



SING  
LIKE A  
*Catholic*

Jeffrey A. Tucker



# Sing Like a Catholic

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**CMAA**

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CHURCH MUSIC ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Many essays are drawn from articles that appeared in *The Wanderer*, *The New Liturgical Movement*, *Inside Catholic*, and *Sacred Music*.

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# Dreface

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Scott Turkington

There exists an urgent need in the Catholic Church to upgrade the music at all our parishes. This means forming scholas that take their liturgical task seriously. It means teaching people the chants that are part of their heritage, and making this music part of their liturgical lives. It also means that priests who celebrate the Mass need to seek training in singing their parts of the Mass, including the readings.

A vast tradition is out there waiting to be rediscovered. At the parish in which I direct music, we are making progress toward the ideal, and many other parishes are doing the same. There is a burgeoning movement in place that is seeking to do what the Church is asking. That means going beyond the standard fare given to us on a platter by mainstream publishing houses. It requires the added work of seeking out music and education.

The willingness to undertake that work requires two things that this excellent book by Jeffrey A. Tucker provides: inspiration and direction. With those in place, the next step is training followed by implementation.


The chant movement in the United States is growing fast but still in its infancy. I look forward to the day when every parish has a schola, when Catholic musicians will look to the Catholic Church as a place in which they can fulfill their professional dreams, and when the Catholic Church generally becomes known as having high standards of excellence in music.

It's been my pleasure to work with the author of this book in connection with the Church Music Association of America and its publications and programs. I enjoy his regular blogging on the

topic of sacred music and his writings in *Sacred Music, The Wanderer*, and elsewhere. He is also a good colleague.

I'm very pleased that he has gathered many of the insights he has shared in those venues in a single book that is of great value to many musicians working in the Catholic Church today.

St. Paul said in a letter to the Colossians that part of the evidence that Christ is dwelling in us is that we sing "psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles" (3.16). The Catholic tradition takes this task seriously, and has in every age, giving us a musical tradition that Vatican II said is of "inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art."

May this splendid volume, combined with the work and prayer the author implores of us all, make a contribution to bringing this tradition to life in all our parishes. 

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Stamford, Connecticut  
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# Introduction

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Jeffrey A. Tucker

In 1990, Thomas Day published a book called *Why Catholics Can't Sing*. It was daring and brave, and it shocked many Catholics out of their stupor.

He wrote that Catholic music is in dreadful shape. Our hymns are pathetic. Our Mass settings are uninspired. Our singers are weak and egotistical. Our parishes don't pay musicians and don't reward excellence, and we are paying the price for this. Our celebrants don't sing. Even our hymnbooks are an embarrassment. We've lost our traditions, he continued, among which even simple plainsong and chant.

Some cheered him; some condemned him. But it did get attention. It was a wake-up call.

The book wasn't filled with new revelations about the particulars. The revelation for many was that the problem was not limited to their own parishes. It was a pervasive problem, one that defines the whole.

As a columnist and daily blogger in Catholic music, I have to admire the courage it took to say what he said. I can't even imagine what kind of abuse he must have dealt with from the Catholic music establishment (for lack of a better term), which until then was a self-satisfied lot. To say, as a professor of music at a Catholic college, that the Catholic Church had been led into a pit of bad taste and shoddy practice must have caused the ceiling to crash in on him.

That was fifteen years ago. Today we are fortunate that something is being done about the problem. There is a new debate, and, more importantly, there are new solutions being put into practice in our parishes.

This new debate is what this book is about. It chronicles how we are moving from the world of Professor Day, one in which Catholics can't sing, to a world in which singing like a Catholic is considered a glorious thing. It is the fulfillment of a brilliant heritage of singing that began in the Apostolic age with chant, continued through the middle ages with the invention of the musical staff and the Renaissance with soaring heights of the polyphonic idea, and all the way through the later centuries with orchestral and organ Masses.

Now, a bit about me. My father was a church music director, and I sang under him as a kid. Today I am director too, with an unpaid position as director of polyphony for a local Catholic parish choir, the St. Cecilia Schola, in Auburn, Alabama. Indeed, I'm a complete amateur who dropped out of music school because I couldn't stand the secularity and arrogance that seems integral to the craft. I turned to economics as a vocation. Later in life, I discovered Catholic music and after some years of study and practice, I jumped back in. I now write monthly, weekly, daily columns on the topic, and lecture and teach as time allows

I'm also the managing editor of *Sacred Music*, under the mentorship of editor William Mahrt of Stanford University. The journal, which has been around 135 years, provides a publishing venue for Catholic musicians to share insights, debate, communicate, offer results of research, and explain the seemingly infinite variety of spiritual and intellectual implications of music for liturgy. Its specialization is sacred music, which is not just any music but music especially suitable for liturgy, which leaves time and strives to touch eternity. I also serve as the publications director, and was involved in the production of *The Parish Book of Chant* (CMAA, 2008).

I'm also involved in the workings of the Church Music Association of America and its visionary programs under the direction of Arlene Oost-Zinner. These are the training grounds of the new epoch. The crowds and its programs are too varied to characterize simply. The average age is 40 or so, and most people are parish

music directors or musicians. There are also many priests who come to learn to chant their parts. We divide into polyphonic choirs and chant choirs. We prepare propers and ordinary settings for Masses, as well as Motets for Holy Hour, and Psalms for Vespers. We also hear lectures on theology, conducting, resources, singing technique, as well as critical discussions of the chant repertory. It is rigorous, fun, and spiritually life changing.

