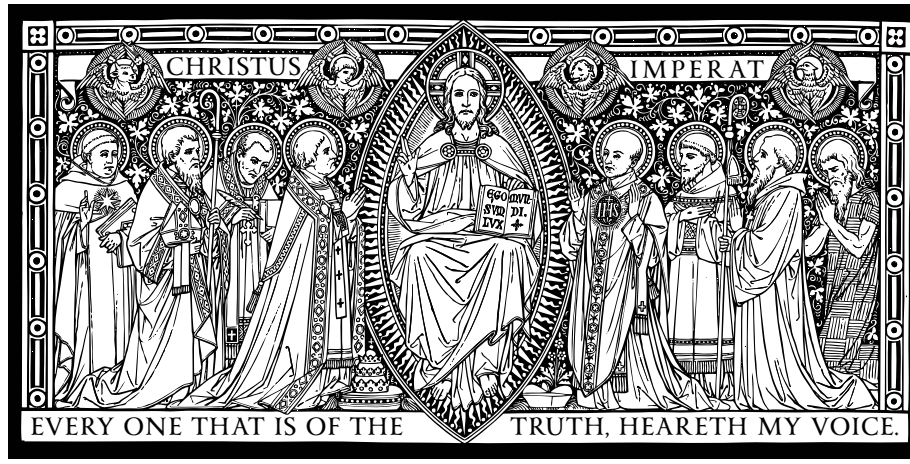

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Editoral

The Choice of Music

Sacred music is an important bulwark against the forces of secularization.

by William Mahrt

What music should be chosen for the liturgy? Given any particular Mass, the average person in the pew has little choice. But who does? Archbishop (now Cardinal) Roche, Prefect of the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments made the following comment in addressing Pope Francis' Motu Proprio *Traditionis custodes*:

> When we go to Mass, even when the music perhaps isn't something that we would personally choose—and again, this is individualism coming in—then we've got to realize that we are standing at the side of Christ on his cross, who gives everything back to the Father through this Eucharist.[1]

Further, Archbishop Roche laments the decline in the observance of Sundays, attributing it to aspects of the culture—"secularization and . . . the change of the status of the Sunday." He says that "when we go to church, when we celebrate the liturgy, we're there to worship God. We're not there to entertain ourselves or to entertain the community."[2]

It seems that according to the good archbishop, "personal choice" smacks of the fault of individualism, and the implication is that whatever is sung or played must just be accepted. It is not your choice. Offer it up! But it is still the choice of someone, the musicians, the pastor, the liturgist, and why is their choice not also subject to the fault of individualism? This touches upon a very important principle of liturgy: the liturgy is received, not just the choice of those celebrating it. Archbishop Roche is a strong proponent of following the liturgy the church prescribes, so much so that he rejects the continuation of the celebration of

[1]Quoted in Cindy Wooden, "Archbishop Says Most Bishops See Importance of 'Traditionis Custodes,'" *Catholic News Service*, January 21, 2022 <https://catholicnews.com/archbisop-says-most-bishops-see-importance-of-traditionis-custodes/>.

[2]Deborah Castellano Lubov, "A Conversation with Future Cardinal Roche, Prefect of Divine Liturgy, Sacraments," *Vatican News*, June 16, 2022 <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2022-06/interview-with-future-cardinal-roche-prefect-of-divine-liturgy.html>.

William Mahrt is the president of the CMAA and the editor of Sacred Music.

the old Mass, the Tridentine Mass.[3]

Just as the church prescribes the texts of the liturgy as given, so also is the music, in principle, given. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum concilium*, gives "principle place" to Gregorian chant (¶116), and the books of the liturgy prescribe exactly which chants are to be sung on any particular occasion.[4] It also gives a place to polyphony and organ music. The principal polyphony of the pre-Reformation era incorporated Gregorian melodies; the polyphony of the later Renaissance imitated the style of Gregorian melodies in an imitative texture. The earliest organ music was simply improvisation on Gregorian melodies; in the later period much of it imitated classical polyphony, especially in the fugue.

In practice, there are quite a few possible degrees of the incorporation of chant and polyphony, as well as modern styles of sacred music. Pope John Paul II, while he acknowledged the place for a wide range of music in the liturgy, gave chant a normative role as a model of all sacred music:

> With regard to compositions of liturgical music, I make my own the "general rule" that St. Pius X formulated in these words: "The more closely a composition for church approaches in its movement, inspiration, and savour the Gregorian melodic 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."[5]

Archbishop Roche also makes frequent reference to the Second Vatican Council and its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum concilium*. It is there that the role of sacred music is laid out in principle and practice; the whole of Chapter VI of the constitution is dedicated to sacred music. In addition to its endorsement of Gregorian chant, there is a statement about the completely sung liturgy being normative:

> 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 (¶113).

This could easily be dismissed as being a harmless general principle, but the key is celebration "solemnly in song." For the fathers of the council, "solemnly" could only have meant the Solemn High Mass, with deacon and subdeacon ("assistance of sacred ministers"), where practically everything to be pronounced aloud is to be sung.[6]

[3]It might be noted that a statement of Pope Francis is even more absolute: in speaking of the desired unity of the church as created by a complete unity of the use of the Mass of Paul VI, he says "As I have already written, I intend that this unity be re-established in the whole Church of the Roman Rite." Apostolic Letter, *Desiderio desideravi* (June 29, 2022), ¶61.

[4]The repertory of Gregorian chant has been published for the ordinary form in the *Graduale Romanum* (Sablé-sur-Sarthe: Solesmes, 1974); there the repertory of chants for Sundays and solemnities remains unchanged for the most part, though reordered for the revision of the calendar; the repertory for the feasts of the saints is another matter.

[5]Pope St. John Paul II, *Chirograph for the Centenary of the Motu Proprio "Tra le sollecitudini" on Sacred Music* (December 3, 2003), ¶12 <https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/2003/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_20031203_musica-sacra.html>.

[6]In the traditional Solemn High Mass, the only thing spoken by the priest is the blessing at the end of Mass; if a bishop celebrates, he sings it. The

Truly sacred music is the greatest hedge against secularization, and the proper genres of sacred music can be an effective force in re-sacralizing the liturgy.

Now there is some wisdom in the good archbishop's comments: secularization is a serious problem for our liturgy today, and as well, the widespread treatment of music at Mass as entertainment does not fulfill the needs of the sacred liturgy. But he overlooks the elephant in the room: *truly sacred music is the greatest hedge against secularization, and the proper genres of sacred music can be an effective force in re-sacralizing the liturgy.* Gregorian chant must remain the norm, preferably sung in Latin, but also now in English. Still, gradual improvement is the normal way for the principles of sacred music to be achieved. A basic foundation for improvement is the texts of the music as provided by the council:

> The texts intended to be sung must always be in conformity with Catholic doctrine; indeed they should be drawn chiefly from holy scripture and from liturgical sources (¶121).

"Songs" with non-scriptural or non-liturgical texts and in the style of present-day popular music run the serious risk of desacralization, since they replicate the ethos of a distinctly secular popular culture; what is sacred must be in some way or the other, distinct from the secular. These songs could gradually be replaced with hymns with proper texts. The music of traditional hymns remains sacred and cannot be confused with the music of entertainment. Likewise the accompaniment of the organ conveys a sacred quality that combos of secular instruments cannot.[7] While it is true that the ethos of the best hymns may be slightly Protestant, vigilance in their choice can minimize this. Nevertheless, the four-square rhythm and harmonization of hymns leaves this genre as not surviving comparison with the Gregorian Propers of the Mass. In practice, the number of hymns sung is somewhat limited, while for each day of the year, there is a distinct set of chants. Moreover, the rhythms of the chants evoke a sense of eternity, of the sacred, better than the strongly metrical hymns.

There is a slight mismatch in the usual Catholic employment of hymns. Protestant tradition insists that the whole hymn should be sung, and this is certainly the case with the liturgical source of metric hymns, the hymns of the Divine Office, which are the sole

sermon, of course, would also be spoken, but this is not a formal part of the old Mass—the *Ordo Missæ* of the old rite makes no provision for the sermon.

[7] I recall having attended some years ago the Sunday Mass at a midwestern cathedral, in which the usual repertory of songs was accompanied by a heterogeneous group of singers and instruments to a decidedly heterogeneous effect; a few years later I attended that Mass at which the same music was sung by the congregation, but accompanied by the organ. The music was transformed by the accompaniment, which projected a sacred affect. Often the instruments are what undermine the sacred character of the music.

liturgical action at that point in the office. On the other hand, the Gregorian chants of the Proper of the Mass, are designed to last for just the duration of the liturgical action they accompany. Our employment of hymns incorporates this principle that the music accompanying another liturgical function should last just for the duration of that action. In the case of hymns, this most often involves a truncation of the hymn, usually singing just the first verse or two of the hymn.

While the Propers of the Mass accompany another liturgical action, the Ordinary of the Mass is itself the liturgical action; this makes it the most suitable thing for the congregation to sing. That the melodies for the ordinary can be repeated over several Sundays means that the congregation has the opportunity to learn to sing them well.

If the singing of the ordinary is well practiced by a congregation, then the singing of the propers can be left to the choir; a skillful choir can sing the great tradition of Gregorian chants. The chants in Latin convey a solemnity and sacredness that currently available English adaptations do not quite achieve, but there is much work being done on this, so that gradually there will be more satisfactory settings. I am sometimes asked why are you not working on the setting of Gregorian chants in English? My answer has always been, but who is going to keep the Latin chants? Without the continuous experience of the Latin chants, their setting into English may not be effective. This is one of the positive features of Fr. Samuel Weber's English chant versions, that they are founded upon his long and extensive experience of the Latin chants.

This is true of the entire context of the sacred liturgy. The celebration of the Tridentine[8] Mass is unambiguously sacred, but the sacrality of of the new Mass has been compromised by a number of innovations that were not in the best interest of the liturgy. Moreover, the traditional music prescribed by the council, chant, polyphony, and organ music, had its formation in the Tridentine Mass. The continued celebration of the High Mass in the Tridentine form is essential for the comprehension of the proper employment of sacred music in the new rite.

I return to the basic motivation for the work of the CMAA: *The liturgy must be sacred and it must be beautiful.* The renovation of the Sunday which Archbishop Roche calls for depends upon its re-sacralization. Sacred music can be the medium of the re-establishment of a truly sacred liturgy. The fact that the new rite is so often celebrated in a way that is not quite sacred or beautiful does not mean that it cannot be done; it should be; in many places it is being done. And a liturgy that is beautiful can be a significant motivation for Catholics to attend Mass every Sunday, since the Gregorian Propers of the Mass as well as the lessons and orations are unique to each Sunday. A beautiful liturgy depends upon many elements: architecture, vestments, solemn ceremonial action, the use of bells and incense, truly sound and inspired preaching, and, of course, music—music being among the most important of these. ❖

[8]I do not say "Traditional Latin Mass," as many of the advocates of the Tridentine Mass do, since I contend that a Mass in the new rite celebrated in Latin and using Gregorian chant and polyphony is also a traditional Latin Mass.

Articles

Cantare amantis est: The Place of Chant in the Spiritual Life

The sure musical and spiritual guidance offered by the church's chant can warm the heart to worship God alone.

by A Benedictine Monk of Norcia

When John Cassian and his friend Germanos set out from their monastery in Bethlehem in the late fourth century to seek wisdom and holiness among the desert fathers of Egypt, one of the hermits whom they visited, Abba Moses the Black, surprised the two pilgrims with an abrupt question: what are you doing here?

> You have given up your country, your families, everything worldly in order to embrace a life in a foreign land among rude and uncultured people like us. Tell me, what was your purpose and what goal did you set before yourselves in doing all this?

Of course, the pious young monks are ready with the "correct" answer: we did it for the kingdom of heaven! But Abba Moses isn't satisfied. He presses them to draw a distinction between the goal (*telos*) of their monastic life (which is indeed the kingdom of heaven) and the immediate purpose (*skopos*) which leads infallibly to the goal and which, he says, is purity of heart.

This distinction between the final goal and the immediate purpose leads to a further distinction: between the immediate purpose itself and the tools used to achieve that purpose. These tools are the various observances of traditional monastic life: prayer, fasting, vigils, silence, obedience, etc. The rest of Abba Moses' conference to the two wandering monks is occupied with convincing them of the need for the virtue of discretion in order to know how to apply these tools in order to achieve their proper purpose (purity of heart), and thus arrive at the goal (the kingdom of heaven). He mocks the foolishness of monks who renounce large estates and then lose their tempers over a pen or a knife—a mistake they wouldn't have made if they had kept in mind the purpose for which they renounced their property in the first place.

Now I want to turn Abba Moses's question around to those of us devoted to Gregorian

The Monastero di San Benedetto in Monte is located near the ancient town of Nursia, birthplace of St. Benedict, founder of Western monasticism.

chant. Imagine that the holy Ethiopian hermit arrives at our next schola rehearsal and repeats his question to us: what are *we* doing here? Before we can answer his question, let's take note of the points of orientation he has already given us to work with: 1) While the ultimate goal (*telos*) of the spiritual life is the kingdom of heaven, 2) its immediate purpose (*skopos*) is "purity of heart." 3) All the activities of the spiritual life are tools to be used in reaching the immediate purpose. 4) The virtue of discretion is necessary in order to know how to use these tools to achieve purity of heart.

The Heart

But what is the heart? For the fathers, as for the authors of holy scripture, the word heart has a rich and multifaceted meaning. It certainly includes its common modern usage to indicate the seat of the emotions, but it is not limited to that. It includes too what modern spiritual writers mean by the will, and even the reason. In the scriptures, the Lord writes his law on our hearts, he gives us hearts to know him, out of the heart proceed evil thoughts that defile a man, the hearts of the disciples burn in the presence of the Risen One. The heart is the core of the man (the Latin word for heart, after all, is "cor"), where not only his feelings but his most fundamental beliefs reside. These "heartfelt" beliefs immediately affect the emotions and are at the root of all the choices we make. These are not speculative beliefs, either, but beliefs about what we truly need to be happy, about whether we are worthy of love, and what is worthy of our love. Ultimately, the heart is the power in us to love and be loved. And because the only object finally worthy of our love is God himself, all throughout scripture there is a rich poetic interchangeability in the use of the images of marriage and worship as opposed to adultery and idolatry.

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Purity, Positive and Negative

For a man to have "purity of heart" then, means not only that he assents to true doctrines and that he makes the right choices when he takes the trouble to force himself. It means that the fundamental beliefs that determine his choices are true. It means that he seeks happiness and love only where they can truly be found, and is neither elated by possessing what is not God nor saddened by its loss. This fundamental "rightness" of heart can be defined in both its positive and negative aspect. On its positive side, the heart is pure when it truly fulfills the double commandment of charity, the perfect love of God and neighbor. In its negative side, which is necessary in order to achieve the positive side, the heart is pure when it is free from attachment to anything less than God. It is this negative sense that predominates in ascetical literature, and when Cassian writes it, he is paraphrasing the Greek term "apatheia" (passionlessness) which was the acknowledged ideal among the Greek-speaking desert fathers.

The term shouldn't be misunderstood to mean a literal absence of felt passions; as though the monks believed perfection to lie in never feeling hungry or indignant. Rather, the negative ideal of "passionlessness" is achieved when the monk never seeks to satisfy a passion as an end in itself, because what is treated as an end is treated as a god.

But the negative aspect on its own is not actually possible. The heart of man is made to love, indeed, to worship. If the ascetic attempts to purge every passion, every idol, from the altar of his heart, his heart will yet demand some object to adore. And this demand will be experienced as a rebellion of the emotions. Either the idols must be purged at the same time as affective love of the true God is built up, or the idols will simply return all the stronger. But no man hath ever seen God. Since the true God is invisible and cannot himself directly take the place of the idols (the passions), the Christian ascetic is compelled to treat the practice of virtues opposed to the passions as intermediate ends themselves. In order to uproot the idol of my own will, for instance, I must replace it with the concrete practice of obedience; to uproot the idol of gluttony, I embrace a rule of fasting; and so on with the other passions. This is the sense in which the various monastic observances function as tools for acquiring purity of heart. They stand in the place of the passions that the ascetic wishes to overcome for the sake of providing some concrete goal at which to aim. They fill the niche in the shrine of the heart where the idol once stood, but they do so specifically in order not to be worshipped.

But neither is this stopgap system of setting up virtuous observances in the shrines where the passions had once been worshipped enough to achieve purity of heart. The very practices of virtue which replace the formerly-idolized passions stand in constant peril of becoming idols themselves. And this is one of the most frustrating ways in which the passions return to their place of worship in the heart. The peril only grows once the ascetic has tasted the good effects of his spiritual labors. If he knows by experience and thus values the freedom of soul that comes from mastery of his stomach, he is all the more likely to overvalue the fasting that led to it; to forget that it is not itself the goal of his work nor even the only way to get there. This is the real burden of Abba Moses' insistence that all the practices of the spiritual struggle are only tools. As he says, "perfection is not to be found in them; it is acquired through them." In summary, then, the negative aspect of purity of heart is that the heart worships nothing that is unworthy of worship and thereby it remains free for the positive aspect, free to love and worship more intensely the true God.

All the practices of the spiritual struggle are only tools. As Abba Moses says, "perfection is not to be found in them; it is acquired through them."

Insensibility and Its Medicines

Which brings us to the other side of the problem. In our fallen hearts, we find not only the tendency to worship that which is unworthy of worship, but also a painful lack of desire to worship that which is worthy. This is why the fathers ranked "rock-like insensibility," too, among the passions to be uprooted. The remedies they give for this passion are of two kinds.

On the one hand, in direct reaction to coldness of heart, the fathers advise a monk to pray spontaneously to God in groans and tears, to force himself to emotion by reflecting on his sins, or on the four last things, and even by wearing out his body by repeated prostrations. St. Benedict, for example, recommends this sort of prayer to his monks every day but advises that it be "short and pure."

On the other hand, in order to actively promote a stable "warmth" of heart, the fathers recommended long periods of sung prayer every day. This practice has come down to us as the Divine Office and even in the briefest of the traditional forms that have come down to the contemporary Latin West, the canonical hours entail several hours of singing every day. (The longest of traditional forms in the early Greek East was practiced by a community in Constantinople known as the "Sleepless Monks," because their system of rotating choirs meant that the Divine Office was sung literally without interruption, twenty-four hours a day.)

Sung, liturgical prayer addresses the problem of "rock-like insensibility" in a very different way from the spontaneous, tearful prayers a monk may offer in private. When the monks interrupted their solitary weeping, then, and raised their voices to address almighty God directly, the universal tradition of the church in East and West clothed their words in song. And these melodies were not mere decorations on the text but themselves served an ascetical purpose all their own.

Music and the Heart

It is the special power of music to affect the emotions directly without need for intellectual mediation. As soon as the emotions are touched, the heart, the seat of the emotions, is also touched. To attempt to describe this emotional power of music in words is to approach the inexpressible, the mysterious. One reaches for metaphors. When the text of a prayer moves from simple, spoken recitation into song, the difference is like a film changing from black and white into color. The precise difference resists definition, continually demands reference to direct experience in a similar way that color cannot be described to those who have never seen it. But we can certainly say that one quality that is introduced along with melody is emotion. A chanted text is not only clothed in solemnity, but its rational content is now inseparable from its direct appeal to the emotions, to the heart. This is the case even

It is the special power of music to affect the emotions directly without need for intellectual mediation.

with the simplest of recitatives sung by an untrained voice. The emotional appeal may be weak or strong, pleasant or otherwise, but it is present by virtue of the mere presence of music.

The connection between music and emotion flows in both directions. Not only does the presence of music arouse the emotions, but the presence of emotion in heart presses for expression in music. A man who feels strong emotion wants to express it, and the most natural way for him to do so is to sing. And a man who begins to sing despite not feeling any particular emotions in his heart, will find that the song itself can, if he allows it, inspire the very emotions that would have inspired the song. This phenomenon is why sung prayer has the power to combat "rock-like insensibility."

But the affective dimension of chanted prayer is not limited to the fight against this particular passion. Rather, it is this affective power of song that has ensured the chanted Divine Office its central place in the monastic life since its beginnings. As we have seen, the whole dynamic movement of the spiritual life can be synthesized into seeking purity of heart; negatively by removing the heart's attachment to the passions, and positively by cultivating its love for God. We saw too that in depriving the heart of the consolations it once found in the passions, we leave it hungry for some affective relief which it seeks either by returning to the passions it once idolized or idolizing the virtuous practices it used to supplant them. By filling the monastic day with long periods of sung prayer, then, the founders of monastic life both anticipated the positive need to cultivate the heart's love for God, and provided the necessary compensation for the negative work of uprooting the passions. It is the same as when a monk wishes to cultivate love for his neighbor. He begins by behaving as though he loved him, and over time he grows really to feel sincere love for him. Just so, if he begins to speak to God in song, as though his heart were overflowing with love for him, over time the melodies soak into the soil of the heart making it a rich and fertile ground for the seeds of grace to spring up and bear the fruit of divine charity.

