

Church Music Association of America

August 21, 2008

Dear Friend of the CMAA,

Catholic Church music has been in a state of upheaval for decades. The good news is that the Church Music Association of America is making progress in bringing about change to the beautiful and true.

With a heritage that dates to 1874 and a rebirth in 1964 in cooperation with the *Consociatio Internationalis Musicae Sacrae* (Rome), the CMAA today has emerged as the leading educator, promoter, and publisher in the sacred music tradition, drawing thousands of young people to this liturgical art and inspiring change in parishes around the country.

- Our teaching seminars on Gregorian chant are filled to capacity. More than three hundred attended our week-long seminars in Chicago this summer.
- We have made available dozens of books of chant and polyphony available online—for free download. These beautiful scans are used every day by directors and singers all over the country and the world.
- We are running a round-the-clock forum on sacred music that is helping thousands.
- We have published the *Parish Book of Chant* that puts the Gregorian tradition into the hands of every Catholic, and provides complete English translations.
- Many other books have been published by the CMAA, including a tribute volume to William Byrd, a book of communion antiphons with Psalms, books on the theology of sacred music, manuals of musical rubrics, and much more.
- Our journal *Sacred Music* is the leading venue for scholarship and practical help in giving truly sacred music primacy of place in Catholic liturgy. Now in its 135th year, its circulation is higher than ever before.

- Parish memberships in the CMAA are growing daily, as is our listing of Gregorian scholas around the country.
- Through the generosity of donors, provided a limited number of scholarships to music students and seminarians to attend training sessions.
- We work to match up good Catholic musicians with parishes in need of their services, and thereby serve as a "job bank" that has led to many improvements in the liturgical experience in parishes around the country.

What does all this mean for you and your parish? It means that change is coming along the lines of what Pope Benedict XVI has proposed: away from "utility" music and toward music as sung prayer. He has said that "an authentic updating of sacred music can take place only in the lineage of the great tradition of the past, of Gregorian chant and sacred polyphony."

For millions of Catholics, this will mean a substantial improvement in their prayer lives and bring them to fall in love again with the Mass. It will bring decorum to our worship, joyful solemnity to our liturgy, and peace to our parishes.

This is an issue that the pope has written about for decades. And under his leadership, we've seen substantial change in the right direction. After a period of upheaval such as we've seen, this change will not be immediate. There are hearts that need to undergo a kind of conversion.

Just as importantly, what is needed now is technical training. Many pastors and laypeople have the desire to embrace the Gregorian tradition in their music, and sing the music of the sacred treasury of motets and Masses of the past. What stands in their way is that they do not know where to begin. They don't have musicians who are properly prepared.

This is where the CMAA has made such a difference. Our training programs in chant, organ technique, and vocal production have helped people overcome their fears and make this music their own. CMAA-affiliated chant directors, organists, and singers are now quoted in the Catholic and religious press on a regular basis. Young people are being inspired.

The CMAA is positioned to take the leadership role. It was formed just after the close of the Second Vatican Council with the mandate of guiding American Catholic music after the council. History didn't turn out that way, with music

having taken a dramatic turn in following decades. But today we can put the past behind us and look to a bright future.

Our president is William Mahrt of Stanford University, one of the most brilliant chant scholars in the world. He serves as the editor of our journal, and also teaches at our annual Colloquium, in addition to speaking around the country. It is such a pleasure to work with him.

His theme is to stay ever focused on the ideals emphasized by the whole of our tradition. Chant is the music of the Roman Rite, intimately bound up with the text and reflecting the holiness, universality, and beauty of the liturgy itself. All other music of the Mass should be reflective of the spirit and sensibility of the chant.

Thus does the choir have a special role. Does this mean that the people are excluded from singing? Quite the opposite. There are parts for the choir, parts for the choir and the people, and parts for the celebrant alone. The rite is ennobled when all parts are sung in a fitting manner.

Understanding this, and being able to sing the music that is suitable, requires hard work, study, and lots of practice. That is our responsibility as Catholic musicians.

Musicians must be inspired to accept this responsibility. At the same time, they must have access to high-quality teaching materials, sheet music, instruction manuals, as well as seminars to provide technical training. Also, they need to enjoy the support of a nationwide community that helps them on a constant basis. This is what the Church Music Association of America provides.

The CMAA has been able to do all of this on a very low budget—shockingly low, in fact. We have no endowment, no large pool of benefactors, no subsidies from large foundations or the government. People pour their lives into this work because they love it and care about it so much.

And yet, there are bills to pay and costs to defray: printing, facilities, books, scanning, internet, scholarships for students who cannot afford to pay, among many other costs. It is also urgent that we expand our current services, with more seminars, software tools, archival books to get online, and training sessions in all regions.

We are also making some big plans for the future. We would like to send a copy of *The Parish Book of Chant* to every Bishop in the U.S. and Canada. This might lead to many parish and cathedral adoptions. Right now, we cannot afford to do this.

We are looking at a new program which we are calling the Chant University. It would be designed for college-age students. It would provide a full immersion into the world of sacred music. We have the personnel and the means of outreach.

Can you imagine what kind of a difference a program like this could make in the Church? But financially this is not currently feasible: ideally, everyone would come on scholarship.

Because we are a non-profit organization, a 501(c)(3), donations to our work are tax-deductible. This means we can accept your contribution to the CMAA and you can deduct that amount from your taxes to the full extent that regulations allow.

Please consider joining the work of the CMAA with an annual membership, and, in addition, helping with a financial gift that, as large as you can afford, will help us continue this wonderful work and expand into the future. Continued progress is not written in stone. It is written on the dedicated hearts of those who care about improving the liturgy.

The Catholic music of the ages, the music that the Church tells us is "of inestimable value," must be heard again in our parishes, carried in our hearts, and passed on to the next generation. The CMAA offers hope that this can happen in our time. And for this reason, it deserves all the support you can provide. Please [go to MusicaSacra.com now to make your donation.](http://MusicaSacra.com)

Thank you for reading, and please pray for continued success in this apostolate.

Very sincerely,

Scott Turkington
Director of Chant
Church Music Association of America

P.S. St. Augustine said that through sacred music "truth filtered into my heart, and from my heart surged waves of devotion." Together, let's work toward making his experience our own.