This is one new trend. Another is the rise of Praise and Worship music. There is a difference between “glory and praise music” of the 1970s and the new trends in pop Catholic music, just as there is a difference between the tango and the salsa. But neither style partakes of the marks of sacred music: holy, universal, beauty of forms.

The change from G&P to P&W strikes me as part of a changing fashion, like the width of ties. This book argues that what we need is a paradigm shift that takes seriously the long teachings of the Popes: the Roman Gradual is the book for the choir, the Kyriale is the book for the people, and the Missal is the book of music for the celebrant. The music most appropriate to liturgy, I argue, is either that music or an elaboration on that music.


It is not just the text that matters but also the music and its cultural context. Liturgical music is a special sort of music, one that lifts our hearts and minds ever upwards to the Heavens. The whole push is not so much for “restoration” (that word bugs me a bit) but rather for an ideal, which is what Catholic musicians lack and desperately need.

We need to get away from the week-to-week chart picking that characterizes the typical approach. The ideal we should seek is rather well presented by the Second Vatican Council, consistent with musical ideals established very early in the Christian centuries. What sacred music offers is perfect integration between art and faith, a music that is wedded to the liturgy: textually, stylistically, theologically, and historically.

Yes, it is a challenge. It takes work. It takes training. It calls on all our efforts and prayers. In this way, it is like the faith itself: simple in form but infinitely complex in its meaning. No one expects an overnight change, but once the ideals are in place, the work of the people to achieve the ideal becomes more clearly laid out. Most of the musicians in Catholic parishes haven’t been exposed yet to

the ideal, but the time is coming. I hope that this book makes a contribution to the cause.

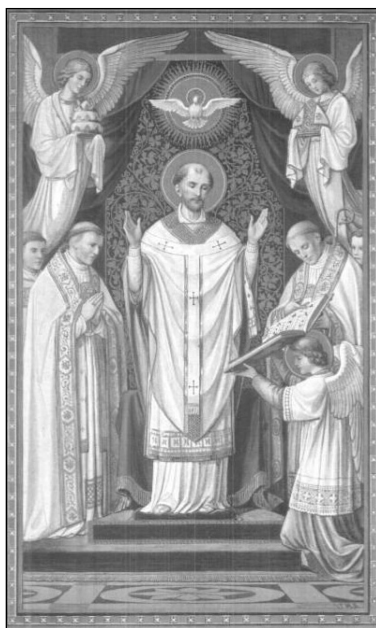
My thanks to William Mahrt (whose theory of musical ideals is the core of this book), Arlene Oost-Zinner (who has provided intellectual inspiration for application), Scott Turkington (the model of the practitioner and the chant master of our age), Jane Errera (who conceived of this project), the editors at *The Wanderer* (where many of the thoughts herein were originally published in 2008), Shawn Tribe at the *New Liturgical Movement* (and the many commentators there who keep me on my toes), Michael Lawrence, Aristotle Esguerra, Robert Tucker, countless others from whom I've wantonly taken ideas, and to everyone who puts up with my obsession with this topic.

A final word on why the book now: the purpose is to raise scholarship money for the Church Music Association of America and its annual colloquium. All proceeds from this book will go to that end. I hope you, too, will consider giving to the cause. 

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# Why Chant?

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## Why Chant Now?

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That Gregorian Chant is making huge inroads into American Catholic liturgical life seems beyond dispute. The documentary evidence includes the numbers of scholas in this country, which my estimate puts at about 250, up tremendously from three years ago. Chant books are now being sold by all major Catholic publishers, which is something that is new in the last three years. The circulation of *Sacred Music* magazine has gone up four-fold in a period in which similar periodicals are going under. Five years ago there were perhaps two or three workshops on chant in the course of a year, whereas now the number approaches 20 or more.

Anecdotally, the evidence is even stronger. The typical Catholic gathering now includes an archetype known as the “chant jock,” the young twenty-something guy who carries a *Graduale Romanum* with him in hopes of finding someone else to join him in burning through some propers just for practice. They live for chant news, post on blogs and forums, spend hours a week in rehearsals, and hang out with other aspiring singers who hope to play a big role in the future of Catholic music. As for the “contemporary” music their parents were raised with, don’t even go there: it’s material for in-the-know jokes and that’s just about it.

The larger question is why chant and why now? I think we might be able to approach an answer here, so I’m going to list some factors without attempting to weight the influence of each.

GROOVINESS BURNOUT. Maybe that generation that came of age after the Vatican Council enjoyed singing music that was completely different from that of their parents. Was there was a certain thrill associated with importing styles from the popular music of the time into the liturgical setting—sort of like the thrill of tearing

up the pea patch? Maybe. You can only tear up the pea patch so many times and for so long before you realize that you are just digging around in the dirt. Or grant good intentions: the new styles reflected the spiritual fashions of the day. But that was then and this is now. Soft rock in liturgy does not wear well, and the two don't mix well as either art or theology.

**CATHOLIC IDENTITY.** It's not easy being Catholic in our society and times. It is dawning on a new generation that making concessions in our worship pop culture doesn't make it easier; it only ends up making worship less Catholic. If we are going to take the implausible intellectual leap of believing the claims of the Church, we might as well go all the way and get the real thing. No one can take away from the fact that chant is always and everywhere identified with Catholicism. It is the music that sounds like, and beautifully expresses, what we believe.

**CHANT LIVES IN THE CULTURE.** It is a great irony that popular culture never lost sight of the relationship between chant and prayerful solemnity. We have been through several waves of popular-selling chant CDs. We hear it at the movies. It even makes an appearance in the video games that kids play. If this music can have a life outside of liturgy, how much more so within its proper context at the Catholic Mass?

