an opposite direction. Only the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity can provide the solution. Christ alone is the “light that illumines every man who comes into this world.” In him, the spiritual and the material, indeed the divine and the human, unite in perfect balance.

When God created man and all things, he saw that they were good. Every creature reflects the Creator who is Goodness. But man, through his gift of free will, brought disorder into creation, and his original sin continues to affect not only himself but all the created universe, which “groans and travails in pain,” as Saint Paul says.² The disharmony that man experiences

¹*Sacred Music*, 124 (Summer 1997), 12–18. Msgr. Richard J. Schuler was president of the CMAA, 1977–98 and editor of *Sacred Music*, 1975–99.

²Romans 8:22.

within himself between the material and the spiritual extends to his relationship with the rest of earthly creation, which is material, and with his Creator, who is a spirit. And even after the Resurrection, redeemed creation, rejoicing in the grace of Christ's victory over sin, bears the scars of Adam's fall. Burdened with the effects of original sin and yet still destined for an eternity in heaven, redeemed man has found the material world around him, and even within him, to be both his greatest friend and his worst enemy, his tool for salvation and his means of perdition, the reflection of the Creator and the lure of Satan. But since God made all things good, it can only be in man's misuse of these things that they become evil for him.

Man's noblest use of God's creation is art. In a sense, he here shares in God's creative power, for as God made man to his own image, so man in turn makes his art in the image of his own being or the world that surrounds him. Dante says that art is God's grandchild, the child of his child.

Unfortunately, human art shares in human weakness; original sin touches all of creation. Art, like the artist, is subject to death and sin. "Rapt of its own beauty, it can take itself for God,"³ just as Adam and Eve desired to do. Nevertheless, God in his wisdom chose to use art in his relationship with man. He spoke to man in poetry through the prophets of the Old Testament; he inspired the song of the psalmist; he prescribed the architectural details for the building of the Art, the Tabernacle, and the Temple; and he endowed man with an artistic spirit in imitation of his own creativity. Christ too came into close association with human art. He loved the beauty of the Temple; he preached in the literary forms and with the imagery of Jewish literature; he sang the canticles and the psalms and the hymns; he knew the choral and instrumental music and the sacred dance of the Temple.

Man's noblest use of God's creation is art.

Truly, art has been God's tool in dealing with man. Through it, he has materialized the spiritual and spiritualized the material. By art, the Infinite has been shown

to the finite, the Creator to the creature, the Timeless to the temporal. God has been made known to man through the medium of matter in its noblest form. The Word was made flesh and his glory was made known, full of grace and truth. Indeed, the supreme art of the Father is the human nature of Jesus Christ.

But if art is God's tool in coming to man, so too must it be man's means of reaching God. Creation exists for the glory of God, and true art has its fulfillment only when it corresponds to the general purpose of all creation—the glory of God. (How right Joseph Haydn was to mark *Ad majorem Dei gloriam* at the top of his musical compositions!) Art, however, can fail in that purpose. It may be created only to give glory to man, or it may indeed be intended to give glory to Satan. But as in all creation, evil lies in the perverse will of man, not in the creatures themselves. When an artist is able to make his medium reflect the beauty of the Creator and become a sign of eternal Beauty, then art is capable of lifting man, through God's grace, even into the

³Wisdom 13:3.

life of the Trinity itself. Art thus participates in the sacramental activity of the church, but even when its effect is supernatural, it remains always a natural tool of religion. The harmony, truth, and goodness of God seem to shine forth in it, and man is thereby attached to the reality that is represented here in matter. Man in that way experiences “the sacred.”

On the other hand, art may fail to bring man to God. This results when the techniques and laws of the artistic discipline are absent or violated, or when the artist lacks the faith that sees in his work the reflection of the creativity of God himself. In the first case, what is produced is not even true art, because nothing can substitute for a natural talent or for the training of that talent. This is salient, and perhaps it can be more quickly appreciated with reference to the practical arts than with the fine arts. Surely we are quick to detect the incompetency of a plumber or a TV repair man who does not have a command of his craft. Actually, much of what may attempt to pass as art today is lacking the basic requirements of the very discipline involved, and thus it does not even fall into the category of art. It cannot, therefore, bring man to God, since the false cannot achieve the True.

Pope Pius XII in his encyclical, *Musicae Sacrae Disciplina*, emphasized the need of these two basic requisites in an artist who will create true religious or sacred art: he must possess skill in the techniques of his discipline and he must have that faith in God which will give him the interior vision needed to perceive what God’s majesty and worship demand. When either is lacking, the result is not satisfactory. The artist without faith cannot bring others to God, since no one can give what he does not himself possess. It may be true, of course, that subjectively one might be greatly moved by a work of an artist lacking that faith in God and seem to find in it a transcendental quality that reflects the Creator, when in reality such is not present. It is in this very fact that the danger of art for religion lies, and it is here that Satan can use art as a lure for man. On the other hand, a man who has great faith but lacks talent or skill or training in the techniques of his chosen medium can produce only a sham, since all the good will in the world will not make an artist. The work of art the church seeks will come from the trained and talented craftsman who has a vision of faith, is humble before the creativity of God in which he shares, and who has conceived in the depths of his soul a concept that he expresses in the material, but in which shines forth the majesty of God.

Pius XII tells us that the true work of art, secular or sacred, must be judged by the ultimate purpose of all creation, the glory of God. Theories of art or aesthetics do not determine the success of art. The successful artist must create something appropriate to the glory of God but at the same time capable of touching the soul of man. Religion must express itself, so that the spiritual can be made manifest; the invisible, visible; the unheard, audible. Christ is the mediator who binds the material to the spiritual. He, the handiwork of the Father, is the bridge-builder; and human art in its way imitates and reflects Christ. It too then, is a bridge-builder between the Creator and the creature.

The early church was wary of art because of its connections and associations with pagan worship. There was always a degree of distrust of art in religion. Art is a danger to religion when it attempts to regulate its inherent disciplines. But each needs the other: religion to inspire art to its highest expression; art to be the means of externalizing the spirit and truth of religion, the means of creating the “sacred” in human experience.

Art can be secular or sacred, depending on its purpose. Secular art exists to imitate nature, to entertain, to inspire, to create moods, to rouse passions, to engrandize man. It may have a hundred different purposes. Sacred art, on the other hand, as the Vatican Council has recalled, exists to glorify God and to edify the faithful. Art is true to itself when it fulfills its purpose. If its purpose is in accord with the eternal law of God, it is morally good; if it exists for an evil purpose, it is evil. The work of art itself is not evil, its purpose may make it evil. Such is Satanic art, or art intended to arouse the passions needlessly or promote eroticism.

Modern art has been almost totally secular; time alone will be its judge. If it fulfills its purpose and follows its own law and nature, one may well affirm its value. But modern religious art in general has not been successful. In too many cases, contemporary attempts in nearly all the media have failed because the artist has lacked the techniques necessary for a proper handling of the materials to be dealt with: sound, paint, stone, wood, words. In other cases, the very purpose of sacred art has been wanting; the artist, even when he is a trained craftsman, cannot bring man to God if he himself lacks the necessary faith. The middle ages reached God through art; they have been called the ages of faith. The music, architecture, paintings and sculpture of those centuries still call forth in men's souls an enormous response toward God, as anyone who has entered the cathedrals of Chartres or Cologne or Amiens will attest.

Sacred art exists to glorify God and to edify the faithful.

In a practical way, the liturgical reform called for by the fathers of the Vatican council has so far failed because artists have failed. Liturgy, more than any other religious experience, needs to use the material. Its very purpose is to praise God by raising the minds and hearts of the faithful through material things to the Creator. This is accomplished only by the trained artist whose faith

inspires him to create. When we survey the efforts of the past twenty-five years, one can only conclude that one or the other or both of these requisites is missing. Where is the sacred art in the translations into English? Do they transcend the material and carry man with their beauty toward the Creator? And the musical efforts, often produced by well-meaning amateurs who are totally unprepared to deal with the techniques of the art, fail to move the minds and hearts of believing and worshipping men. Where is the art that can serve to bring man to God in churches that have been whitewashed and made to resemble Puritan meeting halls? What has become of the art of sculpture or painting as handmaidens of worship?

Music that man makes for man is rightly and quite logically music for his entertainment, at whatever level of competency or sophistication it may exist. But music created and performed for the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful demands quite different standards for judgment. Indeed, dignity, reverence, and beauty are imperative for music directed to God, and when they are lacking in sacred art it has not fulfilled its purpose. The denial of the sacred, or the substitution of the secular for the sacred, is the logical sequel that flows from humanism, the exaltation of man instead of God. "Sacred" by definition means the setting aside of something for the exclusive use of the Deity, particularly in the worship of the Deity. Something that

is secular is what is employed for the daily use of man. Both are good; both are created by God; both indeed share in the effects of the Incarnation; both have perfectly legitimate purposes in man's life and salvation. But by common agreement, every society sets aside persons, places, and things, including forms of art, that are pledged to the end of serving it in the endless effort to reach God. Obviously, these things are material for the most part, and they are closely connected with the senses of man, but through their sacralization, their sacramentalization, and even their supernaturalization, they are elevated to the highest possible level in man's relationship with God. Reverence, dignity, and beauty will characterize these material things selected for such use, because man must seek the highest forms of expression of which he is capable in turning toward his God; his art provides that excellence and that perfection. It is sacred.

But when man assumes the place of God in the liturgy by an exalted humanism, the need for the sacred ceases. The need to dedicate material things to God by sacralizing them, even the need for the sacraments or the acknowledgment of the supernatural elevation of man through grace, ceases. The secular fulfills the purpose of humanism as well, if not better than the sacred. Man has not then a need of God, and we have come to a kind of "practical atheism" which will never solve the eternal quest that man has to reach his Creator.

What must we do? What do we need? Everyone, not just the painter, the musician, the liturgical artist, but everyone must take part in finding again the path to God by means of the sacred. The fathers of the Second Vatican Council envisioned a blossoming of holiness, and the liturgy was to be the chief source of that life. Liturgy is closely associated with art; music, indeed, is an integral part of liturgy. Liturgy is dependent on sacred art, and our relationship with God is dependent on liturgy. What then do we need to come to God and to holiness?

