

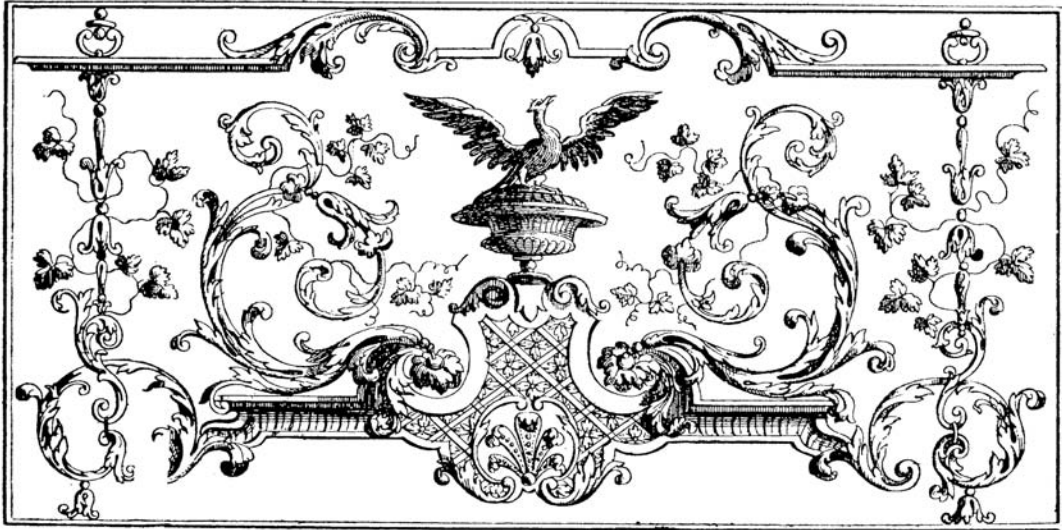
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# SACRED MUSIC

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# SACRED MUSIC

Summer 2006

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## Editorial

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# The Learning Curve

by Jeffrey Tucker



It is now widely acknowledged that Catholic music is in a period of transition toward recapturing a sense of the sacred through the use of Gregorian chant and polyphonic music and hymns that are stylistically compatible. If this trend hasn't yet reached your parish—most public Masses in the United States are still weighed down with the folk and pop styles of the 1970s—you might begin to see a change in the coming years.

The advocates of chant are newly energized. Workshops are giving the practical help that musicians need. Publishers are releasing how-to books, CDs, and song books that incorporate the chant tradition. Young composers are writing music in the polyphonic tradition. The official chant books of the Catholic Church are selling in venues that once only marketed its stylistic opposite. Statements coming from the Vatican are ever more explicit: chant must retake its pride of place.

As we celebrate, let us also consider the pitfalls. Chant could be regarded as a niche market to be accommodated rather than an overriding liturgical concern at the heart of the Roman Rite. Liturgies could become an eclectic mix of styles, so that chant favorites become part of the four-hymn mix that has become standard in parishes. The propers might be neglected entirely, or attempted and sung badly. Directors might impose too much too fast, and lose their congregations in the process.

There are issues of competence. Fewer and fewer people in parishes read music, having been spoon-fed "praise music" that requires no musical skill. Directors might find themselves without capable singers. There are issues of vocal technique. Sacred music requires a stability of sound, clarity of pitch, and openness in vocal timbres. The quality is completely different from the "American Idol" sound that dominates pop culture.

There are issues of pastoral cooperation. Many priests are unfamiliar with the tradition of sacred music. They too must be taught and brought along at a humane pace. While taste and preference should not be the decisive factor in liturgical music, but modern parish life requires that people come to love the sound and feel of the music they hear. Ears must become accustomed to the sound of the eternal.

The transition period will involve bumps and missteps. As musicians and parish members, we must balance our intellectual and artistic desires against what is really possible given the difficulties we face. If the ideal can't be realized now, we must move in the right direction, sometimes with two steps forward and one step back.

It is worth all our efforts, but that will not be enough. Prayer, humility, and the intercession of the Saints in this struggle will carry us through. What matters for now is that the chant is being heard again. We should never underestimate its spiritual power to work miracles. ☒

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## ARTICLES

# John Paul II on Sacred Music

By Peter A. Kwasniewski



In a chirograph dated November 23, 2003, the feast of St. Cecilia, the late Holy Father drew the Church's attention to a major anniversary, one that might otherwise have passed unnoticed: the centenary of St. Pius X's *motu proprio* on sacred music, *Tra le sollecitudini*.<sup>1</sup> Pope John Paul II's document was a forceful reminder that, in his words, "not all musical forms can be considered suitable for liturgical celebrations,"<sup>2</sup> and that music intended for the liturgy is appropriate for it only to the degree that it possesses the qualities praised by his predecessor—holiness, good artistic form, and universality—and when it remains in continuity with the great tradition of the past.<sup>3</sup>

The pope spoke of the need for all songs to be "respectful of the liturgical spirit and the authentic value of art"; there is no room for lightweight things that distract from contemplation of divine mysteries (he speaks of avoiding "any concession to frivolity and superficiality," §6). Among other topics of discussion, the pope renewed the recommendation of Gregorian chant and asked Roman Congregations and bishops throughout the world to exercise greater vigilance about the textual content and artistic quality of liturgical music.

In the world of Catholic journalism, the publication of this document was duly noted as a significant gesture. Far from being the first time John Paul II had spoken about sacred music, however, it was the last of many such occasions during his long reign as the Successor of Peter. He spoke widely and confidently not only on the subject of liturgical music but also on the very art of music, an art form he viewed as pointing to the divine and beckoning man into a stance of awe before the cosmos and gratitude for the gift of existence. While many of the pope's remarks on music come in the course of short speeches or documents treating of more general matters, taken together they deliver a coherent message. In the absence of specially weighty

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<sup>1</sup> St. Pius X's *motu proprio* is available at [www.adoremus.org/MotuProprio.html](http://www.adoremus.org/MotuProprio.html). Aside from the document of 22 November 2003 (referred to hereafter as the "St. Cecilia letter," the text of which is available at [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/letters/2003/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_let\\_20031203\\_musica-sacra\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/2003/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_20031203_musica-sacra_en.html)), the most substantive teaching of John Paul II on the subject is contained in two addresses given a week apart: *Address to the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music* (19 January 2001) and *Address to Participants in the International Congress of Sacred Music* (27 January 2001).

<sup>2</sup> See §4, which also quotes the strong words of Paul VI: "If music—instrumental and vocal—does not possess at the same time the sense of prayer, dignity, and beauty, entry into the sphere of the sacred and the religious is [thereby] precluded."

<sup>3</sup> John Paul II's St. Cecilia letter—by summarizing St. Pius X's teaching, showing its unity with preceding tradition and subsequent legislation, and applying the same insights to the contemporary situation—itself models this continuity. As students of magisterial texts know, a pope's decision to commemorate the anniversary of a prior papal document with a new document that recalls and elaborates on its themes has become a familiar way for the sovereign pontiff to propose anew to the faithful a doctrine or practice he considers especially important for the well-being of the Church. Although I will not dwell on the issue of doctrinal continuity, a reader who is familiar with both preconciliar and postconciliar documents will be able to see two things: first, that there has been no essential change in the Church's teaching on sacred music; second, that much contemporary liturgical music falls short of John Paul II's ideals, just as it falls short of the demanding criteria of his predecessors.

documents such as encyclicals, it is not an individual homily or letter but rather the unified witness of mutually reinforcing statements across the pontificate that carry the stamp of authoritative teaching. John Paul II's unified witness on the topic of music for God's glory is what I shall unfold in the present article. My purpose in these pages is not to offer a comprehensive theological interpretation of the late pope's magisterium on music—for this, nothing less than a book would suffice—but to gather in one place, organize topically, and comment on the significance of his interventions on the subject, with a view to making possible a more profound investigation of the theology and spirituality behind them. Certainly, the far-reaching liturgical and pastoral implications of the pope's statements will be evident.

As is unsurprising for a pope blessed with one of the longest pontificates in history, John Paul II taught more on the subject of music than can be presented in a brief scope. I shall therefore be selective, on the one hand rapidly summarizing points the Holy Father inherited purely from the tradition, on the other hand drawing attention to aspects more distinctive of this pope in contrast to his predecessors, whose teaching I have discussed elsewhere.<sup>4</sup>

## A Philosopher of Beauty

John Paul II came to the pontifical throne not only as a bishop from Poland and an expert moral theologian, but as a life-long Thomistic philosopher, with a philosopher's spirit of inquiry and reflection into first principles of science and art. We are not surprised, then, to find him engaging the question of sacred art not only in its narrower aspects but out of a broad awareness of the transcendental perfection of beauty. Thus in his *Letter to Artists* (1999) we read:

Beauty is a key to the mystery and a call to transcendence. It is an invitation to savor life and to dream of the future. That is why the beauty of created things can never fully satisfy. It stirs that hidden nostalgia for God which a lover of beauty like Saint Augustine could express in incomparable terms: "Late have I loved you, beauty so old and so new: late have I loved you!" Artists of the world, may your many different paths all lead to that infinite Ocean of beauty where wonder becomes awe, exhilaration, unspeakable joy.<sup>5</sup>

Other statements echo this train of thought: "The Church has always maintained that, in some way through all the expressions of art, the infinite beauty of God is reflected and the human mind is almost naturally drawn towards him."<sup>6</sup> "As with prayer, every artistic expression—especially music—lifts the soul beyond mere earthly existence; it allows us to face life and God who created it with humble devotion, open

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<sup>4</sup>"Cantate Domino Canticum Novum: Aspects of the Church's Liturgical Magisterium, Part 2," *The Catholic Faith* 6.2 (Mar.-Apr. 2000), 14–23, available at [www.catholic.net/rcc/Periodicals/Faith/00MarApr/liturgy.html](http://www.catholic.net/rcc/Periodicals/Faith/00MarApr/liturgy.html) and [www.catholicculture.org/docs/doc\\_view.cfm?recnum=4440](http://www.catholicculture.org/docs/doc_view.cfm?recnum=4440). Given the amount of documentation, a further limitation seemed advisable: I have drawn from sources between 1987 and 2003. Quotations in this article are from the official acts of John Paul II, and, except where another source is indicated, are available on the Vatican website ([www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)). Italics follow the original unless otherwise noted.

<sup>5</sup>*Letter to Artists* (4 April 1999), §16.

<sup>6</sup>*Address to the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church* (19 October 2002), §1.

to the splendor of its truth.”<sup>7</sup> In a message given after a performance of J. S. Bach’s *Mass in B Minor* on June 8, 2000, the pope said: “We were able to meditate with spiritual enjoyment on the Latin texts of the eucharistic liturgy presented once again through the mysterious and universal language of music. Once again we could experience that artistic beauty offers privileged access to the Mystery and to the satisfaction of the interior need for light and peace.”<sup>8</sup> As a philosopher, the pope stresses how fine art at its best parallels religion, while as a theologian he is equally aware of the limitations of the analogy obtaining between human artistic ‘inspiration’ and the true divinization of man that occurs by way of the sacraments.

When we turn over certain wonderful pages of literature and philosophy, justly admire some masterpiece of art or listen to passages of sublime music, we spontaneously recognize in these expressions of human genius a radiant reflection of God’s Spirit. Of course, these reflections are on a different plane from those interventions which make the human being, raised to the supernatural order, a temple in which the Holy Spirit dwells together with the other Persons of the Blessed Trinity (cf. St. Thomas, *Summa theologiae* I-II, q. 109, a. 1, ad 1). Thus the Holy Spirit, directly or indirectly, orients man to his integral salvation.<sup>9</sup>

The revelation of the beautiful through the fine arts can be, in this sense, a *praeparatio evangelii*, a making ready for the Gospel. Within the soul of the artist who is attuned to the beauty of God’s creation and attentive to the permanent values etched upon it, there can be a kind of “brooding” of the Spirit over chaos, and a birth of insight that is a true, albeit partial, contact with the ultimate mystery of reality.

Dear artists, you well know that there are many impulses which, either from within or from without, can inspire your talent. Every genuine inspiration, however, contains some tremor of that “breath” with which the Creator Spirit suffused the work of creation from the very beginning. Overseeing the mysterious laws governing the universe, the divine breath of the Creator Spirit reaches out to human genius and stirs its creative power. He touches it with a kind of inner illumination which brings together the sense of the good and the beautiful, and he awakens energies of mind and heart which enable it to conceive an idea and give it form in a work of art. It is right then to speak, even if only analogically, of “moments of grace,” because the human being is able to experience in some way the Absolute who is utterly beyond.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Speech “To the International Youth Orchestra,” *L’Osservatore Romano* 1989, no. 37, p. 7, cited in Basil Cole, OP, *Music and Morals* (New York: Alba House, 1993), 98.

<sup>8</sup>*Address to the Vienna Philharmonic* (8 June 2000). See similar remarks in the *Address at the End of the Concert at Paul VI Hall* (18 May 2000), when Haydn’s oratorio *The Creation* was performed. Speaking on another occasion to children’s choirs, the pope stated: “You are the little messengers of beauty. The world needs your singing, for the language of beauty moves hearts and contributes to the encounter with God. . . . Thus you will be the messengers of God’s peace and love” (*Address to the Representatives of the International Federation of “Pueri Cantores,”* 31 December 1999, §2).

<sup>9</sup>*General Audience* of 12 August 1998.

<sup>10</sup>*Letter to Artists*, §15.

Because grace builds upon nature, it is just this inherent quality of bearing witness to the transcendent and this capacity to carry conviction to the heart that allows the fine arts to be taken up readily by the Catholic religion, where they are made an essential part of the divine *cultus* and human culture she spreads. Music, poetry, painting, sculpture, architecture, these catechize our imagination and our senses, they can be made into instruments for preaching the Gospel. “The Church offers her perpetual praise [to the Trinity] in the polyphony of her many art forms.”<sup>11</sup> But since the corruption of the best is the worst, no one should be surprised to find that the arts have as great a power to harm the human person as they have graces to perfect him. “Time and time again, we are reminded of the damage to the personality—especially young people’s—by literature, art or music, if they are created with an inherent hostility to man,” the pope soberly observed to a delegation of Polish intellectuals.<sup>12</sup> The Catholic faith is the salt that preserves mankind from corruption, the animating principle that endows the human race with life and health. In the arts as in moral behavior, no sooner has the spiritual ‘soul’ departed than corruption sets in.

### Inseparable Companions: Art And Liturgy

Many motifs run through John Paul II’s statements on religious art in general and liturgical music in particular. Most frequent is his insistence on the necessity of bringing to the composition and performance of sacred music a proper, and profound, understanding of the great mystery of the liturgy—a mystery that cannot be reached by any sociological or psychological model of explanation. We stand before the altar of sacrifice in a spirit of wonder, humility, and surrender to God. We kneel before the all-holy, all-merciful Lord Jesus Christ. We adore him in the supreme mystery of the Eucharist, we eat his flesh and drink his blood for the remission of our sins, unto eternal life. The whole content and sequence and symbolism of the liturgy is meant to lead the Christian into this sanctuary of the divine presence, to prepare her for the wedding feast of the Lamb, to intensify its effects within her by the force of fervent prayer. In the pope’s own words:



Between heaven and earth a channel of communication is established in which the action of the Lord meets the hymn of praise of the faithful. The liturgy unites the two holy places, the earthly temple and the infinite heavens, God and man, time and eternity. During the prayer, we accomplish an ascent towards the divine light and together experience a descent of God who adapts himself to our limitations in order to hear and speak to us, meet us and save us.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Address to Participants in the International Congress of Sacred Music*, §2.