**THE RISE OF SERIOUSNESS.** The ethos of popular music at Mass is rather thin. It conveys a sort of contentment but does not capture more difficult human emotions associated with deep sadness, suffering, longing for eternity, transcendent joy, the expectation of miracles, the profundity of salvation through death, or most other themes that are at the core of our faith. Chant is stunningly varied in its musical expression. From Advent to Lent to Easter to Pentecost, the chant expresses the meaning and sensibility of the life of Christ and his Church throughout the liturgical year, and with all the emotional complexity that implies.

**MULTICULTURALISM.** The other day I met a priest from Uganda who was visiting the United States for the first time, and the topic quickly turned to music. He sang a Kyrie and I picked up on it, then I sang a Sanctus and he knew that one too. We then turned to propers and sang some of those. It was an instant connection of two completely different worlds. There is no other music that is capable of engendering that type of total global unity. The Catholic



Church is a universal Church and we need universal liturgical forms that reflect that.

It is easy to tell the difference between fake multiculturalism and the real thing. The fake kind ends up being patronizing of other cultures, a disguised form of elitist imperialism in which we conjure up what we imagine what the foreign peoples of the world – aggregating in their class interests – might desire. The real form deals with reality, and the reality in Catholic music for the world is that chant is the great unifying force. And by the way, this applies to issues of age as well. It is the music that unites the generations.


MUSICIANS WANT A CHALLENGE. Catholic parishes have long suffered in terms of the presence of musical talent. But it has never been worse than today. Each parish has only a few people who can read music or play a keyboard or sing anything. It is pathetic, and a major contributing factor is that in the postconciliar practice there has not been much to challenge musicians at all. If there is no real job to do beyond singing the melody of a pop ditty, there is nothing to inspire serious musical accomplishment.

But the chant is completely different. Here we have a massive and daunting repertoire that requires all artistic and intellectual energy. Frankly, if you are not willing to work hard and not willing to spend the time on the task, there is no use in even bothering with it at all. But if you are willing to try, there is a great result and a sense of accomplishment that comes with it. Your individual talents are going to be used for the highest possible purpose. That prospect alone attracts.

POPE BENEDICT XVI. Here is the most obvious factor at work. The Pope himself has been a champion of sacred music for many decades, and we find in his own books and essays a great love of Catholic music. He hasn't issued binding directives yet, and truly there is no need to, since the directives are already in place and his speeches and homilies are serving to call everyone to a higher musical standard. Yes, there are issues of obedience here, and the Pope is inspiring that. But there is also an issue of education. Musicians themselves have been inspired to undertake the hard work that comes with achieving a certain ideal. Benedict XVI has made it very clear that this ideal is worth achieving.

THE MOTU PROPRIO. *Summorum Pontificum*, the motu proprio that liberalized the preconciliar Roman Rite, provides an impetus

to re-embrace our chant tradition. But let us not put too much emphasis here. It is not the case that the Tridentine Mass uses chant whereas the Novus Ordo does not, though one can easily gain that impression. The music, in fact, provides a strong linkage between the two forms. They both have the *Graduale Romanum* as the normative form of music as that is woven into the liturgical fabric itself. The introits, the communions, the ordinary chants—these are all the same in both forms. A great contribution to *Summorum* is the gravitational pull it creates that links the ordinary form more closely to its predecessor.

FORTY YEARS. Someone said to me a few years back that Catholics were about to leave the liturgical desert, and that he knew this because of the significance of the year forty in holy scripture. I'm not sure what to make of this, but it is generally true that it was forty years ago when we Catholics lost our way in liturgical music and wandered off to the point of being lost. We are finding our way out, and making our way to the musical land of milk and honey, the name of which is the *Graduale Romanum*. Or to extend the analogy to the Gospels, we are making our way to the true cross, the very source of our salvation. 

## The Sociology of the Chant Movement

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The most conventional critique of the push for Gregorian chant in parishes is that chant is elitist, and not for regular people. The words are in Latin. It uses unfamiliar notation. It draws its melodies from traditions unfamiliar to the modern ear. It might be loved by “conservatory trained” musicians with high sensibilities, this argument goes. The establishment might go for it. But it is inherently alienating to the regular person, who longs for ecclesial art that is more common and accessible.

Whoever says these things knows nothing about the current music situation in the Catholic Church. The archetype of the chant director today is that he or she is a volunteer, not a professional. He or she has been trained not at conservatory but at a seminar or colloquium, the tuition for which was paid out of pocket. The singers in chant scholas are also volunteers, people who discovered this music only a few years ago and who are inspired by its beauty and role in liturgy. They do not know Latin; what they do know they have learned without formal instruction.

Think too of those who are behind the training and publishing of today's chant music. They are not the established and big players in the market. They are decentralized, small, and unstaffed. While the big firms make their money through the buying and selling of "praise music" that is a sort of baptized version of bubblegum pop music, the chants of the Church are downloadable online at no charge. If you look where the money is going in the typical parish, it is not toward chant and sacred music; it is to pay for the support materials and personnel for contemporary song.

Nor is academia captured and held by the chant movement. Most programs in "Catholic music" in the academy train their musicians to perform praise-style music. Even pastors have discovered this: if you want to hire someone to help with a transition to chant, you can't rely on music graduates from Catholic colleges.