From the Monastic Choir to the Modern Parish

What has worked for the monks all through the centuries can work for ordinary Catholics as well. For one thing, the body of teaching that we think of as "monastic spirituality" is not the private preserve of spiritual experts. It began simply as the collected sayings of laymen who wished to live their Christianity to its fullest as the age of martyrdom was ending. The early monks had hearts the same as we do, and the God they sought to love has not changed since their time. For another thing, the long hours of psalmody that filled the monks' days were, in one sense, an extended preparation for the chanted Sunday Mass that modern Catholics retain in common with them. (At

What has worked for the monks all through the centuries can work for ordinary Catholics as well.

least in principle the chanted Mass is still the norm; how remote that may be from the reality in most modern Catholic parishes is a different question.) The music of the Divine Office has always been simpler and more subdued in tone when compared to the melodies prescribed for the Holy Sacrifice and this reflects an intuitive sense of right proportion on the part of the ancient composers. The divine presence of God is always worthy of adoration from the heart, and so chanted prayer is always proper in principle. But the preeminent act of adoration is the Mass, since God makes himself there present in a preeminent way under the sacramental species, which calls for a correspondingly greater intensity of devotion. This more intense devotion is both expressed and elicited by the more elaborate and emotionally evocative melodies which the tradition prescribes for the eucharistic sacrifice.

The divine presence of God is always worthy of adoration from the heart, and so chanted prayer is always proper in principle. But the preeminent act of adoration is the Mass.

Nor should we forget that the emotional power of chanted prayer is not limited in its scope to those who are actually producing the music by their own voices. While it is true that much of the monastic office was and is sung by the entire community, there have always been substantial portions of the liturgy sung by a few voices, or even only one, while the rest of the community listened. In the Egyptian deserts where John Cassian learned his ascetical theology, the psalmody was almost entirely sung by a solo voice while the brothers listened in silence. Its affective power was, if anything, increased by this limitation, such that when discussing sources of compunction, Cassian mentions the power of the beauty of a brother's chanting to touch the heart and bring forth tears. St. Benedict, too, while setting the liturgy in order in his Holy Rule, makes a point of mentioning that not all the brothers should be allowed to sing the antiphons or read the lessons, but only those who are able to edify their hearers.

When the music itself is technically demanding, it is more likely that, if anything, the listeners will enjoy a greater emotional benefit from the music than the singers themselves do. Its affective dimension is in constant tension with the amount of attention demanded for the proper technical production of the music. There is only so far that a singer can hold himself in receptive openness to the emotional influence of the music when he is also thinking about reaching the high F, keeping his falling fourths in tune, and managing his breath for the line-and-a-half-long melisma. This is a paradox present in all performing arts. The attention that the singer gives to the technical perfection of

the chant may, for him, decrease his immediate capacity to be moved by its emotional content, but it increases the music's capacity to move others. As the music approaches its artistic perfection, the affectivity inherent in its melodies will, to the listener, sound more effortless, almost inevitable, until the heart forgets that anyone is making an effort to produce the music and it tastes something of the blissful stillness that accompanies every earthly foretaste of the infinite beauty of the vision of God.

Discretion

Does all this mean that the only criterion for worthy liturgical music is that it should stir up the emotions? Far from it. As we learned from Abba Moses, the virtue of discretion is necessary in every activity of the spiritual life in order to ensure that the tools are used for their proper purpose and not treated as ends in themselves. If such unpleasant activities as fasting and wearing a hair-shirt can become objects of disordered attachment, then singing, a practice that is specifically intended to be pleasant, is even more liable to misuse. Whenever a young monk, then, knowing that he himself lacked discretion, wanted guidance in how to go about his spiritual work, he would seek out a holy old man to ask for guidance, for a "word of salvation." (This is just what our friends Cassian and Germanos were doing when Abba Moses asked them his disconcerting question.) This holy old man was a kind of master-craftsman in the spiritual art. But in the case of holiness, the true artist is the Holy Ghost. The sanctified monk has become a vessel of the Holy Ghost, and his perceptions and judgments are treated as divine messages for the one to whom the holy man speaks. Ideally, a spiritual guide would not only be a saint, but would have arrived at holiness by the same means which he recommends to others. What he passes on is not speculative knowledge, but the fruit of his experience. In the case of music, then, our ideal guide to its use in the spiritual life would not only have to be a saint, but also a great musician.

Does all this mean that the only criterion for worthy liturgical music is that it should stir up the emotions? Far from it.

This happens to be exactly the case for Gregorian chant. Whether or not one accepts the traditional attribution of its composition to St. Gregory the Great himself, the case is the same. The familiar image of St. Gregory, vested in the pallium and tiara, composing the chant at the dictation of the Divine Dove on his shoulder stands as the allegorical key to how the Latin church has received its corpus of liturgical song. St. Gregory, in this allegory, stands for both the spiritual father of the monastic desert (he was, after all, a monk himself) and for the apostolic authority of the church. The dove on his shoulder reminds us that the words of salvation spoken by the saints and by the hierarchy are not their own words, but the words of the Holy Ghost speaking through them. Just so the "Gregorian" melodies of the Latin liturgy have always been

treated as sacred themselves. They were passed from cantor to cantor, each memorizing (learning "by heart") the melodies of the entire Roman repertoire, then travelling to the furthest ends of Christendom with a word of salvation that only they could share, but which would enrich the hearts of all who received it.

If the Holy Ghost has guided the millennial development of the church's traditional liturgy, then his role in the development of the chant corresponds exactly to the symbolic dove on the papal shoulder; though his human stenographers may have been legion. And the chant that bears St. Gregory's name was not offered just to one particular monk to guide his private devotions, nor even to a single monastery, but to the whole Latin Church. If we compare it in this respect to the "words of salvation" given by the desert fathers, we see that it corresponds less to the specific advice that might be given for one brother's personal needs (how do I resist this temptation? where should I build my cell?), and more to the generally accepted "norms of the fathers" which marked out the safe, middle road of virtue.

Reply to Abba Moses

By now we're ready to give a much better answer to Abba Moses than Cassian and Germanos were when they first came to his desert hut. We know that our ultimate goal is the kingdom of heaven, but that in order to arrive there, we need to acquire purity of heart. We've seen that this purity is both negative and positive: negative in the sense of removing the passions from the heart, positive in the sense of perfectly loving God and neighbor. But the negative side is impossible on its own, since the heart cannot help but love something, and the positive side is difficult since we all to some extent suffer from "rock-like insensibility" to the infinite lovableness of God. We wean our hearts away from the pleasures of the passions, and stimulate them to feel affective love for God by joining music to our prayers since music touches the heart directly whether or not we already feel emotions. By perfecting the artistic performance of the chant we increase its power to warm the hearts of its hearers, and by submitting to the Gregorian repertoire we follow the safe road marked out by the holy and God-bearing fathers who reached holiness before us.

In so many words, we are helping ourselves and everyone who attends the solemn liturgies at which we sing to become pure of heart. Insofar as we achieve this, then, we are truly singing for the greater glory of God. Since, as St. Irenæus famously says, "the glory of God is a living man, and the life of man is the vision of God" and Our Lord himself assures us that "the pure of heart are blessed, for they shall see God." ❖

By perfecting the artistic performance of the chant we increase its power to warm the hearts of its hearers.

The Form and Function of the Alleluia and Its Melisma

The placement and structure of the melisma contributes to the rhetorical and liturgical effects of the Alleluia.

by William Mahrt

The word "alleluia" receives numerous musical settings in the liturgy: as a psalm antiphon in the Divine Office, as the conclusion of several Mass propers, especially in the Easter Season, but most importantly, as a separate chant of the Proper of the Mass.

I will discuss aspects of this Mass Alleluia from several points of view, particularly concerning its role and significance in the liturgy. In this I rely upon some very excellent work of two recent scholars. Fundamental scholarship on the alleluia was carried out by Karlheinz Schlager, whose index and edition of alleluias in the manuscript tradition has provided enormous access to a very large repertory.[1] His article in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart,* the great German equivalent of the *New Grove,* is a compendium of a lifetime of work on the subject. James McKinnon's comprehensive study of the Mass Proper, *The Advent Project*, has received some critical reception, but its significance is far greater than the issues which other scholars have raised.[2] His article in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* gives a comprehensive and masterful view of the whole history and aesthetics of the genre. What I have to add has to do with its function in the liturgy of the Mass and in the musical phenomenon of the melisma, a unique feature of the alleluia, which is crucial to this function.

"Alleluia" occurs already in the Book of Psalms where some twenty psalms include "alleluia" at their heading, understood to have been an introductory chant to be sung before the psalm. It is thought that the singing of alleluia by the celebrant of the Easter Vigil followed by a verse of a psalm, represents this Hebrew practice. This seems to have been carried over into the Christian liturgy, in which in the early centuries, it was those "alleluia psalms" which were sung with "alleluia" as an antiphon.

The Ambrosian liturgy of Milan shows a pattern of three lessons in the Liturgy of the Word—Old Testament, Epistle, and Gospel—and that liturgy, after the Old Testament, sings a psalmellus (the equivalent of a gradual), after the Epistle an Alleluia, and

[1]Karl-Heinz Schlager, *Thematischer Katalog der ältesten Alleluia-Melodien*, Erlanger Arbeiten zur Musikwissenschaft, 2 (Munich: Walter Ricke, 1965); *Alleluia-Melodien*, Monumenta Monodica Medii Ævi, Bd. 7-8 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1968, 1987).

[2]James McKinnon, *The Advent Project: The Later-Seventh-Century Creation of the Roman Mass Proper* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

even another antiphon after the Gospel, fulfilling an archetypal liturgical protocol of following a lesson with the singing of a complementary chant. It was once assumed that the early Roman liturgy included a similar scheme of three lessons, with at least the first two followed by a chant. Willi Apel sketched out a hypothetical history of this three-lesson paradigm, in which the epistle was at first followed by a psalm (the equivalent of a tract) and then gradually replaced with an alleluia.[3] The problem with this scheme is that there is no evidence of the three-lesson scheme in the Roman liturgy. This issue has been given a definitive conclusion by Canon Georges Martimort, and it is well accepted by liturgists today.[4]

St. Augustine gives a famous witness to the structure of the Liturgy of the Word in his time. It was his custom to preach on each text of the liturgy in turn. And in doing so he gives us precious testimony of the performance of this liturgy. He begins preaching on the Old Testament lesson by saying "we have heard the lesson," meaning that both congregation and preacher listened together to the lesson. He then says, "I have heard the psalm," meaning that he listened to the cantor *and* the congregation singing the psalm. Finally, he says "you have heard the gospel," meaning he delivered it himself. This pattern of the Liturgy of the Word is understood to have been widespread in the earlier centuries of the Roman liturgy.

The history of the Roman alleluia has recently been illuminated by the discovery of Byzantine sources for some of the earliest melodies. The Byzantine usage did have three lessons, and there was an alleluia which followed the epistle; psalm verses for it are recorded, though it seems they were seldom sung. The link between Byzantium and Rome is demonstrated by melodic concordances between Byzantine alleluias and early Roman ones, a few even with Greek texts, and it is concluded on this basis that there was a significant adoption of Byzantine alleluias.[5]

This poses a problem in considering the instability of the alleluia. There are three principal early Roman alleluia melodies to which a number of texts are set. This is different from the gradual, in which a single system of melodic formulae of a mode is applied in a unique way to each of a number of texts. Rather, in the case of the alleluia, the exact same melody occurs with different texts. James McKinnon has defined three principal melodies; some of them have direct concordances with the psalms of the Byzantine chants:

1. Ostende, for the First Sunday of Advent, ten melodies, one shows a direct Byzantine concordance
2. Excita, for the Third Sunday of Advent, thirteen melodies, two Byzantine concordances
3. Dies sanctificatus, for the Third Mass of Christmas, twelve melodies, two Byzantine concordances

The use of the same melody for so many different texts suggests, as McKinnon says, "an apparent effort to render the repertory adequate for liturgical needs."[6] The various

[3]Willi Apel, *Gregorian Chant* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958), pp. 24–5.

[4]George Martimort, *Les Lectures liturgiques et leurs livres* (Tournhout: Brepols, 1992).

[5]Christian Thodberg, "Alleluia, II. Byzantine rite," *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians Online* (accessed November 8, 2022) <www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

[6]James McKinnon, "Alleluia, I. Latin rite, 3. 8th-century Roman repertory," *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians Online* (accessed

Melodic types of Eighth-Century Roman Alleluias
(From McKinnon in *New Grove* "Alleluia")

	mode	GR74	scripture	Feast, GR 1974	Feast, GR 1908
DIFFUSA EST TYPE					
Diffusa est	8	p.413	Ps. 44:3	Common BVM	*St. Lucy
Dominus dixit	8	43	Ps. 2:7	Christmas I	Christmas I
Dominus in Sina	8	236	Ps. 67:18–9	Ascension	Ascension
Lauda anima	8	355	Ps. 145:2	OT 29	-
Lauda Jerusalem (not Ostende type)		358	Ps. 147:1	OT30	Votive peace
Mittat tibi [Mittat vobis]	8	646	Ps. 19:3	Nuptial	Nuptial
Nimis honorati		431		Com. apos. outside PT	*Ss. Simon & Jude
Ostende nobis		16	Ps. 84:8	Advent I	Advent I
Paratum cor meum (not Ostende type)	3	344 -	Ps. 107:2	OT26	20 after Pentecost
Quoniam confirmata					-
Specie tua		416	Ps. 44:5	Com. BVM	Com. virg. martyr
DIES TYPE					
Dies sanctificatus	2	49	-	Christmas III	Christmas III
Disposui testamentum	2	489	Ps. 88:1	Com. pastors	-
Hic est discipulus	2	637	John 21:24	St. John apostle	St. John apostle
Hi sunt qui		-			
Inveni David	2	446	Ps. 88:21	Com. mart. outside PT	*St. Sylvester
Justus non conturbabitur	2	479	Ps. 36:24	Com. mart. outside PT	
Magnus sanctus Paulus		537	-	Conversion St. Paul	Conversion St. Paul
Quoniam Deus magnus [not type]	7	327	Ps. 94:3	OT31	25 after Pentecost
Sancti tui Domine . . . benedicent…		463	Ps. 111:10, 11	Com. mart. outside PT	Ss. Fab & Seb
Tu es Petrus		576	Mt. 16:18	Ss. Peter & Paul	Ss. Peter & Paul
Video cælos		634	Act 7:56	St. Stephen	Chair S. Peter Rome

	mode	GR74	scripture	Feast, GR 1974	Feast, GR 1908
EXCITA TYPE					
Ascendit Deus	4	236	Ps. 46:6	Ascension	Ascension
Cantate Domino cantate					
Cantate Domino … laudatio					
Cantate Domino … quia [not type]	1	330	Ps. 97:1	OT32	Com. mart. outside PT
Confitebuntur [not type]	7	478	Ps. 88:6	Com. mart. outside PT	Com. 1 mart. outside PT
Emitte Spiritum	4	253	-	Pentecost	Pentecost
Excita Domine	4	23	-	Advent III	Advent III
Exsultabunt sancti		-			
Lætatus sum [not type]	1	19	Ps. 121:1	Advent II	Advent II
Laudate Dominum … omnes [not type]	2	273	Ps. 116:1	Easter Saturday	-
Laudate Dominum … quoniam					
Laudate pueri [not type]	4	215	Ps. 112:1	Easter Saturday	Easter Saturday
Qui posuit fines	4	364	Ps. 147:3	OT32	Votive peace PT

texts which set the same melody are shown in the above table.

A further problem is posed by the state of the extant repertory of alleluia chants in the Roman liturgy. The other Propers of the Mass (introit, gradual, offertory, and communion) show stable transmission: the assignment of a particular chant to a particular day is surprisingly consistent. The student of chant who has sung the chants for a few years looks for the first time at the *Antiphonale Missarum Sextuplex*—the collation of the texts of the earliest manuscripts of Mass Propers—and is astonished to see the chants he is accustomed to singing already assigned to the days upon which he still sings them. This is not the case for the alleluias, whose assignment to liturgical days is not nearly so stable; frequently varying from place to place. This irregular transmission is an indication that it was most likely developed at a somewhat later time than the other propers.

My main point here is that the use of melisma in the alleluia is unique to this genre. To establish this, it is useful to look at the various types which differ in their use

November 8, 2022) <www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

of melisma. Some five types of chant melody can be distinguished according to the extent and position of melisma. Here are examples of each, all of which use the same text, as a way of illustrating the differences.

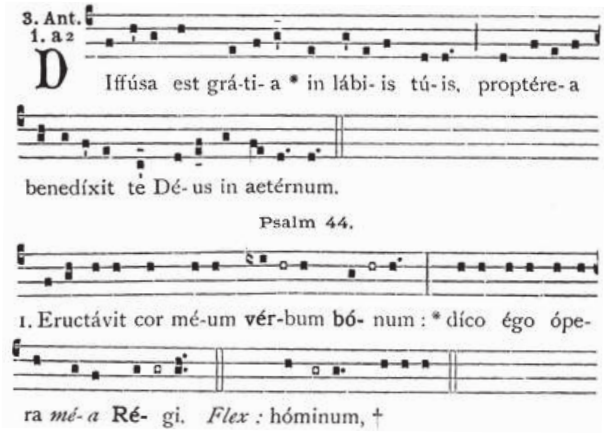

Figure 1. Psalm Antiphon* Diffusa est gratia *with psalm tone.

The simplest melody type is the psalm antiphon. It is generally syllabic and carries no melisma. It is suited to be sung as a "refrain" to the singing of a whole psalm in the Divine Office. The historic use of psalms in the office is that all one hundred fifty psalms are sung in the course of the week. This means that the melodies to which the psalms are sung need to be efficient and not over-drawn, i.e., the psalm tone. It is part of the genius of the Gregorian tradition that the psalm tones retain a very neutral melodic character—repetition of a too characteristic melody for each verse of a long psalm would not be feasible, either practically or aesthetically. Still, the more melodic character of the antiphon compensates for this seeming melodic neutrality in the verses.

There is another aspect of the singing of the psalms that has practical and aesthetic significance: antiphonal singing. The choir is divided into two groups and, sitting in choir stalls facing each other, they alternate in the singing verse by verse. The practical advantage of this alternation is that it saves their voices by a half. Singing the Divine Office can entail perhaps six or eight hours of singing in a day; this reduces the burden to three or four. But there is also an aesthetic or spiritual significance to this antiphonal singing: a monk once told me that each side of the choir, in singing its turn, is ministering to the other side. This means that as a singer, one pays attention to the technicalities of singing on one verse, but meditates on the significance of the text on the alternate verse.

This places a significant emphasis upon the role of listening in participating in the liturgy. In a stunningly beautiful address on the liturgy at his *ad limina* meeting with the bishops of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and Alaska, Pope John Paul II spoke of active participation:

> Active participation certainly means that, in gesture, word, song, and service, all the members of the community take part in an act of worship, which is anything but inert or passive. Yet active participation does not preclude the active passivity of silence, stillness, and listening: indeed, it demands it. Worshippers are not passive, for instance, when listening to the readings or the homily, or following the prayers of the celebrant, and the chants and music of the liturgy. These are experiences of silence and stillness, but they are in their own way profoundly active. In a culture which neither favors nor fosters meditative quiet, the art of interior listening is learned only with

difficulty. Here we see how the liturgy, though it must always be properly inculturated, must also be counter-cultural.[7]

I have experienced this principal in a surprising way. During the pandemic, when our church was closed, we wanted to continue to sing Vespers. On normal Sundays, we met on the hill behind my condominium and sang the office outdoors. For some major feasts, some singers who could not come in person wanted to participate. We devised a way of singing the office by Zoom. At first, I was very skeptical. On Zoom no two people can sing together. So we devised a schedule in which a psalm would be sung in alternation between two people, the next psalm between two others, and so forth. I found myself paying close attention to the texts being sung, perhaps aided by the retrospective advice of the afore-mentioned monk. When the church was again open and we sang Vespers there, some former singers now living far away wanted to continue to sing, so we now sing Sunday Compline by Zoom. It has not lost its beauty and depth upon repetition over a few years.

The second type of chant melody is the processional chant—for the Mass the introit and communion and to some extent the offertory. These chants could be called "neumatic," for the fact that their melodies contain a prevalence of neumes, usually two or three notes per syllable. Ideally, they accompany a procession, in the case

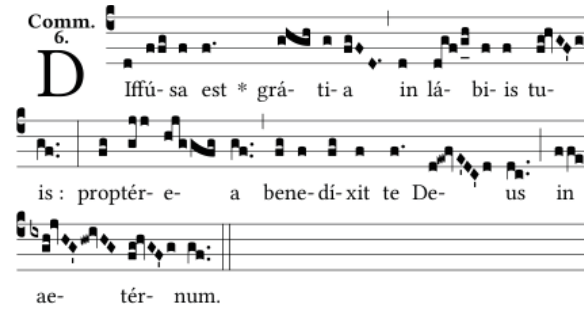

Figure 2. Communion antiphon **Diffusa est gratia.**

of the introit, the procession of the clergy through the congregation to the altar, the focal point of the liturgy, its most sacred place. There the sacredness of the altar is observed by incensation. The neumatic style of the chant projects a sense of motion which is quite suitable to the procession.