<sup>12</sup> *Address to the Rectors and Professors of the Polish Universities* (30 August 2001).

<sup>13</sup> *General Audience* on Psalm 150, of 26 February 2003, §2. For further discussion, see my articles “What is Liturgy Supposed to Be and Do?” *The Catholic Faith* 6.4 (Jul.-Aug. 2000), 29–38, available at [www.catholic.net/rcc/Periodicals/Faith/2000-7-8/kwasniewski.html](http://www.catholic.net/rcc/Periodicals/Faith/2000-7-8/kwasniewski.html), and “Traditional Liturgy as a Liberation from Egoism,” *Homiletic & Pastoral Review* 99.4 (Jan. 1999), 19–28.



And it follows from this that everything involved in the liturgy—the church building itself and its furnishings, vestments and vessels, bodily gestures, words spoken or sung, melodies, harmonies, rhythms—should be at the service of the *sacra mysteria*, the holy mysteries being celebrated with fear and trembling, joy and thanksgiving.<sup>14</sup> As the Holy Father explains:

The very concept of beauty in ancient Europe is largely the result of the Christian culture of its peoples, and its landscape reflects this inspiration. The centre around which this culture has developed is the heart of our faith, the eucharistic mystery. Cathedrals, humble country churches, religious music, architecture, sculpture and painting all radiate the mystery of the *verum Corpus, natum de Maria Virgine*, towards which everything converges in a movement of wonder. As for music, I am glad to commemorate Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina this year [1994], on the occasion of the fourth centenary of his death. It would seem that, after a troubled period, the Church regained a voice made peaceful through contemplation of the eucharistic mystery, like the calm breathing of a soul that knows it is loved by God.<sup>15</sup>

The pope often speaks of the European cultural heritage not as merely one time-bound culture among many, but as a supreme example (and in many ways, exemplar) of the response of man to the glad tidings of the Word made flesh, the reaction of the human intellect raised aloft by faith, and of the human heart inflamed with love, face to face with the mystery of Jesus Christ, the splendor and perfect image of the invisible Father.<sup>16</sup> The most sustained argument to this effect is found in the *Letter to Artists*. Note, for example, how the Holy Father speaks of the effects of faith on fine art, and the effect of fine art on the faithful:

Hilary of Poitiers, Ambrose, Prudentius, Ephrem the Syrian, Gregory of Nazianzus and Paulinus of Nola, to mention but a few, promoted a Christian poetry which was often of high quality not just as theology but also as literature. Their poetic work valued forms inherited from the classical authors, but was nourished by the pure sap of the Gospel, as Paulinus of Nola put it succinctly: “Our only art is faith and our music Christ.” . . . The “beautiful” was thus wedded to the “true,” so that through art, too, souls might be lifted up from the world of the senses to the eternal.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>“A sacred edifice . . . reaches its ‘aesthetic’ perfection precisely during the celebration of the divine mysteries, since it is precisely in that moment that it shines forth in its truest significance. The elements of architecture, painting, sculpture, music, song, and light, form part of the unique combination which welcomes the community of the faithful to its liturgical celebrations, a community comprised of ‘living stones’ who form a ‘spiritual house’ (cf. 1 Peter 2:5)” (*Address to the Pontifical Commission for Cultural Heritage*, §3).

<sup>15</sup>*Discourse to the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Culture* (18 March 1994).

<sup>16</sup>Cp. Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17 April 2003), §49: “The designs of altars and tabernacles within Church interiors were often not simply motivated by artistic inspiration but also by a clear understanding of the mystery. The same could be said for *sacred music*, if we but think of the inspired Gregorian melodies and the many, often great, composers who sought to do justice to the liturgical texts of the Mass.”

<sup>17</sup>*Letter to Artists*, §7.

Later in the same document we are told that art performs an irreplaceable function, a function we can only describe paradoxically: that of illuminating what remains hidden to bodily eyes, of amplifying what remains inaudible to earthly ears.

In order to communicate the message entrusted to her by Christ, the Church needs art. Art must make perceptible, and as far as possible attractive, the world of the spirit, of the invisible, of God. It must therefore translate into meaningful terms that which is in itself ineffable. Art has a unique capacity to take one or other facet of the message and translate it into colors, shapes and sounds which nourish the intuition of those who look or listen. It does so without emptying the message itself of its transcendent value and its aura of mystery.<sup>18</sup>

In other words, fine art at its best, sacred art when true to its subject-matter, is not an end in itself, but opens a window through which the soul looks beyond what is given to the senses; it develops in us a capacity for contemplating truths, becoming aware of realities, which no word or picture or melody can contain; it “nourishes intuition,” to use the pope’s delicate phrase.<sup>19</sup> Without the fine arts functioning at their peak, we would be trapped in a workaday world that could not see any end, hear any meaning, beyond human pragmatism and ideology. The pope speaks from his own experience as a poet, playwright, and actor in Nazi-occupied Poland; for him as for his companions, art was a secure connection with eternal truths about man and God, a sanctuary of the indomitable human spirit.

The Church has always favored the arts. In fact . . . authentic works of art give expression to the greatness and wonder of the mystery of human life. They reflect our thirst for the infinite, and at the same time they evoke it. They stand as eloquent sentinels, protecting the human race from trends and fashions which would deny or water down the spiritual dimension of human existence. The arts elevate and console; they inspire and give hope. They help the human spirit rise towards God and towards the most important values in life.<sup>20</sup>

Because the arts are so vital an expression of the inner life of mankind and bear such witness to the “spiritual dimension of human existence,” the Holy Father appeals to artists to rediscover the dignity of their calling:

Mine is an invitation to rediscover the depth of the spiritual and religious dimension which has been typical of art in its noblest forms in every age. . . . I appeal especially to you, Christian artists: I wish to remind each of you that,

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<sup>18</sup>*Letter to Artists*, §12.

<sup>19</sup>“The deep emotions that music stirs up in the soul of the listener and the performer make us realize that artistic and religious experiences resemble one another; both require a spirit of contemplation . . . that human attitude which makes us look at reality with respect, attention, and love” (Speech “To the International Youth Orchestra,” *L’Osservatore Romano* 1989, no. 37, p. 7, cited in Cole, *Music and Morals*, 98).

<sup>20</sup>Speech on “Full participation in social and cultural life,” *L’Osservatore Romano* 1987, no. 50, p. 3, cited in Cole, *Music and Morals*, 99.

beyond functional considerations, the close alliance that has always existed between the Gospel and art means that you are invited to use your creative intuition to enter into the heart of the mystery of the Incarnate God and at the same time into the mystery of man.<sup>21</sup>

But the pope, himself an artist of no mean stature, was well aware that “gaining entrance into the heart of the mysteries of faith” does not come easily or cheaply; it can only be the result of talent and asceticism cradled in a constant reliance on God’s grace.

We must question ourselves, be converted and go to meet the Lord. Christ’s three appeals: “Take heed, stay awake, watch!”, limpidly sum up the Christian watchfulness for meeting the Lord. The waiting must be patient, as St. James urges us in his Letter: “Be patient until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer awaits the precious yield of the soil. He looks forward to it patiently while the soil receives the winter and the spring rains. You, too, be patient. Steady your hearts, because the coming of the Lord is at hand” (Jas. 5:7-8). If an ear is to grow or a flower blossom, there are times which cannot be forced; for the birth of a human being, nine months are required; to write a book or a worthy piece of music, years must often be spent in patient searching. This is also the law of the spirit. “Everything that is rushed / will soon fade,” a poet wrote (R. M. Rilke, *Sonnets to Orpheus*). To encounter the mystery takes patience, inner purification, silence and waiting.<sup>22</sup>

### **Music Worthy Of Divine Mysteries**

How are composers and musicians to exercise their “creative intuition” in a specifically liturgical context? In the *Letter to Artists*, the Holy Father indirectly answers this question with a description of the wonders music has done for the Church’s faithful over the ages:

How many sacred works have been composed through the centuries by people deeply imbued with the sense of the mystery! The faith of countless believers has been nourished by melodies flowing from the hearts of other believers, either introduced into the liturgy or used as an aid to dignified worship. In song, faith is experienced as vibrant joy, love, and confident expectation of the saving intervention of God.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Letter to Artists*, §14.

<sup>22</sup> *General Audience* of 26 July 2000, §4.

<sup>23</sup> *Letter to Artists*, §12, cited again in §12 of the St. Cecilia letter, where the pope also adds these potent words, true for all the arts: “Only an artist who is profoundly steeped in the *sensus Ecclesiae* can attempt to perceive and express in melody the truth of the Mystery that is celebrated in the Liturgy.” Not only could an unbelieving artist not succeed, the pope is saying; he could not even make a worthy attempt.

This notion of “dignified worship . . . imbued with the sense of the mystery” of God is a recurrent motif in John Paul II’s statements. In his Apostolic Letter *Spiritus et Sponsa* observing the fortieth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, we read:

The Liturgy offers the deepest and most effective answer to this yearning for the encounter with God. It does so especially in the Eucharist, in which we are given to share in the sacrifice of Christ and to nourish ourselves with his Body and his Blood. However, Pastors must ensure that the sense of mystery penetrates consciences, making them rediscover the *art of ‘mystagogic catechesis’*, so dear to the Fathers of the Church. It is their duty, in particular, to promote dignified celebrations.<sup>24</sup>

This is an important statement, given that the patristic understanding of liturgy is vastly different from contemporary social or psychological models of worship. The pope is stating here that the liturgy itself must be a form of catechesis in which the *mysteriousness* of the divine realities of faith is the foremost instructor of mind and heart. This view is the underlying logic of the following excerpt from the Apostolic Letter that inaugurated the Year of the Eucharist:

The Eucharist is a great mystery! And it is one which above all must be *well celebrated*. Holy Mass needs to be set at the centre of the Christian life and celebrated in a dignified manner by every community, in accordance with established norms, with the participation of the assembly, with the presence of ministers who carry out their assigned tasks, and with a serious concern that singing and *liturgical music* be suitably “sacred.”<sup>25</sup>

A plea on behalf of dignified worship emerges with peculiar force in a General Audience on Psalm 150, where the pope urges an “examination of conscience” and warns against a sort of vulgarity that can creep in where vigilance is lacking:

It is necessary to discover and to live constantly the beauty of prayer and of the liturgy. We must pray to God with theologically correct formulas and also in a beautiful and dignified way. In this regard, the Christian community must make an examination of conscience so that the beauty of music and hymnody will return once again to the liturgy. It is necessary to purify worship of ugliness of style, careless forms of expression, ill-prepared music

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<sup>24</sup>*Spiritus et Sponsa* (4 December 2003), §12, emphasis in original. In the same vein, *Mane Nobiscum Domine* offers a pastoral suggestion: “One specific project of this *Year of the Eucharist* might be for each parish community to study the General Instruction of the Roman Missal. The best way to enter into the mystery of salvation made present in the sacred ‘signs’ remains that of following faithfully the unfolding of the liturgical year. Pastors should be committed to that *‘mystagogical’ catechesis* so dear to the Fathers of the Church, by which the faithful are helped to understand the meaning of the liturgy’s words and actions, to pass from its signs to the mystery which they contain, and to enter into that mystery in every aspect of their lives” (§17).

<sup>25</sup>*Mane Nobiscum Domine* (7 October 2004), §17. I say “underlying logic” because the need for a well-celebrated, dignified liturgy follows from the fact that the Eucharist is a “great mystery.” Being, as a matter of fact, the mystery of faith *par excellence*, it is already objectively the “centre of the Christian life” and therefore should become more and more the center of the life of each Christian and ecclesial community.



and texts, which are not worthy of the great act that is being celebrated. Significant, in this connection, is the appeal of the Letter to the Ephesians to avoid intemperance and vulgarity, to leave room for the purity of liturgical hymns. “And do not get drunk on wine, in which lies debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and playing to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father” (Eph. 5:18–20).<sup>26</sup>

This text is striking: the musical equivalents of drunkenness and debauchery make a worthy thanksgiving (*eucharistia*) impossible or at least more difficult than it need be. “Ugliness of style, careless forms of expressed, ill-prepared music and texts” are not mere unfortunate blunders but are, as it were, acts of violence directed against the sacredness of the Mass. The reason for this is simple: as the pope explains, “music and song are not merely an ornament or embellishment added to the liturgy. On the contrary, they form one reality with the celebration and allow for a deepening and interiorization of the divine mysteries.”<sup>27</sup> There is but *one reality* constituted by ritual and sound, much as in the union of soul and body, there is one human being.

As a manifestation of the human spirit, music performs a function which is noble, unique, and irreplaceable. When it is truly beautiful and inspired, it speaks to us *more than all the other arts* of goodness, virtue, peace, of matters holy and divine. Not for nothing has it always been, and will it always be, an essential part of the liturgy.

Hence, if the music is poor, the liturgy as such is impoverished. That does not mean *it*, the divine sacrifice, fails to occur; but it may well mean the *people* fail to reap from the Mass all the fruits of grace the Savior wishes them to reap. Due to the link between the worshiper’s subjective dispositions and the fruitful reception of grace, the Holy Father insists on the need for appropriate artistic formation and discernment.<sup>28</sup>

The application of the Second Vatican Council’s guidelines on the renewal of sacred music and liturgical song—especially in choirs, sacred music groups and *scholae cantorum*—today requires of pastors and faithful a sound cultural, spiritual, liturgical and musical formation. It also calls for profound reflection in order to define the criteria for creating and disseminating a high-quality repertoire which will enable musical expression to serve its purpose, “the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* §112), in an appropriate way. This is particularly true for instrumental music.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *General Audience* on Psalm 150, of 26 February 2003, §3.

<sup>27</sup> *Address to the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music*, §1. The Holy Father links this observation with a statement of Pius X’s: sacred music should be “an integral part of the solemn liturgy, sharing its overall purpose which is the glory of God and the sanctification and edification of the faithful.”

<sup>28</sup> Speech “To the Harmonici Cantores,” *L’Osservatore Romano* 1989, no. 2, p. 11, cited in Cole, *Music and Morals*, 100. The emphasis on “more than all the other arts” is Fr. Cole’s, who comments: “No previous pope has ever related music and virtue” as forcefully as John Paul II does in this statement.

<sup>29</sup> *Address to Participants in the International Congress of Sacred Music*, §5.

The pope's words contain a gentle remonstrance: profound reflection about the criteria of high-quality music can only be necessary on the supposition that our present-day music is largely poor in quality, based on false criteria, resulting from a lack of reflection. As he notes in the St. Cecilia letter: "Today, moreover, the meaning of the category 'sacred music' has been broadened to include repertoires that cannot be part of the celebration without violating the spirit and norms of the Liturgy itself" (§4). This judgment is noteworthy because it is often thought that any music having to do with "spiritual" or "religious" themes, however vaguely or popularly construed, can be freely used at liturgies. The Church's specifications for liturgical music are more precise and exacting than that, as we have already seen and will continue to see as we go along.

