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Ministry

What improvements for the exercise of ministries in the Ordinary Form of the Mass might be suggested by the hermeneutic of continuity between the two forms of the Roman rite?

by William Mahrt



The Second Vatican Council specified the norm as the sung Mass: “Liturgical worship is given a more noble form when the divine offices are celebrated solemnly in song, with the assistance of sacred ministers and the active participation of the people.”¹

Musicam Sacram added a slight but significant element to this declaration: “Liturgical worship is given a more noble form when it is celebrated in song, with the ministers of each degree fulfilling their ministry and the people participating in it.”²

Who are sacred ministers, what are these degrees, and what are their functions? For the fathers of the council, this describes the traditional Solemn High Mass. The ordering of the sacred ministers is hierarchical, mirroring the order of heaven. These are principally priest, deacon, and subdeacon,

with the assistance of lesser ministers, such as acolytes. The only element in the constitution that might not have been recognized is that the people take an active part, although since Pope St. Pius X, this has been importantly cultivated. These liturgical functions were represented by ordination to the corresponding rank. The seven traditional orders provided for a variety of liturgical functions, not all of them proper to the Solemn Mass: porter, lector, exorcist, acolyte, subdeacon, deacon, and priest. They were, however, mainly stages in ordination to the priesthood, and so for the liturgical functions they describe, the corresponding order was often not available, and the liturgical functions of deacon and subdeacon were usually exercised by priests; that of acolyte by laymen.

If a bishop celebrated the Mass, additional ministers would traditionally be present, assistant priest, additional deacons, additional acolytes, miter bearers, and so forth. Indeed, before the council, a bishop had only two options, a completely Low Mass or a Solemn High Mass with all

¹Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963), ¶113.

²Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction on Sacred Music, *Musicam Sacram* (1967), ¶5.

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the ministers mentioned. In the renewed celebration of the extraordinary form, this still seems to apply: when the bishop celebrates, it is with the maximum amount of ceremony.

When a priest was ordained, he still retained the order of subdeacon and deacon, and therefore he could serve those functions in a Solemn Mass. That the bishop is seen as possessing all the orders is expressed by his wearing the vestments of the subdeacon and deacon—dalmatic and tunicle—under his chasuble, though a bishop would not function as anything less than a bishop. If he were not to celebrate the Mass, he would “preside,” sit in the bishop’s chair and exercise a few presidential functions. While it may have been thought that the order of subdeacon is now extinct, it seems that it must be retained for the Solemn Mass in the extraordinary form, and subdeacons are now regularly being ordained for that form.

After the council, specifically on August 15, 1972, Pope Paul VI issued the *Motu Proprio Ministeria Quaedam*, in which the orders were reorganized to provide for the revised liturgy. Of the minor orders, only two were retained, acolyte and lector, and they were renamed ministries, with the explicit purpose of opening them to lay people. They are still, however, steps to the priesthood, and so there was an “institution” of these orders, but limited to men. Laypeople who exercise these functions may be blessed for them. Numerous duties are assigned to these ministries.

The lector is not only to read the scriptures, but his duties might also include directing the singing of the congregation, instructing the faithful in the worthy reception of the sacraments, and instructing others of the faithful in the office of

lector. No provision is made for his education; rather he is exhorted to undertake his own improvement in knowledge and love of scripture.

The acolyte is principally to assist the priest and deacon in the celebration of Mass, but also to distribute communion, expose the Blessed Sacrament (though not bless with it), and instruct others in the function of acolyte. As with the lector, no education is provided; he is to attend to his own improvement in his office.

One of the purposes of Pope Benedict in widening access to the extraordinary form was to hold up a mirror to the ordinary form to suggest ways in which the

Of the minor orders, only two were retained, acolyte and lector, and they were renamed ministries, with the explicit purpose of opening them to lay people.

sacrality of that form might be improved. With that in mind and in the spirit of the hermeneutic of continuity, it is possible to improve the exercise of the ministries, and to let the extraordinary form suggest ways that its sacrality might inform the ordinary form. Concerning the principal ministers at the Solemn Mass in the extraordinary

form, subdeacon, deacon, and priest, the three ministers formed a symmetry, deacon and subdeacon most often standing on either side of the priest or standing in an ascending row on the steps facing the altar. The GIRM encourages ministries to be shared with more than one person and suggests that there could be two deacons, one for the Gospel and one for the altar. This could be so arranged that the same symmetry as before could be maintained. There remains the problem that deacons are more often than not “transitional”; they will soon be ordained priest, so the availability of two deacons for the same Mass often may not be practical. Historically, priests would take the role of deacon or subdeacon, but that is no longer tolerated. Still, the arrangement of a concelebrated Mass with three concelebrants could represent the same symmetry. What would be lost, however, is that their functions would not be shown by their vestments, the three priests all wearing chasubles. An alternative could be what in the tradition was called a “straw subdeacon.” Anyone who had minor orders could wear the tunicle and exercise the office of subdeacon, with the exception of just a few tasks concerning the handling of the chalice. *Ministeria Quaedam* specifically provides that an acolyte or lector may be called subdeacon, and presumably wear the proper vestment. This would require only one deacon, and each minister would then wear the proper vestment; the traditional symmetry could thus be obtained.

The order of the lessons is another interesting case. In the traditional rite, there are two lessons, the first read by the subdeacon, the gospel by the deacon. There is an order of moving from the lesser to the greater, and the complementary chants move in an

order as well, the gradual as a melismatic chant, but the alleluia as a very melismatic chant with its melismatic jubilus creates a crescendo which prepares for the gospel.

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In the ordinary form, there are three lessons; the GIRM suggests that each of the first two lessons each be read by a different lector. The order from Old Testament to New Testament to Gospel is a progressive order, and now the gradual follows the Old Testament, the alleluia the New in a more progressive order than before. This order should be represented by vesture: the deacon proclaiming the Gospel wears the dalmatic; the acolyte, now called a subdeacon and wearing a tunicle, the New Testament, and the lector wearing an appropriate vesture as well begins the sequence.

This suggests a further development. The GIRM provides that all the ministers should wear appropriate vesture, the alb,³ and now lay people serving as acolytes, whether boys or girls wear it, this should

³General Instruction on the Roman Missal, ¶339.

apply to the lector as well. Further development: if the lessons are proclaimed by someone vested for a special liturgical function, should the lessons themselves be read liturgically? I mean that they ought to be sung. The distinction between the tone for each type of lesson create the same kind of differentiation as does the vesture and project the lessons as something sacred. Further development: might I suggest that the epistle and gospel side of the sanctuary be recovered? The move to a different place for the gospel emphasizes its special role. At the Mass where my choir sings, we sing the first two lessons on the south side of the sanctuary (that faces East), and then make a procession to the ambo on the North side for the gospel. One of the celebrants at our Mass remarked, when we decided to sing the first two lessons from the “epistle side,” that if you sing all of the lessons at the same ambo, then the gospel procession is weakened: it makes no sense to process to somewhere you have just been. I am aware that some say that reading all the lessons from the same ambo emphasizes the unity of the scripture. I have never seen any official prescription of this; I would be grateful for someone to show me, if there is. My suspicion is that this was to provide the other lectern a place for a song leader, but this can be accomplished from another position, without preempting the lectern for the first two lessons.

The progression of solemnity between the lessons can be reinforced by the roles of the readers: the reader can read the Old Testament, with the acolyte holding the book; then the epistle can be read by the “subdeacon” with the reader holding the book and the acolyte attending; then a procession can be made to the ambo or pulpit and the dea-

con can read the gospel, with the book held by the subdeacon and the reader and acolyte attending. This can also be accompanied by candles and incense to give the gospel a real priority: the congregation obliges by standing for the gospel.

There is another question, suggested by the limitations of the definitions from *Ministeria Quaedam*, which leave the instruction of lector and acolyte up to the individual. The result is that we hear gross mispronunciations and misconstruals of the sense of the scripture; the readers are often amateurs. It is a very mechanical point of view that anyone can read the scripture for the liturgy. What is worse, often large numbers of unprepared readers are recruited on the grounds that this is the way to increase the participation of the people in the liturgy. I would contend that the proper participation of the people in the liturgy of the word is attentively to hear the lessons; this means that they must be well read, by someone well prepared to do it; and by well-prepared I do not just mean coached in a few sessions, but rather the reading should be based upon a deep knowledge and understanding of the meaning of the scripture. I suggest that lectors and acolytes should be professionals well prepared for a high calling.

All of these are but suggestions of ways in which the functions of the sacred ministers can be improved to enhance the sacrality of the liturgy in the ordinary form. Those who exercise the extraordinary form should strive to celebrate the Solemn High Mass, especially for major feasts, and to do so with careful attention to all the ministers. ♦

Articles

Sacred Music Renewal Fifty Years after *Musicam Sacram*

The nobility of the sung liturgy and musical excellence called for by the church are important allies in our pastoral ministry and religious education programs.

by Jennifer Donelson



his past Sunday, March 5th, was the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *Musicam Sacram*, an instruction on music in the liturgy, issued with the approval and confirmation of Blessed Pope Paul VI by the Sacred Congregation of Rites, what we now know as the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.¹

The instruction's opening paragraphs illustrate its relationship to *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the Second Vatican Council. The process of implementing the reforms called for by Vatican II had already begun, and "problems regarding sacred music and its ministerial role" had arisen. In light of these problems and questions, *Musicam*

Sacram paragraph 2 states that the purpose of the document is to "expound more fully certain relevant principles of the Constitution on the Liturgy" in light of these questions and problems, noting that the document is a "continuation and complement" of another instruction from 1964, and that it is limited in scope, not drawing together all the "legislation on sacred music," but rather "establishing the principal norms which seem to be more necessary for our own day."²

So what does this document have to do with us today?

In his address from last week, Pope Francis drew out a number of ways in which this document speaks to our time and guides our understanding of liturgical

¹Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction on Sacred Music, *Musicam Sacram* (1967), ¶2.

²*Ibid.*, 3.

This address was given as a plenary lecture on March 10, 2017 as part of the "Gregorian Chant in Pastoral Ministry and Religious Education" conference held at St. Joseph's Seminary (Dunwoodie) in New York.

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music. He discussed the document's relationship to *Sacrosanctum Concilium* from a legislative perspective, the proper musical role of each person in the sacred liturgy, active and conscious participation, the mission of those involved in sacred music both to preserve the church's heritage of sacred music as well as to "inculturate" sacred music into the present age in light of musical trends and ecumenism, the problems encountered with quality of music in the process of translating the sacred liturgy into the vernacular, and the role of education in sacred music, especially for seminarians. He concluded by invoking on those present for a conference commemorating the anniversary the document the accompaniment of the Virgin Mary, who sang of the merciful holiness of God in the first Magnificat.

Taking the cue of our Holy Father, I would like to focus on two elements he highlighted in *Musicam Sacram* which seem to have particular significance for our gathering—first, the diversity of proper musical roles and nobility of the sung liturgy, and second, the call to pursue excellence which is embedded in the document and was reiterated by Pope Francis in his comments.

Let us begin with the first point by quoting the same paragraph as Pope Francis—paragraph 5, which quotes from paragraph 113 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*:

Liturgical worship is given a more noble form when it is celebrated in song, with the ministers of each degree fulfilling their ministry and the people participating in it.

Indeed, through this form, prayer is expressed in a more attractive way, the mystery of the liturgy, with its hierarchical

and community nature, is more openly shown, the unity of hearts is more profoundly achieved by the union of voices, minds are more easily raised to heavenly things by the beauty of the sacred rites, and the whole celebration more clearly prefigures that heavenly liturgy which is enacted in the holy city of Jerusalem.³

This symphony of musical roles, the priest, people, and choir fulfilling their duties, calls to mind St. Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians, chapter 12: "different kinds of gifts but the same Spirit . . . different forms of service but the same Lord . . . different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone." When each acts in accordance with his nature, his musical role in the sacred liturgy, there is a hierarchical harmony and order which is

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produced, one that is so pleasing so as to be a reflection, a prefigurement of the worship of God in heaven.

But we must ask ourselves why music makes the worship of God "more noble." Why sing at all? Is it that the spoken word is unfitting for the worship of God? By no means! Our faith is one founded on worship of the *Logos*, the Word of God made

³Ibid., ¶5.

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tradition.*

flesh who dwelt among us. The Word of God fully discloses the heart and being of the Father—to know the Word of God is to know the Father who sent him. Through the *Logos*, our minds can grasp the depths of reality, bearing as it does the splendor of truth in all things. In the words of the sacred liturgy lie the form of the sacrament of the Eucharist. The texts of the missal are at the heart and essence of what has been handed on to us through liturgical tradition and through the custodianship which the church exercises over the sacred liturgy. Without them, there is no sacred liturgy.

We may have experienced this to be true in our lives as well. You, as I, can likely recall the intimate encounter with God available in the context of a simple, recited Mass—one perhaps which had a spiritual calm and silence about it. While the situation in religious communities and seminaries may be different, the opportunity afforded to us by the Roman Rite of having a Mass without music makes it possible for parishes to have daily Masses, since singing all Masses all the time would outstrip the musical resources of most churches. Daily Mass, and the possibility of the daily reception of the Eucharist,

indeed have been shown to us through experience and the teaching of the church to be the source of great grace in the spiritual life for those who are able to attend Mass and receive Holy Communion on a daily basis.

Moreover, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* reminds us of the essential nature of the word:

The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art. The main reason for this pre-eminence is that, as sacred song united to the words, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy.⁴

It is through the text that sacred music gains its privileged place. And yet, we know that it is not because of the text alone that music is admitted into Divine worship. *Musicam Sacram*, echoing paragraph 112 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, gives a long list of reasons why music is fitting for the sacred liturgy which do not focus on the text:

prayer is expressed in a more attractive way, the mystery of the liturgy, with its hierarchical and community nature, is more openly shown, the unity of hearts is more profoundly achieved by the union of voices, minds are more easily raised to heavenly things by the beauty of the sacred rites . . .⁵

If we look to the writings of St. Augustine, we see that those items on this list of a more affective nature are why he, too, concluded that there was a place for music in

⁴*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, ¶112.