As for the support infrastructure, the largest and most well-heeled of the Catholic music organizations hosts thousands for annual get-togethers that push pop styles with ever more exotic beats (calypso, merengue, samba) accompanied by instruments such as electric guitars and far-flung percussion devices. The organizations dedicated to chant are staffed by volunteers and have few resources; certainly they cannot rely on an income stream from royalties and copyright charges.

The Catholic composers who make money from the craft reflect a similar pattern. They are strummers, pianists, and pop musicians who go from parish to parish convincing musicians that what people want is something jazzy and exciting, not solemn and rooted in chant. They make money doing this, and by selling their music along the way. They are sponsored in their travels by large publishers.

So we have to ask the question: who is really the elite and what constitutes the establishment in Catholic music? It is pretty obvious that it is not the chant movement. We can see from this that the widespread impression of the partisans of Gregorian chant is just wrong. We might add that the typical proponent of chant in parish life is not the rich and established interests in the parish but the young and poor. Ethnic minorities figure strongly in the mix since chant alone serves as the truly multi-cultural and inclusive music of liturgy.

That is not to say that today's chant movement sets itself against the elites. It seeks more music directors in cathedrals. Many young chant enthusiasts and serious Catholic organists are attending or planning to attend conservatory. Many others are entering academia one position at a time. We are working toward establishing publishing companies. We have our first fresh publication for use in liturgy: *The Parish Book of Chant*. Miracle of miracles, the Church Music Association is working toward establishing a scholarship fund, and is even paying its colloquia conductors.


Now take a look at the music itself. The core of the repertoire that has made the transition from century to century, inspiring countless compositions, are the popular hymns such as Pange Lingua and Adoro Te, and the Marian hymns like Ave Maria and Ave Maris Stella. These songs have been sung by Catholics of all ages, classes, and education levels in all countries for centuries. The ordinary chants are beautifully crafted to be sung by all people.

The propers that change week to week are more difficult to sing, but the more you understand them, the more you realize how much they are like folk music. In particular, the communion chants that set stories of Christ's parables have the sound and feel of folk music. Whenever I get stuck on a chant, I try to imagine a scene from the early centuries of Christianity, with believers sitting around a fire at night, while one very good story teller sings the songs of the parables with wide eyes and great drama. This is an imaginary scene but it can help to understand that this music is not only ritual music; it is also great art that seeks to tell a story.

You might note that my sociological description of the chant movement has much in common with the musicians who made such inroads into Catholic life in the 1970s. I do think there are such similarities, and this is one reason it is making such advances.

It is a movement from below, which also happens to enjoy the support of Benedict XVI.

One major difference, however: the chant movement is not self-consciously a “people’s movement” so it completely avoids the soft-Marxian undertones of those who pushed pseudo-folk music that made inroads in the 1970s. It is a mistake in general for serious chant musicians to set themselves up as being either for or against elites, for or against the people, for or against the establishment. What we need to be is consistent servants of the liturgy in every way and at all levels of the Church.

The chant needs to be cultivated in both parishes and cathedrals, in small-scale seminars and the academy, through the work of both volunteers and professionals. We need this comprehensive approach in order that sacred music can again become a force in the culture and a force in our individual lives. 

## The Mansion of the Past

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With the passage of one year, we are beginning to see that the most substantial effect of Benedict XVI’s *Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum* is not exclusively or even directly related to the liberalization of the Tridentine form of the Roman Rite. To be sure, this form is making a comeback in parishes, seminaries, and cathedrals, and this is a glorious development. The pope brilliantly named the old form the “extraordinary form” and the new form the “ordinary form” and made it clear that they constitute two forms of the Roman Rite. With this change in language comes a kind of liturgical healing, one that reduces the distance that has artificially separated us from the liturgy of the past.

But the real implications here are more significant still. What *Summorum* has done is re-legitimize the whole of our Catholic heritage—in the broadest way with can think of that term—from the deracination that had become common in the postconciliar years.

The banning of the past was not a policy. It was not a result of legislation. It was not instituted by any one group in particular. But it had become woven into the fabric of American Catholic life in subtle and deeply dangerous ways. In the tumult of the age, Catholics were not entirely sure what it is we were supposed to believe and do, but we were sure of this much: whatever we believed and did was different from what our ancestors in the faith did and believe.

The habitual sneering at the bad old days was the most predictable aspect of this period in which everything changed, and I don't need to rehearse the details. Confession was different. Music was different. Liturgy was different. Theology was different. Morality was different. And in all these differences, it has been presumed that in all ways we are better off, more enlightened, more humane, and more advanced. Never mind that not a single piece of data seemed to back that view. Whether we looked at vocations, Mass attendance, family size, or the production of art in the post-conciliar years, a new Pentecost has not been entirely obvious.

All Catholics have felt a grave form of discomfort; a major problem is that so many do NOT. I look at my parish; the people at that Mass earlier in the day love that music. The Mass that was displaced and then nearly suppressed was the center of Catholic life in the past. It made appearances everywhere in the art, the music, the theology, and spiritual writings. We would stumble upon an old Holy Card with a high altar and wonder whether it is really of any use today. We would find children's books in used bookstores and decide not to buy them because they featured priests facing liturgical East. The writings of the saints on the Mass didn't seem as relevant to us since they seemed to be talking about something we did not know or experience in our time. We would look at great musical compositions and wonder why the Sanctus was separated from the Benedictus and we would be tempted with the idea that this timeless music just wasn't viable in our day.

Even pictures of the past from our own parishes made us feel squeamish. What are these unusual vestments that the priests are wearing? What is that hat on the priest and is that even allowed today? Probably not. What happened to that altar that looks so beautiful and why was it replaced with this little table? Where did those altar rails end up, and is that stained glass on the windows?