In the longer text cited above, one should note the mention of *scholae cantorum*, that is, special choirs for the singing of Gregorian chant and polyphony. It was never the Council's intention that such choirs be abolished, although that is what often happened in practice.<sup>30</sup> Speaking to singers, John Paul II lauded "the Church's musical tradition, a priceless treasure which you have inherited today and which, as faithful witnesses, you must preserve and hand down."<sup>31</sup> In the St. Cecilia letter, he writes of the need "to encourage a development in conformity with the requirements of liturgical reform and which will measure up to the liturgical and musical tradition of the Church."<sup>32</sup> In other words, the tradition of the past is to be understood not as a museum piece or cultural heirloom, but as a living measure for the present and an abiding norm for the future. Similarly, in the Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini* (31 May 1998) the pope mentions two inseparable standards: "Care must be taken to ensure the quality, both of the texts and of the melodies, so that what is proposed today as new and creative will [1] conform to liturgical requirements and [2] be worthy of the Church's tradition which, in the field of sacred music, boasts a priceless heritage" (§50).

The pope expounds a number of these points in his Apostolic Letter *Vicesimus Quintus Annus*, written for the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

In order to reenact his Paschal Mystery, Christ is ever present in his Church, especially in liturgical celebrations. Hence the Liturgy is the privileged place for the encounter of Christians with God and the one whom he has sent, Jesus Christ (cf. Jn. 17:3). Christ is present in the Church assembled at prayer in his name. It is this fact which gives such a unique character to the Christian assembly with the consequent duties not only of brotherly welcome but also of forgiveness (cf. Mt. 5:23-24), and of dignity of behavior, gesture, and song.<sup>33</sup>

Shortly after, the pope speaks of "different and even contradictory reactions to the reform," singling out three reactions for comment: those who received the new books with indifference; those who rejected the new books and clung "in a one-sided and exclusive way to previous liturgical forms which some of them consider to be the sole

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<sup>30</sup>See the St. Cecilia letter, §§8-§9.

<sup>31</sup>*Address to the International Federation of "Pueri Cantores,"* §1.

<sup>32</sup>§2, emphasis added.

<sup>33</sup>*Vicesimus Quintus Annus* (4 December 1988), §7.

guarantee of certainty in faith"<sup>34</sup>; and thirdly, those who "promoted outlandish innovations, departing from the norms issued by the authority of the Apostolic See or the bishops, thus disrupting the unity of the Church and the piety of the faithful and even on occasion contradicting matters of faith."<sup>35</sup> Accordingly, the pope goes on to

acknowledge with regret deviations of greater or lesser seriousness in its [the reform's] application. On occasion there have been noted illicit omissions or additions, rites invented outside the framework of established norms; postures or songs which are not conducive to faith or to a sense of the sacred; abuses in the practice of general absolution; confusion between the ministerial priesthood, linked with Ordination, and the common priesthood of the faithful, which has its foundation in baptism.<sup>36</sup>

Those who are familiar with John Paul II's writings will recognize here common themes of warning and reprimand, especially in *ad limina* addresses to groups of visiting bishops and in documents on the Holy Eucharist such as the Holy Thursday letters to priests.<sup>37</sup> One might recall the unprecedented public apology in *Dominicae Cena*e of 24 February 1980, wherein John Paul II asked forgiveness, in his own name and in the name of all bishops, for abuses committed against the Eucharist and for abusive manipulations of the Second Vatican Council.<sup>38</sup> Over twenty-three years later he is compelled to call attention to the same scandal:

Lack of respect for the liturgical norms can sometimes even lead to *grave forms of abuse* that obscure the truth of the mystery and give rise to dismay and stress in the People of God. This abuse has nothing to do with the authentic spirit of the Council and should be prudently and firmly corrected by Pastors.<sup>39</sup>

Without a doubt, the pope's most detailed contribution on a burning question of liturgical reform was the *ad limina* address of 9 October 1998 to the Bishops of Washington, Oregon, Montana, Idaho, and Alaska. The burning question is the meaning of "active participation," *participatio actuosa*, which the Council put forward as a guiding ideal, and which was later taken as an excuse for a kind of congregational

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<sup>34</sup> Here the pope has in mind, of course, not those who support the widespread use of the Tridentine rite—something he himself supported—but rather, traditionalists of schismatic tendencies. See his *motu proprio Ecclesia Dei Adflicta* (2 July 1988) and my article "Introibo Ad Altare Dei: Aspects of the Church's Liturgical Magisterium, Part 3," *The Catholic Faith* 6.3 (May-Jun. 2000), 28–35, available at [www.catholic.net/rcc/Periodicals/Faith/May-June00/Liturgy.html](http://www.catholic.net/rcc/Periodicals/Faith/May-June00/Liturgy.html).

<sup>35</sup> *Vicesimus Quintus Annus*, §11.

<sup>36</sup> *Vicesimus Quintus Annus*, §13.

<sup>37</sup> One of numerous examples of emphasis on episcopal responsibility may be taken from the *Ad Limina Address to the Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of Australia* (14 December 1998): "As 'the steward of the grace of the supreme priesthood' (*Lumen Gentium*, §26), the Bishop's service to the truth has a specific and primary application in the liturgical life of his diocese. He must do everything necessary to ensure that the liturgy through which 'the work of our redemption is exercised' (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, §2) remains true to its most intimate nature: praise and worship of the Eternal Father (*ibid.* §7). He then adds that this requires well-trained priests and laymen who will, in particular, ensure that the "design and furnishings" of churches "will be in close harmony with underlying values of the Catholic tradition."

<sup>38</sup> See *Dominicae Cena*e, end of §12.

<sup>39</sup> *Spiritus et Sponsa*, §15. Compare the statement to the Bishops in the October 1998 *ad limina* address I shall be citing presently: "Not all changes have always and everywhere been accompanied by the necessary explanation and catechesis; as a result, in some cases there has been a misunderstanding of the very nature of the liturgy, leading to abuses, polarization, and sometimes even grave scandal."

activism and clericalization of the laity.<sup>40</sup> The importance of this address merits considerable attention on our part, if we are to understand what the pope has to say about music. Correcting the excesses of the liturgical reform will require

entering more deeply into the contemplative dimension of worship, which includes the sense of awe, reverence and adoration which are fundamental attitudes in our relationship with God. This will happen only if we recognize that the liturgy has dimensions both local and universal, time-bound and eternal, horizontal and vertical, subjective and objective. It is precisely these tensions which give to Catholic worship its distinctive character. The universal Church is united in the one great act of praise; but it is always the worship of a particular community in a particular culture. It is the eternal worship of Heaven, but it is also steeped in time. It gathers and builds a human community, but it is also “the worship of the divine majesty” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, §33). It is subjective in that it depends radically upon what the worshippers bring to it; but it is objective in that it transcends them as the priestly act of Christ himself, to which he associates us but which ultimately does not depend upon us (*ibid.*, §7). This is why it is so important that liturgical law be respected. The priest, who is the servant of the liturgy, not its inventor or producer, has a particular responsibility in this regard, lest he empty liturgy of its true meaning or obscure its sacred character. The core of the mystery of Christian worship is the sacrifice of Christ offered to the Father and the work of the Risen Christ who sanctifies his People through the liturgical signs. It is therefore essential that in seeking to enter more deeply into the contemplative depths of worship the inexhaustible mystery of the priesthood of Jesus Christ be fully acknowledged and respected. While all the baptized share in that one priesthood of Christ, not all share in it in the same manner. The ministerial priesthood, rooted in Apostolic Succession, confers on the ordained priest faculties and responsibilities which are different from those of the laity but which are at the service of the common priesthood and are directed at the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians (cf. *Catechism*, n. 1547). The priest therefore is not just one who presides, but one who acts in the person of Christ.

. . . Full participation does not mean that everyone does everything, since this would lead to a clericalizing of the laity and a laicizing of the priesthood; and this was not what the Council had in mind. The liturgy, like the Church, is intended to be hierarchical and polyphonic, respecting the different roles assigned by Christ and allowing all the different voices to blend in one great hymn of praise. Active participation certainly means that, in gesture, word, song and service, all the members of the community take part in an act of

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<sup>40</sup>For a discussion of the double inversion of clergy and laity, see the end of my article “Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist,” *The Catholic Faith* 6.6 (Nov.-Dec. 2000), 34–42, available at [www.catholic.net/rcc/Periodicals/Faith/2000-12/kwasniewski.html](http://www.catholic.net/rcc/Periodicals/Faith/2000-12/kwasniewski.html). I wish to point out that subsequent to the publication of this article, the Holy See requested that the non-ordained who distribute the Sacrament should be referred to as “extraordinary ministers of holy communion,” a precision that in fact harmonizes with the argument of the article just mentioned.



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.<sup>41</sup>

While the liturgy has to be inculturated, has to be adapted to diverse peoples, times, and places with no loss of what is essential, yet the liturgy must also be *countercultural* when the prevailing culture is in any way at odds with “the revealed truth of Jesus Christ.”<sup>42</sup> For this reason, the “work of adaptation” to the sensibilities of different cultures has to be “carried out with a constant awareness of the ineffable mystery against which every generation is called to measure itself. The ‘treasure’ [of the Eucharist] is too important and precious to risk impoverishment or compromise.”<sup>43</sup> “[S]acred art must be outstanding for its ability to express adequately the mystery grasped in the fullness of the Church’s faith.”<sup>44</sup> There is one *depositum fidei* to be handed down through a variety of means, not as many deposits as there are diverse cultures. In *Dies Domini* the Holy Father writes: “It is important to devote attention to the songs used by the assembly, since singing is a particularly apt way to express a joyful heart, accentuating the solemnity of the celebration and fostering the sense of a *common faith* and a *shared love*.”<sup>45</sup> The purification and improvement of liturgical music is an imperative task precisely because music can form the heart so deeply, can magnify (or minimize) the sublime reality of the saving event, can build up an experiential awareness of faith and love—and hence has power to determine, in part, what people actually understand *to be* the faith they profess and the charity they are called to live.

We have seen a number of characteristics of good liturgical music touched on in the pope’s statements, principally dignified reverence, a sacred aura, and the power to touch the soul’s contemplative depths. There is another, mentioned in the passage

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<sup>41</sup> *Ad Limina Address to the Bishops of Washington, Oregon, Montana, Idaho and Alaska* (9 October 1998), §3 and §4. *Spiritus et Sponsa* also takes up the need for silence at public worship: “One aspect that we must foster in our communities with greater commitment is *the experience of silence*. We need silence ‘if we are to accept in our hearts the full resonance of the voice of the Holy Spirit and to unite our personal prayer more closely to the Word of God and the public voice of the Church’ (*Institutio Generalis Liturgiae Horarum*). In a society that lives at an increasingly frenetic pace, often deafened by noise and confused by the ephemeral, it is vital to rediscover the value of silence. The spread, also outside Christian worship, of practices of meditation that give priority to recollection is not accidental. . . . The Liturgy, with its different moments and symbols, cannot ignore silence” (§13).

<sup>42</sup> See the *Ad Limina Address to the Bishops of Brazil* (23 January 2003), wherein the Holy Father addresses “the delicate question of inculturation, especially in the liturgical rites, vocabulary and forms of musical and physical expression typical of African-Brazilian culture,” concluding: “It would be inconceivable to give the rite an external presentation and structure—with regard to the priest’s vestments, language, music, ceremonies and liturgical objects—based on the so-called African-Brazilian rites, without the rigorous application of a *serious and profound discernment about their compatibility with the revealed Truth of Jesus Christ*.” The bishops “should identify and aptly correct the introduction into the sacramental rites, music and objects that explicitly belong to the world of African-Brazilian worship.”

<sup>43</sup> *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, §51.

<sup>44</sup> *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, §50.

<sup>45</sup> *Dies Domini*, §50, emphasis added.

just cited from *Dies Domini*: grandeur, splendor, solemnity, as befits the majesty of God, the Holy One, Alpha and Omega.<sup>46</sup> “The celebration of the sacred mysteries is above all else an act of praise to the sovereign majesty of God.”<sup>47</sup> John Paul II considered music part of the all-embracing, cosmic and eschatological purpose of the liturgical celebration itself: the Mass speaks with silence and song on behalf of all creatures (“Through the human person, spokesman for all creation, all living things praise the Lord. Our breath of life that also presupposes self-knowledge, awareness and freedom [cf. Prov. 20:27] becomes the song and prayer of the whole of life that vibrates in the universe”<sup>48</sup>), renews the Paschal mystery of death and resurrection, anticipates the coming of Christ in glory to judge the living and the dead. When the pope spoke of “popular singing,” note how he conceived of it: “a bond of unity and a joyful expression of the community at prayer, [which] fosters the proclamation of the one faith and imparts to large liturgical assemblies an incomparable and recollected solemnity.”<sup>49</sup> In context, the pope is looking back on his experiences of liturgies at the Vatican during the Jubilee Year, liturgies he retrospectively characterized as “fervent and of high quality,” “exemplary” in their “use of the resources of sacred music.”<sup>50</sup> Some have suggested that we might take how the pope celebrates Mass in Rome as a working model of what we should strive to attain at the parish level, to the extent possible with more modest resources. As long as one does not appeal to any eccentricity of a particular celebration but looks for guidance to the normal pontifical liturgy, this seems to me a good rule of thumb. But it would mean something radical, for first, the pope celebrates in St. Peter’s basilica *ad orientem*,<sup>51</sup> and, more to the point for this article, the papal liturgy is usually accompanied by Gregorian chant, Renaissance polyphony, and stately hymns. The “new song” that we should sing together is, like Psalm 98, “a perfect, full, solemn song accompanied by festive music”; like Psalm 32, “the hymn is ‘new,’ not only because it renews the certainty of the divine presence within creation and human events, but also because it anticipates the perfect praise that will be intoned on the final day of salvation, when the Kingdom of

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<sup>46</sup> Such comments prompt an aside: we must not give into the temptation to be “sophisticated” with regard to papal statements on the arts by asking after the meaning of words that are not, in themselves, particularly difficult to parse. When a pope speaks about music that is, for example, “solemn” or “contemplative” or “of high artistic value,” he is assuming that there is or can be general agreement, at least among those who are in a position to know better (pastors, liturgists, and musicians), about the kind of music that deserves these accolades as well as the kind that does not. A musician may not agree that solemn music is the most appropriate for the liturgy; there are church musicians who would say “Yes, Palestrina is solemn, but he’s much too serious and somber for today’s church-goers. We prefer something lighter and happier-sounding, something you can sing along with and feel good about,” etc. My point is that people usually *know*, even if vaguely, what is meant by “solemn music,” and could readily agree that many contemporary church hymns are exactly *not* solemn. Similarly, when it comes to artistic quality, there are few who would not be able to perceive the degree of excellence that belongs to many older works of art and to judge them superior exhibits of imagination and skilled craftsmanship. Still, having made this judgment, many would go on to argue that such works are no longer culturally relevant, are too difficult to perform, cannot “involve the people,” and so on. Once again, impressive artistry is capable of being *recognized*, even if it is not considered a relevant criterion. The papal teaching addresses precisely the question of criteria; it does not attempt to teach people how to listen to music or how to discriminate qualities of music. If such abilities are lacking, the papal teaching can have no meaning.

<sup>47</sup> *Address to the Congregation for Divine Worship*, 27 September 2001. This document is not found on the Vatican website but was reported on in the Catholic media. The pope went on to say that the first characteristic of any liturgy must be “a profound sense of the sacred.”

<sup>48</sup> *General Audience* on Psalm 150 of 9 January 2002, §5.

<sup>49</sup> *Address to Participants in the International Congress of Sacred Music*, §4 (cited again in the St. Cecilia letter, §11).

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* Unfortunately, his description does not match my experiences of “popular singing” at the parish level.