⁵*Musicam Sacram*, ¶5.

the sacred liturgy. He only reached this conclusion, however, after seeing a sort of tug-of-war between the words and music, between head and heart, between the flesh and the soul. In the tenth book of his *Confessions* we read:

But when I remember the tears that I shed on hearing the songs of the Church in the early days, soon after I had recovered my faith, and when I realize that nowadays it is not the singing that moves me but the meaning of the words when they are sung in a clear voice to the most appropriate tune, I again acknowledge the great value of this practice. So I waver between the danger that lies in gratifying the senses and the benefits which, as I know from experience, can accrue from singing. Without committing myself to an irrevocable opinion, I am inclined to approve of the custom of singing in church, in order that by indulging the ears weaker spirits may be inspired with feelings of devotion. Yet when I find the singing itself more moving than the truth which it conveys, I confess that this is a grievous sin, and at those times I would prefer not to hear the singer.⁶

We see this ability of music to move the heart to devotion echoed in Aquinas's question in the *Summa* about "whether God should be praised with song." In his answer to the objections, he says, "the praise of the voice is necessary in order to arouse man's devotion towards God. Wherefore what-

⁶St. Augustine, *Confessions*, X, 33, tr. R.S. Pine-Coffin (New York: Penguin Books, 1961) pp. 238–239.

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ever is useful in conducing to this result is becomingly adopted in the divine praises."⁷

In the fathers of the church we also see that music was admitted to the sacred liturgy because it was a reflection of the ordered nature of creation. Just as tones combine to create a melody or harmony with a distinct shape and hierarchy of pitches, so all of creation can be seen as a cosmic harmony, and so too virtuous interactions in the social order, or even the right ordering of the soul to God can be seen as a sort of spiritual harmony or music. In the context of the sacred liturgy, sacred music is a means by which the order of the worship of heaven manifests itself more clearly to the senses, notably the sense of hearing. This explains what I mean by the "splendor" or "glory" of the sung liturgy—that music which makes the reality of the mysteries of God more easily perceptible. In a sense, sacred music draws back the veil of this world from our ears to give us an aural glimpse of heaven.

And it is on this point that we return to that symphony of song in the sacred liturgy celebrated well, with each singing according to his role, reflecting the hierarchical nature of the church at worship. We

⁷St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II.2.q. 91.

see this principle at work in paragraph 40 of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal:

Great importance should therefore be attached to the use of singing in the celebration of the Mass, with due consideration for the culture of peoples and abilities of each liturgical assembly. Although it is not always necessary (e.g., in weekday Masses) to sing all the texts that are in principle meant to be sung, every care should be taken that singing by the ministers and the people not be absent in celebrations that occur on Sundays and on Holydays of Obligation.

However, in the choosing of the parts actually to be sung, preference is to be given to those that are of greater importance and especially to those which are to be sung by the Priest or the Deacon or a reader, with the people replying, or by the Priest and people together.

This is something that comes to the fore in the practical, pastoral advice offered by *Musicam Sacram*, especially in its outline in paragraphs 28 to 31 of what should be prioritized in the singing of the Mass. Paragraph 28 states:

For the sung Mass (*Missa cantata*), different degrees of participation are put forward here for reasons of pastoral usefulness, so that it may become easier to make the celebration of Mass more beautiful by singing, according to the capabilities of each congregation.

These degrees are so arranged that the first may be used even by itself, but the

second and third, wholly or partially, may never be used without the first. In this way the faithful will be continually led towards an ever greater participation in the singing.

We see in the first degree those parts of the Mass sung by the priest with the people responding, as well as the Sanctus, which forms a sort of acclamation of divine praise in response to the chanted preface. To the second degree belong the Mass ordinary and prayer of the faithful, and to the third, the propers of the Mass (entrance, Alleluia, etc.) and the readings. With this order, we see a prioritization of the singing of the priest and the people, with the choir playing its role primarily in the second degree and third degrees, whether as a representative of the voice of the people, or as a support for the singing of the congregation.

Why should it be prioritized this way? In my opinion, it is because the documents are responding to the call of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, paragraph 14, which states that “this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else.” In this schema, the singing of the priest is vital, calling all those present to join him in prayer, praising God; and the response of the people is equally vital: “Amen.” “And with your spirit.” “Holy, holy, holy. . .” Through singing with the body, the heart learns to praise and adore God, and each individual member of the faithful finds a means to participate interiorly and exteriorly in the worship of God. The choir’s job is to support this fundamental interaction, as well as at times to give voice, on behalf of the faithful, to those beautiful compositions of the sacred music treasury that form an integral part of

the sung liturgy and foster that interior participation so crucial to active and conscious participation, but which surpass a congregation's musical abilities.

From a practical standpoint, it is clear that *Musicam Sacram* is trying to outline a way in which the congregation can be called to participate through the external manifestation of song, even in situations in which the musical resources of the parish aren't sufficient to sing all of the Mass. In this way, there is a movement towards the sung Mass, away from the recited Mass, "especially on Sundays and feast days"⁸ for at least one of the Masses on those days. And we see in paragraph 36, exceptions are made to the singing of the three degrees outlined, making it clear that it is a helpful suggestion, but one which can be bent in favor of more singing. There can be the singing of the Mass Proper or Ordinary, even if the priest, for some reason, is not able to sing his parts of the Mass.

The trajectory towards a sung Mass outlined in *Musicam Sacram* endures, precisely because it is an excellent symbol of the worship of heaven, it is "more noble," and an experience which moves the soul in devotion towards the worship of God. This prioritization of a sung Mass on Sundays and feast days likewise provides a framework in which the parish recited Mass can make sense—there is an alternation between the essence of the Mass and the essence embodied and expressed in artistic splendor, between its beautiful, noble simplicity and its wondrous glory—a meaningful contrast which gives shape to liturgical time in the experience of the faithful.

So we see that *Musicam Sacram* is use-

⁸*Musicam Sacram*, ¶27.

ful today because principles like the one outlined here still seem useful in helping engage the minds, hearts, and voices of the congregation in their proper musical role.

And why does that have any bearing on the subject of our conference? Because we know that we cannot engage in pastoral ministry or religious education without first ourselves worshipping God. We cannot hand on what we have not received. We cannot love without loving the source of love before all else. We cannot invite others to participate in that which we have not ourselves participated in. We must participate in the intimate encounter with God made present to us in the sacred liturgy before we can invite others to know Jesus.

As Pope Francis reminds us, this participation through singing

is, therefore, first of all, to participate intensively in the Mystery of God, the "Theophany" that takes place in every Eucharistic celebration, in which the Lord makes himself present among his people, [who are] called to participate truly in the salvation achieved in Christ's death and resurrection. The active and conscious participation is, therefore, in being able to enter deeply into this mystery, in knowing how to contemplate, to adore and to receive, in perceiving the way, thanks in particular to the religious silence and the "musicality of language with which the Lord speaks to us."⁹

This experience of the nobility of sung worship can play a vital role in our spiritual

⁹Address of the Holy Father Francis to Participants at the International Meeting on Sacred Music (March 4, 2017), ¶5.

life, and fortify us for the tasks demanded by ministry. It also can play a crucial role in the vitality of the spiritual lives of all we meet in our ministries.

Moreover, if sacred music in the context of the sacred liturgy can move our hearts and fortify us, our ministries must recognize that we are calling others to this same encounter with the beautiful splendor of God, with the joy of taking one's proper role in the worshipping congregation, so that all may experience this foretaste of heaven, and be led deeper into the inner life of the most holy Trinity through the life of grace.

The second and final point I'd like to focus on is that of musical excellence. To phrase it this way, "musical excellence," may cause us to wonder why "excellence" is a goal to be pursued at all. Does God not love us just as we are? Of course he does, and this experience of God's love "just as we are" is fundamental to our knowledge of the unconditionality and overwhelming depths of God's love for us. But once we have this foundational experience, we can recall the old adage: "God loves us just the way we are, but he loves us too much to leave us that way." An authentic encounter with the love of God spurs us on to "put out into the deep" and be led through his love to the perfection and holiness offered through continual conversion in the life of grace.

We know that the pursuit of excellence is the pursuit of perfection, and we are called to "be perfect as [our] heavenly Father is perfect."¹⁰ Here, musical excellence is pursued not because it can be obtained, or because it builds us up in vanity, but because we desire to give our best, our most diligent, our most sincere efforts to God; we hone our skills

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so that we can offer him something for "his greater glory;"¹¹ we develop the "habit of art" so that we can readily render to God praise which befits his majesty, and which ennobles us and inspires others in the process.

Excellence is inextricably linked with beauty, and beauty is a reflection of the perfection of God. Therefore we pursue excellence so the music we create can be the most beautiful that it can be, and reflect God to its maximum capacity.

You will notice that all these descriptions are qualified: maximum, most, etc. This is because there is a diversity in level of talent, in educational opportunities, in interest. Whatever position one finds himself in with regards to these varied backgrounds, he can still pursue excellence, offering his best to God, even if it is not as beautiful as what his neighbor can offer. What matters here are the intention and the effort. Excellence at a rural parish most likely will not sound like excellence at an urban cathedral.

I often think of the interaction a choral director has with his choir in terms of

¹⁰Matt. 5:48.

¹¹*Ad majorem Dei gloriam*, motto of the Jesuits.

the guidance and care given by a mother or father. A parent is solicitous of his children—he constantly looks after them to see what they are doing, to see how they are progressing, to encourage them towards maturity. He corrects what he sees is wrong, but delights in even the smallest progress towards perfection and maturity, praising such progress and inviting towards greater perfection and musical independence and maturity.

This manner of building up people is at the heart of excellence in a sacred music program, no matter the level of talent. In the parlance of seminary formation, it is a pursuit of good human formation, so that, having acquired the habits required to make excellent music, the heart and soul might more easily rejoice in those things which are noble, true, beautiful, and good. This is because making good music requires discipline, focus, reflection, listening and acting, attentiveness to neighbor, fortitude when nervous. All of these things, in addition to helping us make good music, are virtues which help us to live the Christian life well.

Beyond this, though, we know that an objective sense of beauty and excellence comes to bear on the situation. There is a call to sing beautiful music beautifully, regardless of the talent level. No matter how beautiful Gregorian chant is, if it is sung badly, the objective beauty of it is deformed. The same is true for all music in the sacred liturgy, regardless of style or form—there is a certain objectivity of beauty in both the piece itself, as well as the manner of execution. For this reason, *Musicam Sacram* and *Sacrosanctum Concilium* called for simpler settings of music so that congregations, small choirs, and places of modest musical means could pursue musical excellence

*Having acquired the
habits required to make
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and soul might more
easily rejoice in those
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true, beautiful, and good.*

in the same manner of places with greater musical resources.¹²

As the Holy Father mentioned in his address,

Certainly, the encounter with modernity and the introduction of [vernacular] tongues into the Liturgy stirred up many problems: of musical languages, forms and genres. Sometimes a certain mediocrity, superficiality and banality have prevailed, to the detriment of the beauty and intensity of liturgical celebrations.¹³

Now quoting from the Radio Vaticana report:

The Pope encouraged the various actors in the field of liturgical music—from composers, conductors, musicians and

¹²Cf. *Musicam Sacram*, ¶¶21, 33, 50 and *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, ¶121.

¹³Pope Francis on Sacred Music, ¶8.

choristers, to liturgical animators—to do their best to contribute to the renewal of sacred music and liturgical chant, especially as far as the quality of sacred music is concerned.

Both *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and *Musicam Sacram* issued a call to composers to bring their talents to the service of the sacred liturgy, a call echoed by Pope St. John Paul II in his letter to artists and chirograph for the centenary of *Tra le Sollecitudini*. We can see what Pope Francis is speaking of in terms of the quality of sacred music—especially in the realm of vernacular-language compositions for the liturgy—and it must spur us on to further search for and compose works of beauty.

As a pianist, I think, for example, of the wonderful body of repertoire written by Russian and Eastern European composers during the twentieth century for children to play. (As a different genre entirely, of course—they're not intended for use in the liturgy!) There are melodies, harmonies, and textures which are amongst the most delightful in the entire repertoire, and yet there is a consciousness of the hand size of the child pianist, as well as his emotional and imaginative world. They are pieces which reflect and convey the particular culture in which they were created in a clear way, and fulfill their intended purpose with surpassing excellence. The most skilled of composers shone perhaps their brightest in creating little masterpieces within a greater restriction of means. In composing simpler works for the sacred liturgy, we must pursue excellence, especially in situations which call for a restriction of musical means. Is it not befitting for all people, regardless of their situation, to have words and music set

upon their lips which are truly noble and worthy of the worship of God? Both choirs and congregations deserve to sing beautiful music with excellent, orthodox texts.

We must also build structures which support the pursuit of musical excellence in terms of the performance of sacred music. We must give special attention to the formation of choirs, a topic which has been particularly vital to this conference, especially with regard to children. If we grow as teachers and think deeply about and build those structures which make excellence possible, we can invite the singers and congregations in our parishes and schools to achieve levels of excellence which might surprise us. In this regard, too, Gregorian chant is an important model: it is simple without being simplistic; its range fits even developing voices well, being neither too high nor too low; its rhythm and texture are conducive to the development of beautiful singing by voices of all ages. This is certainly a model which can carry into all cultures and times, including our own, as the treasury of the church's sacred music has shown us.

So in conclusion, let us follow the call of *Musicam Sacram*, of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, of the teachings given to us by the popes of the modern age including Pope Francis. Let us exercise our musical roles in the nobility of a sung liturgy, and let's pursue musical excellence for the "greater glory of God." Let us trust that the church's sacred music can serve as an ally in our ministries, helping us and others come more easily to know, love, and serve the beautiful face of Christ. ♦

A Pastoral Plan for Parochial Music

What are the key elements that will support the development of an excellent sacred music program in your parish?

by Rev. Jon Tveit



Our last two popes have spoken often of the importance of the *via pulchritudinis* in our church today, that is to say, the “way of beauty,” or beauty as a means of coming closer to the divine. In a general audience in 2011, Pope Benedict XVI said:

A work of art can open the eyes of the mind and of the heart, impelling us upward. However some artistic expressions are real highways to God, the supreme Beauty; indeed, they help us to grow in our relationship with him, in prayer. These are works that were born from faith and express faith. We can see an example of this when we visit a Gothic cathedral: we are enraptured by the vertical lines that soar skywards and uplift our gaze and our spirit, while at the same time we feel small yet long for fullness.¹

The beauty of the house of God serves to raise our hearts, bringing about the *sursum corda* to which we are called in the Mass. Pope Benedict takes as an example the conversion of Paul Claudel, who “had a tangible experience of God’s presence” during the chanting of the *Magnificat* at Christmas Vespers at Notre Dame in Paris and came to faith in God.²

Pope Francis has also emphasized the way of beauty in the Christian life. In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Holy Father urged that all catechesis ought to keep this *via pulchritudinis* in mind. He wrote,

Proclaiming Christ means showing that to believe in and to follow him is not only something right and true, but also something beautiful, capable of filling life with new splendour and profound joy,

¹Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience on Art and Prayer (August 31, 2011) <<https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/>

[audiences/2011/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20110831.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2011/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20110831.html).