It was hard for us even to look at all of this since it seemed like a period of time shut off to us.

Those who longed for restoration were once called disloyal or reactionary. Our mental stability was openly questioned. What is it about our state of mind that refuses to accept modernity? Are we questioning the wisdom of our leadership? What is it about community, openness, and participation by the people that causes us to long for bad old days gone by?

It didn't take much for a person to be called a "traditionalist," a term that was used as if it were an insult. I remember years ago objecting to the suggestion by an architect that the high altar be torn down. A priest who sympathized with my objections warned me not to be too vocal lest I be accused of harboring secret traditionalist sympathies and wanting to restore the Tridentine Rite!

Keep in mind that this was a parish in which the rule was otherwise "anything goes." It was this same parish in which I taught a CCD class from the *old Baltimore Catechism* because it offered the best material that I could find. But when there was a knock at the door I would gather up the books carefully and put them out of sight.

Sometimes it felt like living in the old Soviet bloc and dabbling with ideas of freedom. Of course, no one said that I could not use the Baltimore Catechism, but we all intuited the cultural ethos of modern parish life. Anything was possible, anything permitted, all manner of liberality was encouraged—unless it meant looking back to the past.

Sometimes the desire to purge took the form of a witchhunt. If a musician suggested the use of a Kyrie, everyone wondered if the next step was the forced conversions of the Middle Ages. To sing a full choral Sanctus raised serious questions about whether we were plunging ourselves into a forbidden world that had been shut to us forever. Even to receive communion on the tongue or to ask for confession behind a screen meant to risk being labeled a troublemaker.

The ostracism experienced by those who longed for older liturgy was quite intense. Many were reduced to declaring that they had no objections to anything going on now; it is only that, for whatever psychological reason, we have an "attachment" to the 1962 rite.

"Attachment" was the word everyone used because it was not threatening and seemed to hint at a kind of permissible subjectivism.


Of course the term lacked viability for many people who used it, considering that young people were the driving force behind the movement to liberalize the old Mass. How interesting that teenagers would so quickly develop an “attachment” for a Mass they had only experienced once or twice in the most truncated of environments, or perhaps never experienced!

But with *Summorum*, much of that tendency of thought is changing. The Mass of the past is renewed again, completely licit for every Roman Rite priest. It is being taught in seminaries. It is making appearances in cathedrals and even in our parishes. The objections you would have heard five years ago are vanishing, as ever more Bishops and priests feel free now to embrace this heritage and even celebrate it.

We can look at old Holy Cards and connect with them again. Pictures from the parish archive are not sad memories but instructive blueprints for the future. The music of the past seems fresh, fabulous, and challenging. The vestments of the old days enthrall those in seminaries. The liturgical books of the preconciliar years are in a boom phase.

None of this means that we must reject developments of our time. It means that these developments can be understood more fully as part of a long history of our faith, and what is new can be more readily integrated in a way that the continuity of our faith demands.

The answer is not merely to “turn back the clock” or to seek to re-establish what has come before, contrary to what is commonly said. What *Summorum* has achieved is to permit us to intellectually and spiritually draw from a broader range of experience as we look to the future. It has meant an end to the illusion that Catholicism was re-founded in 1969 and that we have nothing to learn from our ancestors beyond what not to believe and what not to do.

In retrospect, this sad situation could not have lasted. But it took a man of great courage to finally put an end to the barriers that had sealed off our heritage like a mansion that had been padlocked pending demolition. That mansion is now open to us, to explore, to repair, to use, to make our own and prepare for future generations. 



## Music Without Borders

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In December 2008, *The New York Times* devoted a major 3-part story to the changing demographics of the American priesthood. The core of the story deals with the priest shortage in the United States, and the ways that dioceses are dealing with it by drawing from the surplus of priests in Africa and Latin America. One of six diocesan priests now serving in the United States comes from abroad.

The series did not deal with the problem of music, for this is a major issue that these new priests face. Music in all times and places is a major contributor to helping us identify aspects of home – wherever we happen to be. This is a factor in the spread of digital MP3 players; they permit us to bring our preferred surroundings with us, whether we happen to be in the subway, the car, an airport or wherever.

The music of the Roman Rite – itself a universal liturgy – has a universal music that permits priests from all over the world to have a sense of “home” when celebrating it in all places. That is not to say that there are not local variations. The music at Mass in Uganda is going to have a different character from Masses celebrated in Utah, and national variations in incidental music are legendary.

However, there is a foundational music of the Roman Rite that has been the same in all times and places. The ordinary settings of the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus are worldwide settings in which no national culture in particular is embedded in its sound and feeling. They were put together as part of a body of music overtly structured with a multicultural demand that no one language or demographic group prevail over any other. The Mass and its artistic setting must transcend not only time but also place and even the cultural character of the gathered people.

This is also true of the propers of the Mass (Introit, Gradual, Alleluia, Offertory, Communion), which are of the same plain chant style as the ordinary settings but more musically complicated and designed for singers who have studied and are engaged

in continual practice. The Sequences are the same all over the world, provided we are using the prescribed melodies.

Finally, there are the chant hymns such as those gathered in *The Parish Book of Chant*; and they have a universal quality as well. At Masses where there is an international gathering of people, chant hymns are what unite people from all over the world in song. They convey a sense that no matter what your national origin, the Catholic Church is your home, and it is a home that you share with the faithful from all over the world.