First, we need beauty of place. Our churches must not be mere meeting halls, stripped of all sculpture and painting, stained glass and rich vestments. The art employed must not be esoteric and so avant-garde that it is not easily grasped or appreciated. At the same time, it must be true art and not "kitsch." It must not be present as a kind of estheticism but as a true servant of liturgy, made holy by its association with sacred ritual. The building and its appurtenances must inspire awe and reverence, a feeling of the presence of God; the first step in one's quest for him. It must be a sacred place, set aside from the ugliness of the worldly, even removed from the goodness of every-day life. While all that is used is material, the end result is the producing of an effect on the spirit.

Secondly, we need a beauty of movement within the holy place. Dignity, reverence, order, and purpose must mark the sacred action. Celebrant, ministers, altar boys, and all who participate must reflect the reason for the rite. It must be more than the creating of community it must be greater than assembly of God's people to manifest love of each other. The purpose of the sacred rite must be the glory of God and the manifestation of man's continuing efforts to reach him by giving him all that the human race has, its best and greatest achievements. Over-familiarity, slovenliness, carelessness, the tawdry, the cheap, novelty, and the secular have no place. What the chosen people knew about the conduct of the rites in the Temple in Jerusalem and what the era between the Council of Trent and our day should teach us is the mystical importance of the traditional, the ancient, and the mysterious in ritual actions. The dignity of the Roman Rite was assured through the careful observance of its rubrics and the use of the

Latin language; the loss of dignity, reverence, order, and even purpose can so easily be achieved by so-called “creativity” exercised by someone who lacks the requirements needed to produce true art.

Thirdly, we need beauty in sound, the sound of vocal and instrumental music, of church bells, of the voice of the lector and the cantor and the congregation. The iconoclasm following the council banned from the liturgy the great art of the past by abandoning the Latin language to which church music has been inseparably united and by disbanding the musical organizations capable of performing it. In place of art music came a kind of do-it-yourself product that was unreasonably demanding of congregations incapable of any such effort. Congregational singing for the most part has been a failure, chiefly because more was demanded than the people are capable of. Choirs have disappeared, even when not intentionally disbanded,

Sacred art is a prophetic anticipation of the glory which will one day outshine all human art and make it superfluous.

because the value of much of our contemporary composition has been so inferior that they have not found it worthwhile to continue. To revive choral singing in our churches will take many years and much prejudice has to be overcome first. But until art music, both in Latin and the vernacular, is again fostered, our people will lack a means of grace that can bring them to God more effectively

than any other liturgical art. Music is said to be an integral part of the liturgy; liturgical music *is* liturgy, and it must be worthy of so holy a thing. It cannot be music that is not quickly grasped or that belongs only to the initiated. The beauty of sacred music must be apparent and the text it adorns must be clearly understood. All styles that are true art are admitted if they are found to be effective and useful, but it requires competent artists to perform them. Listening is active participation just as singing is too. All take part in sacred music—both those who hear and those who sing or play. Very often it is the one who can listen who is moved to the highest degree of prayer—because he does not have to turn his attention to the demands of performance. He can afford the leisure that is needed to raise his heart to God in contemplation, inspired by the beauty of the sound that the artist has created for that very purpose.

The liturgy of earth is but a faint reflection of the liturgy of heaven, carried out by the choirs of angels and the saints of every class. It is the adoration of the Lamb, seated at the right hand of the Father, in union with the Holy Spirit. Dante in his *Paradiso* describes it as the unfolding of the petals of a rose, while the great processions of the apostles, the martyrs, the confessors, and the virgins move before the enthroned presence of the Blessed Virgin Mary. That liturgy is ceaselessly celebrated and is only palely reflected here on earth. The sacred art we employ is only a sensitive, prophetic anticipation of that glory which will one day outshine and overwhelm all human art and make it superfluous. ❧

Musica Sacra and the Root Phenomenon of Christian Liturgy¹

by Rev. Robert A. Skeris

I.

The reflections which follow recall a forgotten sphere of Christian life as it is actually lived: sacrality or sacredness. The motivation for such reflection appears to be very timely, since all the more significant impulses in spirituality, priestly formation, liturgical studies, church architecture, and other important areas of opinion molding in the Church of God during the past quarter century, all strive for success without any consideration of this dimension at all. So to that extent there exists, considered in purely formal terms, a very strong one-sidedness. In the fact of such a powerful force, our modest contribution can only enrich the general discussion.

The deepest reason, however, why our considerations are perfectly justified, is simply that the dimension of the *sacrum* is precisely the root phenomenon of Christian worship, and hence a decisive factor in shaping the totality of Christian life as it is really lived. The term “root phenomenon” does not refer to the ontological or dogmatic core, but indicates rather the most basically persuasive and formative element from the phenomenological, psychological standpoint of personal experience. And so if (as is the case for an entire generation) this particular root phenomenon is hidden from view and buried, so to speak—indeed, in some instances deliberately repressed—then Catholic worship is in danger of losing its identity and thus also its own ability to make any psychically formative impression. We are presently experiencing such a process of destabilization, as can be discerned in the shrinking of “religious ties” among sectors of the population which are still unambiguously Catholic. As a consequence, the remarks which follow will unavoidably (if only indirectly) touch upon many questions pertaining to the nature and identity of Christian worship, the Christian image of man, and a culture specifically Christian.

And the organization of these observations is very simple. The first section discusses contemporary forgetfulness of sacrality, after the fashion of a “diagnosis.” The second part proposes a renewal of the liturgy which is fully conscious of sacrality—a “therapy,” if you will. Minor repetitions cannot be avoided in the process.

II. Religion and Sacredness. For the purposes of our discussion today, I propose to describe religion as perception of the fundamental lack of symmetry between the Divine and the Human, as well as the possible establishment of a peaceful relationship between both which is included in that perception.

Considering religion as fundamental lack of symmetry makes it very clear that the Divine is always necessarily greater, more powerful, more holy, and more beautiful than all that is Human. This perception is not unique and abstract—for then it would be philosophy and

¹*Sacred Music*, 124, no. 3 (Fall 1997), 15–24. Fr. Robert A. Skeris was president of the CMAA, 1998–2005.

not religion. Rather it is a continual interior awareness which is confirmed by constantly new objects of experience. That means that it does not simply stop at observation or confirmation, but seeks to react in every way possible to the unsurpassable primacy of the Divine, for instance through sacrifice, prayer, or a religious way of life. If one perseveres with loyal dedication in these practical reactions, then religion of any kind promises man true peace and the genuine happiness which man himself cannot make but can only receive according to God's free bestowal.

The differences, struggles, and mutual corrective moves which led to the crystallization of the three great monotheistic religions and then, among them, to proof of Christianity's claim to sole truth, affect only the ways and means in which Divinity or the one true God speaks unreservedly to men, and how they react to these claims. All the battles over true religion which fill the pages of religious history do not in fact contradict the insight that there is a lack of symmetry between God and men. This is the unchanging point of reference for the entire field of religion—Christianity included—both now and in the future.

"I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:2–3). "For thou shalt worship no other god; for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous god" (Ex. 34:14). God alone leads, liberates and maintains man in existence; he alone sees to it that the truth remains recognizable, but he also demands unrelentingly that man acknowledge God's sovereignty, and that he bow down before no idol or idol-like idea, as if it were God. God alone is to be adored, to be sought with all one's strength. And thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself (Mark 12:29–31)—

All the battles over true religion do not in fact contradict the lack of symmetry between God and men.

as thyself, as a servant of God equally dependent upon him, but not as a god! The Christian is surely bound to see God in his neighbor (Matt. 25:34–45) and to honor him (1 Cor. 3:16f., Eph. 5:21–69). But that does

not mean that his reverence and fear of God may be diminished thereby (Ps. 111:10 and also Prov. 1:7, 9:10, 15:33; Sir. 1:11–20, esp. 14).

Religion as perception of the fundamental lack of symmetry between God and man is the instance or the place in which God's *mysterious* aspect remains secure: the fact that God is unfathomable, sometimes terrifyingly powerful, then again blessedly bright and uplifting *mystery*. The fact is that even in terms of his viability, God is infinitely above mere man. He proves and communicates his vitality when and where he will.

This characteristic of religion in general is completely preserved in Christianity, indeed expressly confirmed and made obligatory: Christ himself, in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, points up the fact that it is God alone who calls each one to his proper place and pays him his just wage (Matt. 20:1–16). It is Christ himself who inculcates the need to be needy and watching at all times for God's coming (Matt. 24:42, 44), since only the Father in heaven

“knoweth that day and hour” (Matt. 24:36, 25:13). And to crown everything, the highly developed New Testament doctrine of the Holy Ghost teaches that he, the Spirit of God, is the One who perfects and completes all good things through us in God’s good time (John 14:26; 16:13; Rom. 8:9–11, 26; 1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19), so that the only thing necessary is a humble openness toward the Holy Ghost as well as a healthy skepticism toward all inclinations of a worldly or fleshly nature (Luke 11:13, Matt. 12:31f., Rom. 8:5–16, 2 Cor. 7:1, Gal. 5:13–8).