<sup>51</sup> St. Peter’s basilica having been built in such a way that the pope faces *both* eastwards, which was the norm for nearly twenty centuries, *and*, as it happens, towards the congregation. On the peculiar positioning of the altar of St. Peter’s, see Joseph Ratzinger, “The Altar and the Direction of Liturgical Prayer,” in *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 74–84; on all questions concerning the *ad orientem* issue, see the brilliant work of U. M. Lang, *Turning Towards the Lord: Orientation in Liturgical Prayer* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004).

<sup>52</sup> *General Audience* on Psalm 98 of 6 November 2002, §1.

<sup>53</sup> *General Audience* on Psalm 33 of 8 August 2001. Cp. *Address to the International Federation of “Pueri Cantores,”* §3: “May your singing always be *new*, because, in singing for God, you are singing the *newness* of God’s grace, the inexhaustible source of joy and peace. Yes, ‘Sing to the Lord a new song’ (Ps. 96:1)”

God will have attained its glorious realization.”<sup>53</sup> “I exhort you,” the pope says to a group of musicians, “to persevere in your commitment to gladden and uplift the hearts of the faithful through sacred music to thoughts of, and a taste for, heavenly things, indeed for eternal life; as you know, the idea that the heavens eternally resound with celestial music is a classic one!”<sup>54</sup>

In his final encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, the pope, speaking of the contribution the fine arts make to the worthy celebration of the All-Holy Sacrament, writes:

With this heightened sense of mystery, we understand how the faith of the Church in the mystery of the Eucharist has found historical expression not only in the demand for an interior disposition of devotion, but also in outward forms meant to *evoke and emphasize the grandeur of the event being celebrated*. . . . On this foundation a rich artistic heritage also developed. Architecture, sculpture, painting and music, moved by the Christian mystery, have found in the Eucharist, both directly and indirectly, a source of great inspiration.<sup>55</sup>

“The Lord’s love and fidelity must be celebrated in liturgical song that is to be performed ‘with skill’ (Ps 46:8),” the pope writes elsewhere. “This invitation can also apply to our celebrations, so that they *recover their splendor*, not only in the words and rites, but also in the melodies that accompany them.”<sup>56</sup> Although it can be at times difficult to render judgment about this or that musical style or mixture of styles, a helpful litmus test would be to ask whether a given idiom or piece of music expresses *either* contemplative adoration *or* majestic splendor (we need not insist on the almost miraculous coincidence of both, though it can and does happen, above all in music of the Renaissance and Baroque periods). It has been my experience that most music written after the Second Vatican Council fails on both counts. The pope, as always, proposes to us concrete models of what genuine reform should look like, among them St. Philip Neri’s aspirations:

It was in the Oratory that St. Philip, together with cultivating piety in its traditional and new expressions, *undertook to reform and elevate art, restoring it to the service of God and the Church*. Convinced as he was that beauty leads to goodness, he brought all that had an artistic stamp within the realm of his educational project. And he himself became a patron of various artistic forms, promoting sound initiatives that led to truth and goodness. *The contribution made by St. Philip to sacred music was incisive and exemplary; he urged it to be elevated from a source of foolish amusement to being a re-creation for the spirit*. It was due to his initiative that musicians and composers began a reform that was to reach its highest peak in Pierluigi da Palestrina.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Speech “To the Harmonici Cantores,” *L’Osservatore Romano* 1989, no. 2, p. 11, cited in Cole, *Music and Morals*, 100.

<sup>55</sup> *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, §49, emphasis added.

<sup>56</sup> *General Audience* on Psalm 92 of 12 June 2002, §2, emphasis added. Thus, too, in *Spiritus et Sponsa* John Paul II identifies the *causa finalis* of sacred art: “The Council gives clear instructions to continue to leave considerable room for it [sacred art] in our day too, so that the splendor of worship will shine out through the fittingness and beauty of liturgical art” (§5).

<sup>57</sup> *Letter on the Occasion of the Fourth Centenary of the Death of St. Philip Neri* (7 October 1994).

This mention of the finest Renaissance composer of the Roman school gives us another concrete point of reference. Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525–1594) enjoys the unique status of being the only composer mentioned *by name* in the decisive interventions of the Magisterium on sacred music, such as Pius X's *Tra le sollecitudini*, where the pontiff puts him forward as an exemplary artist who produced exemplary works for the Church.<sup>58</sup>

Music that cultivates a prayerful stillness, music that evokes awesome majesty: what do they have in common, separating them from the brash and banal? In the pope's words, it would have to be "the beauty that invites prayer"—the principal criterion of music truly sacred.

The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, continuing the rich liturgical tradition of previous centuries, said that sacred music "is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art. The main reason for this pre-eminence is that, as a combination of sacred music and words, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, §112). Christians, following the various seasons of the liturgical year, have always expressed gratitude and praise to God in hymns and spiritual songs. Biblical tradition, through the words of the Psalmist, urges the pilgrims on arriving in Jerusalem to pass through the doors of the temple while praising the Lord "with trumpet sound, with timbrel and dance, with strings and pipe, with sounding cymbals!" (cf. Ps. 150). . . . There is a close link between music and song, on the one hand, and between contemplation of the divine mysteries and prayer, on the other. The criterion that must inspire every composition and performance of songs and sacred music is the beauty that invites prayer. When song and music are signs of the Holy Spirit's presence and action, they encourage, in a certain way, communion with the Trinity. The liturgy then becomes an *opus Trinitatis* [a work of the Trinity]. "Singing in the liturgy" must flow from *sentire cum Ecclesia* [thinking, feeling, with the mind of the Church]. Only in this way do union with God and artistic ability blend in a happy synthesis in which the two elements—song and praise—pervade the entire liturgy.<sup>59</sup>

One perceives in such a passage the pope's mystical understanding of the liturgy, which he and the other Fathers of the Second Vatican Council inherited from the Fathers of the Church, and they, in turn, from the Apostles.<sup>60</sup> In the concluding paragraphs of *Spiritus et Sponsa* we read these magnificent words:

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<sup>58</sup> The composers of Gregorian chant in the classic period are nearly all anonymous, so they cannot, of course, be mentioned by name. John Paul II refers to Palestrina many times; in the documents available in English between 1988 and 2003, I counted five instances, of which the following is the most significant: "Although the Church recognizes the pre-eminent place of Gregorian chant, she has welcomed other musical forms, especially polyphony. In any case, these various musical forms should accord 'with the spirit of the liturgical action.' From this standpoint, the work of Pierluigi da Palestrina, the master of classical polyphony, is particularly evocative. His inspiration makes him a model for the composers of sacred music, which he put at the service of the liturgy" (*Address to Participants in the International Congress of Sacred Music*, §3).

<sup>59</sup> *Address to the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music*, §3.

<sup>60</sup> See the texts cited at note 24.



It is in the Liturgy that the Church, enlivened by the breath of the Spirit, lives her mission as “sacrament—a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men” (*Lumen Gentium* 1) and finds the most exalted expression of her mystical reality. In the Lord Jesus and in his Spirit the whole of Christian existence becomes “a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God,” genuine “spiritual worship” (Rom 12:1). The mystery brought about in the Liturgy is truly great. It opens a glimpse of Heaven on earth, and the perennial hymn of praise rises from the community of believers in unison with the hymn of heavenly Jerusalem: *Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth. Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua. Hosanna in excelsis!*

## Gregorian Chant

Returning to the pope’s comment that the liturgy must, in certain ways, run *against* the grain of an alien culture, we can state the obvious: today, forty years after *Sacrosanctum Concilium*,<sup>61</sup> nothing is more countercultural in the realm of music than the serene, quieting, God-centering simplicity of Gregorian chant, and hence it is easy to understand why our Holy Father, like his predecessors throughout the twentieth century, proposes it as peculiarly suited to the intrinsic nature of Catholic worship, our humble encounter with the mysterious majesty of God.<sup>62</sup> The fact that chant has become popular in some parts of the decadent West as background music shows a hunger for the beautiful and the peaceful that parochial music directors might well take seriously. Is it naïve to think that young people would respond to an improvement in the quality of liturgical music? Or is it rather a patronizing attitude to think that they are incapable of appreciating the treasures of the past, which, as a matter of fact, many of them buy CD recordings of? One need only think of the chant recordings by the monks of Santo Domingo de Silos which have topped the best-seller charts. John Paul II seems to recognize this cultural phenomenon when he tells the bishops of the Northwest: “Young people are ready to commit themselves to the Gospel message if it is presented in all its nobility and liberating force. They will continue to take an active part in the liturgy if they experience it as capable of leading them to a deep personal relationship with God.”<sup>63</sup> With few exceptions, they will not come to Mass in order to sing third-rate ditties which sound anemic beside any pop song. If they are interested in religion, it is because they hope or expect to find in the church something *different* from what they can get in huge quantities everywhere else. It is only from a deep and sustained encounter with the mystery of God, the pope goes on to say, that “priestly and religious vocations marked by true evangelical and missionary energy” will come.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Which recognized and confirmed that Gregorian chant—in the very words of the document itself—“should be given pride of place in liturgical services” according to the Roman rite (§116). For discussion of what the Council meant here (and how we should understand the phrase “other things being equal,” which appears to cancel out the primacy of chant), see Kwasniewski, “Cantate Domino.”

<sup>62</sup> See the St. Cecilia letter, §7; other documents will be cited below.

<sup>63</sup> *Ad Limina Address to the Bishops of Washington, Oregon, Montana, Idaho and Alaska*, §5.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, §5

At very least, observes the pope in the *ad limina* address we were following earlier, the genius of the Roman Rite and the internal demands of liturgy make it impossible to lay aside altogether the Latin chants that are so intimate a part of our heritage:

Conscious participation calls for the entire community to be properly instructed in the mysteries of the liturgy, lest the experience of worship degenerate into a form of ritualism. But it does not mean a constant attempt within the liturgy itself to make the implicit explicit, since this often leads to a verbosity and informality which are alien to the Roman Rite and end by trivializing the act of worship. Nor does it mean the suppression of all subconscious experience, which is vital in a liturgy which thrives on symbols that speak to the subconscious just as they speak to the conscious. The use of the vernacular has certainly opened up the treasures of the liturgy to all who take part, but this does not mean that the Latin language, and especially the chants which are so superbly adapted to the genius of the Roman Rite, should be wholly abandoned. If subconscious experience is ignored in worship, an affective and devotional vacuum is created and the liturgy can become not only too verbal but also too cerebral. Yet the Roman Rite is again distinctive in the balance it strikes between a spareness and a richness of emotion: it feeds the heart and the mind, the body and the soul.<sup>65</sup>

But the Holy Father does not stop at a minimalist judgment that Gregorian chant should not be altogether banished. In an address to the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music, he underlines the more positive—and among the most neglected—recommendations of the Council Fathers:

You, teachers and students, are asked to make the most of your artistic gifts, maintaining and furthering the study and practice of music and song in the forms and with the instruments privileged by the Second Vatican Council: Gregorian chant, sacred polyphony and the organ. Only in this way will liturgical music worthily fulfill its function during the celebration of the sacraments and, especially, of Holy Mass.<sup>66</sup>

The pope understands chant as ideal in its Roman balance: musically, it combines a captivating simplicity with a rhythmic subtlety and melodic expressiveness that never cease to stir wonder in music scholars; it can be vigorous and robust, but without ceasing to be sacred in character, a sort of musical equivalent of billowing clouds of incense; best of all, it embodies holiness by its restraint, reverence, humility, and spiritual joy. It is thus for good reason that “Gregorian chant, with its inspired modulations, was to become down the centuries the music of the Church’s faith in the liturgical celebration of the sacred mysteries.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, §4.

<sup>66</sup> *Address to the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music*, §4. In *Sacrosanctum Concilium* §116, the Council Fathers singled out Gregorian chant and Renaissance-style polyphony as being specially well-suited to liturgies of the Roman rite, as all the popes of the twentieth century have done. The leading role of the pipe organ is reaffirmed in the St. Cecilia letter, §14. Other instruments are permitted “to the extent that they are helpful to the prayer of the Church,” but “care must be taken . . . to ensure that instruments are suitable for sacred use, that they are fitting for the dignity of the Church and can accompany the singing of the faithful and serve to edify them” (*ibid.*).

<sup>67</sup> *Letter to Artists*, §7.

Sacred music is an integral part of the liturgy. Gregorian chant, recognized by the Church as being “specially suited to the Roman liturgy” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, §116), is a unique and universal spiritual heritage which has been handed down to us as the clearest musical expression of sacred music at the service of God’s word.<sup>68</sup>

The Holy Father closes his address to the bishops of the Northwestern United States by reminding them that Mary provides for us the ultimate model of song and singing, as she does of everything else: “Together with you I pray that American Catholics when they celebrate the liturgy will have in their hearts the same song that she sang: ‘My being proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit finds joy in God my Savior. . . God who is mighty has done great things for me, holy is his name’ (Lk 1:46-50).”<sup>69</sup> The same example is brought to the attention of the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music: “May Mary, who sang the Magnificat, the canticle of true happiness to God, be your model. Down the centuries music has woven countless harmonies with the words of this canticle, and poets have developed it in an immense and moving repertoire of praise. May your voice also join theirs in magnifying the Lord and rejoicing in God our Saviour.”<sup>70</sup>

We may fittingly conclude with the Holy Father’s reflections on the opening verses of Psalm 42, which teach us the interior attitude that has to permeate our music, our prayer, our efforts at reform. “As the deer longs for fountains of water, so longs my soul for Thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.”

Let us return to the image at the beginning of the Psalm, on which it would be pleasing to meditate with the musical background of Gregorian chant or of that polyphonic masterpiece, the ‘Sicut cervus’ of Pierluigi da Palestrina. The thirsty deer is, in fact, the symbol of the man at prayer who tends with his whole being, body and spirit, toward the Lord, who seems far away but at the same time is needed: “My being thirsts for God, the living God.” One word in Hebrew, *nefesh*, indicates the “soul” and “throat” simultaneously. So, we could say that the soul and body of the man at prayer are involved in a primary, spontaneous and essential desire for God (cf. Ps. 63:2). It is not accidental that a long tradition describes prayer as “breath”: as something original, necessary, fundamental, vital breath.<sup>71</sup> ☒

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<sup>68</sup> *Address to Participants in the International Congress of Sacred Music*, §3.

<sup>69</sup> *Ad Limina Address to the Bishops of Washington, Oregon, Montana, Idaho and Alaska*, §7.

<sup>70</sup> *Address of 19 January 2001*, §4.

<sup>71</sup> *General Audience on Psalm 42*, 16 January 2002, §2.

# Beyond Taste in Liturgical Music

By Shawn Tribe

**T**oday, many Catholics and non-Catholics feel a sense of loss when contemplating what was the glory of Catholic liturgical music. It was, and indeed still is, a treasure of Christian culture. The Second Vatican Council affirmed this, and *Musica Sacram* directs how new musical works ought be characterized: “composers should have as their motive the continuation of the tradition . . .” (§59)

Unfortunately, this ecclesial direction has been more honored in the breach than in adherence to date. Fortunately though, there are also signs that a change may well be underway, however gradually.

Too often, proponents of the liturgical music we have received since the Council have reduced sacred music simply to a matter of taste and the *Zeitgeist* and have thereby trivialized the matter as well as the tradition. This reflects a broader cultural blind spot which fails to recognize in the arts the power to form an individual for good or for ill; to lift one by way of beauty to virtue, or to bring one down into the mire of vice.

I am not suggesting that poor liturgical music places us in the realm of sin (like much popular music can indeed), but it won't necessarily inspire us to the heights of holiness either. Nor am I suggesting the modern is necessarily outside the pale of what constitutes acceptable liturgical music, but there needs to be discernment and continuity.