I don't think it often occurs to American Catholics just how provincial and national in character the music at our Masses has become over the years. Of course this was also true in the 19th and early 20th century, when the favorite songs of Irish and Italian immigrants became standard fare. But underneath them, there was still a constant strain of music that united the immigrant groups, and that was the chant tradition.

What is different today is that this chant tradition has been largely displaced by tunes written in the 1970s as well as those continuing to be written today. Their source of inspiration was not the universal music of the Roman Rite but the localized, national, and contemporary trends of secular and evangelical culture. Our Masses take on a sensibility that strikes foreign people as predictably "white bread," and provincial as hot dogs.

The result is that our liturgy often sounds distinctly American in a way that is distinctly un-Catholic. I noted this years ago when I attended a Mass at the North American College in Rome prior to its more recent effort to revive and universalize the music used at the seminary. I was struck at how the Mass seemed no different from what one would hear in your local parish. Yes, it made one feel "at home" but only in the sense that Americans feel at home only with American things.

In this sense, we should have some strong sympathies with "progressive" Catholic liturgists who complain about the alienation that is felt by ethnic minorities in our parishes, and how the music that is dominant doesn't really connect with their own history.


Not that music at Mass must necessarily connect with any particular national tradition but neither should it be so tied to a national genre as to indicate exclusivity. The chant, on the other hand, takes us to a new level in which we are neither catering to

majority interests nor pandering to minority demands. It calls us all to leave such selfish concerns at the door and discover timeless truth.

What we need in our parishes is a form of music that emphasizes the universal unity of all people in Christ. On a practical level, this means that the African priest should be able to step into any parish in America and be part of a repertoire of music that is familiar and known, illustrating how any Catholic parish is a home to any Catholic priest anywhere in the world. It is an undeniable truth that there is only one musical genre that fulfills this demand, and it so happens that it is the same music that has been specifically named by the Church as that which is to have primacy of place at Mass.

Reflect on the wisdom of those who see chant as the universal music of the Mass. It means that all Catholics can have a sense of belonging. The Marian antiphon for the season is the same in all parts of the world, even if we are struck by subtle local variations.

My own parish had a visiting priest from Africa last year, and it was the chant that provided that deep connection between him and our local parish. He was so grateful that he brought with him, in his heart, this music. This gave our local parish a grander appreciation for the chant and its capacity to unite us all. And he left with a burning desire to learn even more and sing ever more in his own country, as a way of underscoring the mystical connection between parishioners here and there.

It is enough that priests from abroad must struggle with language issues and adjustments to our national traditions like Thanksgiving and our peculiar ways in matters of politics and material things. Amidst all these differences, if we can find areas of commonality, that is all to the good. The Rite itself we have in common. The music of the rite should be a source not of division, but of unity. 

## The Musical Intentions of Vatican II

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One of the most striking external differences between the older and new forms of the Roman Rite concerns the music. Any Catholic who had been asleep from, say, 1960 to 1980 would have woken up to a completely different world, one that seemed to welcome pop styles at Mass and banish Gregorian chant. It is even more shocking to consider that Vatican II contained the most explicit and canonically binding recognition in the history of Christianity that Gregorian chant is the music of the Roman Rite.

In trying to come to terms with what happened, there are three general theories about the true musical intentions of the Second Vatican Council, one of which gains new credibility in a new book by Anthony Ruff, *Sacred Music and Liturgical Reform: Treasures and Transformations* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2007).

The first position we can describe as the progressive position, namely that the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy intended to unleash a furious reform of the Roman Rite in which the vernacular took over, chant was banished because it is boring and in Latin, and the people took power back from the clerical class. In this view, it's true that this was not in the letter of the law but it was part of the "spirit" of the reform. The 1970 Missal, too, was part of the spirit but not its completion. What we needed, in this view, were creative liturgists to take ever more liberties to make the Mass community-minded and accessible, in touch with the modern world. Hence the guitars, dancers, puppet shows, and textual improvisations.

On the other side of the debate are those who we might call the traditionalists, who oddly suspect that the progressives are largely correct. The Constitution contained ticking time bombs which people at the Council put into the document so that they might explode the Roman Rite later. The document contains just enough loopholes to unleash a dismantling of tradition. The words in there about Gregorian chant were perfunctory and purposely qualified. Whatever language appears in the Constitution that seems

friendly to tradition is really only tactical. What was secretly intended was the furious reform that actually took place.

Where these two positions agree is that the manner in which the liturgy is celebrated in the ordinary form represents, in some way, a fulfillment of the Council's intentions. Where these positions disagree is whether this is a good thing or not. The progressives love it while the traditionalists say that it is a disgrace and the only solution is full restoration of the 1962 Missal, the last Missal to appear before the 1963 Constitution unleashed this "spirit of Vatican II" that ended up unraveling the Roman Rite as it has always been known.

A third position has occupied a tiny minority of opinion over the years, and yet it is gaining prominence today in light of the call for greater continuity between old and new. For convenience we can call it the conservative view. (Please don't get stuck on the terms here; they are only placeholders for general tendencies of thought.)

This is the position that when the Constitution spoke with praise for Gregorian chant and polyphony, it was speaking truthfully and clearly with the intention of giving them an increased presence in the liturgy. Further, though the 1970 Missal has its problems and issues, if it is said according to the liturgical books, and the dictates of Vatican II are followed, what you end up with is something that is much more organic to tradition. You have Latin chant for the ordinary and the propers. You have the Mass said with the solemnity of old, whether in Latin or in English. This was the true intention of the Council, according to this view.