In recent times, the priest, in order to make a significant procession goes to the back of the church and then makes a procession to the altar. To get to the back of the church, he may go outdoors, even in bad weather. This makes no sense; this is not how a procession should work. Theories of procession identify two kinds: going to a goal and encircling a significant element, a so-called circumambulation. In Western liturgy both of these types are usually present. I have advocated that we should consider the type of circumambulation: for the procession to get from the sacristy to the altar, it makes little sense for them to go outdoors; rather they should encircle the congregation, moving from the sacristy down the side aisle and then up the center aisle. This is easily seen as purposeful motion, and then the encirclement draws the congregation into the motion; they virtually approach the altar with the priest and ministers. This is something that Msgr. Schuler always did at St.

[7] *Address of the Holy Father Pope John Paul II to the Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of the United States of America (Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and Alaska)* (October 9, 1998) <https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1998/october/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19981009_ad-limina-usa-2.html>.

Agnes Church in St. Paul, Minnesota.

While the chant articulates a sense of purposeful motion, it also accomplishes other things: its text articulates an aspect of the meaning of the liturgy, especially on solemn feasts; its beauty contributes a sense of solemnity and purpose that is often lacking in processions which simply wander into the church. While I congratulate Fr. Samuel Weber on his adaptation of Gregorian Mass Propers to English, with them I still miss the sense of solemnity that the fully neumatic chants project. That sense of solemnity is a prelude to the solemn singing of petition and praise which follows in the singing of the Ordinary of the Mass, whose voice is that of the entire congregation. This entrance rite is concluded with a collect which is proper to the day, but which is general enough to summarize the intentions of all present.

A striking contrast with the processional chants can be seen in the meditation chants. Chants which follow the singing of a lesson complement it by way of contrast. In singing a lesson, there is a proliferation of words on a very simple melodic formula. In the complementary chant there is a proliferation of notes on a rather short text. Here the phenomenon of melisma becomes important, and for the three types of meditation chant—Matins responsory, gradual, and alleluia—there is a distinctive treatment of melisma which relates to the distinctive purpose of each of the types.

The first type of meditation chant is the responsory of Matins. I speak of the Roman usage, though there is also a Monastic usage, which differs somewhat. The Office of Matins on Sundays and feast days was sung in the night (perhaps around 2 a.m.) and consists of three Nocturns,

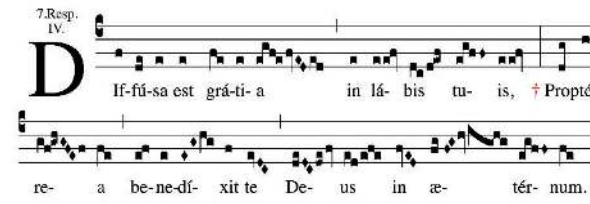

Figure 3. Responsory of Matins **Diffusa est gratia.**

each of which has three psalms with antiphons and three lessons with responsories, all told, nine psalms and nine lessons. The lessons are generally from the scripture or the fathers of the church, with the lessons of the third nocturn upon the Gospel of the Mass of the day. The treatment of these lessons is not what one would call intuitive: the three lessons of each nocturn are generally from the same text, but broken into three somewhat short segments, after which a different responsory is sung. The time taken to sing each responsory is at least twice as long as the time for the lesson it complements. The musical style of the responsory is moderately melismatic; by melismatic, I mean that in a chant in which most syllables carry one or sometimes two neumes, some syllables carry melismas of moderate length: more notes. The example at hand shows four different syllables with seven to nine notes each. Three out of four of these melismas are on unaccented syllables. But in these responsories, rarely is there a melisma on the final syllable of the chant, something that is in remarkable contrast with the other types of meditation chant.

It boggles the mind to think that in the earliest history of the chant, these pieces were all sung from memory, eight melismatic responsories on a single day (the final lesson was complemented by the singing of

the Te Deum). It is said that Amalarius of Metz (of the ninth century) prescribed that the singing of Matins should be done with only two candles on the altar; the only time another candle could be lit was when no one remembered what came next.

These responsories provide meditation upon the lesson, but it is upon a third of the lesson at a time. The responsories break up the lesson, each responsory providing a meditative expansion on a small portion of the lesson. The direction of these chants is retrospective, completely focusing upon what has just been sung.

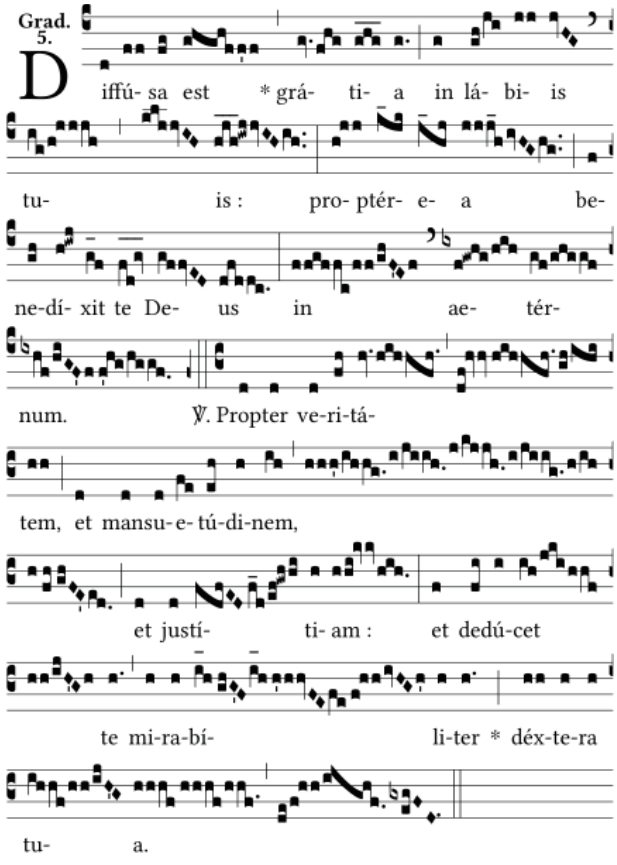

***Figure 4. Gradual* Diffusa est gratia.**

The second type of meditation chant is the gradual. This follows upon the first lesson (the epistle in the extraordinary form, the Old Testament in the ordinary form). Its style is quite melismatic, more so than that of the responsories. More characteristically, the melismas frequently fall upon unaccented syllables, often the last syllable of a word, or even of a whole passage. In the gradual *Diffusa est gratia,* of twelve melismas, seven are on unaccented syllables, including the final syllable of "mansuetudinem" with thirty-seven notes. Given the natural expectation that a melisma ought to fall on an accented syllable, this is a striking characteristic of the gradual; I call it an "end-melisma." In contrast with the Matins responsories, the gradual responds to a longer, integral lesson, and it is a longer chant.

What is the purpose for all these melismas, particularly for the end-melismas? The chants are traditionally understood as meditation chants, and the *General Instruction on the Roman Missal* (for the ordinary form) designates "meditation" as the purpose of the "responsorial psalm." This does not distinguish between the gradual and the psalm frequently spoken or sung in the new rite, since "responsorial psalm" is the designation of the gradual in the earliest chant manuscripts.

I had sung the proper Gregorian graduals in the liturgy for quite a few years before it occurred to me what was going on in the gradual. When the gradual was sung beautifully (and this does not quite happen always), one could sense a hush in the congregation. Suddenly there was no white noise. White noise is something we do not notice until it stops; it is created by inadvertent motion on the part of a few in the congregation, a slight rustle of clothing, turning

of pages, and so forth. When it stops the silence is magical, something heard elsewhere in the Mass only at the elevation of the Blessed Sacrament. I take it to be a sign that the whole congregation has been inspired to cease all motion in the process of recollection, of turning inward in an act of meditation, most often upon the lesson just heard. Amalarius of Metz comments on the function of the melisma: "it ploughs furrows in the soul,"[8] a striking description of the way music can touch the soul deeply and intensely. This recalls the words of Pope John Paul II, who speaks of "experiences of silence and stillness, which are profoundly active." Curiously, such silence of recollection at any Mass is not heard during the lesson, but only during the gradual. I contend that this meditative state is elicited by hearing the beauty of the chant, especially of its long melismas, which depart from the word for just a few seconds. These melismas

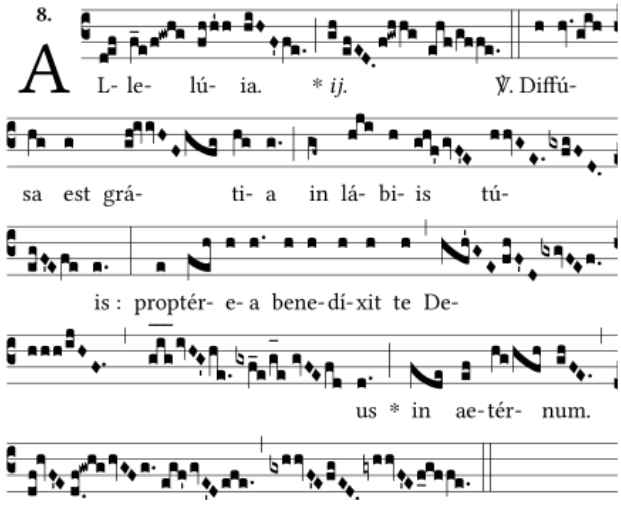

***Figure 5. Alleluia* Diffusa est gratia.**

reflect upon the lesson, but, in addition, create a sense of forward motion, different from that of the responsories of Matins.

The alleluia is the third kind of meditation chant. It has its own kind of melismatic activity, particularly in the *jubilus*—that long melisma upon the last syllable of "alleluia" and on the end of the verse. This melisma often has its own internal musical ordering, in the present case, it articulates the chain of strong notes, F-a-c, then turns the melody to the G final of its eighth mode. The same melisma very frequently occurs upon the final syllable of the psalm verse belonging to the alleluia. But in some cases, this final melisma is even longer than the original jubilus, as here. It repeats the process of outlining the F-a-c strong notes and then resolving them to the G final; in this case the resolution is amazing, since it involves a change from a B-flat to a B-natural just before the arrival on the final.

The verse of the alleluia usually shows a unique internal melisma as well. Upon the accented syllable of an important word, a single long melisma forms the musical center of the whole verse. It is often upon a word expressing motion or directly referring to God. In this case the melisma consists of two parts, the first articulating the F-a-c chain with a B-natural, second moving from the B-natural to a B-flat leading to the cadence of the melisma on F, which then introduces the F-to-G motion of the final melisma of the verse. This alleluia is based upon the type-melody "ostende." In order for the melisma of the type-melody to occur on the important word "Deus," a series of seven recitation notes has been introduced so that the word will fall on the melisma. Other key words for the central melismas are: exsultemus, plaudite, laudat, Dominus, and so

[8]Anders Ekenberg, *Cur cantatur?: die Funktionen des liturgischen Gesanges nach den Autoren der Karolingerzeit* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1987).

forth. A curious one is Sion, which receives the long melisma on its last syllable; this would seem to be an exception to the usual internal melisma being on the accented syllable of its word. It should be remembered, however, that this is a Hebrew word, and Hebrew words generally have the accent on the final syllable; this is the case in another chant for the word Adam.

What is the purpose of this unique employment of melismas in the alleluia? Can it be that it serves a function similar to that of the gradual? Yet, in its history in the Roman liturgy, it does not follow a lesson as the gradual does but actually directly follows the gradual. In the Easter season, the alleluia replaces the gradual, so it must be that it can serve the same purpose as gradual. Still, in its usual position after the gradual, it ought to be understood as enhancing the motion of the gradual; its more focused melismatic activity makes a more ecstatic expression and this must, in turn, be an anticipation of the Gospel. This purpose can be seen in subsequent medieval developments: the sequence, which follows the alleluia is a further extension of the anticipation of the Gospel. And the subsequent development of the polyphony of the Notre Dame school is almost exclusively an enormous expansion of the meditation chants, the gradual, the alleluia, and the responsory. This is a striking contrast with polyphonic Mass of the Renaissance, which distributes polyphony throughout the whole liturgy.

I have focused upon the earliest chants of the Roman liturgy, but later developments are significant. The gradual *Oculi omnium* (Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost in the extraordinary form, the Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time in the ordinary form, and Corpus Christi in both

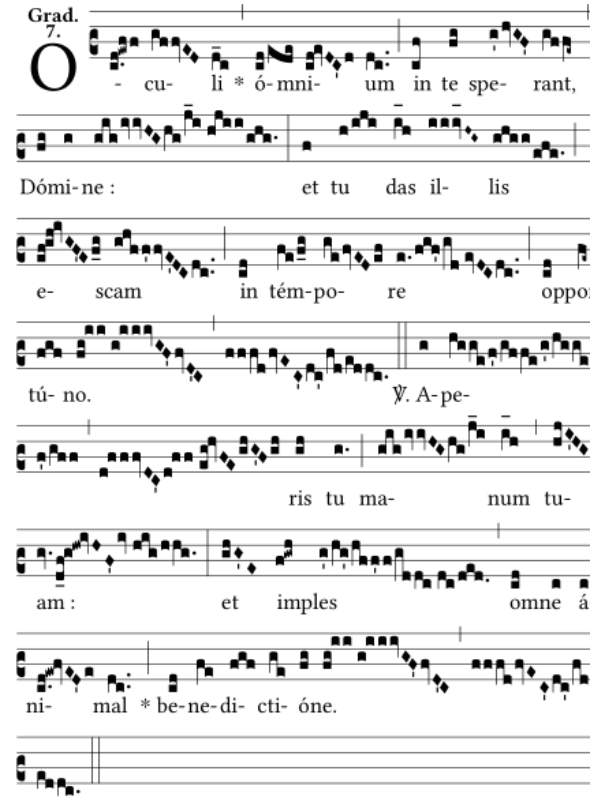

***Figure 6. Gradual* Oculi omnium.**

forms) shows a more striking use of end melisma. Of ten longer melismas, all but one fall upon unaccented syllables and eight are upon the final syllable of a word, an end-melisma.

The alleluia for the same Sundays falls into the later period of historical development. Still, it shows the use of several texts with exactly the same melody. Schlager's catalogue of alleluia melodies in manuscript shows fourteen different verses which were set literally to that very melody, although only three of these occur in our current chant books. The melody is quite well-ordered. There are throughout the chant numerous ornamental neumes—pressus, bistropha, tristropha, quilisma, and salicus. It begins with the typical mode-three intonation: E-D-G-a-c. the last three pitches

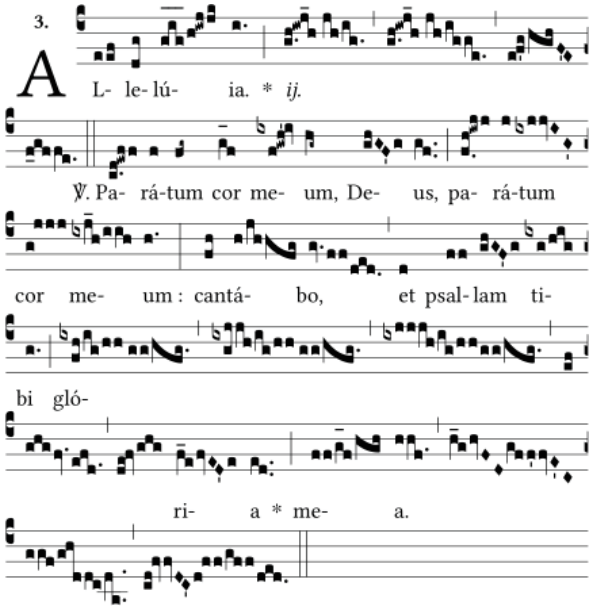

Figure 7. Alleluia **Paratum cor meum.**

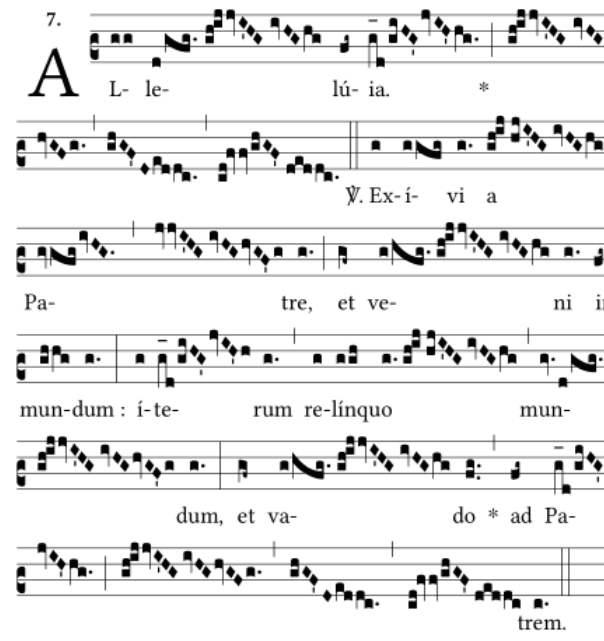

Figure 8. Alleluia **Exivi a Patre.**

are those of the psalm-tone intonation, and they play a role in the jubilus which continues. The fourth rises from G to c and back down. This is repeated but extended down to e, where a similar fourth now rises E to a. The verse begins with another fourth C-F and then F-b-flat. Now the D-F-a-c chain introduces the idea of singing, which is then realized by the long melisma on "gloria." The melody on "gloria" sings the same figure three times, each one varied slightly; a new figure on E is repeated leading to the final melisma of the verse. This is a new melisma (not like the jubilus of the alleluia), which articulates the A-C-D-F-a chain of thirds, ending on D, which is not the final of the mode. Thus, the alleluia must be repeated to arrive at the final of the mode. This is a more highly developed alleluia of the period later than the earliest melodies I have examined.

Alleluia, *Exivi a Patre* is a yet later melody, one of the second alleluias of the Easter Season. While in the Easter Season a single alleluia after the epistle seems to have been early, a second alleluia, often in a very much later style was added, comparable to the alleluia added to the gradual for most of the rest of the year. It very unusually begins with a descending interval and proceeds with considerable repetition of figures, some of which are slight variations on previous ones. Characteristic of later alleluias, the melisma at the end of the verse recapitulates the whole beginning alleluia, not just its jubilus. Both of these are exactly forty-eight notes long.

I conclude with some comments on the use of the alleluia in the ordinary form. The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* of the Second Vatican Council prescribed Gregorian chant as having *principem locum,* "principal place," not just "pride of place," which could be ambiguous. It also prescribed what would have certainly been the Solemn High Mass for the fathers of the council: the completely sung Mass with Gregorian chant propers and ordinary (*missa cantata*) should

have been what was cultivated.[9] Instead, there we experience a *missa mixta,* with a constant alternation between sung and spoken parts, each of which detracts from the other. For over fifty years, I have conducted a choir that sings a completely sung ordinary-form Mass in Latin, with complete Gregorian proper and ordinary and have observed principles of liturgical music which are generally applicable to both forms.

I contend that the "responsorial psalm" as it is sung today scarcely rises to the level of meditation, since the congregation is asked to repeat a trivial antiphon, while a cantor sings verses (often to psalm tones). For the sake of "active participation" the contemplative aspect of the genre is abandoned. The alleluia is prescribed in the Graduale Romanum of 1974 as well as the Gregorian Missal of 2012 in its Gregorian form. The Roman Missal prescribes Alleluia, alleluia (two-fold). This is how the conventional manner of performance has always been indicated. The first "alleluia" is the cantors intoning the alleluia; the second is the choir repeating the intonation and continuing with the jubilus. Even the performance of the actual Gregorian alleluia has been modified in the ordinary form. Cantors intone the whole alleluia, choir repeats. Cantors sing the whole verse, and the choir repeats the alleluia. This must be the application of a notion of a simple responsorial chant to the alleluia, which is not just a simple responsorial chant. The more complex pattern of alternation of cantors and choir, including the choir singing the final word or two of the verse, creates a greater crescendo of activity and anticipation and better suits the preparation for the Gospel. The repetition of the final words of the verse by the choir is strongly supported by the fact that the verse most frequently concludes with the same jubilus that concludes the alleluia by the choir. The refrain conventionally sung in the parish is a threefold alleluia, something proper only to the office, where antiphons serve to complement the singing of numerous psalm verses. This is a mismatch of liturgical music. The verses are often sung by a soloist to a simple psalm tone, another mismatch of liturgical music, since the simplicity of the psalm tones was for the chanting of whole psalms as part of the whole psalter in a week. The essential musical feature of the alleluia, the jubilus, has been lost. I have always insisted that the Gospel be sung, and this singing be accompanied by candles and incense; when this is done, the culmination of the musical crescendo of the chants is fulfilled by proclaiming the Gospel in a ceremonial frame. I contend that the Gospel of the Mass is not there just for information, but more importantly for the celebration of the history of salvation narrated by the Gospel, and it is thus imperative that it be given the most solemn proclamation, i.e., sung.