Such a living religious awareness of God’s mysterious nature calls forth in religious persons the desire to reach out toward the incalculable and yet infinitely valuable² vastness of God’s grandeur as far as that is possible for mere men, and to purify and transform themselves in order to perceive that vast grandeur at all.³ This shows supra-temporal results which recur continually in religious life: asceticism, adoration of the Deity, “loving God more than man” (Acts 5:29, Cf. Matt. 10:37). Such varied manifestations of the desire to please God can be found both in heathen religions and in Christianity, naturally with totally different motivations in each case. If in paganism it was and is God’s fearsome qualities which produce anxiety and uncertainty of soul, then in Christianity it is the bright side of the divine mystery which in the light of Jesus Christ’s revelation calls forth a constructive, friendly, and loving uncertainty of soul. But this uncertainty of love, which must constantly ask itself whether it corresponds sufficiently to the antecedent, superabundant love and goodness of God, is—phenomenologically, psychologically speaking—still an uncertainty, no less than the pagan forms. Both are a most profound source of uneasiness, anxiety, and concern. And this concern, rooted in love for God, is, at least psychologically, the origin of ritually visible cultic worship. To God is due by right that we present to him the most precious, most beautiful and noble goods we possess, and that means primarily our sincere and candid love (Matt. 6:24, 22:37; Luke 11:23, 1 Cor. 10:21, 2 Cor. 6:14–16) and fraternal compassion or brotherly love (Matt. 5:7, 48; Luke 6:36, Eph. 5:1ff., Col 3:12–14). But it also means everything consecrated solely to the adoring worship of God: vessels, vestments, words, rites. Without them, very important elements would be lacking.

Let us attempt to summarize what has been said thus far, by reminding ourselves that our Catholic faith is at one with the general features of religiosity insofar as it strengthens and intensifies our sense of the sacred, our feeling for holiness (*sensus numinis*). Indeed, the divine liturgy of the Catholic Church is the most outstanding vehicle of such intensification that has ever been found in all of human history. The *sacrum* is a definite property or characteristic of the divine mystery which appears in man’s life in concentrated or condensed form through events. It is by no means limited to the area of liturgical worship, nor is it identical with certain rites—though the “sacred” is most readily experienced in this area. The truth is, that we are dealing here with a very complex phenomenon which cannot be described adequately in the very limited time at our disposal. Let us, therefore proceed, *nolens volens*, to the second part of our observations, the “remedy” after the “diagnosis.”

²One thinks in this context of D. von Hildebrand’s reference to *amare in Deo* in *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality* (New York, 1957), p. 177ff.

³See H. Reinhardt, *Verwandlung der Sinne: Fünf Wege zu Gott* (Stein am Rhein, 1992), p. 33ff., 47ff., 63ff, and passim.

III. Man's basic longing to discover meaning in the world and in his encounter with God is not stilled by reasoned thought alone, but also through myth and symbol as *mediators* of the transcendent to man's level. In the Christian dispensation, this need is met and satisfied in an important way through the divine liturgy of the *ecclesia orans*, the praying church, which embodies in its sacraments the eternal renewal of past events with their saving content of supernatural grace. Christian faith has replaced the mere mythic tales of ancient (and modern) paganism with the supernatural, with a personal God who creates the world and all its creatures so that he can establish with both a relationship based upon his transcendence and his personhood. The sacred symbols and myths of the Christian religion are a translation, so to speak, of the supernatural which is rendered present in the lives of Christians through the cult, through prayer, ritual, and a sense of the sacred community of believers. Here, the principle of *mediation* is involved.

IV.⁴ Rudolf Otto's analysis of the religious experience tends to confirm the fact that the "sacred" or the "numinous" (to use Otto's term) involves a living force, "an overpowering, absolute might of some kind," as we observe in the Bible and in the Semitic religions generally.⁵ (One thinks of the Hebrew *qâdos*, Greek *hagios*, Latin *sacer*, etc.) This numinous power

The Christian faith has replaced the mere mythic tales of ancient paganism with the supernatural.

originates in a source beyond the cult, a source which we call God. His divine reality is not made manifest to the senses in any direct and immediate way, for like Moses on Mount Sinai, we bare our feet, avert our eyes, and fall on our knees when the Almighty says, *Vacate, et videte quoniam ego sum Deus: Be still, and know that I am God* (Ps. 45:11).

Hence the need for *mediation*. Just as the Eastern Church refers to icons as "windows to God," so too the "sacred" mediates between the supernatural on the one hand, and our openness and receptivity on the other. (The thoughtful theologian speaks of sacramental dispositions.) The

⁴Still valuable today by way of introduction is R. Caillois, *L'homme du sacré* (Paris, 1950); J. Pieper, *Zustimmung zur Welt: Eine Theorie des Festes* (Munich, 1963); G. Heilfurth, *Fest und Feier: Wörterbuch der Soziologie* (Stuttgart, 1969), pp. 275–7 with further literature; J. J. Wunenberger, *Le Sacré* (Paris, 1981); J. Pieper, *Was heist "sacral"? Klärungsversuche* (Ostfildern, 1988); T. Molnar, *Twin Powers: Politics and the Sacred* (Grand Rapids, 1988); in spite of these and a few (very few, because of the unpopularity of the topic) other studies, we still await a deeper philosophico-theological treatment—not to mention a great comprehensive systematics—of the *Sacrum*; beginnings have been made, e.g., by H. Reinhardt, *Die Sprachebenen Denken und Glauben: Erörtert am Beispiel des Heiligen* (Bonn, 1973), pp. 70–82, 137–140; idem, "Das alltägliche Numinosum: Religionspsychologische Erwägungen zur lateinischen Kirchensprache," *Archiv für Religionspsychologie*, 16 (1983), 282–303; idem, *Das Heilige retten: Überlegungen zur Aktualität des hl. Norbert von Xanten* (Freising, 1984); idem, *In Gottes Dienst: Eine Annäherung an den Heiligen Wolfgang von Regensburg* (Abensberg, 1994), pp. 11–32; the foundation of any scientific continuation and completion of work in the general area of "the Holy/Sacred" will be to show with strict speculative consequence how, in all the various manifestations of the *sacrum* we find the dialectics of withdrawal and gifting (*mysterium tremendum/ fascinosum*) first discovered by Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, tr. J. W. Harvey (Oxford, 1970), pp. 8–40, esp. 13–24.

⁵Otto (note 4).

“sacred” has stability and permanence; it is able to elevate and inspire; to be transmitted and handed on, which is why “rite means rote.” The *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* which lies at the heart of the numinous and its “aweful majesty” (Otto) explains why we feel a sense of awe before sacred objects or in sacred places (though not in many a contemporary church building), why we experience identical sentiments during the performance of sacred rites in sacred time using gestures hallowed by their transcendent significance.

This is not mere empty emotionalism, nor an appeal to credulity. It corresponds to a reality more real than what we commonly call “reality.” The unembraceable Divinity is present through the Sacred, by means of which the Divinity transmits a force it does not employ in contact with humbler forms of life. We call it grace . . .⁶

To appreciate the realm of the “sacred” we need to be aware of a reality placed by God between humanity and himself, “not a filter, or a screen, or an obstruction, but as a mediator” (Molnar). In this basic sense, the “sacred” is an element in every religion, but the decisive difference between the Christian religion and all the other creeds and their cultic symbols is, at bottom, the dogma of the Incarnation. For us,

Christ (himself) is the *axis mundi*: the story of his birth is the one reference point of all other and later Christian stories . . . and the Cross replaces the intersection of cosmic forces. More than that, through the Incarnation Christ is now the only mediator between the divine and the human. . . . He is the truly sacred channel, present and mediating in every sacrament, in the Mass and its central elevation, the Eucharist. He is also present in artistic expressions, from roadside crucifixes to the pattern of cathedrals, from the retelling and re-enacting of the birth at Bethlehem to Dante’s grandiose composition; . . .⁷

. . . and from the unassuming melodic miracles of *cantus Gregorianus* to the monumental double fugue which crowns the *Gloria* of Anton Bruckner’s *E minor Mass*.

Of course, all this is widely disputed in theory and practice by a generation which believes it has experienced the verification of Feuerbach’s prediction that the turning point of history would be the moment when man would realize that his only God is man himself: *homo homini deus* . . .

Any attempt to explain the supernatural in terms of the natural, and to re-interpret the “sacred” in a scientific or socio-political perspective, runs the risk of destroying the extrarational, or, if you will, the “mythic” foundation of the “sacred,” which results in the degradation of the cult to lifeless routine and in the perception of formerly expressive symbols as meaningless. Titus Burckhardt put it thus:

In every collectivity unfaithful to its own traditional form, to the sacred framework of its life, there ensues a collapse, a mummification of the symbols it had received, and this process will be reflected in the psychic life of every individual.⁸

⁶Molnar (note 4), 7.

⁷Molnar, *ibid.*, 23.

⁸T. Burckhardt, “Cosmology and Modern Science,” in J. Needleman, ed., *the Sword of Gnosis* (Baltimore, 1974), p. 173.

Though he refers *ex professo* to cosmology and modern science, Burckhardt could well have written those words as a description of the malaise afflicting such wide areas of the *Ecclesia in mundo hujus temporis*

To summarize: the “sacred” or the numinous pertains to the sphere of *Mediation* between the ultimate reality—the Creator—and the world of men. And when God enjoins his people (Deut. 6:4–5) to love him with heart and soul and all their might, he is also telling us that all the faculties and senses of the composite being “man” are to be enlisted in the act of worship, in the cult.

And what characteristic notes or *qualities* will such a truly *sacred* liturgy possess? The legitimate liturgist will be permitted to suggest, by way of “therapy,” at least five.

The *first* is a *sacred language*. An atmosphere saturated with the Divine requires a language consecrated to God exclusively, or at least almost exclusively. In recent years the Eastern Church is considering whether or not they should return from Old Slavonic to ancient Greek

as liturgical language, because of its greater degree of sacrality. In the so-called Latin Church, there seems to be no serious thought given to a similar return to the sacral language of Latin. And that is all the more astonishing because the exclusive use of profane languages (and at a sub-literary, plebeian level at that!) has been made to prevail against the expressed will of Vatican II (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*

*The sacred pertains to the sphere of
Mediation between the ultimate reality
—the Creator—and the world of men.*

¶36, 1, 54) and in opposition to the oft-proclaimed will and command of the popes.⁹

Use of the sacral language Latin brings about for every even halfway attentive listener a “leap back into the primitive power of the Sacred”¹⁰ with its three distinguishing marks of fright and dismay, unapproachable grandeur, blessed mystery.¹¹ In the alternating experience of the *mysterium tremendum* and the *mysterium fascinosum*, the sacred language of Latin “holds up to the eyes of man a mirror which is unbreakable and simply conveys the truth.” “With this reflection man can never be completely identified, but it can call forth in man the desire and the strength to conform himself to it with each new beginning which involves a more profound feeling of timelessness. The Latin language of the church is sacred—indeed, numinously so—insofar as it grants us a foretaste, in images but yet clearly and directly perceptible to the senses, of God as the treasure of eternal wisdom and Lord of history.”¹²

⁹Official Vatican texts on the necessity of preserving liturgical Latin have been collected and published in *Vox Latina*, 26 (1990), 100–101, 215–225, 366–390.