This third position gains reinforcement from the undeniable reality that Church musicians following the Vatican II were exuberant about the prospects for the future. For the first time, a Council document stated with great clarity that the music of the Roman Rite is Gregorian chant, with polyphony occupying a high status, and other music permitted (thinking here of new compositions, organ works, and solemn hymns for recessionals and the like).

Many of these people—thinking here of German scholar Johannes Overath, American priests Richard Schuler and Robert Skeris, and Spanish musician and Pontifical Institute for Sacred Music head Higinio Anglés—left the proceedings with great optimism that their decades of work in teaching and promoting chant

would finally reach fulfillment. This is what they report in their memoirs and speeches following the council.

Now, these brilliant people were there and privy to all the debates and details during the Council. If the council had really intended a wholesale liturgical revolution, why in the world would they have been so optimistic? They must have known something about what really went on. I've always been struck by this fact and wanted to know more. It seems incongruous to the reality that we all know today, the empirics of which seem to lend more support to the progressive/traditionalist perspective than the conservative one.

Here is where Fr. Ruff's book comes in. He relays the events as follows. Pope John XXIII announced the council on May 17, 1959 with the goal of strengthening the Catholic faith, renewing Christian morals, and adapting church life to the demands of modern times. The preparatory commission on liturgy had 13 subcommissions. The one on sacred music was headed by none other than the great Higinio Anglés. His subcommission produced a draft which went through nine full drafts and was approved by the Pope.

The document said: "The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art"; also "sacred music is to be considered the more holy, the more closely connected it is with the liturgical action."

Fr. Ruff comments:

The source of the statement on the treasury . . . is to be found in the suggestions of Anglés. . . . He can justly be called an opponent of the [late] Liturgical Movement. In the resolution he submitted in the name of the pontifical school during the first round of consultation for the Council, he stated that the liturgical and musical work of the Council of Trent ought to remain the model and example of the impending Council; that no new principles ought to be established or new decrees contrived, but rather the existing principles and decrees ought to be implemented. . . . (p. 329)

What was needed to end the malaise of music in his view—he and his colleagues were not happy with the status quo—was

adherence to existing legislation as opposed to the dominance of vernacular hymnody and the continuing lack of attention to excellence. This is also true of all the talk about the people's participation. This was nothing new in the Council. It was a reaffirmation of existing statements. The idea here is that the people are to sing and listen to music that was really part of the structure of Mass, not just tacked on like an accompaniment.

What's remarkable is that Anglès's drafts were strengthened over time and it was these that were eventually implemented. His first draft said nothing about the Church musical tradition constituting a treasury. This phrase "inestimable prize" was introduced in the second draft. The fifth draft included the words "inestimable treasury." This eventually became "a treasure of inestimable value."

The Constitution also says that "the treasury of sacred music is to be preserved and cultivated with great care. Choirs must be diligently developed. . . ." "This is also the language of Anglès's drafts.

On the question of new compositions, one subcommission member, the Australian priest Percy Jones, included a statement that composers should create music for parish use. But sound thinkers on the subcommission found that statement to be too loose and unqualified. Johannes Overath intervened here to draw a connection between the treasury of sacred music and new compositions.

The final form reflected Overath's concerns:

Composers, animated by the Christian spirit, should accept that it is part of their vocation to cultivate sacred music and increase its store of treasures. Let them produce compositions which have the qualities proper to genuine sacred music. . . . The texts intended to be sung must always be in conformity with Catholic doctrine. Indeed, they should be drawn chiefly from the sacred scriptures and from liturgical sources.


A subcommittee on active participation called for an open statement that would have undermined the beleaguered polyphonic Sanctus. But this was dropped. Fr. Ruff comments: "the significance of this is that the commission responsible for drafting

the liturgy constitution consciously rejected the position that the congregation must always sing the Sanctus" (p. 321). (That sentence is really worth a second read.)

In addition, the Constitution praises the organ, gives pride of place to Gregorian chant, and calls for the cultivation of *scholae cantorum* to sing chant. These were all great victories by Anglès and Overath, and arguably defeats for Annibale Bugnini, who called sacred music the "cross of the preparatory commission." Anglès and Overath and their colleagues worked very hard for many years to assure this outcome. He sought to limit all concessions to those who dreamed of overthrowing the Church's great tradition, and he largely succeeded.

In Fr. Ruff's account, there was really only one setback on the part of the musicians. The sentence that says that liturgy is nobler when sung, originally said sung in Latin. The reference to Latin was tragically dropped. And while it is true, that this was a significant defeat for Overath and Anglès, the victories were nonetheless major and the legions of opponents of sacred music lost far more than they gained.

Now, in reading the above, it is impossible not to notice the striking difference between what eventually became of the reform and what was actually legislated at the Council. The position that the will of the Council was betrayed by later trends from within and without takes on more weight, especially in light of the detailed historical narrative. What they expected was that Gregorian chant would increase as the music closely connected to the rite and that vernacular songs would decrease.

We can see, then, how it is that the musicians were so blindsided by events. They figured that they had won a victory. But this victory turned to bitter disaster only a few years later. It is left to the current generation to see the original vision of a musical renaissance consistent with tradition is achieved—in the words of Richard Schuler, so that we can experience the true Mass of Vatican II. 



## The Changing Music Environment

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All the music one needs for a parish or cathedral — music that Vatican II proclaimed to have pride of place at Mass — is available for free download, with more coming online daily. Meanwhile, the body of music that is published by the dominant market players in the industry is as expensive and forbidding as ever, bound up in a thicket of copyright and royalties.