The question then, whether one particular form of liturgical music is better than another, is not necessarily a simple question of likes. Rather it is a recognition of the formative power of painting, music, and literature—which, incidentally, is why this question extends not only to Church music, but to all the liturgical arts. Tastes and preferences do exist of course, but these are not absolutes. Like moral conscience, our taste must be formed in accordance with the Good, the True, and the Beautiful.

It is not a case of, “I like *x*, therefore *x* is good.” In the domain of morality this results in relativism, and it has disastrous consequences. Similarly, a piece of music is not made appropriate to the liturgy merely because one likes it, but rather one should like it (or at least accept it and be open to it) because it is appropriate to the sacred liturgy. How is it appropriate to the liturgy? Insofar as it is formed by the primary character, end, and spirit of the liturgy: prayer, adoration, and worship of God.

Beauty in the modern understanding becomes defined as something subjective (“in the eye of the beholder”) or relative to a time and place. Following the latest styles and trends, and not staying rooted to the tradition, becomes its principle. Hence, Gregorian Chant might be cast aside as no longer relevant to the modern person. But beauty, truly understood, is not as fragile as this, because it is something rooted in the eternal and transcendent: God.

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This is why Gregorian chant still has a nearly universal appeal, despite time and place. Dom Jacques Hourlier, in his wonderful book, *Reflections on the Spirituality of Gregorian Chant*,<sup>1</sup> has noted how many people, young and old, Christian and non-Christian (including even those afar afield as the orient), have come to the Benedictine Abbey of Solesmes and speak in awe and wonder at the spiritual power of it. We like it, but we like it because it is good, and because it speaks to us, inspires us, and moves us outside of ourselves to a deeper spiritual reality.

However, beauty, when misunderstood as popular whim, is of course fragile, which is why we see popular trends simply come and go—and also why they should not play a part in our liturgies and liturgical art. This shows the wisdom of the Church in its respect for tradition and organic development which flows from it. Rootedness in tradition doesn't mean being slavishly restricted to it with no possibility for additional developments, but rather means that the new be not entirely new, and be conformed to a traditional spirit and character.

Given that the sacred liturgy is the central and supreme act of our Faith, we can hardly show enough prudence in this regard. The benefit of the traditional character and spirit is that it has been tried and tested down the ages and found perennially fruitful and spiritually efficacious.

What much modern liturgical composition seems to lack is indeed the permanency and verticality of traditional liturgical music. It does not take a trained music theorist to recognize that much of what has been received to date has not built upon the tradition very well.

That being said, there are many positive trends in today's parishes and cathedrals. Many of our glorious traditions are being revived and reinvigorated for a new time, for a new liturgical movement. Up and coming liturgical composers can regain the confidence of the Church and the faithful by adopting the Church's principles and taking to heart the patristic understanding of "cosmic liturgy." Namely: in the liturgy, heaven and earth are first and foremost united in prayerful worship and adoration of the Holy Trinity. New composers must seek to reflect this spiritual reality and be formed and steeped in the tradition. In so doing the faithful will be able to again join in the sentiment of St. Augustine when he said that "he who sings prays twice." ■



<sup>1</sup>Dom Jacques Hourlier, *Reflections on the Spirituality of Gregorian Chant* (Sablé sur Sarthe: Solesmes, 1994)

# REPERTORY

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## *Expectans Exspectavi And Meditabor:* Mode-Two Offertories With Unusual Endings

By William Mahrt

Exspé- ctans \* exspectá- vi Dómi- num, et respé- xit me: et ex-au-dí-  
vit depre-ca- ti- ó- nem me- am, et immí- sit in os  
me- um cán-ti-cum novum, hymnum De- o no- stro.

With expectation I have waited for the Lord, and he had regard to me; and he heard my prayer, and he put into my mouth a new canticle, a hymn to our God. (Ps. 39: 2, 3, 4; offertory, 21<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, *olim* Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost)

Medi-ta- bor in manda- tis tu- is, quæ di-lé-xi valde: et levá-bo ma- nus  
me-as ad mandá- ta tu- a, quæ di-lé- xi.

The modes of the Mass propers, especially in the most ancient repertories, are somewhat more specific than the simple scales given in the textbooks. Instead of being only an octave scale, they are also a system of important pitches which form a framework for melodic figures. Their principal tones are the final and the reciting note, and their melodic activity centers around these tones. For example, mode two, whose final is D and reciting note F, and whose melodies range both above and below the final (thus a plagal range), has melodic figures that comprise the minor third from D to F, frequently focusing upon F, as well as some which range below the final, imitating the D-to-F figures a fourth below.

The D final, however, has a certain peculiarity. Although the scale for Gregorian chant allows one accidental, B-flat, that flat occurs only in two positions: a step below

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middle C and an octave above that. The final of the mode, however, is a seventh below middle C, and there is no B-flat below it.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, there are many chants, which conform to mode two in general—they have a major second and a minor third above their final and they range both above and below it—but they require a major third below the final. This is a significant difference, since that note is the bottom of a major triad which includes the final as its middle note. To provide for this major third below the final, these chants are notated with the final up a fifth on A, the major third below falling on F. Graduals in mode two are all on A, because their principal middle cadence is on that same F.<sup>2</sup>

The two present chants are both noted on A, and both make prominent use of the F below towards the end of the chant, in very different ways but with both effecting a certain delightful surprise at the end. These unusual usages are all the more notable, since, as offertories, they hold to a consistent reiteration of similar formulae, here centered on the D-F interval, a feature which projects an aura of solemnity suitable to the chant which prepares for the most solemn moments of the Mass. In addition, both have unusual parallelisms in their texts, which are reflected in their melodies.

*Exspectans exspectavi*<sup>3</sup> shows the parallelism typical of the psalms: each psalm verse consists of two complete statements which are somehow complementary. Thus, the first verse: “With expectation I have waited for the Lord, and he had regard for me.” The second verse, is also parallel, but its parallelism has been constructed for this chant; it excerpts portions of verses 3 and 4 of the psalm to create a parallelism similar to that of the first verse: “And he heard my prayer, and he put a new canticle into my mouth, a hymn to our God.” This verse includes a direct object, “canticle,” and then an appositive to it—“a hymn to our God,” which extends the second half of the verse by an additional but subordinate parallelism. The precise text is not the received text of the psalms traditionally used to chant the office (the Gallican psalter), but an older text (the Roman psalter) that bears witness to a very ancient tradition behind the singing of the offertories. This manner of excerpting a scripture text is not uncommon in offertories, but more frequently found in non-psalmodic texts. Here the excerpting serves a specific musical purpose: to focus upon that appositive, the hymn to our God.

There is an additional musical element in those lines of the psalm chosen as the basis of the offertory: they show a pronounced use of assonance, the preponderance of particular vowels. The e vowel prevails in the initial two words, as well as in each clause beginning with “et” and in such phrases as “et respexit me” and “deprecationem meum.” The u vowel prevails at the ends of words in “os meum canticum novum, hymnum,” and then the o in “Deo nostro.” These heighten the concrete sense of parallelism and emphasize the difference upon the arrival of the last object.

The melody of *Exspectans* articulates its parallelism: the beginning of each clause is set to a rise from the final to the reciting tone in the manner of an intonation. The

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<sup>1</sup> This is because the scale is constituted of hexachords (patterns of six stepwise notes: ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la, with a half-step between mi and fa, i.e., G A B C D E, C D E F G a, F G a b-flat c d; the lowest hexachord begins on G an eleventh below middle C, including B-natural, but there is not a hexachord on F below that, and so no B-flat there.

<sup>2</sup> The most notable such gradual is *Haec dies*, for Easter Sunday; in this piece, the very beginning of the chant touches on that low F.

<sup>3</sup> *Graduale Romanum* (Sablé sur Sarthe: Abbaye Saint-Pierre de Solesmes, 1974), pp. 328f.; *Liber usualis* (Tournai: Desclée, 1962), p. 1043.

second of each pair includes a complete mode-two psalm-intonation figure: thus, “*exspectans*” (A-C), and “*et respexit*” (G-A-C); then “*et exaudivit*” (A-C), and “*et immisit*” (G-A-C); the differences underline the parallelism between the two complete verses.

The initial intonation, “*Expectans expectavi*,” is notable as an expression of its text. The repetition of the same word in a different grammatical form was noted by Cassiodorus in his commentary upon this psalm:

We must contemplate the double use of the same word here, for this beautiful repetition is not otiose. We can expect even if we are ungrateful, but we expect with expectation only when we meekly endure something with great longing. This is the argument called *a coniugatis*, when one word related to another changes its form; *sapiens* becomes *sapienter*, *prudens* *prudenter*, and so forth.<sup>4</sup>

The earliest translations of the scripture held a principle of making a quite literal translation; here a Hebrew idiom, the repetition of a word as an intensification, was simply reproduced literally,<sup>5</sup> even though it was not quite a Latin idiom. The translator of the original Douai version held to the same principle, retaining “*Expecting, I expected our Lord.*” Challoner’s revision of the Douai, “*With expectation, I waited for the Lord,*” eliminated the double usage of the same word without achieving any clarification in meaning. The English tradition from the time of the Coverdale’s Psalter in the *Great Bible* through the King James and the Revised Standard Versions may have depended upon Cassiodorus’s view, since it interpreted the quality added by the reiteration of the word as patience—“*I waited patiently for the Lord.*” The composer of the Gregorian melody, however, seems to have grasped the idiom as a genuine intensification, since the repeat of the word is set to the intonation figure of mode two up a fourth; thus “*exspectavi*” includes the highest pitch of the piece, probably realizing the import of the original Hebrew idiom most closely. It should be noted that for some medieval musical theorists, pitches were often not described in terms of a spatial analogy—high or low—but a kinesthetic one—what we would call high and low were called “*intense*” and “*relaxed.*”

The most remarkable feature of the mode of *Exspectans*, however, is its conclusion. The second half of the second verse reaches its object, “*a new canticle,*” upon a cadence to the reciting tone, paralleling the cadence of the first verse (on “*respexit me*”). With this, the parallelism is fulfilled, though the final of the piece is not reached. But this is the location of the extension by parallel statement of that object by “*a hymn to our God.*” The melody of this phrase achieves an emphasis by departing from the normal figures, just as at the beginning of the piece, this time through descent to the low F, (the reason the piece was placed on an A final), a remarkable development at the end of the piece, calling particular attention to the ultimate fruition of the intensified waiting depicted at the beginning. This alone would have been an exceptional expression of the text, but it is not all; the passage that dips down to the

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<sup>4</sup> Cassiodorus, *Explanation of the Psalms*, tr. P. G. Walsh, 3 vols., *Ancient Christian Writers*, 51–53 (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1990), vol. 1, p. 398.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. W. E. Plater & H. J. White, *A Grammar of the Vulgate Being an Introduction to the Study of the Latinity of the Vulgate Bible* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926; reprint, Oxford: Sandpiper Books, 1997), pp. 26f.

low F and outlines a triad F-A-C passes through a alternative triad in descent, D-B-G (in the middle of “Deo”) and returns to descend through C-A-F and make its final upon the F. The mode of the piece has thus been changed in the appositive: the hymn to our God, the new canticle, is now completed in a new mode. In fact, one could speculate that the hymn to our God *is* the present piece—this new song, with a new configuration of the psalm text and a new conclusion to an old mode. Still, the F is not entirely new; it can now be seen to have been anticipated by the high F reached in the intensified intonation at the beginning, giving the piece a range of a complete F octave. The traditional analysis of this piece has been mode five, the authentic mode on F, as if this F ending were quite normal; that the piece proceeds in mode two for most of its course was only for the attentive to notice. Among those would have been musicians, whose art received a particular nod in this piece. Indeed, I have found, in seeking the rare pieces which show this kind of commixture of modes, that often such pieces specifically mention music or singing in their texts.

*Meditabor*<sup>6</sup> is another unusual offertory, with striking parallelism of text and a similarly transformed ending, though it remains in mode two. The parallelism is more direct, for it amounts to a repetition of the same idea. The text falls into two very similar lines, including the repetition of several words at the end of the lines. This text shows a prominence of alliteration, the repetition of consonants: Prominent is m at the beginnings of words, but there is a more general use of liquid consonants throughout, especially m, n, and l, and of voiced consonants, d and b. All of these serve to make the sound of the text smooth, liquid, and eminently singable.

As in *Exspectans*, the beginning figure is unique in the course of the piece, starting from a low E, the lowest note of the piece and never repeated; it moves quickly to the conventional intonation notes for mode two on A: G-A-C. What follows reiterates that same figure, setting a pattern for phrases to follow. The first verse concludes with a reiterated figure C-E-D on “dilexi”; this prominent figure, including the highest pitch of the piece, by its repetition emphasizes the motivation for the whole verse: “which I have loved exceedingly.” The reiteration of the figure ever so slightly suggests a reticence to leave this word before it finally descends to the final. The second verse repeats the G-A-C intonation twice and then proceeds to a repeat of “which I have loved.” This repeat begins as the previous phrase on that text, but is then extended substantially; after more reiteration, it descends to the F below (for the first time in the piece) and lingers there long enough to suggest that the piece might do as *Exspectans* did and end there. Instead, it returns to A and in completely stepwise motion rises through a quilisma to C and descends again, repeating this figure once again, as if to linger on it and postpone the ending as long as possible. I know of no other cadence in a Gregorian piece quite like it. If one had been skeptical about the reticence to leave the cadence at the end of the first verse, this place surely confirms the notion that the depiction of “which I have loved” represents a desire to hold on as long as possible to that which is loved. Moreover, this desire is supported affectively by the sensibly attractive elements of stepwise motion, the undulation back and forth of the figure, and the use of quilismas.

These two pieces, even though they were originally sung in opposite parts of the

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<sup>6</sup> *Graduale*, p. 356; *Liber*, pp. 548f.



year, are so memorable that it is easy to see that their use of the low F in relation to the figures of mode two on A complements each other: what the one does forms a contrast to what the other does, and each gains in clarity and meaning by it. In some ways they are quite conventional chants, making use of the usual mode-two figures; yet their unique features make them stand out and be quite memorable. These unique features are most likely the creation of Carolingian cantors in their final redaction of Gregorian chants, for the Old Roman versions of these two chants<sup>78</sup> remain in mode two throughout, without touching upon the major third below the final at all. Such Carolingian redactions are noted for their representation of specific meanings in the texts, like those shown here. 📖

## DOCUMENTS

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### The Faithful Need to Know Chant

[*Instrumentum Laboris*, Synod of Bishops, XI Ordinary General Assembly]

¶61 The People of God, gathered in the Lord's House, give thanks and praise through speaking, listening, singing, and moments of silence.

Various responses to the *Lineamenta* recommend that singing at Mass and Eucharistic Adoration be done in a dignified manner. The faithful need to know the standard Gregorian chants, which have been composed to meet the needs of people of all times and places, in virtue of their simplicity, refinement, and agility in form and rhythm. As a result, the songs and hymns presently in use need to be reconsidered. To enter into sacred or religious usage, instrumental or vocal music is to have a sense of prayer, dignity, and beauty. This requires an *integrity of form*, expressing true artistry, corresponding to the various rites, and capable of adaptation to the legitimate demands of inculturation. This is to be done without detracting from the idea of *universality*. Gregorian chant fulfills these needs, and can therefore serve as a model, according to Pope John Paul II. Musicians and poets should be encouraged to compose new hymns, according to liturgical standards, which contain authentic catechetical teaching on the paschal mystery, Sunday, and the Eucharist.