²Ibid.

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even in the midst of difficulties. Every expression of true beauty can thus be acknowledged as a path leading to an encounter with the Lord Jesus.³

In our parish life, we therefore ought to keep in mind the importance of beauty and its role in leading people to an encounter with God. While marking the fiftieth anniversary of the Instruction on Music in the Liturgy, *MUSICAM SACRAM*, Pope Francis lamented that in recent years “sometimes a certain mediocrity, superficiality and banality have prevailed [in sacred music], to the detriment of the beauty and intensity of liturgical celebrations.”⁴ He thus called for a renewal of sacred music and liturgical chant.

In our time, it seems that few people can be argued into the faith using reason and logic, but beauty is something that remains captivating to people. We should not think of the beauty of sacred music merely as a means to an end. The implementation of beautiful sacred music in parishes is a good for its own sake. It is also relevant, however, to mention that beauty can be a way in for people, a way for them to come to faith. For this reason, beautiful liturgy is a *sine qua non* of the New Evangelization.

I can give personal testimony to the power of conversion that beautiful liturgy

possesses. I can say from my own history, that although raised in the church, I had never experientially encountered the Lord until I experienced beautiful sacred liturgy and sacred music. It was within this environment that I was able to come to faith in Christ, and ultimately to find my vocation. Beauty in sacred liturgy and sacred music is, therefore, not irrelevant to parish life. Much the opposite.

What is it, then, that the church has to say about the beauty of sacred music? In what is certainly a *locus classicus* for us, Pope St. Pius X writes in *Tra le sollecitudini* that sacred music, as part of the liturgy, participates in the liturgy’s twofold goal of the glorification of God and the “sanctification and edification of the faithful.” Sacred chant, which clothes “with suitable melody the liturgical text” has the

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of the beauty of sacred
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to an end.*

³Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), ¶167 <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost-exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html>.

⁴“Pope Francis Calls for Renewal of Sacred Music Tradition,” News.va, March 4, 2017, 2017) <<http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-francis-calls-for-renewal-of-sacred-music-tra>>.

aim of adding “greater efficacy to the text, in order that through it the faithful may be the more easily moved to devotion and better disposed for the reception of the fruits of grace belonging to the celebration of the most holy mysteries.”⁵ Liturgical music

⁵Pope Pius X, Motu Proprio, *Tra le sollecitudini* (1903), ¶1 <<https://adoremus.org/2007/12/31/Tra-le-Sollecitudini/>>.

*Gregorian chant must
be regarded as the
“supreme model.”*

must, therefore, be of a kind and quality that moves the hearts of the faithful and better disposes them to the reception of the grace of the Holy Sacrifice. The music of the liturgy thus needs to possess sanctity and goodness of form, which together result in the quality of universality. Pius X notes how sacred music must be holy in itself, and truly worthy of the name of art.⁶ Gregorian chant must be regarded as the “supreme model” for this, so that “the more closely a composition for church approaches in its movement, inspiration and savor the Gregorian form, the more sacred and liturgical it becomes; and the more out of harmony it is with that supreme model, the less worthy it is of the temple.”⁷

The fathers of the Second Vatican Council echoed these words of Pius X in their Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. The text of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* tells us that “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.”⁸ To this end, “the Church

⁶Ibid., ¶2.

⁷Ibid., ¶3.

⁸Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*

acknowledges Gregorian chant as specially suited to the Roman liturgy: therefore, other things being equal, it should be given pride of place in liturgical services. But other kinds of sacred music, especially polyphony, are by no means excluded from liturgical celebrations, so long as they accord with the spirit of the liturgical action.”⁹ The church’s beautiful liturgical music, as an integral part of the sacred liturgy, is “a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art,”¹⁰ and so “is to be preserved and fostered with great care. Choirs must be diligently promoted, especially in cathedral churches.”¹¹ The truth of these statements applies equally to parish music programs.

We see that the church desires for the faithful to have access to the church’s musical patrimony. The church’s treasury of chant and polyphony is something which, being an integral part of the liturgy, and having the potential for the conversion of hearts to God, ought not to be denied to our people. The question for us becomes, how do we take this patrimony of sacred chant and polyphony and bring it to life again in a typical parish? Does this not seem like a task that is beyond a parish choir of amateur singers? Based on my own experience of parish choirs, I can tell you that the answer to the latter question is a resounding no.

Let me describe three parish music programs that I have experienced. The first is a

(1963), ¶112 <http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html>.

⁹Ibid., ¶116.

¹⁰Ibid., ¶112.

¹¹Ibid., ¶114.

fairly typical choir you might find in almost any suburban American church. It has not had much success in implementing the church's musical vision. The second and third choirs, however, have had great success in bringing the church's musical treasury and patrimony to life in parish liturgy.

The first parish had a volunteer choir of mostly non-professionals, although there were some music and choir teachers. On a given Sunday, there were around fifteen singers. The music repertoire was something you might find anywhere in an American Catholic parish.

Parish 1 Repertoire:

- Settings of the ordinary:
 - Heritage Mass*, Owen Alstott
 - Mass of Creation*, Marty Haugen
- Hymns from OCP's *Today's Missal* Music Issue
- Occasional motets:
 - Ave verum corpus*, Mozart
 - modern four-part anthems, e.g. *Mary, Did You Know?*, Mark Lowry

You can see that this parish's music repertoire is mostly hymn-based. There was never any singing of the propers of Mass. The same settings of the ordinary were almost always used (*Heritage Mass* on most Sundays, *Mass of Creation* for feasts). Mozart's *Ave verum corpus* was sung about once a year, and the choir sang it very well. The overall lack of polyphony was, therefore, not a question of talent.

In the second parish, there was a musical repertoire with a great deal of polyphony. The choir was composed of

non-professional singers, many of whom had been together and singing this music for over a decade. In my time at this parish, there was little use of chant, although subsequently they have introduced chant propers. The choir had at most fifteen singers on a given Sunday.

Parish 2 Repertoire:

- Settings of the ordinary:
 - chant settings: VIII, XI, XVII, *pro defunctis*; Credo I, III, IV
 - polyphonic settings by Fogliano, des Prez, Haydn, Lotti, Machaut, Palestrina, Mozart, et al.
- little use of chant; Psalm-tone propers used mostly
- four-part hymns in English and Latin
- a wealth of polyphonic motets:
 - by Byrd, Palestrina, Victoria, Mozart, Allegri, Bach, Josquin, Gounod, Pitoni, Gluck, Handel, Beethoven, Bruckner, Cherubini, Lassus, et al.

As you can see, this choir made use of a large treasury of sacred polyphony, in both settings of the ordinary and motets.

The third parish music program is perhaps the most impressive of the three in some ways. It was a volunteer choir of non-professionals, many of whom had never sung in a choir before. The director was not a trained organist, and had little formal training in music, but was mostly self-taught in chant and polyphony. This schola was in existence only about six years by the time they had developed the repertoire that will be detailed. It was a choir of ten singers or fewer on a typical Sunday, some of whom were young children.

Parish 2 Repertoire:

- Settings of the ordinary:
 - chant settings: VIII, IX, XI, XVI, XVII, XVIII, *pro defunctis*; Credo I, III, IV
 - Missa Brevis*, Antonio Lotti
 - Mass for Four Voices*, William Byrd
- Gregorian chant propers
- four-part hymns in English and Latin
- many polyphonic motets:
 - by Byrd, Palestrina, Victoria, Mozart, et al.

The hard work of these singers bore fruit in what they were able to contribute to the sacred liturgy. They had success in chanting the propers, and with time and effort, they were even able to perform beautifully and successfully Byrd's *Mass for Four Voices*. Just look at what can be done, even with total beginners. Where there's a will, there's certainly a way!

What was it that determined the success of the second and third choirs in implementing the church's vision for sacred music, and the lack of success in the first? Was it the quality and knowledge of the musicians? No. Was it money? No. In the case of the second and third choirs, I believe the success was due mostly to the desire on the part of the pastor and music director to bring about the type of music program the church envisions. In the case of the second choir, the pastor's desire drove the direction of the music, and the director was willing to assist in bringing it about. In the case of the third choir, the director's desire determined the direction of the music, and the pastor was happy to allow it. In both cases there was some level of cooperation between

pastor and director. In the case of the first choir, which never tried to implement the church's musical vision, I do not think that the pastor was interested, and the director, although talented, was operating from a different vision of liturgical music than the one presented here.

We must be honest with ourselves that most parishes in this country today have a music program like the first parish mentioned, not like the other two. So we have our work cut out for us. But if the latter two examples show anything, it is what is really possible even in a typical parish choir, if there is (1) a director who knows what the church wants for liturgical music, and (2) a pastor who is willing to support the director.

In most parishes, this is something that will take time to accomplish. The parish priests have to be willing to help educate their parishioners about the changes that are going to take place in their parish music program. The priests and the director also have to be ready to face certain opposition that may come, and often does come when changes are made in a parish.

Given a situation in which the parish music director and the pastor are on the same page and willing to work together, here are some initial steps toward bringing into reality what the church wants for liturgical music. By the grace of God, there is today a wealth of resources out there to help a choir break free from its steady diet of the four-hymn sandwich. Many such resources are available free of charge on the website of the CMAA (musicasacra.com). Three potential areas for change would be in (1) the introduction of the propers; (2) the introduction of a plainchant or chant-

like ordinary; and (3) the introduction of polyphony.

Beginning to sing the propers, if they are not currently sung in a parish, is one of the most important steps in the renewal of a parish music program. Singing the propers is necessary if we desire to sing the Mass rather than merely to sing at Mass. The propers are the texts of the liturgy itself, which are what the Magisterium has asked to be sung (see the aforementioned texts of Pius X and Vatican II).

Rather than replacing hymns with propers right off the bat, it might be a good idea to introduce the introit, offertory, and/or communion antiphons alongside the usual hymns. This will help people to become used to hearing a different kind of music at those times. Once you judge it to be opportune, replace perhaps the offertory or communion hymn with a proper antiphon with verses. This can be done by the choir alone, or with the people joining in on the antiphon. Jumping immediately into Gregorian propers may not be feasible for your choir, nor may it be particularly pastoral. In the Anglophone world there are now many resources for chanted propers available, ones that are simpler than the Gregorian chants, and more like music that people are used to hearing. One can have recourse to Adam Bartlett's wonderful *Simple English Propers*, or Fr. Columba Kelly's *English Chant Propers*. For simpler Latin propers, a parish could make use of the *Graduale Simplex* published by the Vatican. All of these can be found online free of charge.

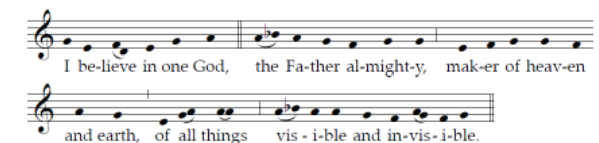
After the propers, the ordinary will likely need attention. Many of the ordinary settings currently used are far from the ideal of Gregorian chant. There are in English, however, many plainchant or chant-like set-

tings of the ordinary that can be introduced. One is given right in the Roman Missal, namely the simple chant setting from the Requiem Mass for the Sanctus and Agnus Dei, with some options for a Kyrie, and an adapted Gloria XV:¹²



*Excerpt from the Roman Missal.*¹³

Part of chanting the ordinary could be to introduce the chanting of the Creed, which is foreseen by the church, but rarely done in most parishes. English settings of the Creed, too, can be found in the Roman Missal. Of these, Credo I is rendered especially nicely into English:



After these changes regarding the proper and ordinary, a choir can move on to learn simpler polyphonic motets, or polyphonic settings of the day's propers. At the

¹²Others can be found at <<http://musicasacra.com/music/english-chant-ordinary/>>

¹³The English translation and chants of The Roman Missal © 2010, International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation. All rights reserved. These and more chants can be found at ICEL's website for music in the liturgy <<http://www.icelweb.org/musicfolder/openmusic.php>>.

offertory and during or after the distribution of communion, many congregations are already used to participating by listening, rather than singing a hymn. Gradually and over time, a choir might build up to more complex chant and polyphony, and ultimately even the Gregorian propers or polyphonic settings of the ordinary.

There may, of course, be opposition to your work to improve your parish's music. But, as I said before, beauty attracts. Our people, for the most part, know that the situation with the music in our parishes is pretty bad. Priests often ask why the people are reticent to sing along. The first reason might be because of the music that is being chosen. Many people are happy when they are presented with improved musical quality and selection.

The sacred liturgy itself is beautiful and grace-filled and therefore attractive; the more we try to make it attract people, to make it relevant, the less we succeed. In fact, people seem to want liturgy that is a bit "irrelevant." Not totally irrelevant to their lives, of course, but different from what they experience outside their churches. Beauty is a little bit irrelevant in that way. The sublime is a little bit irrelevant to the secular.

While beauty is attractive, not everyone is going to respond to it immediately. There may be a need for aesthetic education. There are some who are instantly drawn to beautiful sacred music. But just as some will not necessarily recognize the beauty of Caravaggio, some without much experience of sacred music cannot appreciate Palestrina at first hearing. If we never present them with truly beautiful sacred music, though, they will not ever come to appreciate it.

Some good news in all of this for a pastor is that having beautiful liturgical music

does not have to cost very much. We should not be cheap or stingy with our music programs, and we have a duty to pay professional musicians what they deserve. A great portion of the church's musical patrimony, however, is in the public domain. We can break free of our slavery to disposable missalettes—along with whatever music for-profit publishers determine to be appropriate—and save money in the process. Chances are that your parish is already employing a music director and perhaps an organist as well. Having a director with knowledge of the church's musical patrimony and the will to implement it is a necessity. Much of what I have described can be done without hiring additional professionals. You can do this for free with amateurs (although if there is a budget for professionals, it does not hurt). In my experience, there are many benefits to working without professional singers. Non-professionals often have a clean slate with regard to their style of performance of sacred music.