The repertory of alleluia melodies is not only an incomparable musical treasure. Together with the ceremonies of the singing of the Liturgy of the Word, it is also a liturgical treasure. Where it is not permitted to be sung in the liturgy, it should still be rehearsed on occasion, so that at one point or another it may be restored to its proper place. ❖

[9]Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum concilium* (December 4, 1963), ¶113.

Paper read for the International Chant Conference of the online Gregorian Chant Academy.

"Reflection of the Infinite Beauty": American Catholic Secondary Choral Education from 1925 to 1962

Can program structures and curricular choices from a period of growth in Catholic schools be helpful in making decisions in an era when schools are smaller and fewer in number?

by Sr. Peter Joseph Wardlaw, O.P.

In 1962, Noel Goemanne remarked that the lack of participation in liturgical music was in part a result of the fact that "young people listen to popular music all the time and suddenly they're thrown once a week into great music at Sunday Mass—they can't take the change."[1] Catholic high schools have a unique opportunity to prepare students to listen to great music by giving them the musical vocabulary to be able to worship through the music of the Catholic tradition. But a Catholic music teacher today is challenged to prepare his students for a seasonal concert, a monthly or weekly liturgy, as well as the task of handing on the traditions of liturgy to students whose only contact with that liturgy may be at school. How can Catholic music teachers best prepare their students to be able to receive the beauty found in the great music of the sacred and secular traditions of music? It seems fitting to consider the history of Catholic music education as a starting point to answer this question.

This study considers American Catholic music education between 1925 and 1962, particularly focused on the discussion of music education found in two music bulletins: *Cæcilia* and *MusArt*, both of which focused on Catholic schools. The editor of *Cæcilia* wrote in 1928 that "**The *Cæcilia*** is the **only** magazine devoted to Catholic Church and **School Music**. We realize the necessity of improving the teaching of music in our school. . . . Church Music can only be improved by raising the standard of music in our schools."[2] *Musart*, also known

[1]Quoted in Francis Brancaleone, "The Golden Years of an American Catholic Institution: An Annotated Chronicle of the Pius X School of Liturgical Music from 1946 to Its Transformation as the Music Department of Manhattanville College 1969–1970 (Part II of III: 1953–65)," *Sacred Music*, 147, no. 1 (Spring 2020), 42.

[2]Otto A. Singenberger, "Editor: Scandicus and Climacus," *Cæcilia*, 55, no. 12 (1928), 123. Original emphasis.

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as the *Catholic Music Educators Bulletin*, was a publication of the National Catholic Music Educators Association, an association which lasted from 1942 to 1976.[3] These two monthly resources were the primary sources of shared educational research for Catholic music teachers throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

The period of time between 1925 and 1962 is notable in Catholic school history because Catholic high schools were generally increasing in number and size in the United States.[4] Enrollment in Catholic high schools was increasing rapidly from the early 1900s until the late 1960s, when almost two thousand Catholic high schools served just over one million students. In the early 1970s, enrollment began to decline. By 2020, there were only 1,169 Catholic high schools in the United States serving approximately half a million students.[5] Additionally, the occasion of the Second Vatican Council from 1962 to 1965 and the promulgation of *Musicam sacram* is a fitting end for this research, since it was the impetus for changes in Catholic liturgical and school music that are beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore, this research focuses on the years in which Catholic high schools were most prominent in the United States and in which the size and stability of the schools would have provided the most possibilities of a variety of music programming.

Enrollment in Catholic high schools was increasing rapidly from the early 1900s until the late 1960s, when almost two thousand Catholic high schools served just over one million students.

In order to get a better understanding of the state of secondary choral education, we will consider three main areas across the articles in *Cæcilia* and *MusArt*. First, we will look at the administrative methods and goals of Catholic music educators: what did they believe was the proper end of music education? Secondly, we will consider the practical goals for students and the perceived relationship between teenagers and music, and finally the perceived successes and failures of high school music programs in Catholic schools, as described by authors in *Cæcilia* and *MusArt*.

[3]Sharon Lee Gray, "A History of the National Catholic Music Educators Association, 1942–1976," *The Bulletin of Historical Research in Music Education*, 16, no. 3 (May 1995), 194.

[4]Advanced Solutions International, "NCEA Infograph. Catholic School Data," 2021 (accessed July 6, 2022) <https://www.ncea.org/NCEA/Who_We_Are/About_Catholic_Schools/NCEA/Who_We_Are/About_Catholic_Schools/Catholic_School_Data/Catholic_School_Data.aspx?hkey=86ec3eb1-b329-4e98-9f0e-f271dc6b8d50>.

[5]"Digest of Education Statistics, 2017," National Center for Education Statistics (accessed July 6, 2022) <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_205.70.asp>.

Administrative Methods and Goals

Administrators and school supervisors at Catholic schools were concerned with the purposes of a Catholic high school music education, the types of curricula which would be most profitable, and the skills needed to be a successful choral teacher. The philosophy and curriculum particularly point to the stated end of music education as a means by which students worship and give glory to God, as well as grow in moral virtues.

The writers in *Cæcilia* and *MusArt* considered music education in a Catholic school to be something uniquely important because of their Catholic faith. This was not just "school-music,"[6] but intended to be part of a "truly Christian education" which calls for participation in the Mass, prudence in communal affairs, and growth in a life of union with Christ.[7] The clearest presentation of this philosophy was given in a proposed outline for music studies in high schools that was offered at a National Catholic Music Educators Association (NCMEA) Music Education Workshop in 1954. Because of its clarity and brevity, it is quoted here in full.

> Music gives glory to God. Some music gives direct worship to God, as when we employ it in our public and private acts of worship, e.g., at Mass, at Benediction, at Feast Day celebrations, and at family prayers. Some music gives indirect worship to God because through the aesthetic experiences which it gives, we discover finite beauty which is merely a reflection of the Infinite Beauty of God, e.g., in listening to and participating in musical works which form man's cultural and folk heritage. Through music, therefore, the individual or the social group can worship God even in musical activities that are of a recreational nature. This philosophy of directing all one's activity, including music, toward the glory of God is exemplified in the life and teaching of St. Pius X, patron of Catholic Music Educators.[8]

While the primary purpose of Catholic music education is clearly ordered towards the spiritual fulfillment of the students, the moral aspects of their formation are not neglected. In an article titled "The Moral Influence of Music in the Schools," F. Joseph Kelly wrote that "as the aim of all true education is to make the world and mankind better, music,

Music provides an opportunity for religious training and moral discipline, but the academic and recreational aspects of music education are also important.

[6]Otto A. Singenberger, "The Editor Writes," *Cæcilia*, 69, no. 8 (1942), 242.

[7]John Julian Ryan, "The Importance of Music in the High School Curriculum," *Cæcilia*, 82, no. 5 (1955), 162.

[8]NCMEA Workshop, "General Music Outline for Secondary School Music Program," *Cæcilia*, 81, no. 6 (1954), 234.

after religion, has the prior right to a place in a well-balanced educational system."[9] Music provides an opportunity for religious training and moral discipline, but the academic and recreational aspects of music education are also important. In the philosophical statement quoted above, hints can be seen in its reference to the good of "aesthetic experiences" as well as its encouragement for persons to perform music of cultural significance or for recreational purposes.[10] More academic areas are given in the list of topics to be covered in a high school music curriculum: church music, repertoire songs (including patriotic and school songs, folk and art songs, and operettas), musical tools including vocal technique and music theory, listening skills, and instrumental experience.[11]

It is hard to see when this broad range of music education might have been implemented in an already busy school day, and what curriculum could be incorporated in that time. Practically speaking, a Catholic school already used one of its valuable class periods in teaching religion, which takes away (with good reason!) an hour that in a non-religious school would be used for a core or special subject—presumably, therefore, taking away an hour that could be used to teach music. Schools were thus required to have some creativity to include music in the curriculum, or perhaps relegated it to an elective or extracurricular activity.

The NCMEA suggested a particularly ambitious program of study in 1954, in which freshmen attended daily music periods, and sophomores through juniors attended at least two music periods weekly, with the option of daily music electives.[12] While this curriculum does not seem to have been commonly used, dioceses experimented with various methods of including music curriculum. Cleveland used the "centralized organism of the Sisters' College and the Series of the Catholic Music Hour" to guide their curriculum choices.[13] The dioceses of New York and Chicago generally used the public school curriculum for music, without any change for the Catholic lens.[14] Cincinnati and San Francisco used the educational methods of Ward and Mother Stevens in their grade schools, but these programs did not serve the high schools, which then had to create their own programs.[15] Multiple high schools also promoted private voice classes during or after school in order to prepare students for group or solo performances.[16] Others promoted glee clubs. One such glee club at Marywood Seminary had both choral and orchestral ensembles, which met once a week during "activity periods," and offered sectionals and instrumental classes.[17]

Dioceses also worked to organize the education of their music supervisors and teachers. The role of the school supervisor

[9]F. Joseph Kelly, "The Moral Influence of Music in Schools," *Cæcilia*, 65, no. 2 (1938), 52.

[10]Workshop, "General Music Outline for Secondary School Music Program," 234.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Editor, "Suggested Plan of Musical Education," *Cæcilia*, 71, no. 9 (1944), 285.

[14]Editor, "Here-There-Everywhere," *Cæcilia*, 69, no. 8 (1942), 253.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Sr. Mary Maryla Farfour, I.H.M., "The Secondary Music Educator: High School Music Program at Marywood Seminary," *MusArt*, 11 (April & May 1962), 10–56.

evolved over the first half of the twentieth century. By 1955, music teachers were no longer only inspected by school administrators, but also had regular "in-service training programs calling for co-operative [*sic*] endeavor between teacher and those charged with supervisory function."[18] Beyond this, the teacher ought to have been trained for choral music. Some further guidelines included the following:

> A good teacher is still the main factor in good choral work. Administrators do not always understand that a "music" teacher can not be an expert in every kind of music. . . . Choral teachers ought to be voice majors. . . . Vocal technique is a major technique, and voice production offers problems that only a singer is likely to solve.[19]

The problem of finding music teachers who were trained for their position is clearly constant throughout both journals, which explore the ways to meet "the demand for secondary school music teachers" who ought to excel both as teachers and as musicians.[20]

The first step for a Catholic school was to choose a philosophy of music education and find a curriculum and teachers skilled and creative enough to teach it. A school in this situation was prepared in part to provide a music education program that would lead students to the musical vocabulary they would need to see music as a means to glorify God. However, as with other academic and extracurricular subjects, student interest had to be carefully cultivated, and the means by which that was done was the subject of much discussion.

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Teenagers and Music

Over the space of forty years, there was a clear shift in thought about what types of music ought to be included in the school music program. Writing in 1929, Catherine Pannill Mead wrote an article promoting classical music education in schools, in which she commented that "the everlasting indestructive cachophony [*sic*] of King Jazz, as he is heard in the movies, on the street, over the radio . . . in time will destroy all desire for the elevating influence of classical music."[21] She strongly suggested teaching classical music in order to promote the students' ability to "respond to the high and noble things in this all too ordinary life."[22]

[18]Sr. Jane Marie Perrot, D.C., "Necessary Qualities for Choral Conductor," *MusArt*, 7 (April & May, 1955), 3.

[19]Sr. Mary Cecilia Ward, S.C., "Let's Teach Them How to Sing," *MusArt*, 4 (March, 1956), 5.

[20]J. Rayburn, "Need for Secondary School Music Teachers," *MusArt*, 10 (November, 1957), 30–31.

[21]Catherine Pannill Mead, "Introducing the Study of Music in Our Schools," *Cæcilia*, 56, no. 1 (1929), 4.

[22]Ibid.

The Catholic high schools of San Francisco presented a graduation program of 1945 of which Mead surely would have approved. Like many other programs through the 20s, 30s, and 40s, it included classical, patriotic, and religious repertoire such as Schubert's *Serenade* (in two parts), the *Star Spangled Banner*, and Ganns' *Long Live the Pope*.[23]

However, a sea change was beginning in the 1940s as Americans became familiarized with jazz and popular music. By 1955, John Julian Ryan wrote of the benefits of teaching an even broader range of music.

> I believe that if you simply . . . begin by making full use of the *Motu Proprio* . . . as well as the *Pius X* and the *Westminster Hymnal*, and any good collection of the best traditional songs and the best records of Bix Beidebecke and Glenn Miller, you will . . . give music its due place in your curriculum.[24]

In 1957, Sr. Cecilia Ward, S.C., wrote with delight of Harry Belafonte's songs as exemplars of rhythmic freedom, even while she admitted that listening to the music of Frank Sinatra and Elvis Presley was a "penitential exercise" to which she acquiesced "in the interest of being interested in the interests of teenagers."[25] Both Ryan and Ward considered the current music of teenagers as something from which good music training could be derived, while advocating a broad range of stylistic training for the good of the students.

This stylistic training included a variety of vocal techniques, which were introduced and discussed throughout both bulletins. Vocal concerns included diction, which was "something of a national dilemma," breathing, "particularly in regard to Gregorian chant," and tone quality, which some feared was overemphasized to the exclusion of other musicianship skills.[26] Survey reading was discussed as a way to understand the form and shape of music, the meaning of which "is expressed in musical terms, it is the sum total of the combination of melodic and rhythmic elements that make good music."[27]

Another constant concern was the problem of keeping boys in choir through and after the voice change.

Another constant concern was the problem of keeping boys in choir through and after the voice change. Improvisation on the part of the teacher was highly recommended, as well as doubling by allowing girls to sing the bass part an octave

[23]Editor, "Educational Programs," *Cæcilia*, 72, no. 9 (1945), 277.

[24]Ryan, "The Importance of Music in the High School Curriculum," 168.

[25]Sr. Mary Cecilia Ward, S.C., "Chorale," *MusArt*, 10 (Nov. & Dec., 1957), 23.

[26]Sr. Mary Cecilia Ward, S.C., "Chorale," *MusArt*, 10 (April, 1958), 20.; "Chorale: Legato and Breathing," *MusArt*, 8, (January 1956), 23; "Chorale," *MusArt*, 12 (Feb. & March, 1960), 20.

[27]Sr. Mary Cecilia Ward, S.C., "Chorale," *MusArt*, 11 (April & May, 1959), 20.

up.[28] Another writer suggested "starting a special 'Proper' choir, whose members will be responsible each Sunday for chanting the Proper of the Mass. . . . They will produce a nice, mellow tone quality."[29] Since the propers chosen can be simple and may not require a wide range, this suggestion provided a reason for talented members of the grade school choir to continue through the voice change and be ready to join the senior choir once their voices had changed.

The problem of keeping teenagers in choir and interested in a variety of music types also bore upon the types of ensembles that were encouraged. Glee clubs were strongly promoted—"no matter how large or how small the school, there is one musical activity which is always possible and that is the glee club."[30] Rehearsal suggestions were offered: "at least once a week . . . the usual length of time is forty-five minutes."[31] Procedures and lesson plans were given for specific songs: "let the other voices moderate their volume so that the beautiful run . . . may be brought out as it should. You see, this composition . . . offers a beautiful lesson in self-effacement and regard for others."[32] *A cappella* choirs were particularly recommended for more advanced students, and these more confident groups were encouraged to join contests.[33] "Contests and festivals are good things," wrote Ward, "provided they are used with prudence and common sense . . . and provided all concerned have a saving sense of humor."[34]

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These practical questions provide choir teachers with considerations from their peers—a bit like taking a professional development course from the 1950s. But did these practices and curricula work in the long run?

Success and Failures of Music Programs

Reactions were mixed when it came to the results of music education as recorded by *Cæcilia* and *MusArt*. Some authors considered the Catholic music programs a success and in some dioceses it seems they were very successful. Looking at the diocese of Fort Wayne, one author writes in 1955 that

[28]Sr. Mary Cecilia Ward, S.C., "Chorale," *MusArt*, 12 (June, 1960), 21.

[29]Ward, "Chorale: Legato and Breathing," 23.

[30]Nell Jacobson, "Glee Clubs," *Cæcilia*, 53, no. 3 (1926), 54.

[31]Ibid..

[32]Editor, "Training a Catholic High School Glee Club," *Cæcilia*, 67, no. 4 (1940), 145.

[33]Sr. Mary Grace Andrea Carolan, B.V.M., "Opportunities in A Cappella Choir," *MusArt*, 8 (Feb. & March, 1956), 22.

[34]Sr. Mary Cecilia Ward, S.C., "Chorale," *MusArt*, 6 (June, 1954), 15.

> today, after a decade and a half of development, the music program—not, indeed, without its limitations—has grown to maturity . . . It goes without saying that success in the music education program of the Fort Wayne schools is due, first of all, to the far-sightedness and constant cooperation of pastors, principals, and teachers.[35]

These schools also boasted successful advanced programs, including the varsity chorus, which were continuations of the excellent music programming found in the grade schools.[36]

Another optimistic author sees the Catholic music program as a potential source of national unity: "If our schools would but realize and utilize their unique power for developing this cultural integration . . . [they would] cut across racial and national boundaries and so contribute toward establishing that unity which is so agerly desired by all men of good will."[37] However, this high optimism for specific schools and visions is belied by the perceived failures noted by other authors.

One music supervisor, after visiting a great number of classrooms and conventions across the country, commented, "Bright spots stand out here and there . . . [but] it is impossible to map out a plan of attack."[38] Another writer considered the individual schools to be excellent, but "in the general picture of music in Catholic schools, the high-school [*sic*] is the darkest spot."[39] This writer is even concerned with the various ensemble types, remarking that "glee clubs, destined to save the musical face of the school, may be merry; but surely they are not artistic. In schools for boys especially, their inability reaches proportions offensive to good taste."[40] As in today's Catholic schools, there were clearly a number of problems to work out and to consider for the future.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to consider the state of Catholic secondary choral education in the United States from 1925 to 1962 as described by two music journals from that time period, *Musart* and *Cæcilia*. The research described above provides contemporary choral educators three points of reference for their own teaching.

Many of the concerns that current educators have are ones that have been around since the early 1900s: how do we find time for music?

[35]Perrot, "Necessary Qualities for Choral Conductor."

[36]Ibid.

[37]Sr. Scholastica Chainey, I.H.M., "Music Educators Round Table: Music Education and Democracy," *MusArt*, 6 (January, 1954), 15.

[38]Sr. Mary Cecilia Ward, S.C., "Chorale," *MusArt*, 11 (January, 1959), 19.

[39]Editor, "Here-There-Everywhere," *Cæcilia*, 69, no. 9 (1942), 276.

[40]Ibid., 276.

First, many of the concerns that current educators have are ones that have been around since the early 1900s: how do we find time for music? What types of music should we use, and why? What are the basics for teaching a choir to sound musical and to love the music they are singing? This continued problem could be seen as a reason to be disheartened, but more optimistically, it could provide encouragement for today's teachers to come up with creative ways of including music in their curriculum. This problem is not going away, so we must find new ways to respond to it.

Secondly, music educators from the 1920s to 1960s considered a common philosophy to be indispensable to a common growth in Catholic music education. While a common philosophy was offered by the NCMEA's secondary music curriculum, there is little evidence that sufficient schools were aware of and prepared to make use of that stated philosophy. This, too, could provide an opportunity for Catholic music educators or an individual school to consider how the school philosophy and the teachings of the church on Catholic schools ought to impact the philosophy of music education.

Finally, most of the articles that express a balanced view of music education (neither a reason for despair, nor of unbounded optimism) likewise suggest balance in the music program: a full range of ensembles (choir, band, orchestra), a wide variety of music (Gregorian chant, Handel, and more popular music like Glenn Miller), and a good foundation in musicianship, music appreciation, and music theory. These are also the authors who suggest promoting student leadership and a balanced view of competition.

This period of music education in Catholic schools is certainly not perfect. However, it is advisable that we look to this period to better understand our own concerns in the twenty-first century. It may also behoove Catholic teachers to be prepared for some of the consequences they may encounter if they fail to note the problems and successes of those who have been teaching before them. Through creativity in including music, teaching music in a way that will draw students in, and through having a true understanding of the proper end of music education, perhaps Catholic music teachers will have greater success in encouraging students to understand the music they sing as a "reflection of the Infinite Beauty."[41] ❖

It may also behoove Catholic teachers to be prepared for some of the consequences they may encounter if they fail to note the problems and successes of those who have been teaching before them.

[41]Workshop, "General Music Outline for Secondary School Music Program," 234.