¹⁰Reinhardt, *Die alltägliche Numinosum* (note 3), 284.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 286–9.I.

¹²*Ibid.*, 293; to this sensible foretaste there also belongs a fact which for more than twenty years now plays no part in the discussions of the liturgical thinkers: the artistic beauty of the organically developed Latin liturgy; on November 5, 1962 the bishop of Palmas in Brazil, Charles Saboia Bandeira de Mello, told the assembled fathers of

Of particular importance in the context of the contemporary world, completely unidimensional and safe as it appears to be, is the experience of the *mysterium tremendum*. To eliminate the *mysterium tremendum* from the Christian concept of God is not only to falsify that very concept itself, but also to deprive men of the non-relinquishable opportunity to make themselves temperate and “in fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12) to gain better control of themselves. The love of God, correctly understood, does not extinguish fear of the Lord, but rather continually transforms it into love, as the shyness of the lover toward the beloved (respect

for the mystery of the other person!) fearing a lack of actually demonstrated love, and as stimulus to more complete self-donation. Hence those who by appealing to a one-sided and ultimately non-Christian idea of the “dear, kind” God desire to extract the *mysterium tremendum* from the concept of God, actually rob men of the

“Latin should not disappear entirely from our services.”

truly human depth and profundity of their love for God. For the sake of our salvation, the true God wishes that we, filled with healthy fear, as it were grate against his unmeasurable majesty to a certain beneficial degree, and consequently take refuge ever more unreservedly in his arms. God our Father wishes that amidst the seeming security of the world we literally “lost our footing” and seek the true security of the heavenly Father. This involves a lifelong process of interior purification in order to grow to resemble God as closely as possible. And the sacral language of Latin is an outstanding means to that goal.

It was therefore no accident that Cardinal Mayer asserted in an interview he gave some years ago, that “We must admit that the sense of the Holy, the Sacred, the *Mysterium* has . . . diminished. . . . One could perhaps say that silence, too, has come off badly. And that now, from the beginning of Mass until the end, there is nothing but talk, talk, talk . . . What is more, Latin should not disappear entirely from our services.”¹³

In accord with the prescriptions of the church, we must all join in a call for an end to the *de facto* suppression of Latin as a sacred language, and for the celebration of regular parish Masses (not least on important feasts) in the Latin language of the church. The same holds true *a fortiori* for every pontifical liturgical celebration.

The *second* outstanding quality of a truly sacred worship is *sacred rites*. An atmosphere saturated with the Divine requires solemn, holy rites which for once forget the world and concentrate totally upon God. The sacred rites of the church are not mere ornamental flourishes in a

Vatican II that “the structure of the Mass, as it has developed organically, constitutes the greatest work of art, from a literary, liturgical, canonical, or juridical point of view. . . . It is perfect poetry! When one adds the elements of piety, it surpasses all works of art, even the greatest masterpieces of the Greeks. . . . This great Basilica of St. Peter does not even approach the high artistic level of our present rite.” See *Acta Synodalia S. Conc. Oecum. Vaticani II* (Città del Vaticano, 1970), I/2, 117–18, here 118.

¹³Thus in the *Münchener Merkur* (Sept. 18, 1988); see also *Sacred Music*, 121, no. 2 (1994), 11–20 for a more recent interview of similar import.

world of life filled completely by men. They are by no means short and empty formulae which serve as decorations, but rather windows and doors through which the Eternal—Heaven, true life, and the real meaning of all things—streams into our poor and narrow existence, by means of grandiose yet powerfully concentrated experiences. Sacred ceremonies enshrine that world of the Sacred which is in itself a powerful force and, by accomplishing themselves, so to speak, automatically they summon man to consent and self-sanctification after being touched by the Sacred—*sacrifera sacralitas!* Hence they must be celebrated in accordance with this, their meaning.

Correct celebration of the sacred ceremonies in the Church of God is marked by extreme reticence in the area of subjective “changes” by the celebrant. They must be performed exactly as prescribed by the rubrics, they are, in addition, to be carried out without any abbreviation or diminution of their external marks of distinction: the celebrant always completely vested in sacred garb; prelates, bishops, or cardinals assisting in choir always in full choir vesture including birettum; the faithful always with folded hands and kneeling for the blessings, the sacred

chants always sung complete with no cuts, and everything done with complete interior freedom and relaxation, entirely devoted to the sacred task by which we are borne up and supported. The number of participating faithful is quite irrelevant. The sacred ceremonies in which God’s claims upon us are expressed, and the many value-filled qualities of sacrality are directly experienced, must in any case be per-

Sacred ceremonies call for slow and deliberate celebration.

formed punctually and complete. Furthermore, their beauty and inner coherence may not be disturbed by the stares of the participating faithful waiting to see who of their number may now “do” what. Every liturgical service, whether performed by clerics or lay folk, must be carried out with such an interiorized attitude of service that one scarcely notices when someone else begins to perform his function: liturgy as flowing out from God, as streaming toward him! In no instance, however, will it do to have a mixed choir of lay singers located in the sanctuary in front of or behind the altar. The place for the lay choristers is in the rear of the church, as it were invisible, since watching them would already amount to disturbing the sacred rites.

Sacred ceremonies call for slow and deliberate celebration, which follows logically from their nature as something “other” and different, consecrated to God. Whereas profane activities can and in part should be performed swiftly, because they are relatively barren of significance and sometimes even lack all meaning, sacred ceremonies must be performed slowly. Some of them, for instance, the consecration of persons or things, must indeed be carried out with extreme deliberation, because they are so rich in meaning, and man needs a certain amount of time to absorb the depth and fullness of significance contained in them. That is the case today above all, since the tempo of life in general is increasing so rapidly. Consequently, men today need *even more time to free themselves* from the ordinary and the everyday, and to cross the threshold into the effective radius of the Eternal, that is, into fruitful participation in a sacred

ceremony. That is the reason why every ceremony must be performed slowly and meaningfully, and why the celebrant need have no fear of holy pathos—which *also* has its place!

Sacred rites demand seriousness in their celebration. Hence the participants should gaze at each other as little as possible—indeed, should rather keep their eyes closed whenever it is feasible. Here, a little *custodia oculorum* goes a long way.

In order to guarantee such a sacred performance of the ceremonies of our Holy Church, we must all join in a call for strict observance of the rubrics presently in force, and for interpretation of them in such wise as to render possible the maximum of ceremonial splendor.

Sacred rites demand seriousness in their celebration.

This means using dignified and imposing vestments, reliquaries on the altar, much incense and many candles, bells, Gregorian chant, processions, and all the other good Catholic means of representation in order to present the sacred ceremonies as truly powerful and complete in themselves, not needing the world

but elevating it, ennobling and illumining it. Even the mere suggestion of trivialization must be eliminated, and in cases of doubt one must always choose the *facultas amplior*.

Thirdly, there is need of *sacred texts*. An atmosphere saturated with the Divine requires holy words, sacred texts, *hieroi logoi*—which implies both sacred formulations and a sacred style of utterance or delivery. Without wishing to enter here the vexing area of translations and their qualities or lack thereof (e.g., CREDO, Adoramus), we may restrict ourselves in the present context to noting that today, in the wake of the liturgical reform according to the last council, there exists in many instances the possibility to choose from among various liturgical texts. Here, the celebrant should take care to choose in each case the texts which are less “ordinary” or “everyday colloquial,” more replete with content and a sense of mystery. Among the Eucharistic prayers, for instance, such a text is surely the First Eucharistic Prayer or Roman Canon.

Among the signs and symbols which communicate meaning, both number and quality are concentrated nowadays in the area of visuals. Television, videos, and the computer screen all flood the consciousness of the average person with such an overabundance of images, that most people today make mental association predominantly in terms of pictures and visual images. The spoken word is neglected more and more, indeed devalued. Oral discourse grows daily more slovenly, aphonous and unaccented, indistinctly pronounced. In the prosperous industrialized nations of the word orthography is threatening to become the Great Unknown. Indeed, today one can find the language of the streets in official government proclamations, and the general tempo of speech is increasing rapidly. In view of such not unimportant facts,¹⁴

¹⁴Cf. H. Reinhardt, *Der Begriff Sprache: Dialoge zur Metaphysik der Sprache*, Europäische Hochschulschriften, Ser. 20, Vol. 237 (Frankfurt, 1988), pp. 66ff; idem, “Sprachmetaphysik: Eine Einführung in den Legitimationsgrund von Philosophie und Psychologie,” *Archiv für Religionspsychologie*, 18 (1988), 154–95, esp. 192, n. 97.

the style of delivery in a sacred context must be extremely precise, clearly enunciated, deliberated enough to avoid disturbing echo or resonance while at the same time appropriate to the meaning of the text delivered with inner conviction. The sacred texts must be spoken with unconditional reverence for the word—the word in itself, in other words, *every* word.¹⁵ Enunciation of the holy words must communicate perceptible joy at successful turns of phrase, it must contain meaningful pauses and give appropriate emphasis whenever such stress is called for. In a word: delivery of the sacred texts must be supremely clear and pure.

In complete contradiction to the factually objective demands of such sacred texts stands the fact that today in a great number of liturgical actions performed in Catholic churches, widespread arbitrariness is the rule. How often are the sacred texts changed without the least scruple, omitted, transposed, replaced by profane texts! In view of such liturgical anarchy, we must all join in calling for penalties to be imposed upon those who depart in any way from the liturgical texts both with respect to the wording itself and to its pronunciation. The sacred

texts must once again become sacred in a way that can be experienced by everyone; in other words they must remain untouched by arbitrariness.