I hope that this has given some food for thought, as well as some encouragement that implementing the church's vision for liturgical music is really possible, even for an average parish choir. No matter what the level of experience of your singers, the *via pulchritudinis* is within the reach of your parish, if your pastor and music director are willing to pursue it. ❖

Is Beauty Subjective? Identifying Criteria for Beauty and Recognizing Them in Chant

The Catholic understanding of beauty provides an objective anchor for the aesthetic experience.

by Rev. David M. Friel



Following the Hudson River roughly two-hundred miles north of New York City brings one to Lake George, a place that is lovely in every season. This lake has been named for King George II of England since 1755. More than a century earlier, though, the lake had been given a different name by St. Isaac Jogues, who traversed this territory in the course of his missionary work among the Mohawk and Huron and Iroquois peoples of upstate New York. It was on the vigil of the feast of Corpus Christi in the year 1646 that Father Jogues came to the lake, accompanied by several companions and guides. He was deeply moved by the natural loveliness of the place, and the stunning beauty inspired him to call this body of water *Lac du Saint Sacrement*, “Lake of the Blessed Sacrament.” Why that particular name? Because, he said, it was the most

beautiful thing he had ever seen.¹

Mankind needs beauty. Life without beauty has been tried and found wanting. On account of some misguided efforts in the twentieth century, skylines throughout the world are filled with buildings that are not beautiful; air waves are filled with music that is not beautiful; art galleries are filled with paintings that are not beautiful. But how can such claims be made? Perhaps the buildings and music and paintings that one person feels are not beautiful may be perceived as beautiful by another person. Is it even possible to say definitively whether something is beautiful or not beautiful?

The popular claim is often made that

¹Thomas J. Campbell, *Isaac Jogues, S.J.: The Discoverer of Lake George* (New York: America Press, 1911), pp. 48–49.

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“beauty is in the eye of the beholder.”² As Shakespeare expresses it, “Beauty is bought by judgement of the eye.”³ The classification of beauty as a matter of subjectivity is not unique to modern times, but this stance has achieved its widest acceptance in our era. The Age of Enlightenment and the period of Romanticism, despite their fundamental divergence on numerous matters, are united by their common stress on the primacy of the individual. The societal influence of this individualism remains strong today. Just as, in terms of morality, the doctrine of modern individualism insists that what is true for you is not necessarily true for me, so, in the realm of aesthetics, it teaches us that what seems beautiful to you may not be beautiful for me.

So, is beauty objective or subjective? The ensuing analysis attempts to respond to this question both philosophically and practically. First, the philosophical underpinnings of this debate will be considered before identifying and exploring some of the discernible criteria for beauty. Thereafter, these criteria will be applied practically by demonstrating how they are manifest especially in Gregorian chant.

Subjective vs. Objective

In addressing the question of objectivity or subjectivity, one must begin by asking where beauty resides. Does it rest in beautiful things themselves, or does it rest within the percipient subject (i.e., the one observing)?

²Although the sentiment is surely ancient, this most common form of the expression seems to originate in Margaret Wolfe Hungerford, *Molly Bawn* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1878).

³William Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, Act II, Scene I, line 15.

In addressing the question of objectivity or subjectivity, one must begin by asking where beauty resides.

One way of answering this question is to say that the beauty a person perceives stems from his or her imagination. Adopting this perspective, however, requires one to concede that beauty is not real, but illusory. If, moreover, the beauty of a thing arises from the imagination, then one cannot admit of any difference between actually seeing a beautiful object and simply imagining it. Experience, however, argues contrariwise, as likely all people could agree that visiting the Grand Canyon is better than imagining it in the mind's eye and going to hear an orchestra play a symphony is better than simply imagining the music. Thus, to hold that beauty arises from the imagination is not a compelling position.⁴

Shakespeare is far from alone in placing beauty in the eye of the observer, rather than in the thing observed. The English biologist, Charles Darwin, for example, claims that “the sense of beauty obviously depends on the nature of the mind, irrespective of any real quality in the admired object.”⁵ The Dutch, rationalist philosopher, Baruch Spi-

⁴Robert Augros, “Beauty Visible and Divine,” *The Aquinas Review* (2004): 99–100.

⁵Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (New York: Mentor, 1963), p. 185.

*Pleasure, or joy, arises
from the vision of that
which is beautiful.*

noza, shares the same perspective, writing that “beauty . . . is less a quality of the object studied than the effect arising in the man studying that object.”⁶ Perhaps the position is most forcefully enunciated by the Scottish, skeptic philosopher, David Hume, who contends that “beauty in things exists merely in the mind which contemplates them.”⁷

Quite different, however, is the approach of Aristotle, who teaches that “things manifest goodness and beauty both in their being and in their coming to be.”⁸ It is not surprising that the position taken by Aristotle would be shared by St. Thomas Aquinas, who treats the notion of beauty in several places, albeit never exhaustively. Inasmuch as he wrote no work dedicated to the problem of beauty, Aquinas may seem an unlikely figure on whom to rely for a systematic treatment of aesthetic beauty. It would be unfair, however, to conclude that the field of aesthetics was not an interest for Thomas. The almost parenthetical treatment it receives in

⁶Baruch Spinoza, Letter to H. Boxel, September 1674, quoted in Wladyslaw Tartarkiewicz, *History of Aesthetics*, ed. D. Petsch, vol. 3 (Paris: Mouton, 1974), p. 380.

⁷David Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, I.xxiii.8 (Edinburgh: Bell & Bradfute, 1800).

⁸Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I.iii. English translation from *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 695.

his writings demonstrates, rather, how natural and effortless it was for Thomas (and many medieval figures) to frame the world in terms of beauty. The sheer obviousness of beauty, one could say, did not demand philosophical argumentation in the same way as, for example, the problem of the one and the many. For this reason, the texts Aquinas offers on beauty, though few, prove invaluable.⁹

In the first part of his *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas offers a definition for beauty. The beautiful, he contends, is that which, on being seen, gives pleasure.¹⁰ Remarkable for its concision, this definition captures the essence of beauty by placing it in the realm of the intuitive and the intelligible. Beauty can be described as intuitive because it becomes known directly through sight. Beauty can be described as intelligible because it is apprehended through the senses. The mind, in other words, is not needed to extract intelligibility from someplace hidden within the thing. Pleasure, or joy, arises directly (i.e., *immediately*) from the vision of that which is beautiful.¹¹ Thus, Thomas would reject the claim of Darwin and Spinoza and Hume that beauty exists only in the mind of the one perceiving it. Instead, Thomas would

⁹Umberto Eco, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, tr. Hugh Bredin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 115–116.

¹⁰“*Pulchra enim dicuntur quae visa placent.*” Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q. 5, art. 4, ad 1, tr. Blackfriars (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964). This definition is typically formulated thusly: *id quod visum placet*. All subsequent references are from this edition.

¹¹Jacques Maritain, *Art & Scholasticism, with Other Essays* (New York: Scribner, 1930; reprint, Tacoma, Wash.: Cluny Media, 2016), pp. 24–25, 27.

argue that beauty is an attribute inherent to the thing, itself.

The definition of beauty given by Thomas makes clear its intuitive and intelligible character. Aquinas further makes the case that beauty is primarily intellectual, related to the cognitive faculty.¹² Said another way, beauty is the object of human intelligence.¹³ This claim is essential to understanding the objectivity of beauty for two reasons. First, this perspective is challenged by many modern philosophers, perhaps most notably Immanuel Kant, whose epistemology is marked by a profound subjectivism. In his *Critique of Judgment*,¹⁴ Kant proposes a new way of thinking about aesthetic judgment. In his system, beauty is understood to be perceived primarily through emotion, rather than through the intellect. By reducing the apprehension of beauty to a mere judgment of taste rooted in emotion, Kant transforms the beautiful from a transcendental property with universal validity into a subjective category.¹⁵

That beauty relates to the cognitive faculty is important, furthermore, because it

¹²“Pulchrum autem respicit vim cognitivam.” Aquinas, *Summa*, Ia, q. 5, art. 4, *ad* 1.

¹³Maritain, *Art & Scholasticism*, 24. Maritain states further: “Beauty is essentially a certain excellence of perfection in the proportion of things to the mind,” 25.

¹⁴Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2001). For English translation, see Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, tr. James Creed Meredith, rev. Nicholas Walker, Oxford World’s Classics (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). See also Mehmet Atalay, “Kant’s Aesthetic Theory: Subjectivity vs. Universal Validity,” *Percipi*, 1 (2007): 44–52.

¹⁵Maritain, *Art & Scholasticism*, 170–176.

serves to distinguish beauty from goodness. For Aquinas, beauty and goodness are fundamentally identical.¹⁶ The only distinction to be made between these two qualities is one of logic (*ratione*). Whereas beauty is properly the object of one’s intellect, goodness is the proper object of one’s appetites, or desires. This profound connection between goodness and beauty prompted Pope St. John Paul II to characterize beauty as “the visible form of the good.”¹⁷ This observation corresponds well to the Thomistic definition of beauty by emphasizing the direct apprehension of beauty by sight and by acknowledging the deep relationship between goodness and beauty as transcendental properties.

The twentieth-century philosopher, theologian, and convert to Catholicism, Dietrich von Hildebrand, addresses the question of the objectivity of beauty in terms of “value.” In his thought, value is understood to mean that which is intrinsically important, or important-in-itself.¹⁸ For von Hildebrand, beauty is a value in this sense, and the Kantian theory that beauty is rooted in the emotions is dismissed as a distortion of reality.¹⁹ Beauty, for von Hildebrand, is not a “personal reality,” but a value that “presents itself unambiguously as

¹⁶“Ad primum ergo dicendum quod pulchrum et bonum in subjecto quidem sunt idem.” Aquinas, *Summa*, Ia, q. 5, art. 4, *ad* 1.

¹⁷Pope St. John Paul II, “Letter to Artists,” April 4, 1999, section 3 <https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1999/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_23041999_artists.html>.

¹⁸Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Ethics* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1972), pp. 34–63.

¹⁹Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, ed. John F. Crosby, tr. Brian McNeil (Steubenville, Ohio: Hildebrand Project, 2016), p. 23.

a property of an object.”²⁰ Von Hildebrand also distinguishes subjectivism from relativism. Subjectivism, which he attributes largely to the influence of Spinoza, denies that beauty and other values are truly properties of objects, whereas relativism goes further by claiming that values possess no objective validity. Von Hildebrand supports his argument with examples, such as witnessing an act of forgiveness and experiencing grief, in order to demonstrate how a thing can be subjective insofar as it is lived in a personal manner and yet retain a fundamental objectivity insofar as it does not exist for the sake of the subject.²¹ Within this framework, beauty is not the product of one’s personal response to a thing. One’s “value-response” is the personal, subjective reality, while the inherent value of the thing remains objectively distinct.²²

So, is beauty objective or subjective? The foregoing philosophic exploration supports the contention that beauty has a fundamentally objective basis. However intuitive beauty may be, it remains primarily intellectual. Understood properly in this way, beauty is objective and can be judged by reason, such that the mind can even discern the criteria

of beauty. It remains true, of course, that one’s *perception* of beauty is subjective; this element of subjectivity might well be called “taste.” One’s tastes, however, cannot disregard the objective criteria of beauty without devolving into the irrational. For this reason, it is important that artists form others—indeed, that they form themselves!—to be able to recognize the qualities of authentic beauty. The ability to perceive the beautiful and to recognize it as such is, in part,

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²⁰Von Hildebrand, *Aesthetics*, 25.

²¹Von Hildebrand, *Aesthetics*, 35. See also 49–50: “Beauty does not derive its importance, that which raises it above the indifferent, from what it can achieve *for me*, for my existence, my happiness. Unlike something like health, or the minimum amount of money required to sustain our life, or safety from persecution, beauty is not in the first place an objective good *for me*. Unlike these, its importance is not an importance ‘for.’ It is not constituted by this character of benevolence, of being a gift for me.”

²²Von Hildebrand, *Aesthetics*, 39.

a natural ability of the human person. This capacity can be cultivated, though, through education and training. The varied ability of persons to appreciate beauty often accounts for the situation in which a particular thing appears beautiful to some people but not to others. The richer one’s formation in beauty, the more prepared one becomes to perceive the splendidness of intelligible forms and to delight in their beauty.²³

²³Maritain, *Art & Scholasticism*, 31, 173.

Criteria for Beauty

Having established a case in favor of beauty as objective, our next task is to identify those qualities that are common to all beautiful things. If a collection of such qualities can be settled, then a set of criteria for beauty will have been ascertained. Aquinas again serves as a helpful guide, as he proposes three constitutive elements of the beautiful, namely: *integritas*, *proportio*, and *claritas*.²⁴ Closer investigation is required for each of these attributes.

The first characteristic of beauty, integrity, could also be described as wholeness or perfection or completeness.²⁵ An integral object, for Aquinas, is one that lacks none of its rightful parts. An object that is impaired or mutilated or deficient in some way is, therefore, ugly (*turpis*). Examples from daily life could serve to prove this point. A smile that is missing a tooth, a façade without a door, and a rose that has lost its petals all lack *integritas* and thus do not possess the fullness of their potential beauty. In addition to the fullness of requisite parts, the integrity of a thing also requires the absence of any feature contrary to its nature.²⁶ A human face, for example, should have no scars, a monkey should have no horns, and a highway should have no

potholes. Integrity further prohibits excess.²⁷ A person should not have three arms, a lecture should not incorporate tangents, and a meal should not have too many courses.

The proposition of integrity as an essential criterion of beauty ought not to be understood as an undue limitation, for, as Jacques Maritain observes, integrity can be realized not in just a single way, but in a multitude of manners.²⁸ For example, whereas a missing limb is considered a defect in a person, it is a common feature among beautiful statues. While the fullness of a tree is beautiful in its own right, it is possible for a beautiful painting to feature but a single branch. The requirement of integrity, for Maritain, means that a thing has all that it needs in the given case.²⁹

The second criteria for beauty, according to Aquinas, is proportion.³⁰ This characteristic is sometimes expressed as balance or consonance or harmony. A thing is rightly considered proportionate if the sizes and shapes and colors of all its member parts relate to each other harmoniously.³¹ One of the finest examples of proportion is a beautiful stained glass window, comprised of innumerable small pieces of glass arranged in a pleasing pattern. The proportion inherent in the beautiful delights the mind with its order and unity. The principle of proportion

²⁴“Species autem, sive pulchritudo, habet similitudinem cum propriis filii. Nam ad pulchritudinem tria requiruntur. Primo quidem, integritas sive perfectio, quae enim diminuta sunt, hoc ipso turpia sunt. Et debita proportio sive consonantia. Et iterum claritas, unde quae habent colorem nitidum, pulchra esse dicuntur.” Aquinas, *Summa*, Ia, q. 39, a. 8.