Repertory

English Choral Offertories for Advent: A New Approach and Example

What are some practical collections for the parish choir?

by Karl Isaac Johnson

The propers remain difficult to place in the average ordinary-form Mass. The 1974 Graduale Romanum, with a re-ordered Mass Proper spearheaded by the monks of Solesmes, was released a half-decade after the Missal of Paul VI, and often with completely different texts from those in the Roman Missal. Furthermore, the "four-hymn sandwich" liturgical style, which had already existed in some Catholic cultures, became the norm across the world in this interim period. There was scarcely the opportunity for the propers to find their way into Mass, even though they make up, by and large, the oldest musical subset in the liturgy and some of the oldest liturgical texts of the Roman Rite. Furthermore, excepting the Graduale Simplex, for decades the only available version of the propers were the Solesmes-edited chant versions—valuable and necessary, but jarringly different from the rest of the average post-conciliar Mass experience, and too challenging for the average late-twentieth-century choir to sing, Ward method achievements in the twentieth century notwithstanding.

Within the last twenty years, spurred on by the papacy of Benedict XVI and the "Reform of the Reform" movement, we have seen an explosion of propers in English in a variety of styles, and recently in Spanish (Janet Gorbitz). Fr. Samuel Weber (Ignatius Press) and Adam Bartlett (Source & Summit/Illuminare) have created complete cycles of the propers in English (without graduals or alleluias) along a scale of solemnity and ease, ranging from melismatic and faithfully literal renderings from the Latin originals to simplified modal melodies, sometimes set to psalm tones—the latter of which prevails in the *Ignatius Pew Missal*. While the Weber propers are rendered in Solesmes notation, Bartlett's relatively new Source & Summit platform allows the music director to choose either square notes or round-head, stemless modern notation. The communions have seen the most vernacular adaptations (both from the texts in the Roman Missal and the Graduale),

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as there is usually the greatest amount of time for singing the proper at Communion. These adaptations, including those by Bartlett, Andrew R. Motyka (communionantiphons.org), Fr. Columba Kelly (Saint Meinrad), and Richard J. Clark (GIA and WLP), normally replicate the format of the responsorial psalm: a short "refrain," which in some cases is a shortening of the proper text, followed by psalm verses. Some of these (Motyka, Clark) create new melodies, while others (Bartlett, Kelly, and Mac Cooney) adapt the chant melody. The same refrain-and-verses format is available in Bartlett's and Weber's introits and offertories, although the practical expectation of a hymn in both liturgical spots would seemingly limit the proper to the quick singing of the refrain before or after the hymn.

All of these settings are excellent, and serve the practical needs of churches—in particular, those wishing to pray the texts the church desires us to, but which are unable to dive directly into Gregorian chant. They are, in many cases, ideal for accomplishing the desires of the Second Vatican Council and Liturgical Movement that the congregation "sing the Mass" rather than "sing at Mass."[1] That said, almost all available settings (with the notable exception of Gorbitz and Weber) use brief pieces of syllabic music that can create one liturgical problem—that of timing—while solving another—that of singing the texts of Mother Church instead of the fabrication of a publisher or a non-liturgical hymn, often Protestant in origin. To wit: one of these vernacular settings often lasts anywhere between ten and forty seconds, which is usually enough time to fill an entrance procession (without incense), but not long enough to cover an entire offertory. This can lead to an awkward liturgical impasse: sing a quick, simple offertory so the congregation doesn't think the hymn is being omitted, or cram in the offertory after the hymn before the *Orate fratres*, perhaps truncating the hymn verses? Or omit the hymn altogether and sing a refrain with verses, as is so common at the Communion—but then, should the congregation be expected to join in the refrain? It takes great skill for a music director to make these adjustments on the fly.

There are also stylistic limitations to

[1]Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum concilium* (December 4, 1963), ¶119: "Therefore 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."

¶121: "Composers, filled with the Christian spirit, should feel that their vocation is to cultivate sacred music and increase its store of treasures. Let them produce compositions which have the qualities proper to genuine sacred music, not confining themselves to works which can be sung only by large choirs, but providing also for the needs of small choirs and for the active participation of the entire assembly of the faithful."

Sacred Congregration of Rites, Instruction, *Musicam sacram* (March 5, 1967), ¶16: "(b) Through suitable instruction and practices, the people should be gradually led to a fuller—indeed, to a complete—participation in those parts of the singing which pertain to them. (c) Some of the people's song, however, especially if the faithful have not yet been sufficiently instructed, or if musical settings for several voices are used, can be handed over to the choir alone, provided that the people are not excluded from those parts that concern them."

¶33: "It is desirable that the assembly of the faithful should participate in the songs of the proper as much as possible, especially through simple responses and other suitable settings."

these settings—most of them are monophonic, often due to faithful adaptation of chant, but in other cases for the ease of the learning of a cantor, choir, or congregation. This is not always the case: Richard Rice has an entire collection of SATB propers in his *Simple Choral Gradual*, where both refrain and three-to-five verses are set for choir. These are typically set to formulas reminiscent of Russian or Anglican chant, especially the verses. Clark's communions also have harmonies, more melodic than formulaic. Luke Massery (Antiphon Renewal) has done the good work of collecting versified adaptations of the propers set to well-known hymn tunes, so that both choir and congregation can sing the propers, in harmony as desired (and thus solving the "hymn-or-proper" problem by combining them). Yet there is no collection in English that I am aware of that attempts to participate in the venerable tradition of the polyphonic propers like that of Palestrina and Byrd—where the proper alone, or "refrain" without verses, is sung in long melismatic phrases, such that the choir and congregation can meditate on the text without being rushed—as in the spirit of Gregorian chant and Renaissance polyphony.[2] Other church musicians have argued to me that this is because the simple, modern English settings are a stepping-stone toward propers in Latin—either Gregorian chant, or in some cases, polyphony—so creating polyphonic propers in English would be a waste. This ignores the needs and desires of communities, particularly choirs, who seek liturgical music of true artistic merit and wish to enter the contemplative spirit of melismatic chant and polyphony, but may face a functional ban on Latin. Indeed, I have known priests who are reticent of the singing of the propers, as opposed to the ordinary, in Latin, since these texts are sung on one specific occasion, and without a translation the congregation will not know the meaning of the words, unlike with the ordinary. Furthermore, those following *Divine Worship: The Missal* may find themselves looking for choral English settings of the propers.[3]

I became aware of a need to compose a different style of English Proper during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. My parish at the time, Saint Rose of Lima in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, had expunged hymnals and missals from the pews thanks to the then-common (and erroneous) assumption that the virus could be spread through the surfaces of books. We also had self-imposed restrictions on congregational singing. We used this restriction as a gateway toward introducing the propers

[2]There is no liturgical issue with singing psalm verses to the propers. Such a practice is well-attested both in early medieval manuscripts and in the *Ordo Romanus Primus*. The issue is more stylistic in form: the proper's originally long and melismatic melody will be truncated and adapted for the sake of choir or congregation, but as it ends quickly, there is more liturgical time that needs to be filled, whereas if the proper were sung in its entirety (with the usual exception of the communion) the liturgical time would be filled with no need for verses. This is the case for the Gregorian chant, but excepting Weber's and Gorbitz's collections, generally not the case for vernacular adaptations.

[3]Though *Musicam sacram* encourages the singing of the propers by the congregation, it also upholds the "pride of place" of Gregorian Chant (¶50), whose propers traditionally have never been sung by the congregation; and describes it as of the "third degree," behind dialogues, responses, and the ordinary, all of which take precedence in congregational singing.

in a very intentional way to the congregation for both English and Spanish Masses, which we had attempted in the previous year, but struggled to gain congregational comprehension. I primarily used the Source and Summit propers, with varying degrees of elaborateness depending on the Mass, and would sing a doxology and perhaps a few verses, but would usually fill in liturgical time on the organ. I anticipated a problem with the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent, however. I had long been a proponent of limiting the use of organ to the accompaniment of singing during these seasons, as is church tradition;[4] in previous years, an accompanied hymn and unaccompanied proper would fill this time, but in 2020–2021, there was only a proper. I was particularly concerned about what to do at the offertory: our three priests had different philosophies on how much incense to use and when to use it, and since there was no collection from the pews during this time, the offertory could last anywhere from thirty seconds to three minutes. I needed an offertory that could be resolved quickly, but I was not satisfied with either filling in on organ, sitting in silence, or singing many refrains and verses for a longer offertory rite. I had to tailor-make an offertory for the particular liturgy of our parish. I successfully petitioned our pastor for the funding to resume a small schola in order to sing unaccompanied polyphonic music during these seasons, largely in English, and I wrote offertory adaptations. With a mixed group—five to six people, including me—of some paid local singers, mostly from nearby Middle Tennessee State University, and skilled amateurs, we learned my four Advent and six Lent offertories with fairly limited rehearsal time, singing them at two Masses per weekend. The Advent offertories are reproduced here.

I decided to compose these propers in halves: the first section as an English adaptation of the chant, as faithful to the Gregorian melody as I could make it without being linguistically awkward, and the second section as a multi-part choral version of the same text, with a less-literal and more metrical adaptation of the chant melody. This allows the choir to end the piece at the end of the chant if the offertory rite has resolved quickly, and for the rite to be extended with a repetition of the text (with different music) instead of verses. Ultimately, the finished products were not polyphonic, but homophonic, and intentionally modal. They share more inspiration from the works of Perotin and Guillaume Du Fay than they do with Byrd and Palestrina, even though the Renaissance polyphonic propers were the true musical inspiration for undertaking these works. The homophony has invited comparisons to Rice's *Simple Choral Gradual* from some of my acquaintances. Originally, I wrote the chant sections in stemless modern notation, as with the SATB portions, for men's voices, for the ease of my schola's reading, as they were nowhere nearly fluent in Solesmes notation at the time. This required some executive decisions regarding the rhythmic nuances such as quilismas and episemas. Most quilismas were originally omitted, and episemas, bistrophas, and tristrophas were usually rendered as half notes. For this publication, I was asked to transcribe the chant sections back into Solesmes notation; quilismas and bistrophas were able to return, but I decided to again omit

[4] *Musicam sacram*, ¶66; *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, ¶313.

episemas, both due to quarrelsome historical controversy surrounding their place in the Solesmes edition, and for the sake of rhythmic clarity. Choir directors may feel free to add episemas according to the Solesmes editions as they so choose. Also, the custos at the end of the chant section refers to the forthcoming tenor note of the SATB portion—all the SATB portions begin in unison except for the offertory for the Fourth Sunday of Advent, "Hail Mary." Readers may notice that this chant has the closest notational rendering to the Solesmes edition. This is because the word order and idiom are the closest between the Latin and English of the four, and thus, the music could be the closest to the Gregorian melody without as many elisions and modifications.

I found the strengths of these pieces, in the context of Masses in late 2020, to be their flexibility within the context of the rite, the freshness of their sound over and against the "dreary" a cappella music the congregation was used to during Advent, and the relative ease in learning them. They were composed specifically to be flexible for the offertory rite, and worked perfectly for that purpose. I conducted the chant at a brisk tempo, both out of personal preference and due to the dead acoustic in the room, but would carefully assess the situation of the rite at the altar for the tempo of the SATB portions. If, for example, the priest was only beginning to offer up the chalice and I saw the thurible ready for use, I knew a lengthy incensation was coming and needed to keep the SATB portion rather slow; but if there was no thurible or the priest was already in the middle of incensing, I knew that I had to end after the chant or conduct the SATB portion quickly, respectively. These self-imposed customs were not applicable to the Third Sunday of Advent ("You have blessed, O Lord, your land"), as Gaudete Sunday, by tradition, allows for organ to fill in.

I also found these pieces to be a welcome break from a cappella music of Advent and Lent. There are choir directors who have groups capable of singing interesting and complex music during Advent and Lent *a cappella*; I have not had the same experience. Due partially to my limitations as a choir director, I have not had choirs capable of singing polyphonic motets during these seasons, and I am left with the decision either to program unison or simply-harmonized works, or to accompany everything. Until the end of 2020, my philosophy was to opt for simple *a cappella* works during Advent and Lent in order to reinforce the penitential flavor of these seasons to the choir and congregation; however, after many months of singing nothing but chant adaptations in English or Spanish, sometimes with organ and sometimes without, I had grown weary of monophony and was determined to reintroduce harmony, even if it meant sacrificing my principle of limiting organ accompaniment as much as possible. Luckily, my group was able to sing these chants without accompaniment, but a choir director may choose to double the voices on a soft eight-foot organ stop.

The last strength of these pieces was their relative ease. They are by no means uncomplicated, requiring serious rehearsal time. But the homophony allowed my choir to move and breathe together as a unit, and to stay in the spirit of chant by singing the same rhythms, if not the same notes. As is typical, the inner voices required the most rehearsal. All told, however, each piece was only rehearsed a few times before being sung on a Sunday.

The main drawback of these pieces is the

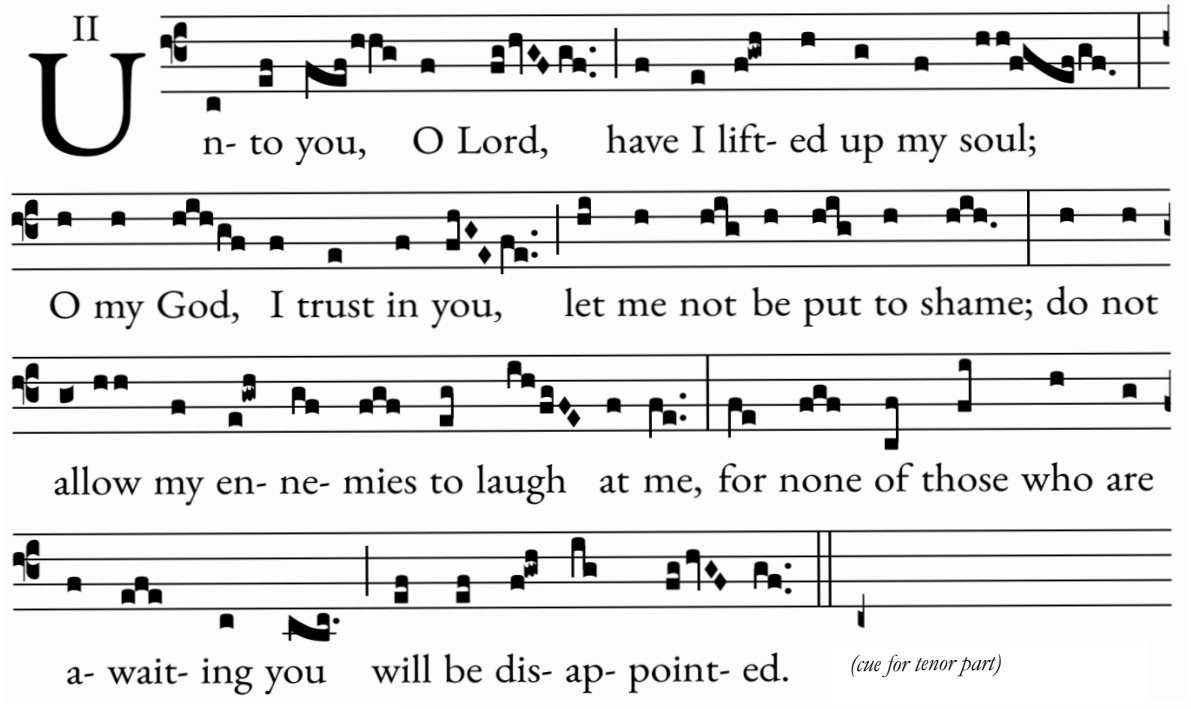
English adaptation. There is no perfect way to set an English translation of a Latin text to a melody written for the Latin. I struggled to adopt my own text-setting philosophy, opting for the Solesmes translations from the Gregorian Missal for the Second and Third Sundays of Advent, but an alternate and commonly-found translation for the First Sunday of Advent.[5] When transcribing back to Solesmes notation, I altered the chant text to be more closely aligned to the Latin (in both meaning and word order) and in order for the English matching of word and neume to align more accurately with the Latin; yet after a few attempts at revising the text for the choral portion, I kept the English words intact because to alter them would do violence to the music. This creates a slight textual disconnect between the chant portion and the choral portion for the offertories for the Second and Third Sundays of Advent, which I hope readers forgive, or alter to their needs.

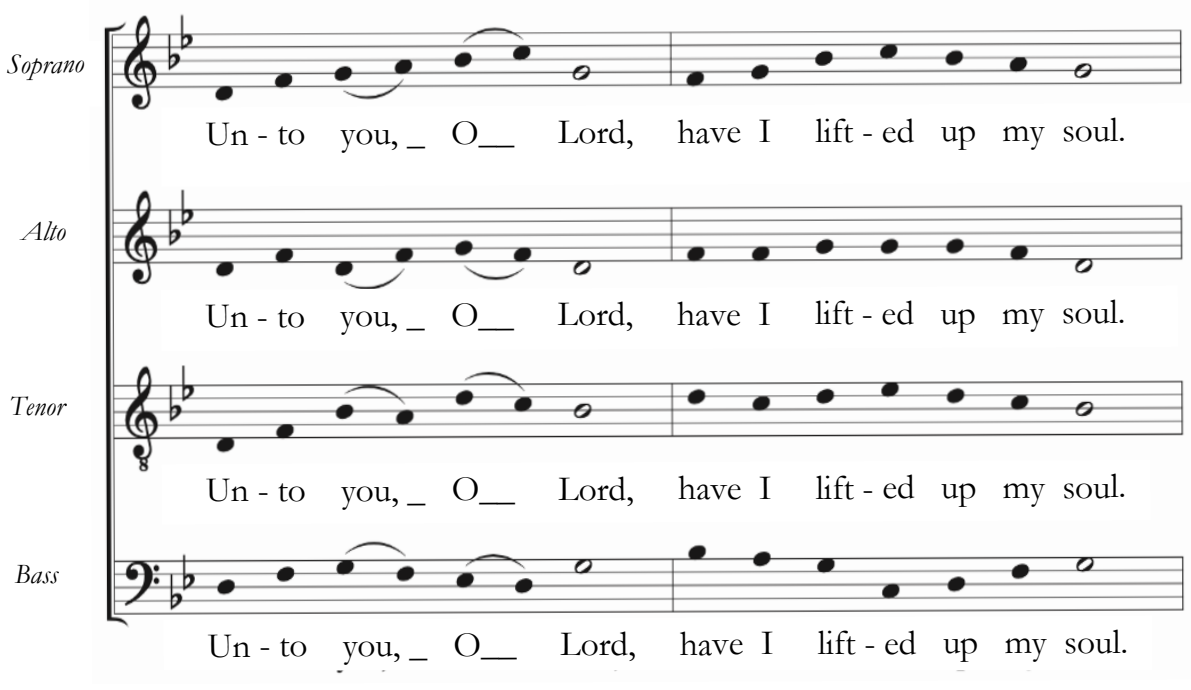
Some may also not prefer the musical idioms of these pieces. I will never claim that my chant adaptations are better than those by Weber, Bartlett, or Gorbitz. Further, the homophonic style may offend the sensibilities of those who prefer polyphony; for those who have groups able to sing true polyphony, I encourage them to do so! I find myself attracted to the choral sounds of Perotin, Du Fay, and Benjamin Britten, so my music tends to mimic them; I believe this makes sense as they all have modal styles which suite the chants well. However, I do not have the skill to write truly contrapuntal, polyphonic music.