The sacred texts must once again become sacred; in other words they must remain untouched by arbitrariness.

The *fourth* main quality of a truly sacred worship is *sacred silence*, which is a particular requisite for an atmosphere saturated with the Divine. A genuinely sacral worship must proceed from, and sink back

into, a profound and adoring silence. Concretely, this means that fifteen minutes before the start of any liturgical celebration there are no more announcements or reminders, nothing more to be made ready, set in order or tried out—above all no music practice! The faithful already gathered in the church should open themselves to the intense atmosphere of the Sacred in deep silence, ready to receive what God says to them or gives to them in preparation for the public celebration of the great Mystery. Similarly, after the conclusion of every liturgical celebration there must be a quarter of absolute stillness—nothing cleared away or taken down or blown out, no disrespectful commentaries—nothing but thankful adoration. Those who must leave at once, will do so noiselessly and unnoticed—and the same applies to sacristans, servers, and organist. Preparation for Mass and subsequent clearing of the church and sanctuary must take place at a great temporal distance from the sacred function itself.

Keen awareness of the sacral element at Holy Mass involves the necessity of silently reciting the offertory prayers, and that after the consecration—instead of the indecent and unbearable vocal interruption of the most sacred of all mysteries—a sacred silence prevail, that at the commemorations of the living and the dead at least a full minute of complete silence ensue. This also applies to the period during and after Holy Communion. In general, we should recall that

¹⁵See H. Reinhardt, *Sprachtheorie als Ethos* (Munich, 1981), pp. 46, 98, 116; *Der Begriff Sprache* (note 14), pp. 11, 134, 278, etc.; “Sprachmetaphysik,” (note 14), 194.

the “low Mass,” at least in the form of the *Missa sine populo*, has by no means been done away with. There are surely a good many situations in which the priest can really only celebrate in silence. How beneficial it would be, were he to do so in fact!

And, of course, the incessant talking customary in today’s liturgy bespeaks a profound disregard for human psychology. After all, a person needs time as well as tranquility in order to participate fully in and to make his very own, prayers which touch him personally. Think of the way the divine office is so often recited—or rattled off.

On the basis of these facts, we must all join in calling for all bishops and other superiors, each in his respective area, to expand as widely as possible the extent of sacred silence.

The *fifth* and last quality of genuinely sacred worship to be considered here is that of *sacred spaces*. It is a truism that an atmosphere saturated with the divine is brought about in large measure by the concentrated, truly consecrated, sacral luster or “radiation” emitted by the sacred spaces of the church itself.

What is meant here, should be clear from what has already been said, and so we can restrict ourselves to two of the most basic points: the higher position of the altar of sacrifice, and the need for pews with kneelers and a communion railing. Even in the perspective of a currently popular *koinonia*-theology of fellowship or *communio*, everyone of the faithful has a right to *look up* towards Christ, the acting subject of all Christian liturgy—and also *up* to the priest who acts *in persona Christi*. Even when Christ appears as the Son of God, emptying himself out to the level of our brother and helper, still the Christian believer must always look up to him as to his Brother of higher standing, of greater wisdom and power and beauty. A fraternizing view of the relationship between Redeemer and redeemed, lacking distance and differentiation, would be in fact heretical. Hence the altar must be built on a distinctly higher level than the floor of the rest of the church: at least three steps higher, though seven would be more fitting. And on the other hand, the communion railing is necessary so that the faithful can express in a physical way their true relationship to the Eucharistic Lord: absolutely lower, receptive—but then of course also standing up again courageously *with Christ*. Since every believing Catholic has a right to express this attitude of humility, we must all join in calling for the permanent installation of at least one communion railing of stone in all Catholic churches.

Where because of particular local conditions the elevation of the altar is not possible, one should at least re-think the all too often senselessly close and hence in effect indecent or obsessive and aggressive location of the altar directly in front of the people. Should the opportunity arise, the altar might be moved farther away. But in any case, large tall candles and a high crucifix should be placed upon it. And is it really necessary to add that “celebration *versus Deum*” is by no means forbidden?

V. We have reached the end of our observations. It is time for a summation and an application to *music sacra*. Given the “scandal” of mediation,¹⁶ which forms the core of the incarnational principle, it is not difficult to understand why *musica sacra* may be regarded as a kind of “secondary cause” through which the believer, singing his prayer *ante conspectum Domini*, can

¹⁶C. de Koninck, *Le scandale de la médiation* (Paris, 1962), p. 267.



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reach the transcendent God in worship while opening himself to receive the supernatural riches which God in turn wishes to bestow upon him. It is the *sacred texts* of the divine liturgy which are given another dimension of effective expressiveness by the sonic vesture in which they are clothed. The apostolate of sacred music involves a share in God's redeeming action, and consequently is a type of mediation. But what sort of

music furnishes the appropriate form for

such supremely meaningful content? Plainly, a music which will permit man to feel that transcendent attraction or "pull" which elevates him to a high level, or at least to higher moments. In practice, the matter is settled as soon as we have given an honest reply to the one absolutely fundamental question: is the cult (and here more precisely, the divine liturgy) really a sacred action (*actio sacra*) in the strict sense, during the course of which God himself becomes present in Jesus Christ? Or is it simply a matter of an event in which nothing real actually occurs, nothing which would in principle surpass the merely human? Once this question has been answered in the spirit of true faith, then nothing more need be said.

The point is worth repeating: if Holy Mass is indeed a sacrifice, an *actio praeexcellenter sacra* (as the last council rightly termed it), then one of its necessary and integral parts will be a *musica* which perforce is also *sacra* (*Sacrosanctum concilium*, ¶112). But if something else is being "celebrated," for example the fraternal gathering of a given community or a merely commemorative meal, then a very different kind of *musica* will be required . . . perhaps a "polka Mass" or some "contemporary" music through which the congregation (and each individual in it) becomes the Voice of God.¹⁷

Let us not forget that it is from God that the cultic singer receives the words of prayer which he intones, and it is to God that the singer directs his prayerful song—but at the same time he passes this song on to others. Thus the cultic singer shares in the sacramental and liturgical action of Christ and the church as His interpreter, His herald, His spokesman, as the intermediary who through sacred song joined to sacred words interprets the signs of salvation by reflecting "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God (*tês doxês tou theou*) in the face of Jesus Christ . . ." (2 Cor. 4:6).

Therefore, let us "Say not the struggle availeth naught." The soul of all culture is and will remain the culture of the soul.¹⁸ And that way lies our hope, which is the last gift from Pandora's box. ❧

¹⁷T. Day, *Why Catholics Can't Sing: The Culture of Catholicism and the Triumph of Bad Taste* (New York, 1990), p. 65; R. Skeris, *Divini cultus studium, Musicae sacrae meletemata*, vol. 3 (Altötting, 1990), p. 236, 16.

¹⁸"Die Seele aller Kultur bleibt die Kultur der Seele," M. Cardinal von Faulhaber, *Rufende Stimmen in der Wüste der Gegenwart: gesammelte Reden, Predigten, Hirtenbriefe* (Frieburg in Breisgau, 1931), p. 62.

The Five Key Principles of Good Liturgical Music¹

by Kurt Poterack

Recently Ignatius Press published a book by Monsignor Peter J. Elliot entitled *Ceremonies of the Modern Roman Rite*. To the best of my knowledge this is the first major book in English on ceremonial in the Roman Rite since Father Adrian Fortescue's *The Ceremonies of the Roman Rite Described* (first published in 1917), almost certainly the first since Vatican II. According to Monsignor Elliot we "have had more than a quarter of a century in which to put into effect the liturgical reforms instituted by the Second Vatican Council. . . . [Since] the Roman rite has changed and developed . . . it is time to provide a practical guide to the ceremonies as the Church intends us to carry them out."²

What is interesting about Monsignor Elliot's book is that, unlike ceremonial manuals of the past, there is an effort to integrate ceremonial directions with liturgical, theological, and pastoral explanations. Although not stated, I believe one of the reasons for this tactic is that the whole notion of ritual and ceremonial has been cast in such a negative light by progressive liturgists since Vatican II that any ceremonial manual from the outset has to tackle this anti-ritualist bias.³ The main way in which Monsignor Elliot does this is by a statement and explanation of what he calls the "five key principles" of good ceremonial in the introduction to his book.

In reading the book I found the five key principles of good ceremonial to be so persuasive and so excellently stated that I thought they would apply equally well to liturgical music. In fact Monsignor Elliot himself points out that there should be a "close relationship" between music and ceremonial in the Roman Rite to the point that the two are "inseparable."⁴ The five key principles for good ceremonial (and liturgical music) are: the centrality of God, a noble simplicity, the continuity of our tradition, fidelity to the church, and pastoral liturgy.⁵

THE CENTRALITY OF GOD

The principle of the centrality of God to liturgical ceremonial and liturgical music should be obvious. As a matter of fact thirty-five years ago it would have seemed unnecessary to state this. Not anymore. In the years immediately following Vatican II some rather outrageous things went on liturgically and musically in our parishes. In my boyhood parish sometime in the early seventies I remember an organist playing the theme from the movie *Love Story* as a

¹*Sacred Music*, 122, no. 93 (Fall 1995), 21–26. Kurt Poterack was editor of *Sacred Music*, 1999–2005.

²Msgr. Peter J. Elliot, *Ceremonies of the Modern Roman Rite* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), p. 1, (no. 1).

³For an explanation of the emergence of this anti-ritualist bias among liturgists after Vatican II, see James Hitchcock, *The Recovery of the Sacred* (New York: Seabury, 1974).

⁴Elliot, *Ceremonies*, 6 (no. 18).

⁵*Ibid.*, 2 (no. 4).

communion meditation. At about the same time I remember Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind" being used at a school Mass. Such examples could be multiplied. At any rate this gives us the first thing that is needed in order for God to be central to liturgical music: a sacred text.