²⁵See Eco, *Aquinas*, 98–102.

²⁶Augros, “Beauty,” 110.

²⁷Eco, *Aquinas*, 100.

²⁸Maritain, *Art & Scholasticism*, 28.

²⁹Ibid. 29.

³⁰For an in-depth study of proportion as an attribute of the beautiful, see David Clayton, *The Way of Beauty: Liturgy, Education, and Inspiration for Family, School, and College* (Kettering, Ohio: Angelico Press, 2015), pp. 133–164. See also Eco, *Aquinas*, 71–98.

³¹Augros, “Beauty,” 111.

applies to all art forms, such that musicians employ chords that are “consonant,” painters utilize colors that are “complementary,” and architects sketch designs that are “symmetrical.” Due to their deficiency in *proportio*, a face with only one eyebrow, a lopsidedly furnished room, and a piece of choral music that ends on a diminished chord are each lacking in the fullness of their potential beauty.

As with integrity, Maritain contends that proportion is not an absolute. The demand of proportion, rather, can only be understood with respect to the goal of the work. In this way, it can be understood that the proportions suited to a man differ from those proper to a woman, and the proportions suited to a portrait differ from those appropriate for a landscape. Thus, in order for a thing to be beautifully proportionate, it must exhibit the balance required of it in its particular context.³²

The third and final characteristic proposed by Aquinas as a criterion of beauty is clarity.³³ Known also as radiance or brilliance or splendor, this attribute of the beautiful is arguably the most important. What would a well-proportioned stained glass window be, after all, were it not for the light streaming through it, bringing to life its order and harmony and color? In a certain sense, clarity can be understood as the defining feature of all beauty. Josef Pieper implies this when he describes beauty as “the glow of the true and the good.”³⁴ Beauty, in other words, is essentially the radiance of truth and good-

ness. The clarity inherent in the beautiful delights the mind with its light and intelligibility. Due to a deficiency of *claritas*, a face that has lost its color, a night sky without stars, and a novel that ends with a still-unrepentant protagonist each fail to reach the fullness of their potential beauty.

As a criterion for beauty, clarity must be understood as brilliance of form, not merely brightness, for it is quite possible for dark colors to be arranged in a painting in such a way that the very form of the piece still conveys light. As expressed by Maritain, the Thomistic sense of *claritas* entails a resplendence that is ontological, such that the clarity of a beautiful thing is luminous of itself,³⁵ independent of whatever light or intelligibility it may impart to a perceiving subject.³⁶

Experiential accounts of beautiful things could surely elicit many additional descriptors. By limiting himself only to integrity, proportion, and clarity, however, Aquinas proposes three qualities that he believes to be universally applicable to all instances of beauty. Whether or not these attributes constitute an exhaustive list would be an admirable subject for a future study. At present, however, these three criteria will be accepted as useful guides for evaluating the beautiful.

The Beauty of Chant

In his *Motu Proprio*, *Tra le sollecitudini*,³⁷ Pope St. Pius X establishes beauty as one of the three criteria necessary for true sa-

³²Maritain, *Art & Scholasticism*, 29.

³³See Eco, *Aquinas*, 102–120.

³⁴Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, tr. Daniel F. Coogan (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965), p. 203.

³⁵Eco, *Aquinas*, 103.

³⁶Maritain, *Art & Scholasticism*, 29.

³⁷Pope St. Pius X, “Tra le sollecitudini,” November 22, 1903 <https://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-x/la/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-x_motu-proprio_19031122_sollecitudini.html>.

Pope St. Pius X establishes beauty as one of the three criteria necessary for true sacred music, the other two being universality and holiness.

cred music, the other two being universality and holiness. The pontiff does not, however, use the exact word “beauty” to express this criterion. The Latin rendering is *bonitate formarum*, which could more accurately be translated “excellence of forms.” In light of the foregoing philosophical considerations, the precision of this expression is significant. It has been shown that, for Thomas Aquinas, the form of a thing is integral to its beauty. As Maritain explains, “beauty . . . begins to exist as soon as the radiation of any form over a suitably proportioned matter succeeds in pleasing the mind.”³⁸ Thus, to speak of “excellence of forms” is an apt way of explaining the superiority of Gregorian chant among various types of liturgical music.

It is important to note that *bonitate formarum* is a plural expression. Thus, St. Pius X suggests that not only the excellence of forms, but their very multiplicity is part of what makes music truly sacred and fit for liturgical service. As William Mahrt writes, “the differentiation of forms is an essential part of the beauty of liturgical music.”³⁹ In

³⁸Maritain, *Art & Scholasticism*, 30.

³⁹William Mahrt, “Gregorian Chant as a Para-

digm of Sacred Music,” in *The Musical Shape of the Liturgy* (Richmond, Va.: Church Music Association of America, 2012), p. 117.

this respect, Gregorian chant is peerless. Gregorian chant is a broad term that encompasses numerous genres, including introits, graduals, alleluias, tracts, sequences, offertories, communions, and more. Each of these unique forms expresses itself in a different manner musically and textually, and when these forms are properly executed within the Divine Office and the Mass, they coalesce to unify distinct liturgical moments and contribute to the *splendor formae* of the liturgy as a whole.⁴⁰

Chant, on account of its multiplicity of forms, serves as a paradigm of sacred music as defined by St. Pius X, with his criteria of holiness, universality, and excellence of forms. To what extent is Gregorian chant also an exemplar of beauty as defined by St. Thomas Aquinas, with his criteria of *integritas*, *proportio*, and *claritas*? These three criteria could well be applied to many forms of art: painting, portraiture, architecture, poetry, literature, popular music, etc. How do they specifically apply to Gregorian chant? What has been established with regard to beauty philosophically will now be applied to chant practically.

First, the chants of the liturgy exemplify integrity by virtue of their vital role in the architecture of the Roman Rite. The rite developed together with its music in such close fashion that to omit the proper or ordinary chants is, in effect, to sever the rite from its inherent logic.⁴¹ The integrity of the

digm of Sacred Music,” in *The Musical Shape of the Liturgy* (Richmond, Va.: Church Music Association of America, 2012), p. 117.

⁴⁰For a more detailed examination of the variety of chant forms, see Mahrt, “Paradigm,” 118–129.

⁴¹William Mahrt, “The Gregorian Mass in General,” *Musical Shape*, 5–7.

chants arises, additionally, from the interrelationships of their texts and melodies. Both text and melody are respected and treated as a composite whole, such that neither the words nor the music that carries them can be considered extraneous. Furthermore, many of the chants in the church's treasury are among the most polished pieces of Western music. This is not to suggest that any single chant should be considered the supreme, definitive setting of a liturgical text; this cannot be true, inasmuch as many liturgical texts are set to a variety of chant melodies. As has already been shown, though, the requirement of integrity is that a thing should have all that it needs in a given case.⁴² This is well reflected in liturgical chants, each of which possesses an orderly marriage of text and melody that beautifies worship.

Gregorian chant also demonstrates Aquinas' second criterion for beauty, namely proportion. It has been shown that proportion consists in harmonious relationship among the member parts of a thing. This is evident in chant in two principal ways. First, each chant corresponds well to its liturgical function. The introits, offertories, and communions, for example, are well proportioned to the processions they accompany; the more melismatic gradual, on the other hand, is well matched to its meditative moment during the lessons. Secondly, liturgical chants exhibit balance in the interplay of various neumes. The subtle ingenuity of chant neumes permits rhythm and pitch to be balanced in a more natural way than modern notation allows. In these and other ways, Gregorian chant may rightly be called proportionate.

Finally, the liturgical chants are exem-

⁴²Maritain, *Art & Scholasticism*, 29.

plars of clarity, the third Thomistic criterion of beauty. The ecclesial treasury of chants is luminous in a variety of ways. Chiefly, the clarity of chant consists in its fundamental orientation toward God, who is the light of the world (John 8:12, 9:5). Whereas so much art in the modern period has lost theocentric grounding,⁴³ this is not possible for chant, which is directed toward God by its very nature. Thus, to the same degree that chant is sacred—set apart for God—it is also luminous. The brilliance of chant is also made known through the unity which it both employs and manifests. Chant, when sung properly, draws together many voices to sound as though one. This unifying aspect of chant makes use of singing in unison in order to unite not only voices, but also minds and hearts. As *Musicam Sacram* attests, “Unity of hearts is attained more profoundly by the union of voices.”⁴⁴ Gregorian chant, therefore, contributes to the union of kindred hearts among the worshipping community, and it facilitates that still-greater union of hearts between God and man which is the fruit of truly spiritual worship.

Beauty is a “perfection in the proportion of things to the mind” characterized by refulgence of light.⁴⁵ Understood in this way, Gregorian chant is especially beautiful insofar as it demonstrates integrity of forms, possesses the internal balance of proportion, and shines brightly with clarity and radiance.

⁴³See Hans Sedlmayr, *Art in Crisis: The Lost Center*, tr. Brian Battershaw (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2007).

⁴⁴“Unitas cordium per vocis unitatem profundius attingitur.” Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction on Sacred Music, *Musicam sacram*, ¶5.

⁴⁵Maritain, *Art & Scholasticism*, 25.

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Conclusion

Just before the turn of the first millennium, Prince Vladimir of Kiev began searching for a suitable religion to be adopted throughout his kingdom. He sent out emissaries to explore the religions of other kingdoms. None of these foreign practices, however, were judged to be suitable, until the emissaries reached Constantinople, the seat of the Byzantine Empire. On visiting Hagia Sophia, the home of the glorious Byzantine Rite, the visitors were overwhelmed. They reported:

We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendor or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We know only that God dwells there among men, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations. For we cannot forget that beauty.⁴⁶

Although this story applies directly to Byzantine, not Roman, worship, it serves to underscore the universal human need for beauty and man's natural sensitivity, even susceptibility, to it. The human person needs

⁴⁶*The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text*, ed. and tr. Samuel H. Cross and Olgerd P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (Cambridge, Mass.: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1953), pp. 110–111.

to experience beauty not only in buildings and music and painting, but throughout the whole spectrum of life's experiences. The need is particularly acute in liturgy, because the beauty of divine worship is an *entrée* to the praise of God, the source and exemplar of all beauty.⁴⁷

Philosophical considerations and practical reflections have led us to conclude that the richness of beauty inherent to Gregorian chant is not merely a matter of taste. On the basis of objective criteria, rather, chant deserves to be esteemed as uniquely beautiful and particularly suitable for the task of divine worship. The musical splendor of the Roman Rite is no less powerful than the visual splendor of the Byzantine liturgy encountered by Prince Vladimir's emissaries. The recovery of its native music by the Roman Rite has the potential to convert or reconvert many people by the *via pulchritudinis*, the "way of beauty."⁴⁸

St. Isaac Jogues had it right. There is nothing in the world more beautiful than the Blessed Sacrament, the glorious Sacrament in which Christ gives us himself in sacrifice. A Sacrament so precious, so splendid, so august warrants the finest celebration one can offer, and Gregorian chant is uniquely well-suited to lend beauty to liturgy and wonder to worship. ❖

⁴⁷Cf. Wisdom 13:3.

⁴⁸See "Concluding Document of the Plenary Assembly: The *Via Pulchritudinis*, Privileged Pathway for Evangelization and Dialogue," March 27–28, 2006 <http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/cultr/documents/rc_pc_cultr_doc_20060327_plenary-assembly_final-document_en.html>.

A Sense of Solemnity in the Sacred Liturgy as a Means of Catechesis and Evangelization

Throughout history and in the modern experience, solemnity is a captivating and compelling means of conveying Divine reality.

by James Monti



In the Book of Ecclesiastes we read: “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven . . . a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.”¹ So there is a time to be merry; but there is also a time to be serious, a time to be solemn, and the sacred liturgy is one of those times when we need to be serious, to be solemn.

In a culture that revels in the casual, the informal, solemnity may seem an obsolete concept. But mankind is “hard-wired” for solemnity. Solemnity is a frame of mind, a disposition of the soul that takes seriously the highest aspirations of the heart.

The evocative power of solemnity can be seen in stately civic ceremonies such as the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National

Cemetery. Spectators at this rite find themselves awed by the slow, measured, impeccably disciplined walk of the soldiers, as also by the commanding officer’s elaborate white-glove inspection of the M-14 rifle that the new guard will carry during his watch, all done in utter silence. Military ceremonies such as this aptly demonstrate the ability of complex ritual actions to speak directly to the soul.

What then is solemnity? It is a sense of seriousness, awe, and reverence in the presence of God and in our worship of him. Solemnity is our response to who God is. And it is key to forming a sense of the sacred. God takes us seriously; we need to take him seriously.

But how is solemnity expressed in the sacred liturgy? It requires prayers and actions that are well-ordered, harmonious, serene, and unrushed, that are reverent and

¹Ecc1. 3:1, 4.

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*Solemnity imparts
beauty to the sacred
liturgy.*

that direct the soul, heart, and mind of man toward his Creator and toward his eternal destiny. In this effort the senses need to cooperate, to work together. For the sense of solemnity can be quickly undermined by a sight or sound that communicates instead disorder or a crass preoccupation with earthly pursuits.

We live in a desacralized and desacralizing culture—a culture marred by vulgarity in speech, dress, entertainment, and worst of all, a culture that has rejected the sacredness of all human life, of the unborn child. We mustn't allow this desacralization to enter our churches; we mustn't allow it to mutilate, dumb down, or vulgarize our worship of God. Amid such a culture, solemnity within the House of God may seem countercultural—indeed, it needs to be so, for it needs to challenge us to seek the things that are above.