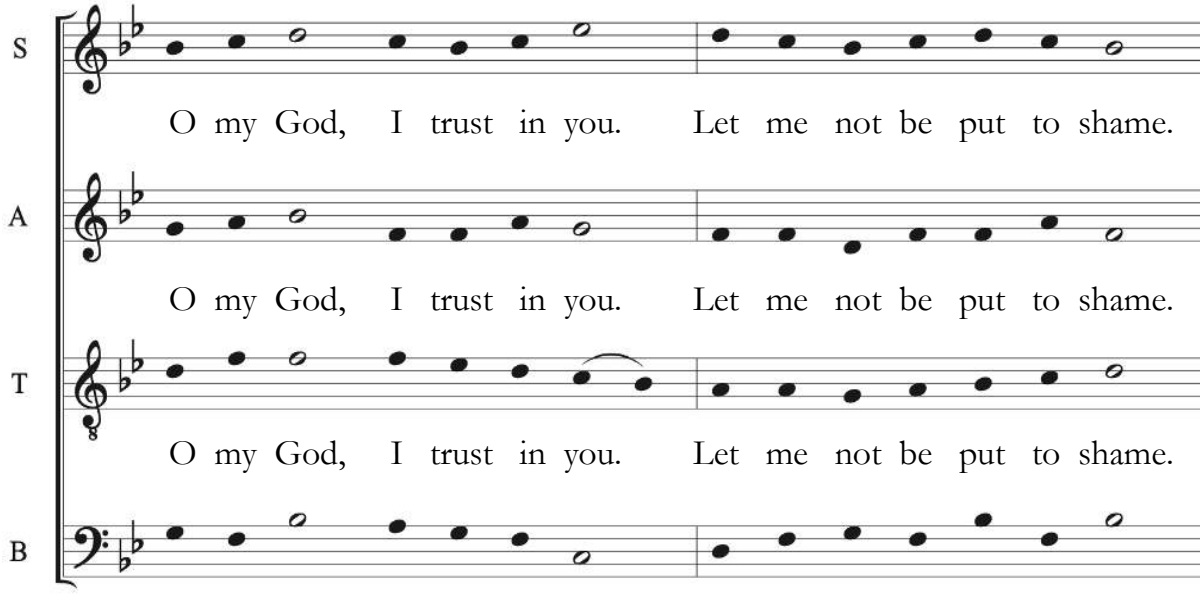
These settings are simply examples of where the composition of English propers may turn in the future. I hope there are other composers who have had similar thoughts as I have—desiring a non-formulaic, English choral collection of propers. If they are more skilled in composition than I am, I urge them to take up the task of writing truly polyphonic propers in English—and not just offertories for Advent and Lent, but propers for the whole liturgical cycle. I especially hope that more offertories emerge, as they tend to be the least used of the modern propers (not least because theit texts are not included in the Roman Missal). Attention to the details of the ordinary form is necessary: I tried to tailor the length of these pieces for the average offertory and the skill to be semi-professional but not specialist. Composers would likely need to make the introit shorter than these offertories, and the communion significantly longer. These are stylistic decisions that composers can make according to what they see appropriate for ordinary-form Masses. Nevertheless, I believe that setting the Propers of the Mass, as well as all truly liturgical music, to any vernacular language should not be merely functional, nor overly nonsensically literal to a Latin original. The Mass deserves our greatest artistic strivings, even if we are unable to use the proper language of the propers. ❖

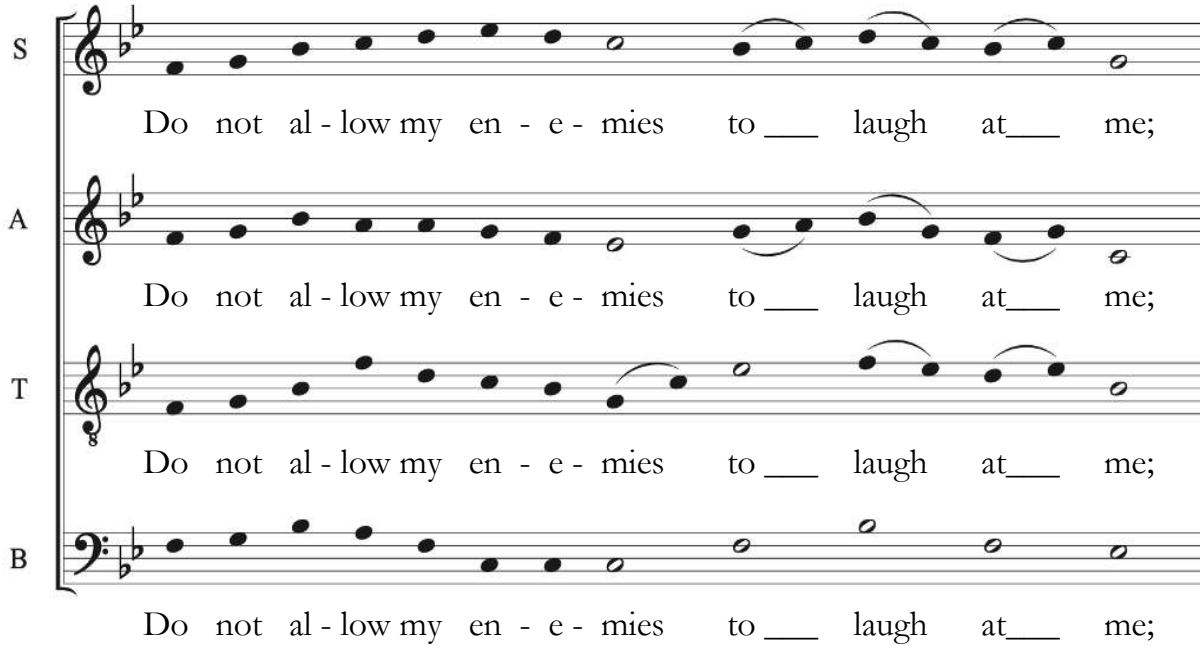
[5]The Latin text of the introit and offertory for the First Sunday of Advent is from Psalm 25, and almost identical between the two chants; the only exception is the addition of "Domine" to the offertory. However, Solesmes has included a wildly different English translation for the offertory than the introit. I chose to use my own translation, very close to many other common translations, that is much more similar to the Solesmes translation of the introit than the offertory, as it was more faithful to the Latin.

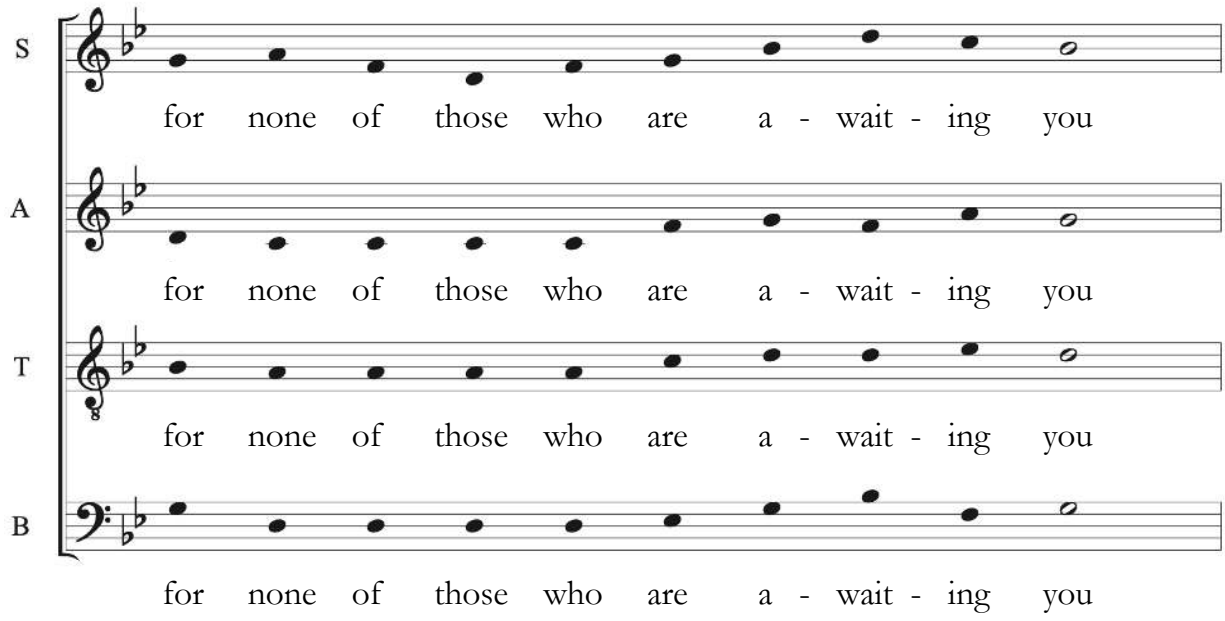
Offertory for First Sunday of Advent

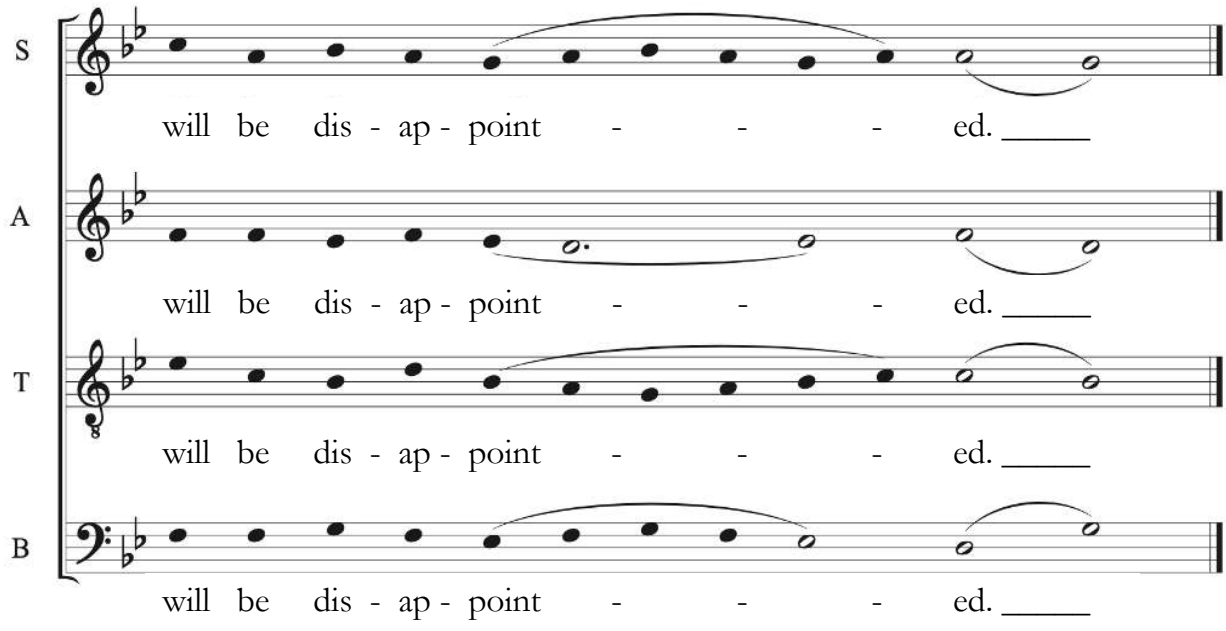




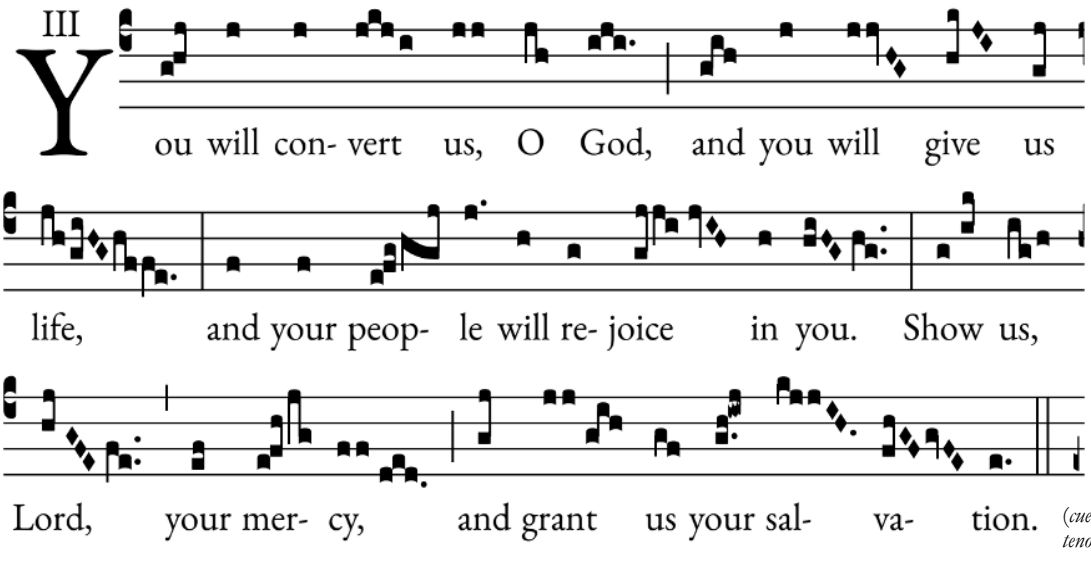

S
O my God, I trust in you. Let me not be put to shame.
A
O my God, I trust in you. Let me not be put to shame.
T
O my God, I trust in you. Let me not be put to shame.
B
O my God, I trust in you. Let me not be put to shame.

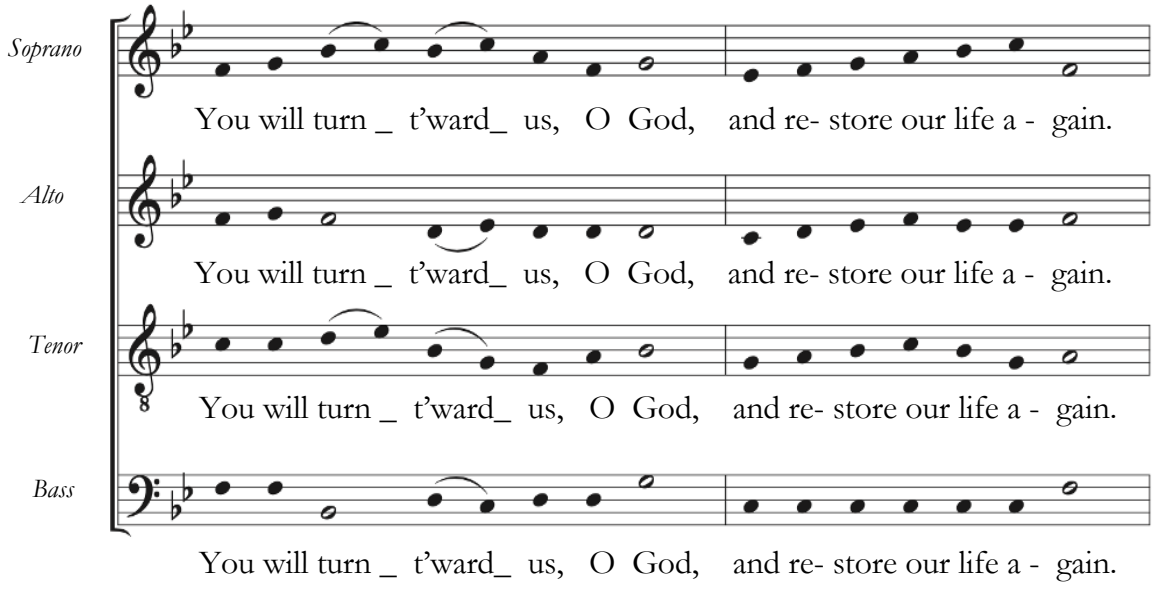

S
Do not al - low my en - e - mies to ___ laugh at___ me;
A
Do not al - low my en - e - mies to ___ laugh at___ me;
T
Do not al - low my en - e - mies to ___ laugh at___ me;
B
Do not al - low my en - e - mies to ___ laugh at___ me;

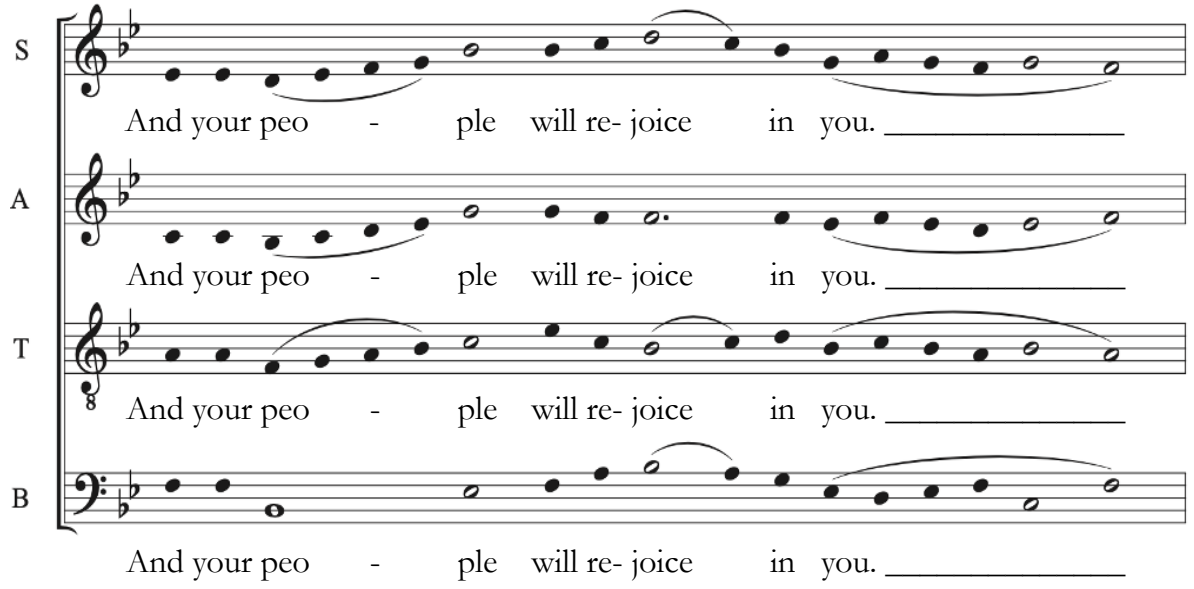

S
for none of those who are a - wait - ing you
A
for none of those who are a - wait - ing you
T
for none of those who are a - wait - ing you
B
for none of those who are a - wait - ing you

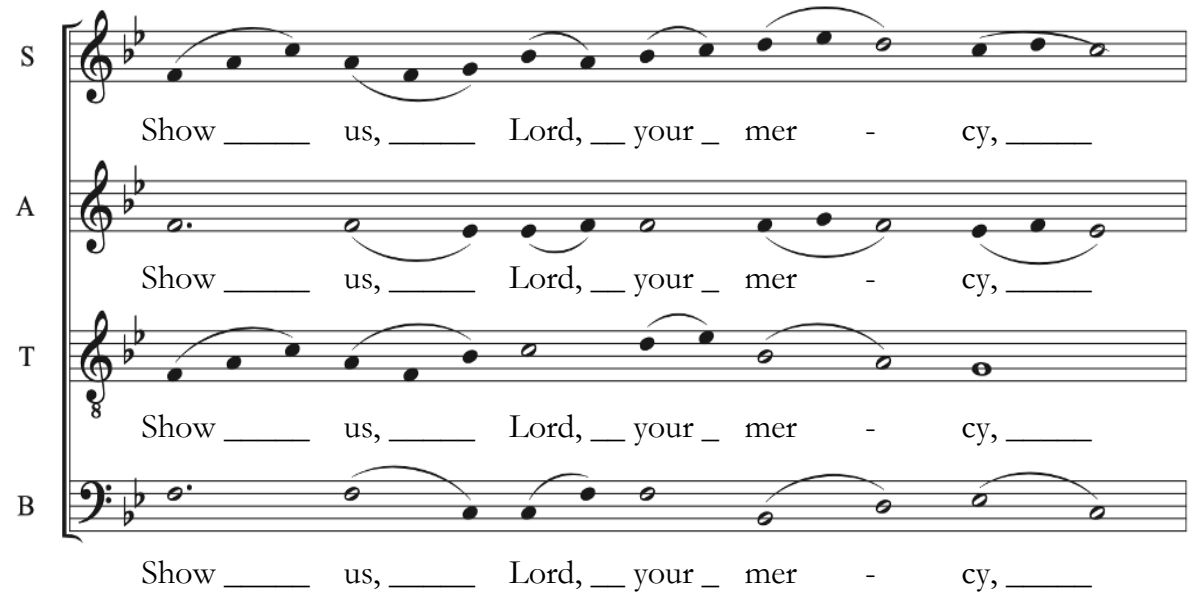

S
will be dis - ap - point - - - ed. _____
A
will be dis - ap - point - - - ed. _____
T
will be dis - ap - point - - - ed. _____
B
will be dis - ap - point - - - ed. _____