¶62 Some responses particularly mentioned the use of musical instruments, referring to the general guidelines contained in the Constitution *Sacrosanctum concilium*. In this regard, a certain appreciation was often voiced in the Latin tradition for the organ, whose majestic sound adds solemnity to worship and is conducive to contemplation. Some responses also made reference to experiences associated with the use of other musical instruments in the liturgy. Positive results in this area were achieved with the consensus of competent ecclesiastical authority, who judged these instruments proper for sacred use, in keeping with the dignity of the place and the edification of the

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<sup>78</sup> Cf. *Die Gesänge des altrömischen Graduale*, *Vat. Lat.* 5319, ed. Margareta Landwehr-Melnicki, *Monumenta Monodica Medii Aevi*, II (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1970), pp. 276ff., 282f.

faithful.

In other responses some lamented the poor quality of translations of liturgical texts and many musical texts in current languages, maintaining that they lacked beauty and were sometimes theologically unclear, thereby contributing to a weakening of Church teaching and to a misunderstanding of prayer. A few responses made particular mention of music and singing at Youth Masses. In this regard, it is important to avoid musical forms which, because of their profane use, are not conducive to prayer. Some responses noted a certain eagerness in composing new songs, to the point of almost yielding to a consumer mentality, showing little concern for the quality of the music and text, and easily overlooking the artistic patrimony which has been theologically and musically effective in the Church's liturgy.

In keeping with the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum concilium*, the suggestion was made that, at international gatherings, the liturgy be in Latin, at least the Eucharistic Prayer, to facilitate a proper participation of the concelebrants and of those who are not familiar with the local vernacular language.

A certain satisfaction is drawn from the fact that some countries have a sound tradition of religious songs and hymns for special times in the liturgical year: Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter. These songs, known and sung by the people, promote recollection and assist the faithful to live in a particularly spiritual way the celebrations of the mystery of faith in each liturgical season. Many hope that this positive experience might spread to other nations and provide a certain tone to these significant seasons in the liturgical year, thereby allowing the faithful to perceive the season's message through music and lyrics. ■

## Liturgy Is No Time for Popular Music

By Francis Cardinal Arinze

The Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship spoke to *Inside the Vatican* about sacred music, November 2005:

**ITV:** In *Sacrosanctum concilium* (Vatican II's Decree on the Liturgy), it indicated at Mass, pride of place must be given to Gregorian chant. But the reality is that few Catholics under the age of 50 would ever have heard a Te Deum sung in their parish church. Liturgical music today is largely guitars and tambourines, etc. Is this an appropriate form of musical expression for divine worship?

**ARINZE:** For music in the liturgy, we should start by saying that Gregorian music is the Church's precious heritage. It should stay. It should not be banished. If therefore in a particular diocese or country, no one hears Gregorian music anymore, then somebody has made a mistake somewhere.

But, the Church is not saying that everything should be Gregorian music. There is room for music which respects that language, that culture, that people. There is room for that too, and the present books say that is a matter for the Bishops Conference,

because it generally goes beyond the boundaries of one diocese.

The ideal thing is that the bishops would have a Liturgical Music Commission which looks at the wording and the music of the hymns. And when the commission is satisfied, judgment is brought to the bishops for approval, in the name of the rest of the conference.

But not individuals just composing anything and singing it in church. This is not right at all. No matter how talented the individual is. That brings us to the question of the instrument to be used. The local church should be conscious that church worship is not really the same as what we sing in a bar, or what we sing in a convention for youth. Therefore it should influence the type of instrument used, the type of music used.

I will not now pronounce and say never guitar. That would be rather severe. But much of guitar music may not be suitable at all for the Mass. Yet, it is possible to think of some guitar music that would be suitable, not as the ordinary one we get every time, the visit of a special group, etc.

The judgment would be left to the bishops of the area. It is wiser that way. Also, because there are other instruments in many countries which are not used in Italy or in Ireland, for instance.

But music should nourish faith, burst from our faith and should lead back to the faith. It should be a prayer. Entertainment is quite another matter. We have the parish hall for that, and the theater. People don't come to Mass in order to be entertained. They come to Mass to adore God, to thank him, to ask pardon for sins, and to ask for other things that they need. Those are the reasons for Mass. When they want entertainment, they know where to go: Parish hall, theater, presuming that their entertainment is acceptable from a moral theological point of view. ☒

## Songs That Make a Difference?

By David J. Hughes

Your recent article about the National Association of Pastoral Musicians' online survey of "songs that make a difference," and the subsequent CNY poll asking for "your top five liturgical music songs," [Catholic New York, March 2006] bespeaks a misunderstanding of what constitutes the music of the praying Church.

Sacred music is the sung prayer of the Church's corporate worship, following prescribed texts that have been honed through centuries of use. When we sing, we join our voices to the entire *chorus angelorum*; no parish choir ever sings alone, as indeed no Catholic can ever be truly alone when he prays. Nearly every pope of the twentieth century, and certainly the Second Vatican Council, has stressed that sacred music must not be viewed as a mere ornament, but rather as a "necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy." These integral parts include, specifically, the Mass

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**David J. Hughes**, organist and choirmaster, St. Catharine's, Pelham, New York, wrote this as a letter to the editor that appeared in *Catholic New York*, March 16, 2006.

Ordinary, the Propers for any given Mass, and the antiphons and psalms of the Divine Office. These prayers are of primary importance for sung worship, and it is around these liturgical texts that the vast treasury of plainchant and polyphony has grown.

A frequent, and deadly, misconception, attends the use of the term “song” when describing the music the Church employs in her sacred worship. To speak of “songs,” while not technically inaccurate, does nothing to dispel the notion that the best music for any Mass consists in whatever is most popular or best liked. I might have a particular fondness for the Corpus Christi Sequence *Lauda Sion*, for instance, but this does not make it appropriate to sing at any Mass that strikes my fancy. Asking for “top liturgical songs” risks turning the music of the Roman Rite into little more than an iPod playlist, subject to personal taste and pastoral whim. Should we not instead sing the texts of the Mass itself, rather than substitutions (“*vel aliud cantus aptus*”) that are allowed by post-conciliar documents like *Musicam sacram* only with great reluctance?

Furthermore, constructing a Top Ten list runs the risk of implying that, by dint of popular acclaim, some normative standard accrues to these pieces. The three thousand participants in the NPM survey are self-selecting respondents, and many of them may be unfamiliar with the Church’s actual teachings on sacred music. That the poll is unscientific should be evident to any reader at first glance: to list *Tantum ergo* and *Pange lingua* as numbers 23 and 25, respectively, is absurd, given that the latter, the great Vespers hymn of Corpus Christi, contains the former. Popular opinion polls are no substitute for the careful study that is the province of any Catholic musician.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the popularity of such pieces as “On Eagle’s Wings” is most often the result of power of association. For instance, having been sung at the funeral of a loved one, this becomes henceforth a beloved song: not for any intrinsic quality (and any student of elementary composition could readily identify problems both in its melodic construction and its textual setting), but rather by dint of personal memory. But Psalm 91, of which “On Eagle’s Wings” is an extremely loose paraphrase, is present in no part of the funeral Mass, nor even of the Office of the Dead. In how many parishes in the Archdiocese are the actual texts of the Requiem Propers sung at funeral Masses? The prayers of the *Requiem aeternam* or *In paradisum* are far more specific and therefore also far more memorable, not to mention efficacious.

Do these contemporary “songs” that comprise the bulk of the list have their place? Certainly: for some people, their use in private devotions can be helpful. But this does not make them appropriate for the public rites of the Church. ☒



## REVIEWS

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# The Popes, the Choir, and the Liturgy

By Jeffrey Tucker

*Papal Legislation on Music, 95.A.D. to 1977 A.D.* by Robert F. Hayburn  
Collegeville Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1979; reprint, Fort Collins, Colorado:  
Roman Catholic Books, 2005. 646 pp. with index. ISBN: 0814610129.

Msgr. Hayburn was director of music for the archdiocese of San Francisco from 1957 to 1979, and as a scholar and organist found himself in the midst of the great upheaval in church music. He put together this splendid treatise—including documents, translations, historical discussion, and argument—first as a doctoral dissertation completed in 1964, and then, in final publication many years later, as a way of providing the larger context in which the discussion of Catholic music must be understood.

When this book appeared, the Catholic music scene was dominated by popular artists and summer-camp guitarists who were spinning out melodies designed to supplant the whole treasury sacred music that came before. This volume was thus designed as a kind of rebuke to those who believe that their own times and music are all that matter. The book includes a vast number of original texts that had never before been translated, and ends with a passionate warning against the then-current trends: “What would we think of a world leader who would destroy all the great cathedrals of Europe? To let the great musical heritage of the Church disappear is a crime of as grave magnitude.”

These two sentences are by no means characteristic of the book as a whole, which is mostly a dispassionate and wholly readable account of in what ways and to what extent the popes have had a hand in guiding the development of liturgical music from the earliest centuries until the present. He brings to light many forgotten periods and documents, such as the pre-Trent debates over the role of polyphony, the attempts by many popes to secure a firmer place for chant in seminaries and parishes, and the controversy over what instruments are suitable at Mass.

Especially valuable for today’s musicians are the controversies preceding Trent. The author provides an extended discussion of the papal bull of Pope John XXII, which mapped out the standards of polyphonic development for the 14th and 15th centuries. His intervention followed many reports of increasing numbers of abuses appearing in parishes and monasteries. Jacob of Liège, for example, wrote that “there are some who although they contrive to sing a little in the modern manner, nevertheless, they have no regard for quality; they sing too lasciviously, they multiply voices superfluously; some of them employ the *hocquestus* too much, breaking, cutting, and dividing, their voices into too many consonants; in the most inopportune places they dance, whirl and jump about on notes, howling like dogs. They bay and like madmen nourished by disorderly and twisted aberrations, they use a harmony

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alien to nature herself.” (p. 17)

Here also we find the details of how Ferdinand I intervened in the proceedings of the Council of Trent to defend polyphony against the suggestion that only chant is suitable: “We will not approve removing ornate chant (polyphony) completely from our services, because we believe that so divine a gift as music can frequently stir to devotion the souls of men who are especially sensitive to music. This music must never be banned from our church.” (p. 28)

Trent and its impact are fully covered, as well as the development of the classical and romantic styles of liturgical music. The author then puts into proper context the reforms of Pius X and the effects of the *Motu Proprio* of 1903, along with the great controversies over the use of the *ictus* and *episema*. The discussion here is far more extensive if only because the documents are more readily available. For the modern reader who is not likely to know much about chant at all, these controversies and arguments might seem somewhat arcane and misdirected. However, recounting them does serve the purpose of underscoring just how important the style of sacred music is to liturgy, indeed as important as the liturgy itself because it is integral to it.

The tendency today is for Catholic musicians to believe that what music exists at Mass is purely a pastoral judgment that should be decided based on local tradition, custom, level of expertise of the singers, region, language, and even the ideological flavor of the liturgical setting. The Church might give broad indicators about what music is appropriate, it is believed, but it is the musicians and their pastors who make the decision about all matters of style and text.

This volume serves as a crucial reminder that Christian music did not evolve in the same manner as popular music. It was directed and guided and dictated in precise detail over the course of development of the Christian Church from the earliest centuries, with abuses corrected along the way. Composers and publishers were expected to take seriously all the norms that were issued by popes. Such was the case until the period of the great confusion following the Second Vatican Council, when the link between liturgical and musical norms was widely regarded as something that had been severed.

It is easy to look at the vast accumulation of legislation and observe that the popes might have sometimes overstepped their authority. And yet we have before us an example of the results of a *laissez-faire* policy, where the popes do not intervene and where authority is exercised by publishing houses and sometimes bishops’ conferences. To know the history here is to suggest something of a proper map for the future.

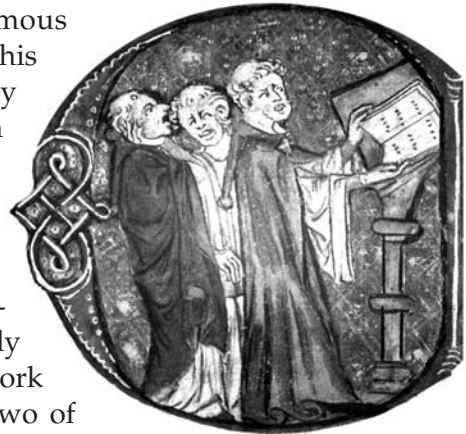
On a personal note, as someone who has spent countless hours with this book for many years, thrilling to its detail and marveling at the development of music through the centuries, the re-issuance of this book provides great happiness. The volume was nearly impossible to get, even from online dealers. Now Hayburn’s careful scholarship is set to educate yet another generation of musicians so they may stand in the long tradition and accept obligations that extend beyond their own parishes and times. May the history in this book provide a model for the reconstructed link between music and the organic development of the liturgy. 📖

# The Spiritual Ascent of Machaut

By William Mahrt

*Guillaume de Machaut and Reims: Context and Meaning in his Musical Works* by Anne Walters Robertson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. xx, 456 pp. ISBN: 0 521 41876 3.

Guillaume de Machaut is the most famous composer of the fourteenth century, and part of his fame rests upon his role in a milestone of the history of liturgical music. He was the first known composer to have composed a complete polyphonic Mass—the genre that became the most widely-composed form of music in the Renaissance. His fame did not end there, however, for in his hands the motet (in its fourteenth-century form) and the chanson were substantially developed. Moreover, the preponderance of his work was poetry—long narrative romances in verse, two of which include numerous musical pieces. Machaut's early career, though he was a priest, was as a poet in a secular court, but at mid-life he returned to his home cathedral of Reims, where he was appointed canon, and where he functioned as an ecclesiastical dignitary for the rest of his life.



Anne Walters Robertson has undertaken extensive researches upon the institution of Reims cathedral in order to illuminate Machaut's life there; her *Guillaume de Machaut and Reims* has produced a very new view of this famous composer. Three important areas will be of particular interest to readers of *Sacred Music*: 1) the occasion for the first polyphonic Mass by a known composer, 2) the history of the inclusion of polyphonic music into the liturgy, and 3) the essentially sacred foundations of what has seemed to be a secular genre, the motet.

Machaut's *Messe Notre Dame* has seemed to scholars to be such an important work in the history of music that they sought to identify the occasion for its performance in an important historical event, and they settled upon the coronation of Charles V at Reims in 1364, though no concrete evidence supports such an occasion. That it was a Mass of Our Lady was explained by the dedication of Reims cathedral to the Blessed Virgin.

Robertson's research into the documents of Reims cathedral has indicated a much more interesting occasion for the work. Guillaume de Machaut and his brother established an endowment for the singing of a weekly votive Mass of the Blessed Virgin, and the amount of the endowment was sufficient to pay, not only for the priest to sing the Mass, but also for several singers, who could then sing the polyphonic ordinary for this votive Mass. Thus Machaut's Mass is now seen to have been

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composed for a weekly Saturday Mass of the Blessed Virgin, sung one to a part, performed for the intentions of Machaut and his brother while they were alive and continued after their deaths for the repose of their souls. Records indicate that the memorial persisted at least into the beginning of the fifteenth century.