Solemnity in the celebration of Mass is a virtual profession of faith in the divinity of Christ, faith in his Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist, and faith in his salvific sacrifice on Calvary. These truths make the Mass a solemn event like no other on the face of the earth, as Blessed John Henry Newman observed: “Nothing is so consoling, so piercing, so thrilling, so overcoming, as the Mass . . . It is a great action, the

greatest action that can be on earth.”² What is so utterly sacred must be celebrated in a sacred manner. In his 1940 book *By Jacob's Well*, Archbishop James Leen explains why the manner of celebrating Mass matters:

As a heavenly precious stone, the Eucharist catches the splendours of heaven and sends them flashing amid the obscurity of earth. The prayers, the chants, the movements of the Sacred liturgy constitute an ensemble whose beauty ravishes the heart of all who love the things of God, and are sensitive to what makes for the perfection of the divine cult . . . The dignity and the solemnity with which the sacred rites are carried out impress the mind of the beholder, and move him to glorify God, as well as inspire him with those dispositions which favor the reception of divine grace.³

As we can see from Archbishop Leen's words, solemnity imparts beauty to the sacred liturgy. For one of the principal ways that solemnity is expressed is through the orderliness of the ceremonies. And order is an aspect of beauty, as explained in a seventeenth century liturgical book of Cologne, Germany:

All order is beautiful and graceful in itself; it excludes confusion, which disfigures the very beautiful, and edifies even men turned away from true religion, and leads to their admiration, not unlike

²Blessed John Henry Newman, *Loss and Gain: or, The Story of a Convert* (Boston: Patrick Donahoe, 1854), p. 193.

³Archbishop James Leen, *By Jacob's Well* (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1940), p. 258.

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[what] we read [of] the Queen of Sheba having been astonished at the splendor and order of the ministers of the court of Solomon.⁴

Our sense of hearing greatly shapes our perception of the sacred liturgy. The sounding of the sacring bell at the consecration, the rhythmic clatter of a swinging thurible in the hands of a priest incensing the altar—these all have a role to play. But it especially through the high art of sacred music, music that is beautiful, authentic and true, that the human heart finds a voice for what is simply beyond the spoken word—a voice befitting the glory of God.

In solemnizing the sacred liturgy, silence too is to have its part. For silence is one of the expressions of solemnity. Silence in the liturgy, like moments of silence in a great work of music, is not merely a void, not merely an absence of sound; the silence does indeed have a voice, for it partakes of the hushed awe of the angels. Even in human conversation there are such moments, when words are unnecessary, or when what is thought, what is felt, is beyond the spoken word.

The art of expressing solemnity in the

sacred liturgy was perfected in the Middle Ages. Medieval Christendom realized that man has an inborn need for ceremony—richly textured, beauty-laden ceremonies, fragrant with mystery and symbolism. Medieval allegorical interpretations of the liturgy saw everything that goes on during the Mass as an act of divine worship—even the celebrant’s walk to and from the altar.

But what was it like to be at a medieval liturgical rite? What did the faithful experience, at least from a sensory perspective, and what might have been the spiritual fruits of this sensory perception of the rite? And is modern man even capable of responding in the same manner as his forebears to this medieval convergence of sensory expressions of the sacred? Some fascinating answers can be gleaned from the findings of a team of largely Protestant scholars assembled by Bangor University in Wales to carry out a series of historical re-enactments of ceremonies from England’s medieval Catholic Sarum Rite.

One participant in this four-year study (2009–2013) noted how in the medieval manner of celebrating Mass “word, music and gesture came together in a climactic moment of attentiveness” for the elevation of the Holy Eucharist at the consecration, and that in the medieval rites “gesture . . . movement, particularly processions, and the choreography of the sacred ministers, the vestments . . . colour, smell of incense, and the sound of both solo and choral voices and instruments contribute to a performance in which the whole community and the whole person (body, mind, imagination and spirit) are engaged.”⁵

⁴*Agenda s. Coloniensis ecclesiae* (Cologne: Peter Cholinus and Bernard Gualtherus, 1614), introduction, sig. *2.

⁵Sally Harper, P. S. Barnwell, and Magnus Williamson, eds., *Late Medieval Liturgies Enacted: The Experience of Worship in Cathedral and Parish*

The rich complexity of the medieval liturgy, as staged in the Bangor re-enactments, was received by the participants in the study as “a texture of depth and unhurried spaciousness” that engendered “a deeper reflection on the way the liturgy draws into the sacramental action heaven and earth, the living and the dead . . . and also a sense of the past and the future gathered into this present moment.”⁶

Participants were also particularly impressed by “the strong impact of the silence” during the Roman Canon in stark contrast to the long intervals of plainchant at other points in the Sarum Mass rite.⁷ Of course, these were nothing more than meticulous dramatizations of the medieval Catholic liturgies, not real Masses, but the findings nonetheless offer us valuable insights as to how the external form of the church’s rites over the centuries has efficaciously communicated the inner meaning of the rites to man’s senses.

Moreover, in view of the impressions that the exterior form of the church’s medieval rites made on these largely Protestant scholars, one can see that solemnizing the sacred liturgy through ritual actions, sacred music, and other corresponding appeals to the senses constitutes a powerful, all-engaging “audiovisual” invitation to those not yet of our faith.

One of the biggest topics in catechesis and evangelization in recent years has been how to communicate efficaciously what the church really teaches about marriage—its definition, its sacred character, its purposes,

Church (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016), pp. 220, 221.

⁶*Ibid.*, 224.

⁷*Ibid.*, 281.

and its indissolubility. One of the best and most important means of doing this is by the way the sacrament of matrimony is celebrated liturgically.

The rite of matrimony can and should be a teaching moment not only for the marrying couple, but also for the others present—the single young people who may marry in the future, the children in attendance, that they may be properly formed in their understanding of the sacrament, and the married couples present, that they may be reminded of what their vocation truly is. Celebrating the sacrament in an authentically solemn manner speaks volumes in this regard.

In this the medieval liturgy has some highly valuable lessons to teach, for its rites vividly testified to the indissoluble and sacrosanct character of marriage. In late medieval Barcelona, Spain, shortly before Holy Communion at the nuptial Mass, the priest would lay across the bridegroom and bride a stole with which he would tie them together. The bridegroom and bride would remain kneeling and bound together with this stole for the rest of the Mass.⁸ The

⁸Text in Amadeu-J. Soberanas, ed., *Ordinarium sacramentorum Barchinonense*, 1501, facsimile ed., Biblioteca liturgica Catalana 1 (Barcelona: Institut d’Estudis Catalans, 1991), fols. 35v–36r. For other medieval versions of this Spanish practice utilizing a colored ribbon called a *jugal* together with a veil, see James Monti, *A Sense of the Sacred: Roman Catholic Worship in the Middle Ages* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), pp. 221–223. The 2016 U.S. edition of the Rite of Matrimony provides a version of this observance as a permissible option “according to local customs”, with an accompanying prayer that identifies it as an expression of the indissolubility of the couple’s marriage. See United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Order of*

message of the Church in this ceremony is quite clear—that the two spouses are inseparably joined together for life. Speaking of this liturgical custom nine centuries earlier, the Church Father Saint Isidore of Seville (+636) explains that the bridegroom and bride are bound together “lest they should break asunder the conjugal joint of unity.”⁹

The sacredness of the sacrament and vocation of marriage was in the medieval rites emphatically expressed with solemn words and actions. In the Barcelona wedding rite the priest binding the couple with the stole would say over them the words used for the imposition of the stole at medieval priestly ordinations, “Receive the yoke of the Lord. For the yoke of the Lord is sweet and his burden light.”¹⁰

In the matrimony rite from a twelfth century monastic pontifical of Lyre, France, the bridegroom and bride would prostrate themselves twice during the nuptial Mass, like the prostration we see at the ordination of priests.¹¹ This must have been a very impressive and sobering experience for medieval couples entering the state of

matrimony. As yet another expression of the sacredness of marriage, two liturgical books from thirteenth century France specify the incensation of the marrying couple.¹²

In the matrimony rite from a 1591 book of ceremonies for Poland, the rubrics direct that if there are musicians present, the hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus* or the antiphon *Veni sancte Spiritus* should be sung at the outset of the ceremony.¹³ This points to how the contemporary rite of matrimony can be invested with a spirit of solemnity comparable to what the medieval rites expressed—through the selection of truly sacred music, including Gregorian chant. Most marrying couples know enough to dress in a solemn manner for their wedding. It only makes sense that the music for the occasion should communicate the same message of solemnity.

I have the pleasure of citing for you a very fine example of how an authentic sense of the sacrament can be conveyed through truly sacred music: a wedding that I attended in May of 2014 at Saint John’s Church in Stamford, Connecticut, the wedding of Timothy and Frances Ginski, both of whom are Christendom College alumni. The sacred music for the wedding was provided by Mr. Christopher Mueller, who as you all know provided the music for Solemn Lauds at the beginning of our chant

Celebrating Matrimony: For Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2016), no. 71B, p. 43.

⁹Saint Isidore of Seville, *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, bk. 2, chap. 20, no. 7, in Christopher M. Lawson, ed., *Sancti Isidori episcopi Hispalensis: De ecclesiasticis officiis*, Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina 113 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1989), p. 92.

¹⁰Soberanas, *Ordinarium... Barchinonense, 1501*, fol. 36r.

¹¹Text in Edmond Martene, *De antiquis ecclesiae ritibus* (Venice: Johannes Baptista Novelli, 1763–1764), bk. 1, chap. 9, art. 5, *ordo* 3, 2:128–129.

¹²See Jean Baptiste Molin and Protais Mutembe, *Le rituel du mariage en France du XII^e au XVI^e siècle*, *Théologie historique* 26 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1974), pp. 297, 300.

¹³*Agenda seu ritus sacramentorum ecclesiasticorum, ad uniformem ecclesiarum per universas provincias regni Poloniae usum, officio Romano conformati* (Krakow: Architypographia Regia and Ecclesiastica Lazari, 1591), p. 51.

conference yesterday. The wedding Mass selections included the Gregorian propers, settings of the ordinary from a Mass of Father Peter Griesbacher, and sacred compositions of Josquin des Prez, Nicholas Gombert, Thomas Morley, William Byrd, and Mozart. Certainly an impressive lineup for a wedding!

In a 1966 apostolic letter to religious congregations urging them not to abandon “the age-old solemnity, beauty and dignity of the choral office, in regard both to language, and to the chant,” Blessed Pope Paul VI described Gregorian chant as “a chant full of grave beauty . . . this melody proceeding from the inmost sanctuary of the soul, where faith dwells and charity burns.”¹⁴

This “grave beauty,” which makes Gregorian chant a consummate and indispensable expression of solemnity in the sacred liturgy, arises from an extraordinary marriage of words to music, such that the music actually informs our understanding of the words.¹⁵ What the composers of Gregorian chant achieved, as chant scholar Marie Pierik observes, is “the finest example of scientific and harmonious craftsmanship that the world has ever produced in the marriage

¹⁴Blessed Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Letter, *Sacrificium Laudis*, August 15, 1966 (accessed March 4, 2017) <<https://www.cwatershed.org/blog/2014/dec/22/sacrificium-laudis-english-translation>>.

¹⁵See Alberto Donini, “Gregorian Chant in the Liturgy according to Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI,” in Janet E. Rutherford, ed., *Benedict XVI and Beauty in Sacred Music: Proceedings of the Third Fota International Liturgical Conference, 2010* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012), pp. 82–83.

of word and melody.”¹⁶

In terms of content, Gregorian chant is overwhelmingly scriptural. The vast majority of chant settings and pieces are either direct quotations or paraphrases of verses from the scriptures—a virtual Bible in music. As one promising avenue of evan-

History testifies to the efficacy of Gregorian chant in evangelization.

gelization in regard to Gregorian chant, I think it well to explain this to our Protestant brothers and sisters, and that we as Catholics revere the scriptures so highly that at Mass we even sing the Gospel on the more solemn occasions using chant settings.

There are also the chants that are magnificent poetic expressions of our faith—as prime examples, I am thinking of the compositions of Saint Venantius Fortunatus and those of Saint Thomas Aquinas.

History testifies to the efficacy of Gregorian chant in evangelization. The French missionaries laboring in seventeenth century North America discovered that the Native American peoples were musically gifted and were amazingly responsive to

¹⁶Marie Pierik, *Dramatic and Symbolic Elements in Gregorian Chant* (New York: Desclée Co., 1963), p. 9.

Gregorian chant. A truly striking testimony to this is related by Father Pierre Cholenec in his January 1677 account of life at a mission near Montreal where soon afterward Saint Kateri Tekakwitha was to spend the final two and a half years of her life:

At three o'clock in the afternoon, the bell rings for Vespers, for which there are two rows of seats on both sides of the church, from the altar to the lower end of the chapel, whereon the savages sit—the men on one side, and the women on the other. While they take their places, the father, the Dogique, and two little choir-boys put on their surplices, on the Epistle side; and then all four advance to the middle of the altar, where the father stands with one of the little savage boys on each side, and the Dogique behind him. All four make the genuflections before the Blessed Sacrament; and at the same time, all the people standing up, the Dogique intones the *Deus in adjutorium* which all sing together, with the *Gloria Patri*. After that, with the Dogique intoning all the psalms, they sing the Vespers in two choirs, all standing up at each *Gloria Patri*—with which all their psalms conclude, as ours do—and remaining seated the rest of the time. The psalms are taken from their prayers, which the father has selected and has set to the principal modes of church music. These prayers are: first, the prayer that they say at rising and at retiring, sung in the eighth mode; second, the prayer for the Elevation, in the first mode; third, the prayer to the guardian angel, in the fourth [mode]; fourth, the thanksgiving for the faith, in the first; fifth, the commandments of God, to the air of the

*Can the solemnity
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In exitu. After that they sing the hymn to the air of the *Iste confessor*; then the *Ave Maria* in the eighth mode, instead of the Magnificat; then the orison, with the versicle before it—to which all respond, as at the end, 'Amen.' After Vespers, there is Benediction."¹⁷

But can the solemnity of the church's sacred liturgical rites and sacred music evangelize contemporary society? A remarkable reason for high hopes in this regard is provided by what transpired on the final day of the June 2015 *Sacra Liturgia USA* conference in New York City, which was co-organized by our conference director Dr. Jennifer Donelson and by Father Richard Cipolla, the celebrant of yesterday's Mass in the seminary chapel. Try to imagine bringing hundreds of New Yorkers in midtown Manhattan to a total standstill on three

¹⁷Letter of Fr. Pierre Cholenec, S.J., Mission of St. Francis Xavier du Sault, Jan. 2, 1677, in *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610–1791*, ed. Reuben G. Thwaites (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers Co., 1900), vol. 60, pp. 281–283.