The texts for "Love Story" or "Blowin' in the Wind" are obviously secular. Thankfully the phenomenon of borrowing secular tunes for the use in church is not common anymore, but is this the only problem? Is God central to all or even most contemporary liturgical music? Almost from the beginning of the liturgical renewal there was a disturbing way in which God was not central to many of the texts of contemporary religious pieces.

In what Thomas Day calls "ego renewal" a fair amount of the music our congregations have sung since the late sixties has had an excessive use of the words "I," "me," and "we." to give just two examples: in "All That I Am" by Sebastian Temple the word "I" appears fifteen times on two printed pages, and "When I Sing" by Jack Miffleton has the words "I" and "me" twenty-one times on the one printed page it takes up.⁶ In a related phenomenon which Day calls the "voice of God" the congregation sings, often very casually, God's own words from Scripture using the first person singular, as if the congregation were God. An astounding feat of presumption if one thinks about it. Some examples are "Be Not Afraid (I go Before You Always)" by Bob Dufford, "I Am the Bread of Life" by Susanne Toolan and "Peace I Leave with You" by Gregory Norbet.⁷

Not only does the text have to be sacred but the music has to be sacred also. But what is sacred music? Is there something intrinsic to the music that makes it holy rather than profane, or is it just a matter of association? (This is an interesting question, and a very important one, the full discussion of which is beyond the scope of this article.)

Not only does the text have to be sacred but the music has to be sacred also.

In his motu proprio on sacred music, Pope Pius

X wrote that sacred music should possess in the highest degree three qualities: 1) goodness of form (or artistry), 2) sanctity (or holiness), and that these two together would spontaneously produce 3) universality.

In a sense there are only two qualities that need to be discussed since the third one (universality) is said to come spontaneously when the first two are present. Artistry is a quality that can involve subjective disagreements but it is much more objective than mere taste. Based on this quality alone (or the lack thereof) entire reams of contemporary religious music could be excluded from the category of sacred music. But what about the second quality, sanctity? How can music in and of itself be said to possess this quality? Pope Pius X seems to answer this when he says that "the more closely a composition for church approaches in its movement, inspiration,

⁶Thomas Day, *Why Catholics Can't Sing* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), p. 61.

⁷Ibid., 64-66.

and savor the Gregorian form, the more sacred and liturgical it becomes; and the more out of harmony it is with the supreme model, the less worthy it is of the temple.”⁸

Perhaps a very practical demonstration of the would be to play a recording of a Gregorian chant and a recording of “On Eagle Wings: for a group of people. Do not ask them which

“Noble simplicity” is one of the norms recommended during the Second Vatican Council for the revision of the liturgy.

they like better or which makes them feel better. Ask them which one sounds holy. If the people are honest I think that even the most ardent *Glory and Praise* devotees would have to admit that it is the Gregorian chant that sounds holy. The reason some people might prefer “On Eagles Wings” is because it stirs certain feelings

they like stirred, not because it reminds them of holiness. Gregorian chant possesses that holiness that all good sacred music should have. Whether this is so because holiness is somehow intrinsic to chant, because of chant’s long association with the sacred liturgy, or a mixture of both things, is a topic for another article.

NOBLE SIMPLICITY

“Noble simplicity” is one of the norms recommended during the Second Vatican Council for the revision of the liturgy.⁹ A violation of the principle of noble simplicity in the area of liturgical music would be what used to be described as “church concerts with a liturgical accompaniment at the high altar.” Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis* would be an example of this. Though a masterpiece, its great length and complexity would make it less than ideal for the liturgy.

Monsignor Elliot points out, however, that in post-conciliar times “noble simplicity is unfortunately often reduced to simplicity.”¹⁰ I would add further that simplicity in liturgy is often reduced to the level of the “simplistic.” This is especially the case with much contemporary liturgical music, lacking in nobility, such simplistic compositions merely tend to be tawdry and sentimental, lacking in originality and full of clichés.

However, as Monsignor Elliot said, “nobility means offering the best for God: noble actions, gestures, . . . [and music]. In this nobility we recognize that God is beautiful, that He should be adored with beauty and that our redeemed nature and our destiny are beatific.”¹¹ In

⁸Cf. Pope Pius X, *Motu proprio, Tra le sollecitudini*, ¶6.

⁹Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, ¶34. “The rites should be distinguished by a noble simplicity; they should be short, clear, and unencumbered by useless repetitions; they should be within the people’s powers of comprehension, and normally should not require much explanation.”

¹⁰Elliot, *Ceremonies*, 4 (no. 12).

¹¹*Ibid.*, 3–4 (no. 10).

my opinion, if we are truly to offer our musical best to God in the liturgy, there should be a slight modification in the direction the liturgical reform has taken.

Though far more supportive of the role of choirs than many liturgists, even the official Roman directives of recent years have tended to emphasize the importance of congregational singing much more than the importance of artistic liturgical music performed by choirs. It would be nice to see more official recognition of the importance of the choir. An entire theology could be worked up based on Monsignor Overath's observation that in the Sanctus and especially in its Eastern-Rite sister prayer, the Cherubikon,¹² the liturgical choir represents the heavenly choir of Cherubim, the Angels who are closest to God.¹³

CONTINUITY OF OUR TRADITION

The continuity of our tradition is one of the most neglected principles in contemporary liturgy and liturgical music. It is through tradition that our Catholic people have a sense of a connectedness with past generations and thus a sense of the communion of saints. It is also through the timeless sense conveyed by tradition that Catholics have had an intimation of the timelessness of God and the heavenly liturgy that they are truly participating in at the Mass.

The continuity of our tradition is one of the most neglected principles in contemporary liturgy and liturgical music.

According to Monsignor Elliot there is a "continuity between the preconciliar and postconciliar forms of the Roman Rite . . . However, in practice we have encountered many problems since the postconciliar reform began."¹⁴

I think that the reason for these problems is that many influential liturgists were affected by what Pope Pius XII referred to as an "excessive and unwise antiquarianism."¹⁵ This is at root a denial of the flow of history and the organic development of tradition. Many liturgical reformers were restless men who were attempting "to begin over again by returning to the community's ancient sources." However, this resulted "in the discovery that the sources themselves are not fully relevant" to the reformers. Once this is realized "the locus of the search then shifts to contemporary culture itself."¹⁶ This would explain an irony in the views of some

¹²"Let us, who mystically represent the Cherubim and sing the thrice holy hymn to the quickening Trinity, lay by at this time all earthly cares; that we may receive the King of Glory, invisibly attended by the angelic choirs. Alleluia."

¹³Johannes Overath, "The Meaning of Musica Sacra and its Nobility: Reflections on the Theology of Church Music," in *Crux et Cithara*, ed. Robert Skeris (Altötting: Alfred Coppenrath, 1983), pp. 73–84.

¹⁴Elliot, *Ceremonies*, 6 (no. 16).

¹⁵Cf. Pope Pius XII, Encyclical Letter, *Mediator Dei*, ¶82.

¹⁶Hitchcock, *Recovery*, 62.

of the progressive liturgists. On the one hand they seem to be extreme antiquarians favoring, among other things, the disuse of the Roman Canon (Eucharistic Prayer I) on the grounds that it was not used in the early church—scholars being able to trace it back with certitude only about 1400 (!) years. On the other hand they wholeheartedly support innovations such as female altar servers that never would have been tolerated in the early church and are based on very contemporary concerns (viz. feminism).

Sometimes these contradictory views come together on one issue as in the program I once saw for a graduation Mass at a Catholic college, which said that there would be liturgical dance “just like in the early church.” Apparently the writer’s assumption was that anything liturgically attractive to contemporary, “enlightened,” post-Vatican II minds must have been practiced in the early church—despite the lack of any supporting evidence. Thomas Day calls this the “dogma of the liturgical and musical parenthesis (i.e., liturgical and musical corruption), followed by the dawning golden age.”¹⁷

According to Monsignor Elliot, within “continuity there is always development, which is as subtle a process in the liturgy of the Church as it is in the deeper understanding of her doctrinal truths. It would be very instructive to apply the Venerable John Henry Cardinal Newman’s tests for authentic doctrinal development to some practices of worship which have emerged since the Second Vatican Council.”¹⁸ It would also be instructive to see if one could demonstrate that the elaborate Gregorian propers and Renaissance Masses, compositions that do not involve any congregational singing, are an example of legitimate liturgical development and not a corruption of any early “golden age” of participatory congregational music, as some liturgists would have it.

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FIDELITY TO THE CHURCH

According to Monsignor Elliot, “fidelity is best understood in terms of ‘communion,’ an awareness of the nature of the Church which is favored in our times.”¹⁹ Fidelity is “a concrete sign . . . of communion with our bishop and of our communion with Rome.”²⁰ On a recent trip to an African country Archbishop Foley noticed that in three separate churches the congregations sang the entire ordinary in Gregorian chant from memory. These Africans were expressing in a marvelous way not only the continuity of Catholic liturgical tradition but also a fidelity to the church—which as Vatican II said: “steps should be taken so that the faithful may

¹⁷Day, *Why Catholics Can’t Sing*, 99.

¹⁸Elliot, *Ceremonies*, 7 (no. 19).

¹⁹Ibid., 9 (no. 25).

²⁰Ibid.

also be able to say or to sing together in Latin those parts of the ordinary of the Mass which pertain to them.”²¹ Why cannot more American parishes express their communion with the pope in such a marvelous way?

If fidelity is a communion with the church in the present, tradition is a communion with the church in the past. Without prejudice to those who benefit from the provisions of *Ecclesia Dei* to celebrate according to the old rite, fidelity to the church would ordinarily indicate observance of current liturgical law established by competent ecclesiastical authority. For example, like it or not, church legislation relating to music since Vatican II has placed much emphasis on congregational participation. Someone who kept alive the church’s “treasury of sacred music”

“Pastoral liturgy” does not mean doing whatever you feel like with the excuse that it is what the people want.

but did nothing to encourage congregational singing would be respecting the “continuity of our liturgical tradition” but would not be exercising “fidelity to the church.”