This is a substantial piece of the puzzle concerning the incorporation of polyphonic music into the liturgy. The first great polyphonic Mass was not for a solemn Mass at the high altar on a high feast day, as a modern historical imagination would have it. On those solemn occasions the assembled canons or their vicars sang the liturgy in Gregorian chant. Rather, polyphonic music first found its place on the periphery of the liturgy, a votive service sung at a side altar for the intentions of individuals. Polyphonic music in the thirteenth century had been developed at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris as a part of the principal cathedral liturgy. The Parisian *organa* were sung in choir on almost half of the days of the year in elaborate polyphonic music. But the bull of Pope John XXII, *Docta sanctorum* (1324), put an end to such elaborate polyphonic music, prohibiting elaborate polyphony from the principal liturgies. Thus polyphonic music only gradually returned and this from the periphery of the liturgy—in devotional services and in such votive Masses as Machaut's endowment. The development of the genres of polyphonic sacred music is of such historical significance that scholars have assumed it to have played a central role from its inception. Now history teaches quite the opposite. Even in the Renaissance, institutions of polyphonic music were exceptional. For every cathedral or chapel maintaining a polyphonic choir, there were dozens, at least, which conducted the extensive traditions of liturgy exclusively in Gregorian chant.

Machaut's body of motets comes in for reinterpretation by Robertson as well, and this is probably the most revolutionary part of her work. The motet in the fourteenth century has seemed to have been a principally secular form. Although its tenors were most often drawn from Gregorian chant, its upper voices usually carried secular texts—texts of courtly love; the majority of Machaut's motets have such texts. But the manuscripts in which Machaut assembled his works indicate that these works were ordered according to Machaut's design, though scholars have not been able to identify what the principal of order was. Until Robertson. Robertson's discovery is that the tenor voices of these motets, as the works are arranged in the manuscripts, form a coherent order, following a ladder of ascent to spiritual perfection depicted by a fourteenth-century Dominican theologian, Henry Suso.

Now what had seemed a miscellaneous assembly of mainly secular works is seen to be ordered on a sacred principal, so much so that their secular texts may now be reinterpreted as allegories of the sacred, much like the *Song of Songs* has always been read; what was thought to be a repertory of secular and courtly works now appears to be a large-scale body of works whose rationale is principally sacred.

These astonishing discoveries concerning major works in the history of music have earned Robertson the Kinkeldey prize of the American Musicological Society and the Haskins Medal of the Medieval Academy of America. She deserves the gratitude of all students of sacred music as well for the historical detail and illumination she has brought to the formative period of sacred polyphony. ■

# Liturgy as an Action of Love

By Michael Lawrence

*The Shape of the Liturgy* by Dom Gregory Dix. Westminster: Dacre Press, 1945; reprint, London: Continuum International, 2005. 764 pp. ISBN: 0826479421.

Those who are concerned about the state of the Roman Rite will find Dom Gregory Dix's *The Shape of the Liturgy* to be indispensable to their understanding of matters liturgical. Though it first appeared in 1945, it remains an essential account of the history and meaning of the Christian liturgy.

Dix, an Anglican Benedictine monk of Nashdom Abbey, discusses in splendid fashion the development of Christian liturgical tradition around a four-action shape: offertory, thanksgiving, fraction, and communion.

Dix observes that Christ, in commanding us to "do this," did not give specific directives on how the Eucharist ought to be done, but rather left its exact development to his Church. In addition, he makes the welcome point that the Eucharist is not the re-enactment of the Last Supper, but rather the *anamnesis* of the entire Paschal Mystery. "Doing this," then, means not only the eating of a meal, but also involves a liturgical rite which expresses the entirety of Christ's Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension, as well as the anticipation of the Parousia.

This Mystery, Dix says, is expressed primarily in the four-action shape, and it is indeed the *action* which is most important. The accompanying prayers of the liturgy, e.g., those at the offertory, according to Dix, are secondary to the action, though certainly not unimportant, and their function is to lend an explanation of the meaning of the action that is taking place.

In the process of elucidating the shape of the liturgy, the author discusses many fascinating developments in the history of Christian worship, but the reader should be aware that, having been first published in 1945, this book contains some outdated scholarship. However, this unfortunate fact does not compromise the overall integrity of the work. It should also be noted that Dix does not succumb to archaeologism but in fact supports the organic nature of liturgical development.

Throughout his book, Dix emphasizes the importance of the corporate aspect of the act of Christian worship. It is not a surprise, then, that he takes a dim view, sometimes rightly, sometimes wrongly, of a number of late Medieval liturgical developments and asserts that the prevalence of the Low Mass, along with the popular devotions of the laity, factored greatly into the 16th-century Protestant Reformation. He is, at the same time, quite critical of the Protestant "said" liturgies which disrupt completely the four-action shape. Cranmer's Zwinglian-influenced liturgies are particularly criticized by this Anglo-Catholic monk.

Every word of this 752-page tome weighs a pound, and the Catholic reader must sift through some of the points carefully, particularly with respect to Dix's Eucharistic theology, which is more in accord with commonly held Anglican beliefs. Therefore,

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I would not recommend this book to any Catholic who has less than a thorough understanding of this subject.

Nevertheless, the four-action shape described by this good monk ought to be one of the basic elements of contemporary liturgical discussion. For example, applying Dix's principles specifically to the Roman Rite, we could ask the following: do the present offertory prayers of the 1969 *Missale Romanum* express the meaning of that liturgical action? Do the words and manner of administration at Holy Communion express the meaning of the reception of the Eucharist? Are each of these parts in harmony with the whole of Roman liturgical tradition?

It wouldn't hurt, either, for modern liturgists to consult Dix's depiction of the liturgy of the sub-apostolic period, which shows the *participatio actuosa* of the faithful of that time to be of a quite solemn nature. Those early Christians most definitely did not strive for a party-like disposition or the atmosphere of a hotel ballroom meeting, both of which can be found at Masses today.

In the closing chapter, Dix eloquently sums up his own book and documents how Christians throughout two millenia have fulfilled the Lord's command to "do this for the *anamnesis* of (Him)":

Was ever another command so obeyed? For century after century, spreading slowly to every continent and country and among every race on earth, this action has been done, in every conceivable human circumstance, for every conceivable human need from infancy and before it to extreme old age and after it, from the pinnacles of earthly greatness to the refuge of fugitives in the caves and dens of the earth . . . The sheer stupendous *quantity* of the love of God which this ever repeated action has drawn from the obscure Christian multitudes through the centuries is in itself an overwhelming thought. (pp. 744-5) ■

## True and False Renewal

By Shawn Tribe

*Looking Again at the Question of the Liturgy with Cardinal Ratzinger: Proceedings of the July 2001 Fontgombault Conference.*, ed. Dom Alcuin Reid, OSB. Farnborough: St. Michael's Abbey Press, 2003. 333pp. ISBN: 0907077439.

Books of essays are not always appealing to the general public, but this is a collection that is simply too important to pass up. This publication presents essays that were given at a liturgical conference held deep in Catholic France, at the traditional Benedictine Abbey of Fontgombault—a conference organized and presided over by (then) Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now our beloved Pope. The nature of this conference is perhaps most

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succinctly explained by Dom Alcuin Reid in his introduction:

“How, today. . . do we achieve ‘the true celebration of the liturgy’? Is the answer a wholesale return to the traditional rites? Is it in accepting a wide diversity of divergent uses—new, old and inculturated—in the Roman rite? Or is it in seeking an official reform of the liturgical reform that followed the Second Vatican Council? These are the issues that were discussed by both liturgists and well qualified non-liturgists alike . . . ”

In the past, Cardinal Ratzinger and others have spoken of the need for a new liturgical movement, and this conference would certainly have to be classified as yet another step in that direction. Particularly important in this endeavor is that its speakers and invitees were equally representative of the Tridentine rite and Reform-of-the-Reform movement. This gives the book a healthy, rigorous, and moderate balance which helps to draw out the bigger liturgical issues in addition to the particular considerations which affect each community.

Four main themes are pursued in the book: the theology of the liturgy, anthropological aspects of the liturgy, the question of diversity of liturgical rites within the Roman rite, and the problems and lessons to be learned from the liturgical reform. The themes are tackled in an academic way, which is typically both constructive as well as critical—but a criticism that is free from polemics.

A particular strength of the book is to be found in the addresses on the themes of the liturgical reform and the diversity of rites. The former essays lay bare the underlying theological and philosophical precepts which influenced and derailed both the original liturgical movement and the liturgical reform and gives a keen insight into some fundamental problems which need to be addressed. The latter tackle the issue of openness to legitimate liturgical diversity in the Latin rite, taking on the attitudes which would marginalize the classical Roman rite or which would pit those two communities represented in this book against one another.

Implicit within this book is a subtle call for reason and common sense for the good of both communities and for the liturgy itself. The book’s constructive dimension is particularly found in the practical considerations and suggestions about how we might move forward to a genuine renewal. This particular dimension marks this text as a foundational document of the new liturgical movement.

The spirit of this text is not a rejection of the Second Vatican Council, nor of the idea of reform or *ressourcement* as pertains to the liturgy. Rather, it is defined by a desire for a more genuine and thorough approach to the Council, faithful to the rule of Faith (*lex credendi*) and to the Church’s tradition and Council’s requirement for organic development.

This is what must define our rule of prayer (*lex orandi*), for as Pope Benedict XIV reminds us, what we previously knew only in theory has become for us a practical experience: the Church stands and falls with the Liturgy. When the adoration of the divine Trinity declines, when the faith no longer appears in its fullness in the Liturgy of the Church, when man’s words, his thoughts, his intentions are suffocating him, then faith will have lost the place where it is expressed and where it dwells. For that reason, the true celebration of the Sacred Liturgy is the centre of any renewal of the Church whatsoever. ■

# Gamber the Moderate

By Shawn Tribe

*The Modern Rite: Collected Essays on the Reform of the Liturgy* by Msgr. Klaus Gamber. Farnborough: St. Michaels Abbey Press, 2002. 96pp. ISBN: 0907077374

Many readers will already be familiar with the name of Monsignor Klaus Gamber, the well known and respected liturgist from Germany. Some will be familiar with his primary work of liturgical criticism, *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy: Its Problems and Background*, while others will have no doubt heard of him quoted or referred to by other contemporary liturgical commentators, particularly Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger.

*The Modern Rite* is another contribution from Msgr. Gamber on the question of the liturgical reform. In point of fact, the book is comprised of essays published in various journals around the time of the Council and the introduction of the modern Roman Rite of Mass. A common theme unites these essays, which Gamber states as follows: "The following collection of essays . . . is intended to draw attention to the dangers of liturgical reform from the point of view of a historian of the liturgy, and to look for a middle way between rigid immobility within the old Tridentine forms, and an aimless pursuit of novelty."

The topic might seem quaint to some. After all, are we not now long past the time when these debates were presently raging and where the ink was still fresh on the pages of the 1970 Roman Missal? Are not the liturgical reforms now a *fait accompli*? While we are indeed past the time when these debates raged fresh, Gamber's insights are still as relevant in our own day as they were in his. After all, we are not yet out of the very dangers that Gamber was pointing out, dangers rooted in an overall mindset and approach to the liturgy characterized by hasty experimentation and a thirst for novelty.

Even our present missal and liturgical forms are not set as firmly as you might think. Self-styled liturgists are still seeking to have their way with the Church's liturgy. Indeed, many Catholics are only too familiar with the ongoing instability of their parish liturgies; instabilities created in the pursuit of "creativity" and "relevance." Moreover, there is the question of the reform of the reform, an ever increasing voice which is again taking up a critical examination of the liturgical reform and seeking corrective measures to the excesses and destruction of the past decades. Far from being dated, there is something of a prophetic voice to be heard in these essays, a tone which Gamber is more than willing to take. Gamber's work is not only an interesting commentary on the issues of his day, but also serves readers today as a general guide to the principles of proper (and improper) liturgical reform.

Readers will find that Gamber is indeed a realist and a moderate in the true sense of the word. While valuing the tradition, he is able to admit where the old Roman rite was in need of organic development—such as the use of vernacular in the epistle and

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gospel for instance. At the same time, however, he is critical of what he perceives as a lack of pastoral sensitivity in implementing reform, in the nature and scope of the particular reforms themselves and the overall attitude of manufacturing liturgy according to rationalist dictates, a posture contrary to the tradition of organic development. The essays tackle most all of the major issues which have come up these past forty years: Mass facing the people, communion in the hand, Latin and the vernacular in the liturgy, the nature of the Mass as a sacrifice, active participation, calendar reform, and the question of making the liturgy relevant to modern man.

If you are looking for a book which critically analyzes the liturgical reform, which values the past while not immobilizing it, and which is done in easy-to-understand terms, then this series of essays is something you will want to acquire. Books from St. Michael's Abbey Press may be ordered in the USA and Canada through St. Augustine's Press Distribution Centre, Tel: 1-800-621-2736, or email: kh@press.uchicago.edu. ☒

## Facing East

By Fr. Richard Cipolla

*Turning towards the Lord: Orientation in Liturgical Prayer* by Uwe Michael Lang.  
San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005. 156 pp. ISBN: 0898709865

"Reclaiming the common direction of prayer seems most desirable for the liturgical life and, hence, for the welfare of the Church. The historical and theological arguments presented in this study will I hope serve to revive this ancient tradition."

These words are taken from the last chapter of this small but important book that has now been translated into several languages. *Turning towards the Lord* is a major expansion of an article which the author published in 2000 (U.M. Lang, 'Conversi ad Dominum: Zu Gebetsostung, Stellung des Liturgen am Altar, und Kirchenbau,' *Forum katholische Theologie* 16 (2000): 81-123.) The book addresses the question of "orientation" of the priest at the celebration of Mass.

This question has been under increasing discussion during the past ten years. In the years immediately following the Second Vatican Council, it was assumed, without a basis in fact, that the Council mandated celebration of Mass *versus populum*, that is, in which the priest stands on the opposite side of the altar and faces the people. There is no doubt that this was advocated by many of the liturgical reformers so as to emphasize the "communal meal" aspect of the Mass, which they believed to have been eclipsed through the centuries by the sacrificial aspect of the Mass.

Lang presents solid evidence that not only was *versus populum* not mandated by the Council, it also was never mandated in an absolute sense by the post-conciliar documents including the General Instructions of the Roman Missal. Recent

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judgments emanating from the Congregation for Worship make it clear that, while current custom is certainly Mass facing the people, the custom which prevailed for most of the Church's life, viz., the orientation of priest and people facing the same way, is certainly a legitimate option.

The Forward to this book was written by the then Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI. The present Pope makes it clear that the question of liturgical orientation is not merely academic but affects the understanding of the Eucharist itself, and therefore this discussion is vital to the Church in the twenty-first century. It is also clear that the Pope wants this discussion to go on in the Church at this time, a time of less partisanship and polemic than in the years following the Second Vatican Council.

The value of this important book is that it presents two aspects of the question: the theological meaning of the East in the tradition of liturgical prayer and the common directionality of priest and people as manifesting sacrificial worship. Lang discusses the meaning of the East using both patristic and modern scholarly sources. The patristic sources show clearly the importance of the east as a specific direction for Christian worship. The sources are taken from the Church in both the East and the West and show that great importance was given to facing east during worship, both because of the symbolism of Christ as the light of the world and because of the eschatological symbolism involved.