*I would beg our
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major north-south avenues at 8:00 PM on a weekday evening to make way for the passage of a Catholic religious procession. As one of those in the procession I can attest as an eyewitness that the bystanders reacted overwhelmingly with silent respect and curiosity. The long line of clerics in their cassocks and surplices, Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Perry from Chicago carrying the monstrance amid clouds of incense under a magnificent canopy, with hundreds of the laity following behind, singing one hymn after another in praise of the Blessed Sacrament, with everything done according to rubrics that have come down almost verbatim from the *Caeremoniale Episcoporum* of 1600—all this seemed to awe jaded Manhattanites, and commanded their respect—certainly a great moment for the New Evangelization.

But what about children? Can they understand solemnity, or does it just scare them? I saw the answer for myself during the fall 2015 U.S.A. “Pilgrimage of Mercy” tour of the body of the child martyr Saint Maria Goretti. I was present for three of the occasions of veneration. Many families with young children came. None of the children seemed frightened by the solemn sight of little Maria in her glass casket. I particularly remember a tiny girl of about six, who went up to the casket seven times over the

course of an hour or so, bowing her head in fervent prayer each time as she knelt beside Maria—the child seemed irresistibly drawn to the saint by some supernatural invitation.

To cite another example: each Sunday I attend two Masses, one in the Ordinary Form in my own parish and then in the afternoon a Mass in the Extraordinary Form, a Traditional Latin Mass, at Saint John Paul II Church in Sleepy Hollow, New York. In addition to the presence of an absolutely excellent schola for the sung Masses at Sleepy Hollow, there is a large team of altar boys ranging from seven-year-old rookies to teenagers that contribute hugely to creating a sense of solemnity, a sense of the sacred, at these Latin Masses. The discipline and reverent deportment of the altar boys is simply amazing. They know how to work together with pinpoint precision, with virtually perfect order, to raise the minds of those present to God and the things of Heaven. So when it comes to children, solemnity isn’t outside their comfort zone if only parents, pastors, and teachers would have the patience and willingness to introduce them to it.

But it isn’t only children who need this introduction to solemnity. We have easily more than one generation of Catholics in want of catechesis in this regard. I would beg our priests to begin this re-education in the sacred from the pulpit. We as lay people must do our part as well, explaining to our fellow Catholics why solemnity matters.

Let me conclude by saying simply this: solemnity opens our eyes and ears to holiness, to the sublime, the holiness of God, the holiness of Our Lady and the saints. As the psalmist has said, “Holiness befits thy house, O Lord, for evermore” (Ps. 93:5). Thank you all and God bless you. ❖

Repertory

Josquin des Prez' Devotional Motet, *Tu solus qui facis mirabilia*

A motet in devotional style is a rarity in des Prez' œuvre.

by William Mahrt

Tu so-lus qui fa-cis mi - ra-bí - li - a: Tu so - lus Cre - á - tor, qui cre - á - sti nos;

Tu so-lus qui fa-cis mi-ra - bí - li - a: Tu so - lus Cre - á - tor, qui cre - á - sti nos;

Tu so-lus qui fa-cis mi - ra-bí-li-a: Tu so - lus Cre - á - tor, qui cre - á - sti nos;

Tu so-lus qui fa-cis mi - ra-bí - li - a: Tu so - lus Cre - á - tor, qui cre - á - sti nos;

Tu so-lus Re-démp-tor, qui re-de-mí - sti nos Sán-gui-ne tu - o pre-ti-o-sís - si - mo.

Tu so-lus Re-démp-tor, qui re-de-mí - sti nos Sán-gui-ne tu - o pre-ti-o-sís - si - mo.

Tu so-lus Re-démp-tor, qui re-de-mí - sti nos Sán-gui-ne tu - o pre-ti-o-sís - si - mo.

Tu so-lus Re-démp-tor, qui re-de-mí - sti nos Sán-gui-ne tu - o pre-ti-o-sís - si - mo.

In te so-lum con - fí - di-mus, Nec

In te so-lum con - fí - di-mus, Nec

Ad te so-lum con - fú - gi-mus, Nec

Ad te so-lum con - fú - gi-mus, Nec

7
 á - li - um ad - o - rá - mus, Je - su Chri - ste.
 á - li - um ad - o - rá - mus, Je - su Chri - ste.
 á - li - um ad - o - rá - mus, Je - su Chri - ste.
 á - li - um ad - o - rá - mus, Je - su Chri - ste.

9
 Ex - áu - di quod sup - pli - cá - mus, Et
 Ex - áu - di quod sup - pli - cá - mus, Et
 Ad te pre - ces ef - fún - di - mus, Ex - áu - di quod sup - pli - cá - mus, Et
 Ad te pre - ces ef - fún - di - mus, Et

11
 con - cé - de quod pé - ti - mus, Rex be - ní - gne!
 con - cé - de quod pé - ti - mus, Rex be - ní - gne!
 con - cé - de quod pé - ti - mus, Rex be - ní - gne!
 con - cé - de quod pé - ti - mus, Rex be - ní - gne!



Tu solus qui facis mirabilia is one of only three of Josquin's motets in what can be called a devotional style.¹ Their texts pertain to the Passion

or the Eucharist. They are in block chords with frequent fermatas; thus large portions of the pieces are in what could be called familiar or homophonic style. They used to be said to be in a "lauda" style, because they resembled the popular Italian polyphonic devotional songs of that name. This

¹The other two are the cycles *O Domine Jesu Christe* and *Qui velatus facie fuisti*. All three are found in *New Josquin Edition*, vol. 22, Motets on Non-Biblical Texts, 2: De Domine Jesu Christe 2, ed. Bonnie J. Blackburn (Utrecht: Koninklijke

Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis, 2003); *Tu solus* is found on pp. 38–42.

view has been revised, however, since it has been shown that these Latin songs in devotional style are earlier than the collections of polyphonic laude.² The earlier pieces are associated with the Milanese genre *motetti missales*, cycles of motets to be sung during Mass, the place in the Mass of each motet generally being designated, for example *loco introitus*, or *ad elevationem*, etc., the motets for the elevation being in the chordal devotional style.

Josquin's piece is not part of a cycle of *motetti missales*, but rather an elevation motet in an otherwise conventional cycle of the Mass Ordinary, in which the elevation motet often takes the place of the Benedictus. Thus *Tu solus* is found in that position in Josquin's *Missa D'ung aultre amer*. Two other Sanctus movements of Josquin include such elevation motets.³ It may be that, based upon his knowl-

edge of the Milanese practice, he introduced the elevation into his own Mass Ordinaries.

The piece occurs in Petrucci's *Canti B*, where it uniquely has a second part, incorporating a quotation of Ockeghem's chanson *D'ung aultre amer*. From a chronological point of view, this is likely a later addition, though surely by Josquin, to what was a single-movement elevation in the Mass.

The text of the elevation is not explicitly Eucharistic but is very appropriate to that context. The pattern of its language is as direct as is the music, with strong repeating elements at the beginning and ending of lines.

The text has two parts: the first four lines consist of what the rhetoricians call *captatio benevolentium*—praising the object of the prayer. Each line has eleven syllables and three of the four begin identically, "Tu solus." The second and third also rhyme with

Tu solus qui facis mirabilia,
 Tu solus Creator, qui creasti nos,
 Tu solus Redemptor, qui redemisti nos
 Sanguine tuo pretiosissimo.
 Ad te solum confugimus,
 In te solum confidimus,
 Nec alium adoramus,
 Jesu Christe.
 Ad te preces effundimus,
 Exaudi quod supplicamus,
 Et concede quod petimus,
 Rex benigne.

Thou alone art the One who dost wonders,
 Thou alone art the Creator, who hast created us
 Thou alone art the Redeemer, who hast Redeemed us
 With thy most precious blood.
 In thee alone do we take refuge,
 In thee alone do we confide,
 None other do we adore,
 O Jesus Christ.
 To thee do we pour out our prayers,
 Hear what we beseech,
 And grant what we ask,
 O kind King.

²Warren Drake, "Motetti B and its Relation to the Lauda Repertory circa 1500," in *Venezia 1501: Petrucci e la stampa musicale, Venice 1501* (Venice: Edizioni Fondazione Levi, 2005).

³The motet *Honor et benedictio* in his *Sanctus De passione* and the motet *Tu lumen tu splendor patris* in his independent *Sanctus D'ung aultre amer*; cf. the Critical Commentary to vol. 22 of

the *New Josquin Edition*, p. 45. An elevation motet, however, appears in the *Missa de Sancta Anna* of Pierre de la Rue, *O Salutaris Hostia*, and such elevations were found in France as early as the thirteenth century; see William Mahrt, "From Elevation Motet to Communion: Pierre de la Rue, *O Salutaris Hostia*," *Sacred Music*, 136, no. 1 (Spring 2009), 53.

the syllables “-sti nos.” The next eight lines are the petition; they consist of the pattern 8-8-8-4 syllables, with the long lines ending with first-person plural verb, creating “-mus” rhymes, while the short lines end with the -e vowel; the long lines express what is desired from the Lord and the short line then names him, “Jesu Christe,” “Rex benigne.”

Each of these parts of the poem is expressed by a contrasting musical technique. The four long lines of praise are set to the block chords, something often used in fifteenth-century music to attract attention. The first two lines carry quite parallel harmonies (G-F-C-F-Bflat), with the end of the second moving to a C, preparing for a different beginning of the line to follow. The third line ends on an F, preparing for the first half of the fourth line which centers strongly around B flat, which is maintained for several chords until the accented syllable of “pretiosissimo,” at which point it quickly returns to the original G harmony. The juncture between phrases three and four is a point of highest harmonic intensity; phrase three ends with no punctuation but rather leads directly to the beginning of phrase four where the harmony expresses the greatest intensity. In this the harmony and the text coincide, for the crux of the text is “sanguine pretiosissimo,” the most precious blood, which receives the most intense harmony, after which it relaxes graciously. Even though the breves (double whole notes) move slowly, a sense of phrasing must be projected. This can be aided

by observing the difference between the accented and unaccented syllables,⁴ making the goal of each phrase its final accented syllable.

The second part, the petition section, consists of a pair of four shorter lines, expressed in parallel ways. This part contrasts strikingly with the devotional style of the first part: now the rhythm is varied and moves more quickly; the lines proceed in pairs of duets followed by full four-part, quickly-moving texture and leading to the name of the Lord addressed, which reverts to block chords in long notes. This pattern is repeated with the variation that the tenor-bass duet (m. 9) is answered now by a trio of soprano, alto, and tenor, singing in fauxbourdon (parallel six-chords), moving again to four parts in quick motion, followed by block chords on the name of the Lord.

The slow stately motion of the first part suggests a confidence and serenity in addressing Christ. The quick rhythms of the second part suggest the urgency of the petition. The striking difference between the parts can be emphasized by maintaining a common tempo, I should think about 72 or a little faster per whole note, thus 36+ per breve. Likewise the proportion at m.55 should be *sesquialtera*, that is three in the time of two.

The repertory of motets by Josquin des Prez is immensely varied. This devotional work is just one of the many kinds of beautiful works, all of which deserve particular attention and performance. ❖

⁴In the accompanying score, the convention of marking the accents of a text of liturgical Latin are followed: 1) since the accent of a two-syllable word always falls upon the first syllable, two-syl-

lable words are not marked for accent; 2) since the determination of the place of the accent in words of more than two syllables is quite complicated, the accent is always marked in these words.

Review

Sharing a Pearl of Great Price—a Closer Look at Joseph Swain's *Sacred Treasure*

Sacred Treasure: Understanding Catholic Liturgical Music by Joseph P. Swain. A Pueblo Book. Collegetown, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2012. 379 pp. ISBN 978-0-8144-6255-7. \$59.95.

by Trent Beattie

Have you ever wondered how to communicate to someone, in an extensive, written format, why church music is supposed to sound different from secular music? Then Dr. Joseph Swain's *Sacred Treasure: Understanding Catholic Liturgical Music* is probably what you are looking for. In it, he aims to provide a common basis for all participants in the liturgical music discussion—a basis that takes into account the objective realities of music itself.

While Dr. Swain does present the Catholic Church's instructions on sacred music, he does not do so in a legalistic way. "The church says we should sing like this, therefore we should" does not accurately summarize the book. "The church says we should sing like this, and the church is correct, not merely on liturgical grounds, but on psychological, linguistic, sociological and historical ones" is a more accurate encapsulation of the book.

Swain, associate professor of music at Colgate University in Hamilton Village, New York, takes care to explain how certain types of music have specific associations that cannot be casually discarded or immediately invented. The was the great tragedy of the years following the Second Vatican Council, he argues, a time when "liturgical pop" was thrown into Catholic worship in an effort to make Masses relevant for modernity.

A far better foundation for the liturgy, Swain proffers, is plainchant, which is not an arbitrary invention, but a centuries-old tradition highly suitable for the purpose of the liturgical action. The way it almost naturally arises out of silence is one of the keys to its being ideal for worship. We are instructed to pray always, so this should be possible without undue effort. Our constant communication with God is solemnized at Mass when a choir sings the prayers of the church in unison.

Trent Beattie's writings on sacred music have appeared in Latin Mass, Catholic Digest, and the National Catholic Register. Many CMAA members have appeared in his stories on polyphony, sacred music in colleges, the moral nature of music, and chant in the ordinary and extraordinary forms of Mass.

Part I of *Sacred Treasure* is dedicated to correcting three major myths attributed to the Second Vatican Council. They are interrelated to the point of overlapping—namely, that the church banned Latin singing in the Mass, promoted the composition of new “popular-style” songs in the vernacular (also known as liturgical pop), and encouraged active participation that demanded congregational singing.

There was supposed to be a top-down democratization of liturgical music, the story goes, that would engage the people in the pews. No longer would worshippers be bored with irrelevant and elitist singing; they would be comforted by fun and familiar songs in their own language—songs that they would be able to participate in from start to finish.

Those who have read *Sacrosanctum Concilium* know this democratization was not the official position of the church coming out of Vatican II. Yet a largescale abandonment of the church’s treasury of sacred song did occur, along with a correspondingly wide-sweeping introduction of mediocre songs.

Swain deftly points out the great ironies of this process. Two notable examples are that the democratization of liturgical music has alienated almost all the people it was supposed to help, and that truly sacred music, which was already in existence, is completely compatible with active (or actual) participation of the people.