We must remember that “the sacred liturgy is greater than ourselves. [Though it] . . . may be a human work, the result of centuries

of human invention and labor, . . . that work has been inspired by the Holy Spirit.”²² The same could be said about sacred music being the integral part of the liturgy that it is. Current church legislation respects both the *nova et vetera*, the new and the old in the area of liturgical music. A true fidelity to the church’s legislation which starts with a great respect for the church’s musical past—inspired by the Holy Spirit as it is—will result in good new music.

PASTORAL LITURGY

This brings us to the fifth and final principle of good ceremonial which is “pastoral liturgy.” Pastoral liturgy “can only be realized when it is formed by the preceding four principles: seeing liturgy as God-centered, seeking noble simplicity, maintaining the continuity of our tradition, and being faithful to the liturgies of the Church.”²³ “Pastoral liturgy” does not mean doing whatever you feel like with the excuse that it is what the people want.

Similarly a true “pastoral music” must 1) have God at its center in both text and tune (i.e., it must truly be sacred music), 2) it should have a noble simplicity about it, 3) it should respect the continuity of tradition (not seeking a dramatic break with the “treasury of sacred music”), and 4) it is faithful to the church’s legislation which seeks to respect the new and the old (*nova et vetera*). Unfortunately the term “pastoral music” all too often is merely used as “a subterfuge for poor musicianship.”²⁴

²¹Cf. *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 54.

²²Elliot, *Ceremonies*, 9 (no. 26).

²³*Ibid.*, 11 (no. 31).

²⁴M. Francis Manion, “Concert Masses: A Reply,” *Liturgy*, 80, vol. 19, no. 6 (August-September 1988), 10–11.

The issue of musicianship brings us to the question of creativity.²⁵ Is there a place for human creativity at all in worship? Since Christ effects the Eucharistic Sacrifice through the priest at Mass, the liturgy is truly the creative work of God, not man. Any expression of human creativity in the liturgy therefore should be clearly subordinated to God's creative act. This is why there has always been a bias in favor of traditional music in the liturgy. A liturgy which has nothing but a continual succession of newly composed textual settings puts too much emphasis on human creativity. A set of traditional chants composed long ago tends to sound almost as if it had come from God, the human composer long since forgotten.

In this regard the Roman Rite has been traditionally more liberal in comparison to most of the Eastern Rites. Alongside Gregorian chant there has been a five-hundred-year-long tra-

dition of newly composed settings of the ordinary. This balancing of tradition and creativity in the liturgy of the Roman Rite collapsed after Vatican II for several reasons. The first reason was an almost complete break with the musical tradition of the Roman Rite because of the demand for total vernacularization. The musical void that resulted was filled by many amateur song writers who wrote music

*There are great composers alive today;
what can be done to get them to write for
the liturgy?*

that had no connection with tradition but was based upon popular forms and was simplistic, not nobly simple. Secondly, Vatican II coincided with a time in Western culture (the 1960s) that was characterized by an antinomian spirit and the trickling down to the masses of the agnosticism that had been brewing among Western intellectuals for years. This would explain why Catholic liturgical music since that time has not been faithful to the church's legislation or centered on God.

One of the reasons for a fixed, traditional liturgy and liturgical music is precisely to give ordinary people *something* to offer to God and beyond that, something far more noble than most could concoct on their own. Giving people too much freedom to "do their own thing" in the liturgy has not resulted in good music (or liturgy), because, as Flannery O'Connor once observed, "freedom is of no use without taste." But what about continuing the great "treasury of sacred music"? There are great composers alive today as there were in the past; what can be done to get them to write for the liturgy?

In my opinion two things should be done. First, the heavy, almost exclusive emphasis on congregational singing must be modified. Congregational singing is fine and should be encouraged but there is only so much artistic challenge that a congregation can provide for a talented composer. If composers such as Palestrina, Mozart, or Bruckner were required to include the congregation in all of their liturgical compositions we simply would not have the

²⁵Monsignor Elliot deals with the issue of creativity in nos. 32–36.

“treasury of sacred music” that the council spoke of. Secondly, something has to be done about the quality of the vernacular translations. According to Monsignor Francis Schmitt, the current vernacular translations do not attract composers of merit because they lack the “poetic verbalization basic to song”: and that, with ICEL’s emphasis on a constant updating of texts, there is no finalization of texts.”²⁶

Monsignor Elliot ends the introduction to his book with a paean of praise to the “evangelizing power of noble Catholic worship”:

When Augustine was enraptured by the Christian chant in Milan, when the pagan princes of the Rus stood awestruck among the glorious Byzantine rites of Hagia Sophia, when Newman and countless others who followed his path were moved by the stately pace and mystery of the Mass, they were all changed, and with and through them the Church was changed. How much greater should be that evangelizing power of Catholic worship now that we have the more accessible liturgical forms of our times. How much more powerful can be the evangelizing attraction of these forms when our ceremonial presents those seeking God with the grace, mystery, and beauty of our living traditions.²⁷

He goes on to say that “now is the time to develop the splendor and glory contained in the living traditions of Catholic worship. Now is the time to bring forth treasures old and new.”²⁸ And this is true for liturgical music as well as liturgy, but we must first have true “reform of the liturgical reform” and it should be based on Monsignor Elliot’s five key principles: the centrality of God, a noble simplicity, the continuity of our tradition, fidelity to the church, and pastoral liturgy. ❧



Dr. Kurt Poterack

²⁵Monsignor Elliot deals with the issue of creativity in nos. 32–36.

²⁶Monsignor Francis Schmitt, *Church Music Transgressed* (New York: Seabury, 1977), p. 59.

²⁷Elliot, *Ceremonies*, 13 (no. 37).

²⁸*Ibid.*, 13–14 (no. 38).

To Whom Does the Liturgy Belong?¹

by Jeffrey Tucker

An email recently landed in my in-box from the International Commission on English in the Liturgy to a convent hoping to make a CD of chant to sell to raise money. The nuns were making in inquiry concerning permissions. ICEL of course informed the nuns that they must pay royalties to ICEL for all music sold insofar as it used their texts—which is not very surprising even if I find the practice of charging to record liturgical texts to be an offense against the Catholic moral sense.

What really alarmed me about this email was another claim: ICEL told the sisters that even to record Latin chants from the *Liber Usualis*, they had to get permission from the Holy See and the Vatican Press—even though the book in question was published neither by the Holy See nor the Vatican Press and, moreover, the book itself has been in the public domain for decades.

What this suggests is not only copyright imperialism but legal ambiguity at the heart of the raging controversy concerning the “intellectual property” of liturgical texts. All good sense suggests that these texts should have the same status they have had for nineteen hundred years, namely they are not owned by anyone in particular even as the church herself bears responsibility for validating their integrity—the same status in law today that the *Book of Common Prayer* has.

The more I’ve looked into this subject, the more the complicity of Catholic publishers becomes obvious, and in ways that similarly violate the moral sense and also stretch legal boundaries.

Consider the strange claims of the missalette publishers. Unlike a book you buy at Borders, every issue comes with a restriction. “The use of this publication is licensed only to current subscribers during the 2010 year.” What about those leftover from last year? You must “discard any remaining printed material covered by the license at the end of the designated time period shown on the license.”

What about saving up three years of missalettes and reusing them just to eliminate waste and saving parish money? Don’t even think about it. That’s not allowed. One of the publishers, OCP, tells us that it is illegal and violates “moral rights.”

And so, at the beginning of every liturgical year in Advent, there must be a bonfire of the missalettes. They must be destroyed, lest you be immoral, or so we are told. Actually what happens is that they are all collected and hurled into the garbage bin out back and taken off to the landfill.

Can you imagine? When I think of the work of the scribes of the first millennium and a half of Christianity, when every book was the result of many thousands of hours’ labor, and when a book itself was the greatest treasure of a monastery, and when I think of the time spent

¹*Sacred Music*, 137, no. 1 (Spring 2010), 68–9. Jeffrey Tucker is managing editor of *Sacred Music* since 2006.

even to publish a Gutenberg Psalter, it truly boggles the mind that parishes are now under a legal obligation to destroy the Word of God.

Now, when I first heard this (in fact, it was William Mahrt, president of the CMAA who first told me), I didn't believe it. Even after all that I've learned about the way these companies operate, I didn't believe that we were all under some kind of requirement to torch our missalettes at the end of year.

Just in case he was right and I was wrong, I decided to look it up. My own eyes popped out in astonishment. It is true, all true. It is not even the case that you can sing or read out of them but not record or photocopy. The way the license works, you may not read or sing out of them at all under any conditions. If you find an old missalette and start singing "Holy God, We Praise Thy Name," you are said to be violating someone's moral rights.

Yes, I know: this is a funhouse mirror room. It is utterly bizarre. As for moral rights, should we talk about the morality of the astonishing waste and destruction of perfectly decent printed matter here? This practice flies in the face of everything we know about normal business practice.

Think back to a year ago or so when Kindle arbitrarily deleted from all machines a book that people had purchased, and did so over some copyright struggle. Customers were furious. They inundated the company with complaints and outrage. This was a serious blow to Amazon's business model. The company clawed its way back with apologies and free stuff for everyone. It was a matter of corporate survival.

But we Catholics are just more passive. We are glad to be abused year after year. We think nothing of it. We are told to destroy the things we bought and we just going ahead and do it, without a thought. Then we buy again. Millions upon millions of tithe dollars are spent this way. Money down the drain for no good reason but to feed a publishing machinery that lives off copyright and re-purchases.

Something is very strange here. A timeless religion is now being marketed with mandatory planned obsolescence.

Do I have a better idea? Yes. The texts of the Mass should be part of the commons. The music of the Mass should be part of the commons. Newly composed material should not be affixed with a ticking time bomb. If you buy it, it is yours. Another radical idea: publishers should start serving the Catholic world rather than mandating vast waste and destruction.

These are changes that can be enacted very easily and quickly and with no ecclesiastical intervention. Publishers can do this themselves. Presumably, ICEL too can change its policies. Someday, we might look back and wonder in astonishment at how we put up with all of this in the past, and marvel at the amount of money paid for replacing perfectly good missalettes rather than given to musicians and architects and the poor.