St. Thomas Aquinas summarizes these earlier arguments in this way: "because of Christ, who is the light of the world and is called the Orient, who mounteth above the heaven of heaven to the east, and is expected to come from the east according to Matthew, *as lightning comes out of the east and shines even to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*"

Lang prepares for the last and most significant part of the book by distinguishing between the orientation to the east as a compass point and the question of the orientation of the celebrant with respect to the people. This is important, for the whole question of orientation has been discussed in the recent past merely with respect to the latter. Thus much ink has been spilled on discussions of the positions of priest and people at Mass in the first few centuries of the Church, especially in those churches like St. Peter's in Rome, where the apse was at the west end. Lang examines several points of view and points out the strengths and weaknesses of each argument. The conclusion is that we really have little evidence at all about the position of the celebrant and the people at the offering of the Mass in the first five centuries of the Church. Therefore, the real issue is not how the patristic Church worshipped; nor is it the question of the east as a compass point *per se*. It is not the question because how the Church may have worshipped in 400 A.D. cannot be relevant to the Church today except as marking a stage in the development of the liturgy, It cannot be used to justify Mass *versus populum* without committing the error of archaism, which in Cardinal Newman's words "substitutes infancy for manhood."

The second part of the book, "The Common Direction of Liturgical Prayer," is the most important part, for it addresses the real meaning of the orientation of priest and people, that is, priest and people facing the same way. Here Lang relies in good part

on the writings of Cardinal Ratzinger from the years immediately after the Second Vatican Council to the beginning of the new millennium. The orientation of priest and people *conversi ad Dominum* brings out several fundamental aspects of the Eucharist: its Trinitarian aspect, its transcendent aspect, its eschatological aspect, its aspect as contemplation and meditation, and, importantly, its sacrificial nature. It is on the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist and its relationship to the common direction of priest and people that Lang's argument is strongest and most cogent. He makes use, in a most original and striking way, of the experience of the Anglo-Catholic movement within Anglicanism in the late nineteenth century in their attempt to regain the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist within Anglicanism. Without forcing a comparison to the post-Vatican II situation in the Catholic Church, Lang shows not only how the eastward position was of supreme importance to the Anglo-Catholics in relation to the recovery of the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist. He also shows, drawing on writing from Newman, Keble, and other Tractarians down to this century with John Macquarrie, that the eastward position of priest and people turned to God together was and is a protest against the rationalism of the age which wants to reduce the Eucharist to a communal meal and to deny its transcendental objectivity. There is much for Catholics to learn from the Anglo-Catholic movement, not only in matters of recovery of the transcendental and sacrificial nature of the Eucharist but also in why that movement ultimately failed in its goal to catholicize Anglicanism.

Lang offers some concrete proposals based on his analysis for the celebration of Mass: that for the parts of the Mass that are "a dialogue between priest and people," the introductory rites and the Liturgy of the Word the priest should face the people. For the Canon of the Mass, the heart of the sacrificial action of the Eucharist, the priest and people should be oriented in a common direction. Lang never really discusses how the Liturgy of the Word is a "dialogue." There is a distinction between the proclamation of and the hearing of the Word and a dialogue between priest and people. This distinction is important. I am not convinced that the Liturgy of the Word is a dialogue between priest and people. Quite apart from the fact that in most parishes two of the Sunday readings are proclaimed by laypeople, and the gospel may be proclaimed by a deacon, so that the priest may not "proclaim the Word" at all in the strict sense at Mass; the proclamation and hearing of the Word are liturgical acts not catechetical acts. While an argument can be made for the reading (chanting makes more liturgical sense) of the biblical readings at Mass facing the people, the basis for this argument would seem to be other than a "dialogue."

We must be grateful to Fr. Lang for this clear, dispassionate, scholarly, and faithful book that is and will be of great use to the Church in the coming years of liturgical renewal and reform. ☒



# REVIEW, RECORDING

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## Chant in Parish Worship

By Jerome F. Weber

*Maundy Thursday*, Monastic Choir of St. Peter's Abbey, Solesmes, directed by Dom Jean Claire, O.S.B. Paraclete S.831 1

The effort to keep chant alive in American parishes seemed to achieve a modest boost a few years ago, at least in my experience. Based on a wholly inadequate sampling of a few churches that had heard no chant in several decades, I noticed all at once that *Pange lingua* was being restored to the Holy Thursday procession here and there. This chant was not only familiar to many people but, in contrast to other feeble attempts to use a bit of chant, perfectly suitable for the occasion.

Does this suggest the possibility of singing the entire Mass of Holy Thursday in chant? Since this Mass probably enjoys the largest attendance of any non-holyday Mass of the year, it might be a good place to start. The model for a music director exists on records. Dom Jean Claire directed the monks of Solesmes in a recording titled "Maundy Thursday" (Paraclete S.831, issued 1989). Unfortunately, the footwashing antiphons that were originally included in a set of two LPs must be found on another disc ("Christ in Gethsemane," Paraclete S.833). Then, too, the Ordinary of the Mass sung here is unfamiliar, for it consists of Kyrie III, Gloria II, Sanctus and Agnus Dei V, but the *Novus Ordo Missae* is complete with readings and the sung Eucharistic Prayer I. A simple Mass Ordinary and vernacular readings might easily be substituted. The five Mass Propers are the heart of this disc.

As a demonstration of continuity between the Tridentine Rite and the Novus Ordo, this is admittedly a poor example. Unlike the radical shift of the Ordinary Sundays that displaced so many chant Propers, the celebration of Holy Thursday involved no ritual change. Nevertheless, only the introit has been retained in this Mass. The old gradual has been moved to the previous Sunday and the offertory to the Easter Vigil, and the *communio*, has vanished. In their places, a medieval gradual *Oculi omnium* has been restored, a tract *Ab ortu solis* has been added after the new second reading (taken from the old votive Mass of the Blessed Sacrament), the antiphon *Ubi caritas est vera* has been designated "pro offertorio" (since the footwashing has been inserted into the Mass at this point), and the *communio Hoc corpus* has been moved from the former Passion Sunday.

Still, these are authentic medieval chants, worthy of being part of any effort to preserve chant in parish worship. Too often, the effort to keep chant alive focuses on chants that are admittedly familiar and popular but not authentic. *Credo III*, the simple *Salve Regina* and *Regina caeli*, and the seasonal motets *Rorate caeli* and *Attende Domine* all date from the Neo-Gallican movement of the seventeenth century. It is no coincidence that these chants all share a resemblance (in modern terms) to major or minor modes. The chant scholarship of the last half-century has focused largely on the

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medieval Mass Propers, chants that were not heard in most parish churches in the last century, and more recently on the late medieval Offices, chants that disappeared in the Tridentine reform. ■

## REVIEW, MUSIC

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# The Majesty of Wilton's Music

By Susan Treacy

This issue of *Sacred Music* features the culmination of my three-part series on the sacred choral works of Nicholas Wilton. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to encounter contemporary sacred music that is so beautiful and deeply reverent, yet of a naturalness and humility that neither overwhelms the words nor trumpets the composer's ego. Moreover, each work is brief, and admirably fits into the liturgical action.

*Cor meum; Beata viscera Mariæ*, by Nicholas Wilton. SATB *a cappella*. \$2.50.

Wilton's 1995 motet *Cor meum*, dedicated to Saint Philip Neri on the quatercentenary of his death, is a setting of the Gregorian communion antiphon for the feast of Saint Philip Neri. In the tradition of Duruflé's *Four Motets on Gregorian Themes*, the composer has clothed the plainchant in harmonies of mystical beauty. Indeed, the music serves supremely well the words from Psalm 83 (84): "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God." Coupled with *Cor meum* is a Marian motet, *Beata viscera Mariæ*. This very brief motet—just under one minute long—is a setting of the text of the communion antiphon for Common of the Blessed Virgin. It begins with a solo incipit that uses the melody of the well-known *Ave Maria* chant. Though not based on a plainchant, *Beata viscera* features a flowing melodic line and mixed meters, which give the music a chantlike quality.

*Ave Maria*, by Nicholas Wilton. SAATTBB *a cappella*. \$3.00.

This seven-voice *Ave Maria* is dedicated to Our Lady of La Salette. The beginning of the motet is particularly beautiful, as after soprano and alto I begin in duet, each subsequent voice enters one measure apart, resulting in a downward cascade of voices culminating in the full seven-voice texture. This gorgeous motet is in a slow triple meter and in F-major. Choirs that usually sing four-part music should not be concerned about covering all the parts because at times two voices may be singing the same melody, and the part-writing has a naturalness and ease that choirs will welcome.

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*Felix namque es*, by Nicholas Wilton. SSAATTBB and organ. \$4.00.

The lyrics of this motet are those for the offertory in votive Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary between Christmas and Easter, according to the *Liber usualis*. In the 1974 *Graduale Romanum* the text is found in the Common of the Blessed Virgin and the Solemnity of Mary. Like the *Ave Maria* above, it is in triple meter. Whereas most of Wilton's sacred choral music is composed for voices *a cappella*, this motet has organ accompaniment. The choral writing makes use of divisions between the men's and women's voices, with, for example, the men singing a passage which is then echoed by the women. *Felix namque es* has a tempo marking of *Allegretto grazioso*, which suits so well the joyful proper text: "For thou art happy, O holy Virgin Mary, and most worthy of praise: because from thee arose the sun of justice, Christ Our God."

*O sacrum convivium*, by Nicholas Wilton. SSAA *a cappella*. \$2.00.

This setting of *O sacrum convivium* was commissioned by the Land of Lakes Choirboys of Minnesota and was published in 2003. The familiar text of St. Thomas Aquinas is given a rich, syllabic setting in homophonic texture, with occasional brief melismas and some soaring soprano lines. The total effect of this lovely G-major motet is angelic.

*Missa brevis; O sacrum convivium*, by Nicholas Wilton. SATB *a cappella*. \$6.00.

In his *Missa brevis* (2004) Wilton has set the Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei. The Kyrie, fittingly in B minor, has a contrapuntal texture that would be manageable by just about any choir. All the other movements are in B major and use shifting meters that impart the freedom of rhythm proper to both Eastern European folksong and Gregorian chant. Both the Gloria and the Agnus Dei share some motivic material, which will facilitate learning the music. The texture is largely homophonic and the composer has been sensitive to word accentuation. This lovely Mass setting deserves to be widely used in Catholic churches. The same score also contains a more conventional, but beautiful setting of *O sacrum convivium*. In fact, it is the same *O sacrum* reviewed above, but recast by the composer in 2004 for mixed voices.

As I mentioned in the Fall 2005 issue, although Wilton acknowledges that he is inspired by the musical style of Tallis and other sixteenth-century masters, his music also uses rich, chromatic harmonies more reminiscent of late Romantic composers like Bruckner. A helpful term to describe Wilton's musical style would be "neo-Cecilian," in the very best sense of the word. One of the principles of Franz Xaver Witt (1839-80), founder of the Cecilian Movement, was to provide fitting liturgical music in the sixteenth-century style for choirs of all sizes, and particularly those of smaller parishes. Nicholas Wilton, likewise, has said that "my *modus operandi* in writing music for the sacred liturgy is to write fitting music in the Church's sacred language which can be sung by an average choir." As a result of working with one choir that often lacked real tenor voices, Wilton avoids composing tenor lines that lie very high,

such as one finds in much of the sacred music of Tallis, Byrd, and Victoria. In addition, the predominantly homophonic texture of his sacred music makes it easier to learn and allows the words to be understood more easily, a factor that adds to the devotional character of Wilton's music. The choral octavos are obtainable directly from the composer at the internet addresses listed below, and prices have been "translated" into US dollars. This music is supremely worth the transatlantic transactions; I wholeheartedly encourage choirmasters to invest in Nicholas Wilton's sacred choral music. As I also mentioned in the first installment of these reviews, there is a CD of Wilton's sacred choral music, also available from the composer, featuring fourteen of his works sung by the superlative professional choir *Magnificat*, under the direction of Philip Cave. Wilton has composed liturgical music that will shine and give glory to God wherever it is sung—whether by small parish choirs or professional cathedral choirs. Go now to Nicholas Wilton's website; listen to the samples and order these miniature masterpieces!

All music is available from Nicholas Wilton/Angelus Music, 85 Moffat Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey CR7 8PY, U.K. [sales@catholicmusic.co.uk](mailto:sales@catholicmusic.co.uk), [www.catholicmusic.co.uk](http://www.catholicmusic.co.uk) ☒

## COMING EVENTS

- Colloquium: Liturgical Music and the Restoration of the Sacred: June 20-25, Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., Center for Ward Method Studies of the Benjamin T. Rome School of Music in cooperation with the Church Music Association of America. For more information, see [musicasacra.com](http://musicasacra.com)

## NEWS

- You can now pay your annual CMAA dues online, through PayPal, at [musicasacra.com](http://musicasacra.com)
- CMAA Secretary Rosemary Reninger gave a presentation on chant to the music teachers of the Diocese of Arlington, after the diocese included chant in its curriculum guidelines for fifth grade.
- *Collegium Cantorum*, the liturgical choir of the University of Dallas, specializing in sixteenth-century Latin sacred polyphony and Gregorian chant, toured Hungary, Austria, and France this May. Led by Mrs. Marilyn Walker, the choir celebrated Fr. Ralph March's 60th Anniversary of Priestly Ordination by singing Masses in eight Cistercian Abbeys in Hungary and Austria, and in several cathedrals in France (notably: Strasbourg, Metz,

Reims, and Paris). Fr. March, former editor of *Sacred Music*, is currently a Professor of Music at the University of Dallas. He has served as Kapellmeister of the Cologne Cathedral, as Professor of Music at the State Conservatory of Düsseldorf, Germany and the University of Innsbruck, Austria. He was also Professor of Foreign languages at Marquette University, Milwaukee. *Collegium Cantorum* sings regularly at Cistercian Abbey, Irving and in parishes in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

- Cantores in Ecclesia of Portland, Oregon made a pilgrimage through Spain and Portugal in November, singing the music of Tomás Luis de Victoria in cathedrals and major churches there for celebrated Masses. The choir is under the direction of Dean Applegate, with Blake Applegate as assistant director and Fr. Christopher Dietz, O.F.M. Conv., as celebrant of the Masses. The tour progressed from Montserrat to Barcelona, Zaragossa, Torreciudad, Burgos, Leon, Compostella, Braga, Fatima, Salamanca, Segovia, Toledo, and Madrid. Masses included Victoria's six-voice Requiem as well as Masses on "O quam gloriosum," "Simile est regnum caelorum," and "Ave maris stella" motets were by Victoria and Morales. Forty-three singers participated, including twenty children and twenty-three adults.
- Cantores's Eighth Annual William Byrd Festival took place in Portland in August, with liturgical performances, concerts, and lectures. Liturgical performances included Latin High Masses for the Sundays featuring Byrd's Masses for Three, Four, and Five Voices; for the Feast of the Assumption, including Byrd's Mass propers for the day; and an Anglican Evensong, including the Evensong portions of Byrd's *Great Service*. Concerts included consort songs, organ music, and choral music from Byrd's *Gradualia* of 1605 in observance of its four-hundredth anniversary. Lectures on Byrd's music were given by Prof. David Trendell of King's College, University of London, Prof. Kerry McCarthy of Duke University, Prof. Joseph Kerman of the University of California at Berkeley, and Prof. William Mahrt of Stanford University. The choir was under the direction of guest conductor Richard Marlowe, Trinity College, Cambridge University, and the organist was Mark Williams, assistant sub-organist, St. Paul's Cathedral, London. The celebrant for the Masses was Bishop Basil Meeking, retired Bishop of Christchurch, New Zealand. The Ninth Annual William Byrd Festival will take place in Portland, August 12–20, 2006. The program will soon be available at [www.cantoresinecclesia.org](http://www.cantoresinecclesia.org)