Lest anyone think the book will depress the reader with frank but unpleasant analysis, Part I ends on a high note. Swain states that masterworks of liturgical music (or any art) have the power to appeal to the finest sense in nearly everyone, while liturgical pop is, at best, misplaced and lacking the qual-

ity to appeal to anything higher than the lowest common denominator. Being needlessly deprived of higher things can only last so long, Swain contends. He believes that worshippers will demand music that touches their souls and raises them up to heights so long neglected. Indeed, this glorious process has already begun.

Part II of *Sacred Treasure* begins with these inspiring words: “The Roman Catholic tradition owns the richest repertory of music of any nation or religion in the world.” Swain explains the beautiful nature of sacred song in the Catholic tradition, helping the reader realize that the church’s selections are done purposefully and intelligently. He not only describes the characteristics of plainchant, but also shows why plainchant is essentially sacred. This informative process sets the stage for treating Renaissance polyphony, which grew out of the church’s chant tradition, in a similar way.

Aside from the inherently musical reasons given for the sacredness of the church’s music (such as free rhythm), another characteristic that spans many categories is addressed. One could use terms such as *psychological*, *cultural*, *sociological*, or *historical* to describe it, since it is connected with how people have received and used other forms of music. In short, the characteristic can be called *strangeness*.

Sacred music is very strange to people who have grown accustomed to hearing heavy drum beats and grinding guitars. This can be used as an excuse for not using sacred music in church, since it could be thought of as too odd for modern sensibilities. Yet Swain claims that strangeness, far from being an impediment to ecclesiastical usage, is sacred music’s saving grace. If



someone is looking for pop music, he can find it on the radio and television, in the grocery store or coffee shop, at the baseball or football game.

The church does not exist to conform to the culture, but to influence the culture for the better. The musical conformity to the culture that has been rampant since Vatican II has greatly contributed to people thinking of the church as irrelevant. If they can get pop music anywhere outside of Mass, why take the trouble of going to Mass to hear it there, and, even if they do go there, what is so special about Mass anyhow?

It is not automatic that sacred music be quite distinct from the secular music of a given culture, but it is to our benefit, in a strange way, that this is the case today. The sharp distinction in song gives the church a clear niche in the music marketplace. Where does one go for sacred music? To a church of course. A church is a house of God, so it should have an aesthetic that breathes this reality.

Closely related to this concept is the fact that, not only is sacred music distinct

in our culture, but it is *new* to our culture. As Swain has noted, very few people, even within Catholicism, have been exposed to Gregorian chant or Renaissance polyphony in a sufficient way. This provides sacred music with another benefit today: novelty.

Novelty is a word with negative connotations inside the church, but in this context it is an attractive thing. If young people are looking for something new, relevant, and even counter-cultural, they will find it in sacred music. This music is as different from pop music as a sunset is from a fireworks display. One comes quietly and naturally to the scene, and, after a glorious appearance, slowly fades away, while the other loudly and artificially bursts onto the stage and departs quickly, leaving behind smoke and ringing ears.

Part III of *Sacred Treasure* is about how building liturgical traditions is not something that can be done *ad hoc*, but only over centuries. It takes more than one generation to generate a lasting liturgical practice, so the test of time becomes the “infallible guide” for Swain in determining the “classical” quality of music or any other work of art.

One of the most interesting segments of part III is the Semantic Range Experiment. Swain gives students three options for musical accompaniment to a wedding procession: J.S. Bach’s Overture to the Fourth Orchestral Suite (slow section), Beethoven’s Symphony No. 3 (second movement) and one of the Chopin nocturnes. After hearing the recordings, students always vote unanimously (on paper ballots) for the Bach option.

That certain types of music are better suited for certain events than other types of music should not be an earth-shaking notion. However, Swain’s experiment helps

to lead the doubters in the right direction. If it is so abundantly clear to students which musical selection best corresponds with a wedding procession, it should easily follow that certain types of song would be better suited (and perhaps even foundational) for Christian worship. Plainchant leads the way, with Renaissance polyphony following in its train.

A nuance to this experiment is that while the students always choose Bach for weddings, they do not share the same adjectives used to describe the music. In other words, *unity, serenity, peace, family, springtime, newness, love, beginning, opportunity, celebration, joy* and *commitment* could all come up as being associated with weddings. This indicates that while not all music is equal when it comes to weddings (or any other event), there is a semantic range within which various concepts can fit.

For chant, there can be an abundance of associated terms, yet there would likely be unanimous agreement from students on its appropriateness for, say, a Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday. *Sacred, solemn, humble, eternal, heavenly, beautiful, tempered, respectful, prayerful, and dignified* could all be used concerning chant, which would easily beat out heavy metal, jazz, and country music for ecclesiastical functions. The lesson: we should expect uniformity for overall types of music, but not for specific descriptions of that music.

While most of *Sacred Treasure* is easy to understand, it might take a careful reading to reconcile a section in chapter 7 ("Why Plainchant Is Essentially Sacred") and the conclusion in chapter 12, which contains this sentence: "There is nothing intrinsically sacred about any music or any kind

of music, if by 'intrinsically' one imagines a music divorced from all possible contexts, an empty signifier, as one could imagine a brand new combination of English morphemes [put together] in one's head to make a new word. "

Regardless of whether sacred music is such, absolutely speaking or only in relation to other music, the importance of context plays a large role in Swain's book. The reader will be encouraged to think, if he has not been doing so already, that, just as someone might ask, "What does this word mean?" so we should ask "What does this music mean?" Put another way, the question could be "What realities do these sounds convey?" or "Which emotions, concepts, or goals are represented, not just in the words, but in the actual delivery of this song?"

There are other contestants, but coming to a deeper understanding of which music a given situation calls for might be the major benefit of *Sacred Treasure*. This is made possible by Swain's mixture of expertise with everyday explanations, making the book constructive, not only for choir directors and choristers, but also for those with little or no musical knowledge.

While *Sacred Treasure* is a gem—a pearl, to be precise—it is also a pearl of great price. The long paperback costs \$59.95. However, that can probably be overcome by buying in bulk (to have copies for those inquirers mentioned at the beginning of this review) or even rounding up colleagues interested in buying as a group. Contact Liturgical Press for details. ❖

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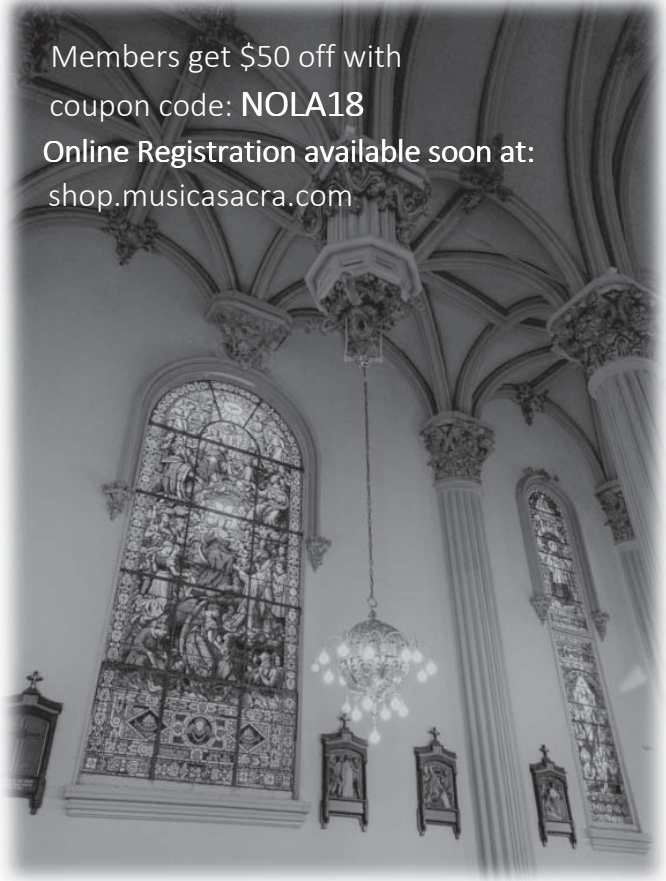
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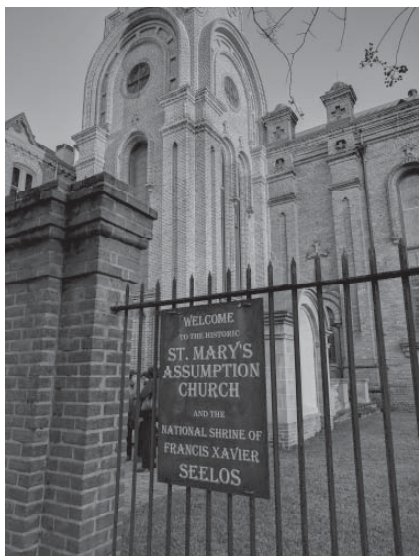
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A black and white photograph of the interior of St. Mary's Assumption Church. The image shows a high, vaulted ceiling with intricate architectural details, including columns and a large, ornate chandelier hanging from the center. A large, arched stained-glass window is visible on the left, and several smaller, framed religious paintings or plaques are mounted on the walls below. The overall atmosphere is grand and historic.

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Winter Sacred Music 2018
January 8-12, 2018
St. Mary's Assumption Church
New Orleans, Louisiana

Registration Details

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All participants will participate in the chant and polyphony choirs of their choosing. Please indicate your section (Soprano, Alto, Tenor or Bass) for the polyphony choir. It is not necessary to choose your choirs prior to the course.

Payment

Your Tuition includes: Nonrefundable \$75 deposit, all tuition for course, course materials, and meals as listed on course schedule.

Check or credit card payment must accompany registration. Registration must be postmarked on or before November 15 (Early Bird) or December 8 (Regular). For any registrations after that date, add \$50 late fee. You may register online at <https://shop.musicasacra.com/>.

Cancellation: Requests received in writing at the CMAA Office will receive a refund less the non-refundable \$75 deposit. All requests for refund must be received at the CMAA office by December 15th to receive a refund. Refunds will be processed after the Winter Sacred Music course completion unless other arrangements with the office are made.

Member Discounts

With a current CMAA Parish Membership, the members' rate is offered to anyone in the parish community. If your name is not on the parish membership, include the parish name on your registration form. If you have a current CMAA individual membership, the members' rate is available to you; it is not transferable to another person. For online registrations, you **must** use the member discount code to receive the member rate.

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HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS are available at the Pontchartrain Hotel, 2031 St. Charles Ave., New Orleans, LA 70130, Tel: 1-504-323-1400. Rooms are available at the special conference price of \$109 per room per night, Single or \$119 per room per night, Double, plus tax, for Sunday – Thursday nights (higher rates apply on weekends). Make your reservation by November 27, 2017 to get the special group rate. Please mention "Church Music Association of America" if calling the hotel directly to make reservations. The hotel is walking distance from the churches.

Amenities include complimentary wireless high speed internet access in all guest rooms, complimentary local calls, complimentary USA today, discounted valet parking at \$15 per day (discounted from \$30/day), full service restaurants and bar, an onsite fitness center.

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Church Music Association of America
CMAA Winter Sacred Music 2018 Registration form

January 8-12, 2018 * St. Mary's Assumption Church * New Orleans, LA

Please print. **Early bird** registrations forms must be postmarked by November 15. **Regular** registration forms must be postmarked by December 8. If registering more than one person, fill out another form - photocopy form as necessary. You may also register on the CMAA website at: <http://shop.musicasacra.com/>.

If you have not received email confirmation by December 20, please contact the CMAA office (505) 263-6298 or programs@musicasacra.com.

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Winter Sacred Music 2018 Registration

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CMAA Member Registration	\$335	\$385	\$435	\$ _____
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CHURCH MUSIC ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA ANNUAL FUND 2016

Funding of CMAA programs and operations comes primarily through membership fees, attendance at our programs, sales of our publications, and through the Annual Fund. Your generous support of the Annual Fund allows us to offer worthy applicants tuition scholarships to attend our training programs and to offer student and seminarian tuition rates. With the extra financial support the CMAA receives from its contributors, we are also able to offer new types of training programs, such as the Winter Sacred Music conference, the new Ward Method courses, Chant Intensive, and to underwrite the costs of bringing in world-class directors and teachers.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, and the volunteers who help make all our programs successful, I thank you for your financial assistance during calendar year 2016.

If there are any errors or omissions in our recognition lists, please accept my apology and send a correction to us at gm@musicasacra.com or call us at (505) 263-6298.

Our closing Mass at the 2017 Colloquium in Saint Paul, MN will be offered for the intentions of our generous benefactors.

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In 2014, the CMAA board of directors established the CMAA Annual Fund – a campaign to generate contributions beyond dues from members and others. Monies raised through the annual fund are support the organization’s general operating expenses as well as specific programs.

The annual fund allows the CMAA to meet the organization’s day-to-day challenges and strengthens its financial foundation. Gifts to the fund are used to support:

Annual Fund Projects and Programs

- ❑ **Online publication of a comprehensive free library** of educational materials for choir directors and others. Materials include numerous books on chant as well as the many CMAA publications.
- ❑ **Publication, distribution, and sponsorship of a wide array of books** useful in promoting sacred music. The CMAA is also active in sponsoring new publications such as the *Parish Book of Chant*, the *Simple Choral Gradual*, the *Simple English Propers*, and our latest new publication: *Now I Walk In Beauty – 100 Songs and Melodies for School and Choir*.
- ❑ **Continuing-education programs**, including Chant Intensive workshops, the annual Colloquium, our Winter Sacred Music courses, and Ward courses. The CMAA continues to develop new educational programs and training to support the needs of musicians and clergy. The CMAA also supports regional workshops sponsored by local groups through advertising and materials.
- ❑ **Commissions of new music.** Although promoting the use of the vast repertory of existing music in the public domain is a key part of our annual programs, it is also crucial to encourage the composition of new music. When new engravings are needed for our programs, they are made public at our website.
- ❑ **Scholarships for students and seminarians** to attend our programs. Every year we receive many requests for funding; providing scholarships to support these requests is crucial for the future of the Church in promoting sacred music to seminarians and students. Because of your generosity, **48** scholarships and reduced rate registrations were awarded for attendance at the 2017 Colloquium and the 2017 Winter Sacred Music conference.
- ❑ **Colloquia** on the national level for all members, including special events and recitals. The liturgies and recitals were open to the public.

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For information about making a gift of securities, please visit our website.*

With your help, we will be able to strengthen our services and enhance our support of the profession in the new millennium.

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* The Church Music Association of America is a 501(c)(3) organization. Donations are deductible to the extent of the law.

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