In the meantime, we can be deeply grateful that the whole of the Gregorian repertoire is in the public domain, with no royalties owed or permissions required. For this reason, chant has a great advantage in the digital age. It is not only holy, beautiful, and universal; it is also free of the dictates and restrictions imposed by the nation-state. For this reason, the chant is being distributed in every form, from physical copies to iPhone apps. The irony is intense: the oldest music known is also the most suited to our technologically sophisticated times. &

Listening And Singing¹

by William Mahrt

Participation in the music of the liturgy involves two complementary processes: listening and singing. In recent years, the singing of the congregation has been taken for granted (sometimes even as mandatory, to the exclusion of music sung by the choir), but listening is often overlooked as an essential part of the role of music in the liturgy and even as an essential complement to singing itself. Pope John Paul II spoke of listening in an *ad limina* address to the Bishops of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and Alaska:

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. Worshippers 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.²

Thus, silence, stillness, and listening are essential to active participation in liturgy. How can this be possible? In listening, we hear the Word of God, the teaching of the church—the truth. But also in listening and watching, we hear music and see purposeful actions—the beautiful. In both, we seek to hear the voice of God, to sense his presence. We cannot do this without recollection. As Fr. Kirby tells us in his article below, music arises from silence and returns to silence. The silence of the external world can represent the silence of the soul, the attentive repose of recollection, when all our faculties have put away distraction and are prepared to respond sympathetically to what they see and hear.

Our present society is filled with sounds; practically everywhere something that passes for music pervades. If, however, we examine what is valuable about music, we may find that not much of that stuff around us fully meets the criteria. Music is to be listened to intently, not just as a background for doing other things, or even as a distraction from being confidently in God's presence. We should listen to music which presents to our mind a principle of order in motion which resonates with the orders internal to our own souls, such that we are brought into harmony with something larger than ourselves. This kind of listening involves a very active internal participation in the music we hear. When what we hear does not present some-

¹*Sacred Music*, 126, no. 2 (Summer 2009), 3–4. William Mahrt is president of the CMAA since 2005 and editor of *Sacred Music* since 2006.

²October 9, 1998, <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1998/october/>

thing compelling to inner participation, then it is not the highest kind of music; it may even be mere noise. For it to be compelling it has to touch upon something we already have and yet give something we do not already have; it must lift us up beyond where we are.

What is to be heard in music? Essentially, harmony—not just the simultaneous sounding of chords, but the harmonious motion of melodies, rhythms, and counterpoints as well. And when we hear these, they resonate within us, because we feel an affinity with the way they represent order and purpose. And that feeling of affinity helps us model our own sense of order and purpose. This amounts to our internalizing the music.

So the act of listening and hearing is something to which we contribute a very active process—responding in an active, harmonious way to the beauty which is intrinsic to the music. That beauty is an aspect of all reality, even and especially of God; that beauty embodies the integrity and persuasiveness of something whose inner essence is freely shown forth in it.

Listening is aided by memory—we have heard a piece before; as we hear it again, our memory of the piece is activated, we are reminded anew of its beauty, but we experience this as an activation of something that belongs to us. Along with this, the perception of its beauty activates something fundamental to our soul, and this experience is identified with the hearing of the piece.

In perceiving beauty we reach out to it, we attain it, we make it our own, and it ennobles us in the process, this is particularly true of the beauty of the liturgy. This is where the percep-

tion of both beauty and truth are integrated. The texts of the liturgy and its actions embody the highest truths available to us, and when they are sung to chants which are not just additions to these texts, but real expressions of their inner meaning and purpose, then the persuasiveness of the integration of beauty and truth is at its peak.

Singing is not possible without listening, for singing is a response to things heard.

In the liturgy, the pieces we hear of Gregorian chant unite us intimately with the liturgical action, since they themselves are united to their texts and the actions of which they are a part—they are more than accompaniment, they are an integral part of the action.

Singing is not possible without listening, for singing is a response to things heard. If the listening has involved that kind of participation in which beauty is interiorized, then singing can arise from an experience of beauty. Singing thus relies upon that store of recollection, that internalized harmony, joyfully returning it to its source. In the liturgy, the singing of the whole congregation most appropriately addresses God, the highest beauty, and thus it is most appropriate that it should proceed from that internalized harmony. It is returning back the fruits of the perception of beauty attained in listening.

Singing orders the thoughts and gives them a beautiful external form; this form is compelling enough, especially if it is truly beautiful, that it creates an external unity of the voices

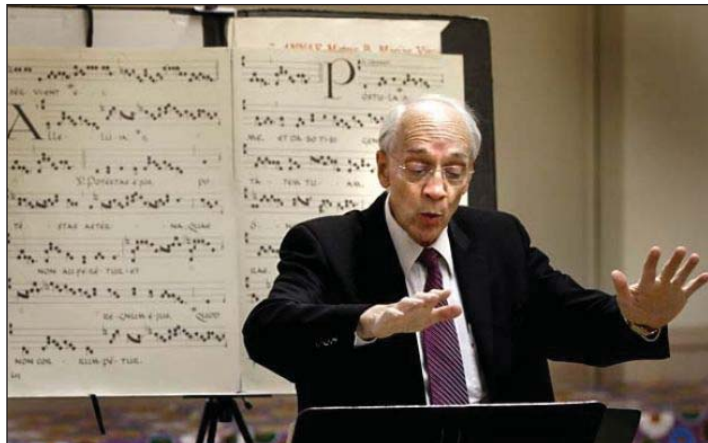
singing; moreover, the beauty of the external form is sufficiently persuasive actually to create an internal unity of minds, a concord of hearts. Reformers have often labored to create “community,” but nothing creates community as effectively as a group unselfconsciously dedicating itself to a common purpose, especially when that common purpose is one of the highest things a human person can do—to praise God. And when that common purpose is expressed in a beautiful form the dedication to the purpose is given that delight that is essential to beauty—“that which when seen pleases.” Thus, as the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* says,

Sacred music is to be considered the more holy in proportion as it is more closely connected with the liturgical action, whether it adds delight to prayer, fosters unity of minds, or confers greater solemnity upon the sacred rites.³

Just as the worshipper is ennobled by the process of the perception of beauty and the recollection it elicits, so the congregation can be ennobled by being drawn into the making of something beautiful in singing the chants of the Mass.

This leads to the conclusion that the traditional division between ordinary sung by the congregation and proper sung by the choir may provide the best opportunity for the deepest kind of participation, a participation in which action and recollection each most fruitfully plays its part. &

Singing orders the thoughts and gives them a beautiful external form.



Dr. William Mahrt

³Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, ¶112.

In Memoriam Paul Salamunovich



One of the CMAA's most distinguished members, Paul Salamunovich, passed away on April 3, 2014, of complications from the West Nile virus, at the age of 86. He was a protégé of Roger Wagner (one-time president of the CMAA) and a long-time member of Wagner's Los Angeles Master Chorale; he was assistant conductor to Wagner for twenty-four years and then director of the Chorale from 1991 to 2001. His stellar record of choral performances particularly included works of Morten Lauridsen and Maurice Duruflé, but also a wide range of choral masterworks, including works of Mozart, Britten, Kodály, Parry, Verdi, Holst, and Bach's B Minor Mass. He was known as an expert in Gregorian chant, and he conducted nearly a thousand festivals and workshops around the world.

He began to direct the choir at the church of St. Charles Borromeo, succeeding Roger Wagner in the position, in 1949, and continued to direct that choir at Sunday Mass for sixty years. He would regularly schedule his many professional conducting duties on the international and national levels around his church duties so that he could be in the choir loft at St. Charles every Sunday with rare exceptions. The St. Charles Choir sang for Pope John Paul II in private audience at the Vatican in 1985, for the official Mass of Greeting with the pope presiding in St. Vibiana's Cathedral in Los Angeles in 1987, and in St. Peter's Square on the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul with the pope presiding at High Mass in 1988. They hold the distinction of being the only American choir to be honored with this invitation.

Salamunovich is well-known for his approach to choral sound. Gregorian chant is a basis, providing a smoothness of line. Articulation and comprehension are also important, but the fundamental conception is that of a pyramid, founded upon the men's voices, producing a kinder gentler tone, avoiding the shrill, treble-dominated choral sound so often heard. He is said to have been able to achieve such results with diverse kinds of groups and in a short period of time.

He was a principal participant in colloquia of the CMAA held at Christendom College in the 1990s. He held academic positions at Mount St. Mary's College (18 years), Loyola Marymount University (28 years), and visiting positions at the University of Southern California, University of Western Australia in Perth, and the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music in Rome. He was the recipient of papal honors: he was named Knight Commander in the Order of St. Gregory in 1969, and in 2013 he received the "Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice," the highest papal award given to laity. He held honorary doctorates from Loyola Marymount University and the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota.



His rosary was held at St. Charles Borromeo on May 2, 2014, and his funeral, the next day at Blessed Sacrament Church in Hollywood, was attended by

over a thousand people. As was the custom with members of the St. Charles Choir who passed away, the choir came out of the choir loft and sat downstairs near the casket as family. The entire congregation was given music, and singers from all the various choirs he conducted sang the Mass, which was presided over by some fourteen priests, including the cardinal.

We give thanks for this illustrious career so dedicated to sacred music. *Requiem aeternam dona ei Domine, et lux perpetua luceat ei.* ❧

D

E fructu * ópe-rum tu- órum, Dómi-ne, sa-ti- ábi-

tur ter- ra: ut edúcas panem de terra, et vi- num læ-

tí- fi-cet cor hómi- nis: ut exhí- la- ret fá-ci- en-

in ó-le- o, et pa-nis cor hómi-nis confírmet.

v. 1ab, 1c-2a, 23, 24, 30, 31, 33, 34

1. Béne- dic, ánima me- a, Dómino. Dómi-ne De- us me-

us, magni-fi-cátus es ve-heménter! De fructu.

musicasacra.com

2. Ma- je- stá-tem et de-córem indu- ísti, amíctus lúmi-ne