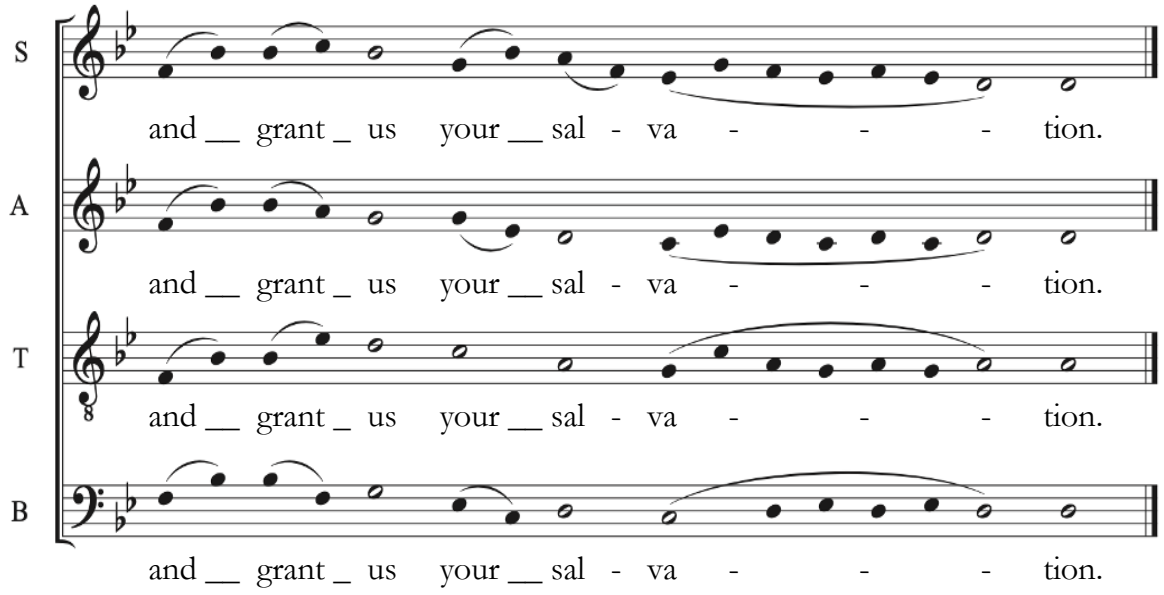
Offertory for Second Sunday of Advent



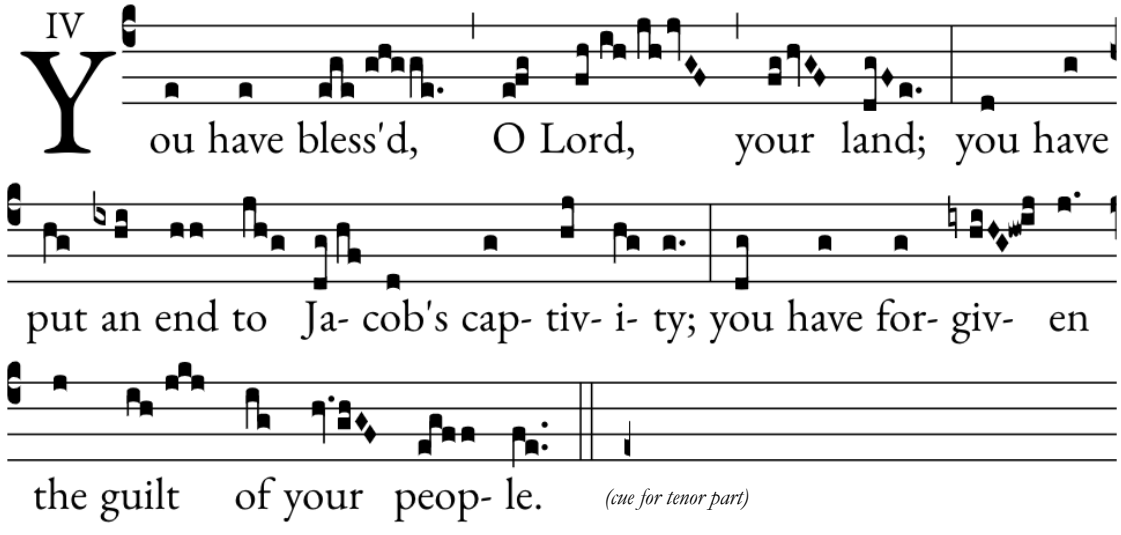


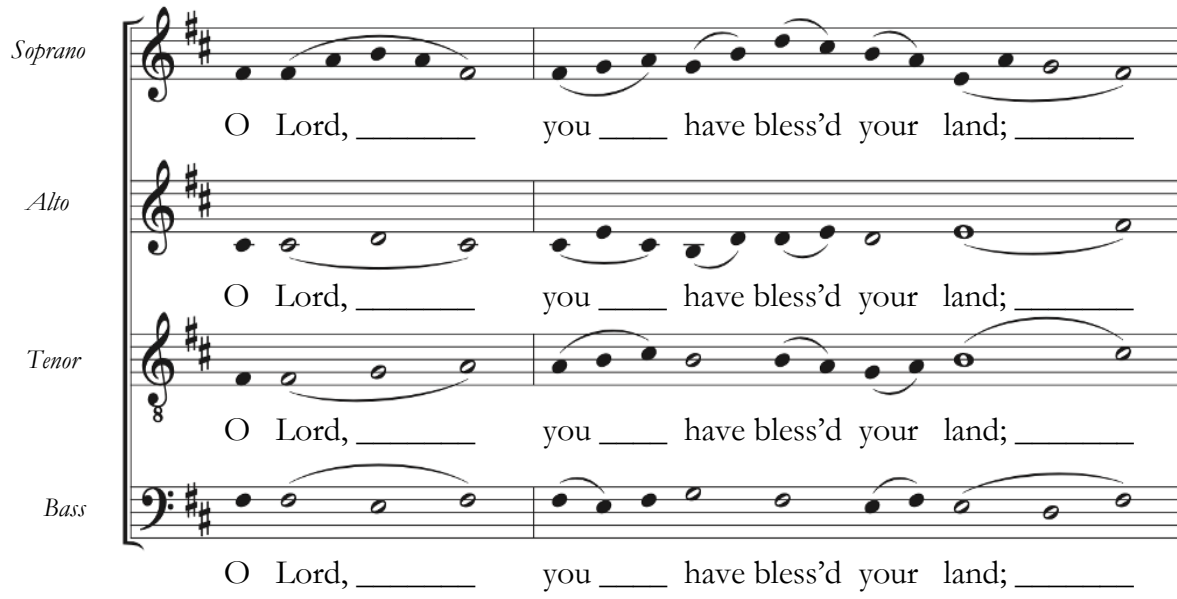

S
A
T
B
And your peo - ple will re- joice in you. _____
And your peo - ple will re- joice in you. _____
And your peo - ple will re- joice in you. _____
And your peo - ple will re- joice in you. _____

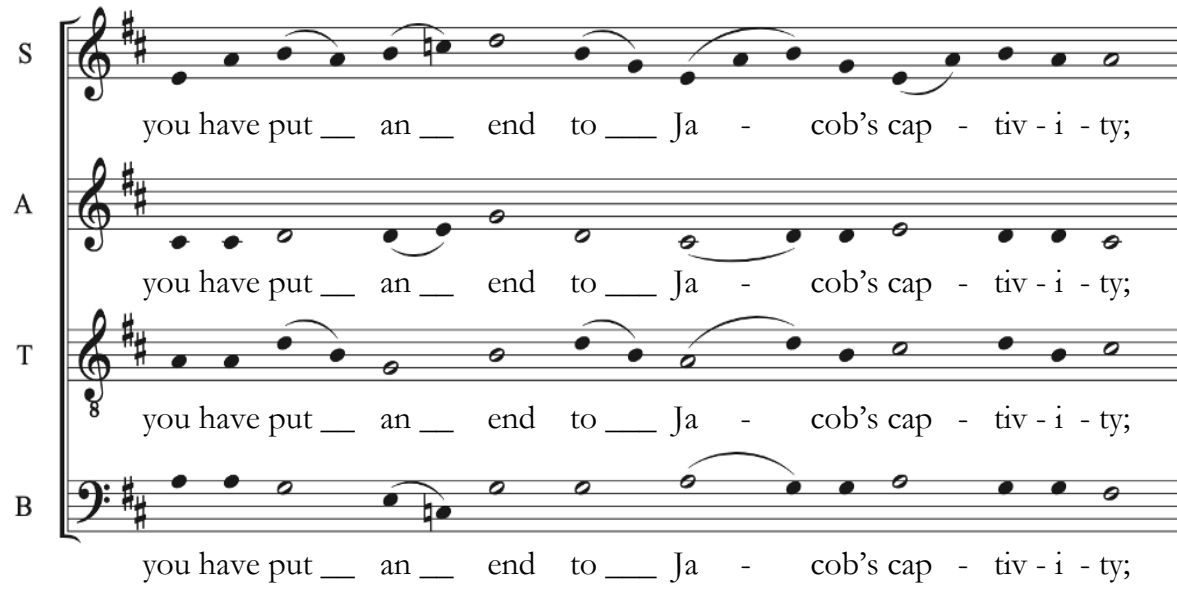

S
A
T
B
Show _____ us, _____ Lord, __ your _ mer - cy, _____
Show _____ us, _____ Lord, __ your _ mer - cy, _____
Show _____ us, _____ Lord, __ your _ mer - cy, _____
Show _____ us, _____ Lord, __ your _ mer - cy, _____

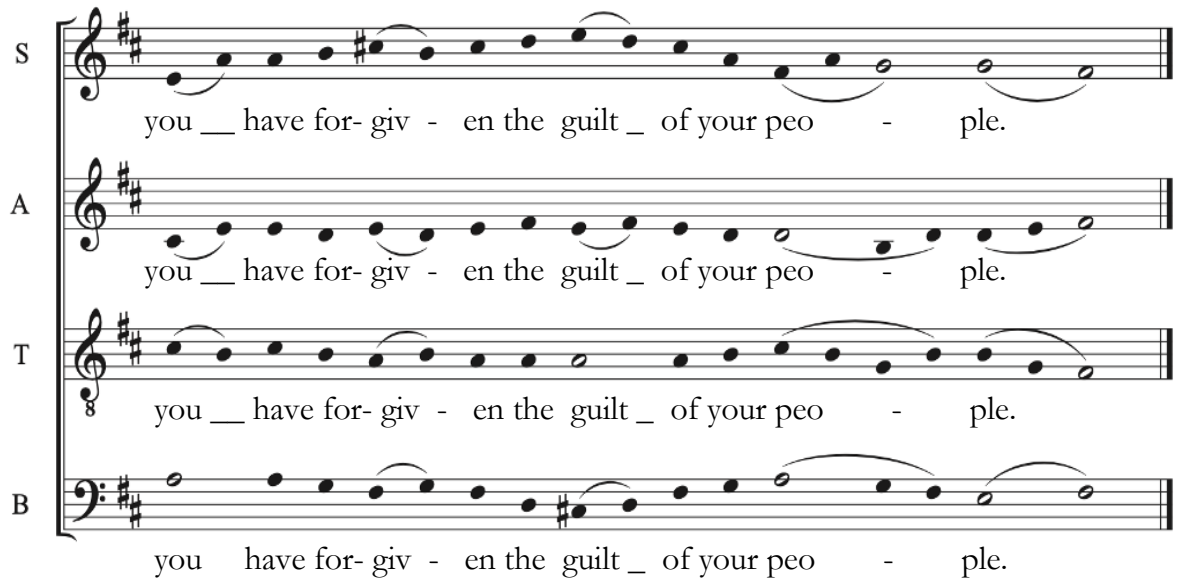


Offertory for Third Sunday of Advent

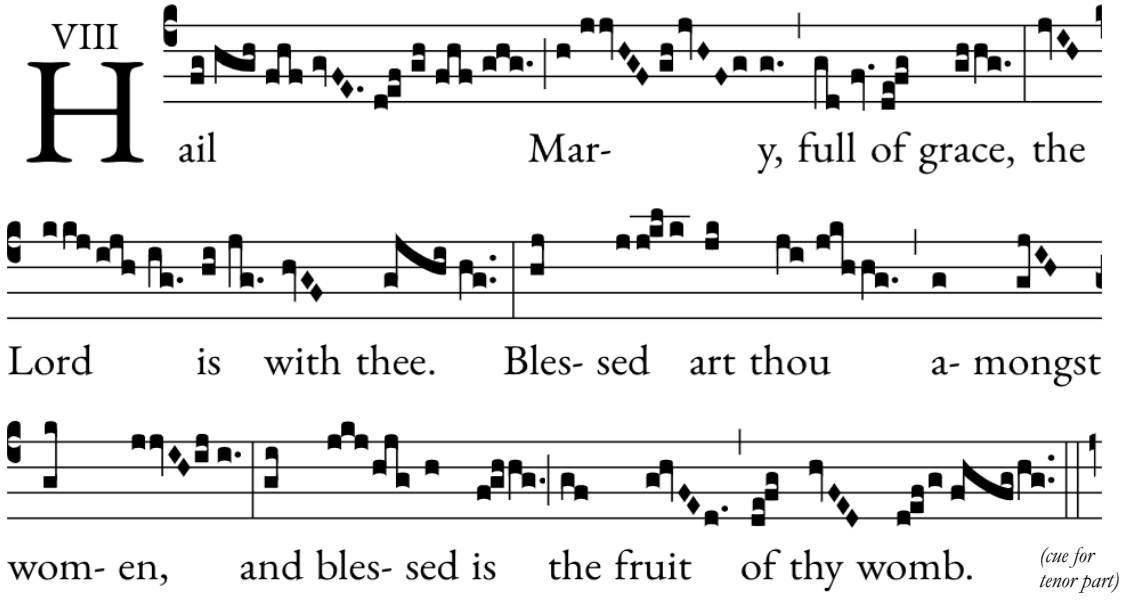


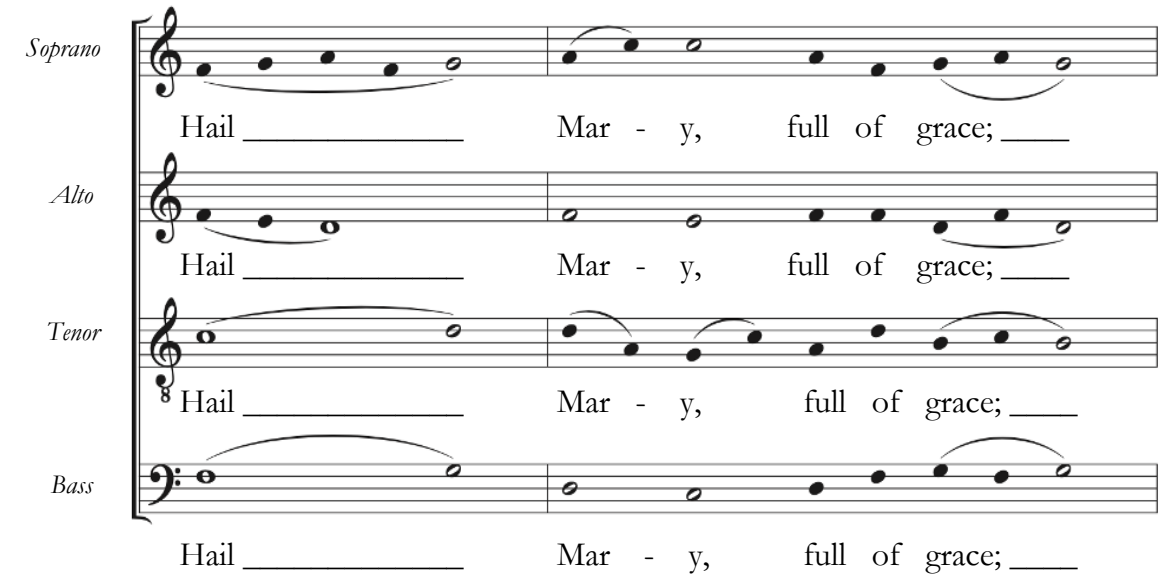

Soprano
O Lord, _____ you ____ have bless'd your land; _____
Alto
O Lord, _____ you ____ have bless'd your land; _____
Tenor
O Lord, _____ you ____ have bless'd your land; _____
Bass
O Lord, _____ you ____ have bless'd your land; _____

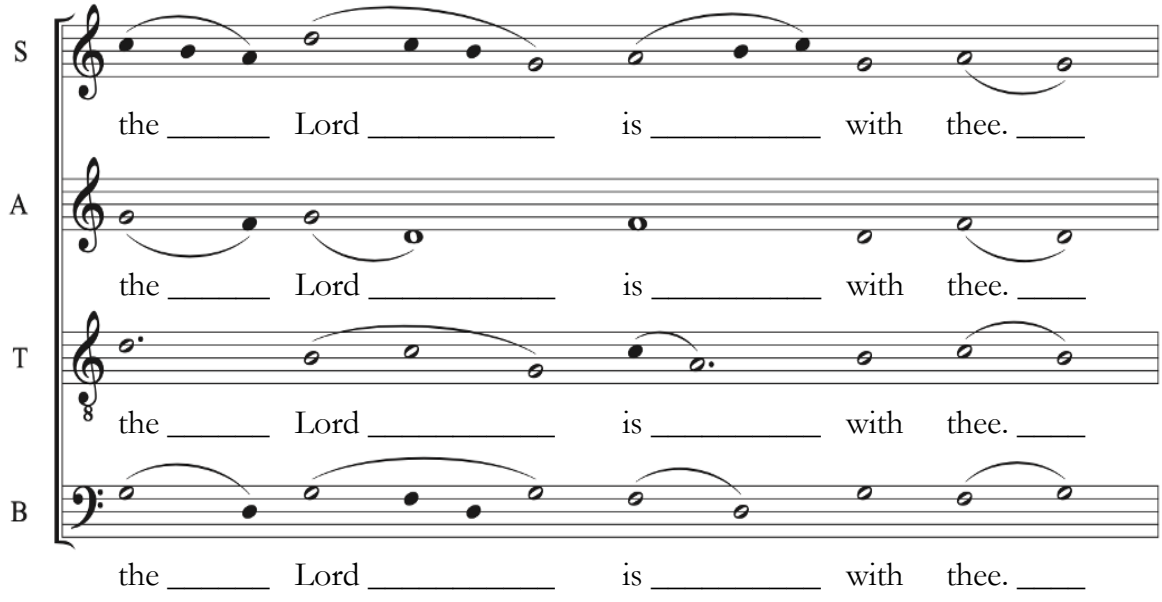

S
you have put __ an __ end to ___ Ja - cob's cap - tiv - i - ty;
A
you have put __ an __ end to ___ Ja - cob's cap - tiv - i - ty;
T
you have put __ an __ end to ___ Ja - cob's cap - tiv - i - ty;
B
you have put __ an __ end to ___ Ja - cob's cap - tiv - i - ty;

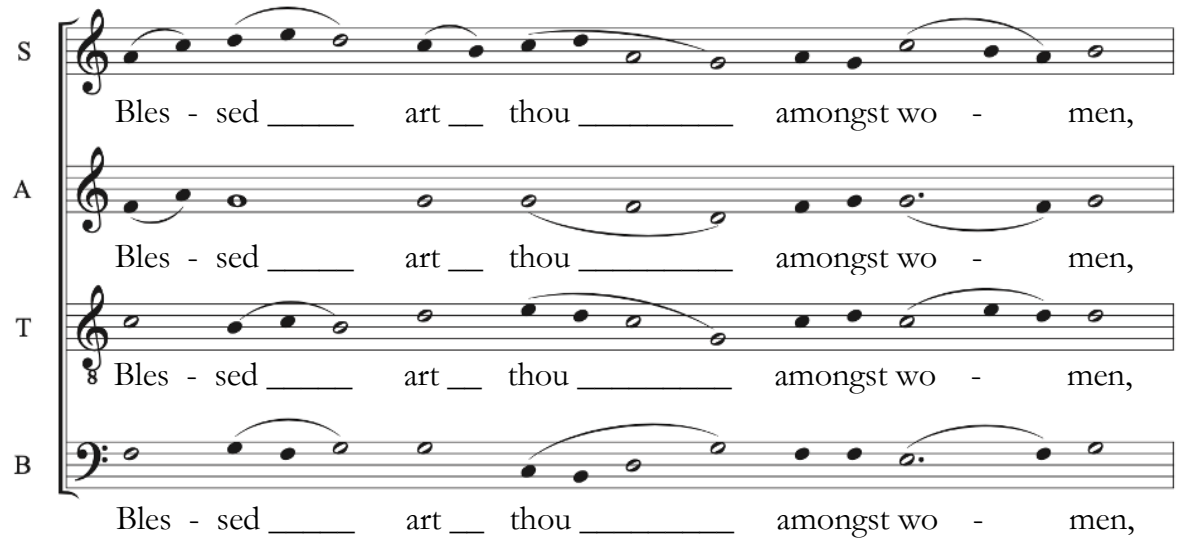


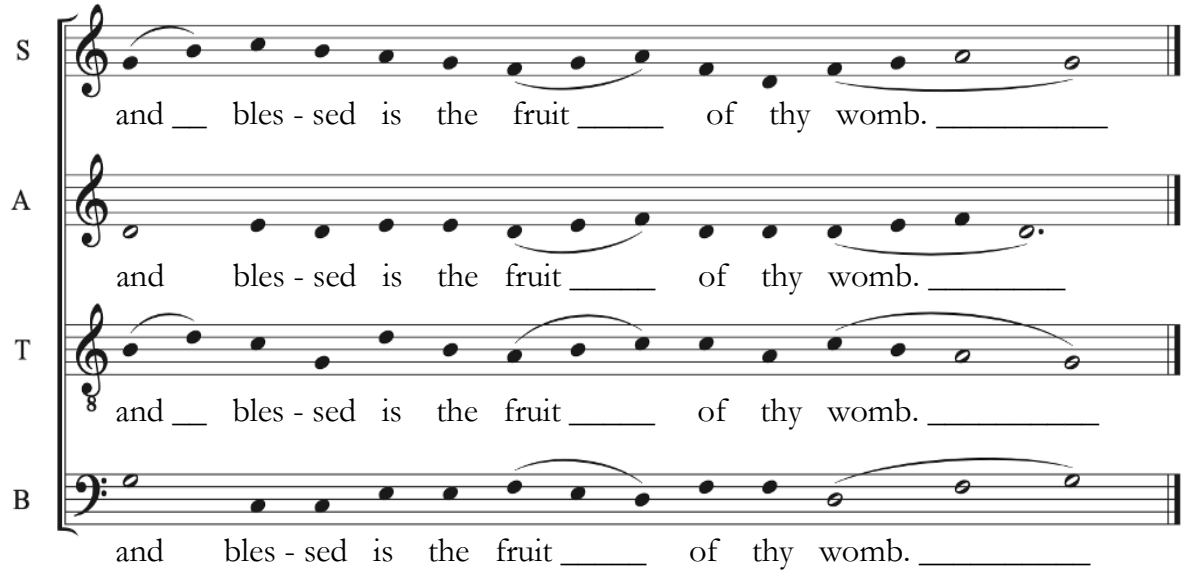
Offertory for Fourth Sunday of Advent




Soprano
Hail _____ Mar - y, full of grace; ____
Alto
Hail _____ Mar - y, full of grace; ____
Tenor
Hail _____ Mar - y, full of grace; ____
Bass
Hail _____ Mar - y, full of grace; ____


S
the _____ Lord _____ is _____ with thee. ____
A
the _____ Lord _____ is _____ with thee. ____
T
the _____ Lord _____ is _____ with thee. ____
B
the _____ Lord _____ is _____ with thee. ____


S
A
T
B
Bles - sed _____ art __ thou _____ amongst wo - men,
Bles - sed _____ art __ thou _____ amongst wo - men,
Bles - sed _____ art __ thou _____ amongst wo - men,
Bles - sed _____ art __ thou _____ amongst wo - men,


S
A
T
B
and __ bles - sed is the fruit _____ of thy womb. _____
and bles - sed is the fruit _____ of thy womb. _____
and __ bles - sed is the fruit _____ of thy womb. _____
and bles - sed is the fruit _____ of thy womb. _____

Commentary

Come One, Come All! Or Is That What You Want? Thoughts on Recruiting the Parish Choir

Just getting a bunch of people to show up might not be the wisest goal.

by Mary Jane Ballou

Twice a year, choir directors open a "recruiting season." This generally happens in autumn, coinciding with school opening, the start of CCD classes, and the end of the traditional vacation season. After Christmas is over, there is another round of pleas for new singers in the choir, aimed at beefing things up for Holy Week and Easter. There is an item in the bulletin and on the parish website. The pastor urges all who wish "to make a joyful noise" to check out the choir.

Wait! Think!

Think about what you want before you start recruiting new members. Do you need singers in all parts or are you drowning in sopranos? If you are looking for tenors and basses (I don't know who isn't), ask for what you need or you risk going even further out of balance. Would a quartet of choral scholars for section leaders give you a reliable base at rehearsals and services? Can you find the money for them? Is there a college with a good music program close at hand? Even if this is not possible this year, maybe you could run some numbers and talk to the pastor about next year's budget. Whatever your needs or possibilities are, think things through before you throw open the doors to the choir room.

Do you audition potential members? If you are directing a select choir, you probably do, and I hope you have the procedures in place. However, many directors do not have that luxury. It would be considered elitist in many parishes and most inexperienced singers are terrified of auditions. Attempting to disguise this as "voice placement" rarely fools them. Nonetheless you are entitled to finding out ranges and the ability to sing on pitch. If that won't pass muster in your environment, you can welcome all who wish to sing and let them "try on the choir for size."

At this point you're probably thinking, "But what do I do if someone with a truly terrible voice shows up?" You have a choice. You can have the difficult conversation of telling the individual that you appreciate

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his or her interest in the choir but that his or her voice is not a good fit for the choir. Perhaps there is another music-related job available—music librarian, public relations for special concerts, keeping attendance and following up on missing members. Dodging that hard conversation is cowardice, not kindness. Every time you hear that voice you will cringe and so will the singers in that section. Maybe you will start to gossip about the singer and, trust me, it will get back to the person in question. You also run the risk that someday you will explode at that singer, causing hurt feelings, distress in the choir, and shame for yourself and a ruined reputation with your singers. Directing a choir is a leadership position and it is your responsibility to the church and to your singers to do the difficult parts of leading.

While autumn and the post-Christmas/pre-Lent seasons are the traditional times to look for new singers, you may want to keep your ears open for new talent all the time. People move in and out of parishes throughout the year and a "rolling admission" policy would let you take advantage of this, while still preserving the traditional "open rehearsal" times. So, if someone with experience comes to you or is recommended by another singer, give that singer a listen. For pity's sake, do not make them wait until "the right time."

Now for the tactics of recruiting. Of course, there is the bulletin announcement which should include all your contact information. If you want an announcement after Mass, keep it short. Offer to meet potential members in the back of the church after Mass, so they need not climb up to the loft or swim upstream to the front if your choir is there. Obviously, you will need a sign so that people can find you and a couple of your more enthusiastic singers. Ministry fairs are not successful in my experience because you appear to be in competition with everything else going on in the parish from knitting prayer blankets to the middle school youth retreat. However, you will be missed if you aren't there. So "person" your booth but keep your expectations low.

Recruit your current singers into the business of finding potential members.

Do you have plans for seeking out the "lost sheep of COVID"? Singers who have not come back but who might return if they were asked? A telephone call from you or from someone in their section might do the trick. Let them know that you miss them and what plans you have for the coming season—special music, concerts, retreats, or parties. At the same time, if their lives have changed and your choir is no longer a part of their plans, be gracious.

Recruit your current singers into the business of finding potential members. Have them pass out flyers after Masses with dates for open rehearsals and some inviting details of the year ahead. Ask them to talk up the choir with their friends. Have them invite possible singers they know from other organizations to an open rehearsal. At this rehearsal you can talk up your plans and enjoy singing a sampler of accessible music. Collect contact information in a low-key, no obligation way for a follow-up email.

You might also consider ways to make

your choir(s) more accessible. Could you add an additional rehearsal time after that eleven o'clock Mass? What about a rehearsal for mothers and fathers waiting for children in CCD? Could choirs for different Masses rehearse at different times? What about a schola of men? Or women? Seasonal commitments might work for some singers: Advent through Epiphany or Lent to Easter. A summer choir might sing nothing but hymns and very easy anthems and invite all who interested to "slip" into singing.

There is one thing you need more than anything else. Your choir must be good enough that people want *to join.*

All these plans are well and good, but there is one thing you need more than anything else. Your choir must be good enough that people *want* to join. No one wants to sing in an awful choir. When I travel and happily sing away in the congregation, people often suggest that I join their dreadful choir because I have a lovely voice. I am glad I can say I'm just visiting. Take a hard look at your choir. Are you singing good music? Is it just a rag-tag assembly of voices singing along with the accompanist? How can you improve your ensemble so that good singers will want to come on board? If your part singing is uncertain or off key, work on developing strong unison or two-part singing with accompaniment. Aside from attracting singers to your choir, do you consider the role a good choir plays in attracting and retaining parishioners? Carey Nieuwhof, a successful leadership coach for Protestant churches, wrote a blog post entitled "Why 'Just Turn Down His Microphone' is a (Really) Bad Leadership Strategy."[1] He points out that "you wouldn't settle for this anywhere else."

> Imagine going to a restaurant where people who were terrible cooks prepared the meal and where people with few social skills served your table. . . . Well actually, come to think of it, some of you have eaten at the restaurant . . . And you left, didn't you?

If you build a good choir, they will come when you invite them. Know what singers you want and welcome them to a choir that builds a community of musicians that glorifies God and whose singing enhances the mystery and beauty of our faith. ❖

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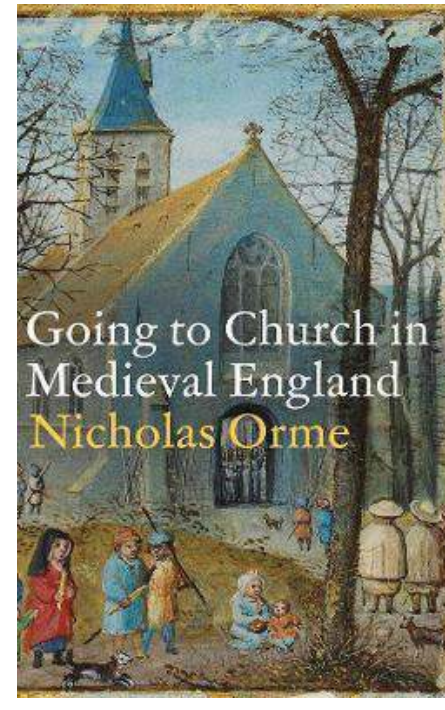
[1]Carey Nieuwhof, "Why 'Just Turn Down His Microphone' is a (Really) Bad Leadership Strategy" <https://Careynieuwhof.com/why-just-turn-down-his-microphone-is-a-really-bad-leadership-strategy/>.

Book Review

Going to Church in Medieval England by Nicholas Orme. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021. 496 pp. Hardcover: ISBN 9780300256505, $35.00; Paperback: ISBN 9780300266436, $25.00.

by Daniel Bennett Page

In *Going to Church in Medieval England,* historian Nicholas Orme has crowned a lifetime of research with a luxuriant account of parish churches and churchgoing from the Anglo-Saxons through the Reformation. Orme, professor emeritus at the University of Exeter, has published over thirty books, with specialties in the Middle Ages, medieval and Renaissance education, church history and architecture, and regional history. Readers of his newest work will be all the richer for this depth and breadth of expertise. A remarkably thorough social history, *Going to Church* is consistently pitched just on the scholarly side of the popular/scholarly divide, and is thus always readily approachable but never flippant or anachronistically reductive. Orme explains through hundreds of well-chosen examples why the thousands of medieval churches in England were built and how they were used. This is not a stained-glass or jolly-peasants story: although we get plenty of vignettes about the rough and ready nature of life in this era, we also get



to know the current state of knowledge on every conceivable corner of daily church life as it filled so much of the existence of ordinary Britons.

Orme's first and last chapters are largely narrative histories of the synthesis of the parish system (roughly from St. Augustine

Daniel Bennett Page is a scholar, educator, and church musician. A specialist in Renaissance music, he holds M.F.A. and Ph.D. degrees from Brandeis University.

of Canterbury through about 1100) and of the Protestant Reformation, respectively. Six core chapters—covering staffing, buildings, congregations, principal liturgies, the church year, and life-cycle celebrations—are set out topically rather than chronologically, but with references to change over time within each. These chapters are divided into ten or so sections which generally avoid the pitfall of so many potted histories. As a result, most of the book can be read in any order without loss of comprehensibility; indeed, this might be a fruitful strategy with a large book consisting entirely of short subdivisions.

Unlike some monographs on the medieval English church, this is very much not a disembodied history of liturgical texts or a narrowly thematic narrative. Orme accurately claims to have articulated no overarching thesis or to have followed no doctrinaire interpretive school, although there is something of a methodological assumption that most patterns of medieval life changed only little. *Going to Church* is especially strong on integrating material history (particularly architecture) with the social. It maintains a consistent focus on the "ordinary majority" of parishioners and gives non-negligible attention to the roles of women. We find elegant descriptions such as a primer on liturgical time (p. 197) and a fulsome explanation of confession in the Middle Ages. Orme is also good at elucidating complicated matters such as medieval parochial configurations (e.g., appropriated rectories) and the structure of the Divine Office, as well as drawing out interesting facets of topics such as social status and church seating.

The forty-seven pages of endnotes and an extensive bibliography show the robust research foundation underlying every statement and example. These are not mere proofs of the author's erudition, but authentically valuable points of departure for further research and guides to both classic historical sources and recent scholarly works. A glossary of technical terms is a kindness to those not steeped in the intricacies of pre-Reformation Catholicism. There are also fifty-nine well-chosen illustrations, including church plans and images in color.

Going to Church *is especially strong on integrating material history (particularly architecture) with the social. It maintains a consistent focus on the "ordinary majority" of parishioners and gives non-negligible attention to the roles of women.*

A handful of the most widely circulated or particularly evocative contemporaneous sources do make appearances in the main text, including the *Festial* collection of model sermons and the verse *Instructions to Parish Priests* by the Shropshire Augustinian canon John Mirk (fl. 1380–1400), and

descriptions from Durandus, the Middle English *Lay Folk's Mass Book*, and Andrew Chertsey (fl. 1510–1530). Important differences between specific Sarum and York liturgical practices are noted, as are issues surrounding tithes and seasonal offerings. Orme is ever-attentive to the subtleties of lay involvement and privileges, especially as they altered during the centuries covered here. And we are left with an unmistakable sense of the importance of the 1215 Lateran Council in bringing into focus many now-normative Catholic precepts and practices.

Going to Church reflects the prevailing (and frustrating) lack of evidence for liturgical music in small and medium-sized medieval parishes. The ways in which the full opulence of medieval cathedral liturgies (as reflected in the surviving liturgical books) was scaled down for local use is addressed, but Orme admits that we have almost no detailed accounts of what chants were sung in places with only one or two resident priests and without hired singers. We learn about the burgeoning of more elaborate choirs in larger churches in the fifteenth century, but not much about who assisted musically in more ordinary settings. For instance, St. Thomas More apparently sang in his parish choir even while chancellor, but his formidable expertise in Latin and year of formation as a Carthusian were hardly typical. We get a general idea about clerical literacy, but documents usually only record efforts at basic enforcement and never anything about singing. Strangely, we also hear next to nothing about the disruptions of the Black Death and the effects of warfare on communities. And there is a conspicuous lack of emphasis on the period's extensive provision and practice of prayers for the dead. In describing the state of the faith immediately before the Reformation and in enumerating the most noticeable changes enacted then, it seems like abrogation of the extravagant customs of late-medieval "transactional" piety would be next in importance after the abolition of the Mass itself.

By steering clear of tendentious interpretations while providing a very complete scholarly apparatus, Orme has produced a book useful to a wide range of readers. Period specialists and liturgical historians will appreciate his encyclopedic knowledge and extensive citations. Non-specialists and general readers will find both an engaging introduction to a crucial slice of medieval life and an example of high-quality multi-disciplinary scholarship. In short, *Going to Church in Medieval England* can be extensively mined for content and still enjoyed as a readable book. Its refreshingly reasonable price makes it an easy recommend for both institutional and personal libraries. ❖

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Last Word

If the Church Has Officially Made Liturgical Changes, Can She (Even Tacitly) Admit Error and Change Things Back?

by Kurt Poterack

I apologize for the very clunky title; my excuse is that I am under a bit of a deadline. And the answer to this timely question is . . . yes! There is historical precedent for this. I am surprised that, to the best of my knowledge, no one else has pointed this out recently—given various contemporary liturgical controversies. It is something that comes up in the music history courses that all music majors must take, even if it only gets a brief mention. What I am speaking about are two things: 1) the so-called Medicean Gradual and 2) the reform by Pope Urban VIII of the Latin breviary hymn texts.

In the Papal Bull *Quo Primum*, issued by Pope Pius V in 1570, his new edition of the Roman Missal is required of all Latin Rite priests, "saving only those in which the practice of saying Mass differently was granted over two hundred years ago simultaneously with the Apostolic See's institution and confirmation of the church, and those in which there has prevailed a similar custom followed continuously for a period of not less than two hundred years." This quotation is something that is often forgotten, in those dioceses with longstanding liturgical uses (such as the diocese of Lyon, France) and religious orders (e.g., Dominicans) were allowed to keep their missals. That much aside, *Quo Primum* said nothing about liturgical music.

The issue of the reform of liturgical music in specific liturgical books, such as the gradual and the breviary, did not come up until a successor, Pope Gregory XIII, issued a brief in 1577 on the matter. Pope Gregory wrote to the composers Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina and Annibale Zoilo: in the letter, he tasked the two with "the business of revising (so far as shall seem expedient to you) and of purging, correcting, and revising these antiphonaries, graduals, and psalters" which are "filled to overflowing with barbarisms, obscurities, contrarieties, and superfluities."

There is the opinion, as expressed by Monsignor Robert Hayburn in his book *Papal Legislation on Sacred Music,* that Palestrina and Zoilo overinterpreted what Pope Gregory wrote in the brief. I take no stand on this, but Msgr. Hayburn's description (of what at least Palestrina did) seems indisputable. Palestrina's "humanist musical reform views" were that "it was a barbarism to have several notes on the syllables following the tonic accent, or long notes over the grammatically short syllables, and vice versa. The obscurities and contradictions he interpreted as faults of the tonality. He cor-

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rected these by going so far as to transpose certain verses of the Te Deum to the upper fifth, in order to give them more brilliance. Finally, the superfluities were, from his point of view, the vocalises of the gradual and Alleluia versicles."

So, we are talking about major edits to liturgical melodies which had been in existence for centuries, because they did not suit a modern sensibility (that of the sixteenth–seventeenth centuries). Hmm . . . does this sound familiar? Now there was protest by at least one noble figure of the time, a Spanish church musician named Don Fernando de las Infantas. He wrote to the pope that "the errors which certain musicians, in all good faith, think they have found in plainchant are not errors at all, but on the contrary contain some of the most beautiful musical passages ever written." In the end, the "Palestrina Gradual" was dropped only to be taken up by two other composers, Felice Anerio and Francesco Soriano. They had similar humanist reform ideas, and their version of the gradual was published by the Medicean Printing Company, with the approval of Pope Paul V, in 1614–1615. Although, according to Msgr. Hayburn, the pope also "forbade the imposition of the book on any church." Still, the damage was done. This defective gradual dominated the market, and it took the monks of the Abbey of Solesmes much of the nineteenth century to do the proper research to restore the chant melodies to their original integrity which were then published by the Vatican in 1908.

So, the Renaissance humanist, stripped down, reformed gradual melodies circulated in much of the Latin Rite church for almost four hundred years. It was Pope St. Pius X who (tacitly) admitted that a mistake had been made when he published the new, official Roman Gradual in 1908. Now, some may argue that, since Pope Paul V did not impose the Medicean Gradual on anyone in 1615, what resulted was a serious misfortune, but not the formal imposition of something that was liturgically erroneous.

Enter the reformed Latin Breviary hymn texts of Pope Urban VIII.

Another area where Renaissance humanism had an influence was in Latin hymns texts of the breviary. In 1631 Pope Urban did *impose* his reform which, according to Vincent Lenti, involved "nine hundred-fifty-two corrections in the ninety-eight hymns then contained in the breviary. Of the ninety-eight hymns, eighty-one were subjected to such corrections, including altering the first lines of more than thirty hymns." And these alterations were to what were often patristic hymns, some of them one thousand years old at the time. These altered texts, based on Renaissance humanist ideas of what Latin poetry should be like became, by papal proclamation, the "normative texts for most of the Catholic world" for over four centuries until Vatican II ordered that "the hymns are to be restored to their original form" (*Sacrosanctum concilium*, ¶93), and this was done with the publication of the *Liber Hymnarius* by Solesmes in 1983.

So, I have cited two examples in which parts of the church's liturgy were dramatically altered based on intellectual fashions of the time. These reforms were either instigated and approved by a pope (Paul V and the Roman Gradual), or the pope himself took a direct involvement in the reform (Pope Urban VIII and the Latin breviary hymns) and imposed it. The original forms were then restored centuries later by church authorities.

Is there a lesson in this for our times? I will leave this to the reader.

P.S. I do not think it will take four hundred years this time! ❖

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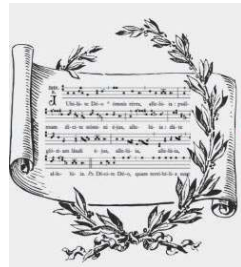

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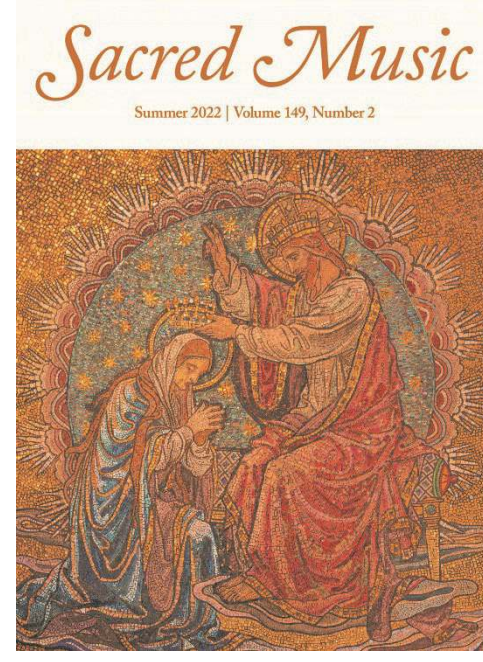

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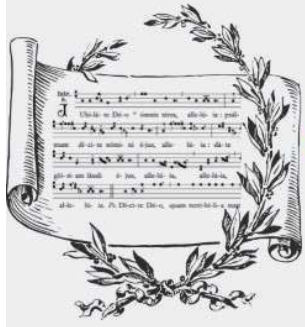

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