This represents a massive change, and provides an important foreshadowing of the future. It was only 10 years ago, in the heyday of Glory & Praise music at Mass, which the well-trained and serious musicians who favored a restoration of Gregorian chant and polyphony largely worked in alienated secrecy, afraid even to publish their own settings of Psalms and chant editions even if they could find a publisher.

The old publishing institutions of the preconciliar days were long gone and the new ones were unfriendly to their work. There was a doubt about whether there was a financially viable market for their work, but that wasn't the only concern. Issues of copyright weighed heavily on them. Who owned the chant? Who can publish and sing it?

I can recall correspondence with some from the 1990s. These were masters of music at cathedrals and universities who lived in fear that someone would discover that there had put an episema over a punctum, or added a dot at the end of a phrase, and the fear was that these small dashes and lines were held by someone somewhere as a proprietary font, and that they would be risky lawsuits by making their editions available even through email.

What was unknown then, and what only came to be known in the last several years, is that the Gregorian editions of the past had long since passed from the proprietary stage into the open-source stage of availability. Inquiries with the Library of Congress yielded results that almost any intellectual-property lawyer might have expected: the chants are the whole property of the Church, and the only editions that remain proprietary in a legal sense are those published in recent years since the Second Vatican Council.

What applied to the music also applied to preconciliar texts: because most of them were not renewed in copyright, they had become the common property of all Catholics, which made them uniquely suited to delivering in the digital age.

Let's take a small step back and look at the origin of the great innovator in open-source music: the Choral Public Domain Library, or CPDL.org. It opened its doors in 1999 with fifty or so compositions available for free download, many of them by Renaissance masters such as Palestrina, Josquin, Byrd, Gabrieli, Gibbons, and others. There were no logins, no fees, no licenses.

This interface was the brainchild of Rafael Ornes, a student of Prof. W. Mahrt's at Stanford University. His studies into this area had convinced him that the raw and unedited editions of the masters can and should be made available to the world. And it was just the beginning. Over the last ten years, thousands of scores have been added, so much so that the site has to be constantly upgraded to prevent crashing. And when it does crash, the entire Catholic music world panics.

In the new world of digital downloads, CPDL plays a hugely important role. The whole Catholic world could sing the music recommended by the Second Vatican Council without paying the fees attached to editions from establishment publishers, who were running a fee-based closed society of locked-down musical editions. This meant that choirs could download and experiment with music, throwing out what they didn't like and keeping what they did. It meant that parish budgets could focus more heavily on paying musicians rather than paying for music—a virtual revolution in parish budgeting.

In terms of the ordinary of the Mass itself, MusicaSacra.com uploaded and made available its first Kyriale in 2005, the 18 settings of the Mass that had been handed on from the Middle Ages, now available to the whole world, including the poorest of the poor. This was also completely new. The same was occurring for Latin propers: many editions of the *Graduale Romanum* were newly available, having long since passed into the common property of the Church. This meant that choirs could experiment and composers could use the Church's music for composition without fearing the police.

There were important steps taking place in the area of English propers too. Jeffrey Ostrowski of the Chabanel Psalms was the first

to come forward with his settings of the Psalms for the ordinary form of the Mass. It was a revelation to many that music during this portion of the Mass didn't have to be sing-songy and silly; it could be dignified and modal in character like the music of old. Many other composers came forward with their settings, and Ostrowski graciously made those settings from other composers available too.

Fr. Samuel Weber had for years circulated his English propers via email only, citing the same concern over copyright. But once the St. Louis archdiocese hired him to head their new institute for sacred music, they too took the important step of making his propers common property as well. They are now fully hosted and available for immediate download, with liberal permissions. Along with this, many other books came online: Bruce Ford's *American Gradual*, the *Anglican Use Gradual*, Psalm-tone propers from the past, along with a massive number of teaching manuals and more.

Meanwhile, CPDL.org has become a place for the posting of new compositions too, under the Creative Commons attribution license, which grants liberal use permissions provided that the source be identified. It also prevents people from homesteading new compositions and puts them under restrictions.

At the same time, new resources such as *The Parish Book of Chant*—along with the re-publication of many older works—are springing up to change parish culture. This is an interesting book in particular because it compiles the true people's music from all ages, all in Latin, and provides the necessary English translations for them, along with ordos for both the new and older forms of Mass, along with a tutorial.

Most importantly, this is a book for our time that brings to life music from the whole history of the Church. The typesetting is fresh. And it is presented in a way that our generation can understand, which accounts for its adoption at the North American College, Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ave Maria University, Mundelein Seminary, Wyoming Catholic College, and the Catholic University of America.

In addition to these resources, blogs provide daily commentary that reaches people as never before. The archives of *Sacred Music* are online. There are large communities of musicians; there are forums and blogs. There are new on-demand publications coming out constantly. The whole history of liturgical music is being


scanned daily and posted, so that priceless treasures, once held by only a few, are available to millions at no charge. MusicaSacra.com has posted new books and dozens of archival editions once kept only in large libraries.

All of this new activity has coincided with the liturgical flowering prompted by *Summorum Pontificum*, which provides equal rights to the older form of Mass and blasts open a massive and extended tradition that had been previously closed to us.

That we are living in very exciting times for the flourishing of sacred music is no longer in dispute. The attendance at colloquia and workshops, and the changes permeating through parish life, are proof of that. What is often missed here are the institutional considerations that have created a distinct advantage to sacred music in particular. Many historical and institutional factors have contributed toward restoring sacred music as an open-source community in which imitation, free distribution, widespread dissemination, and the resulting dynamism are the characteristic features.

In this respect, we are seeing a restoration of the *status quo ante* that gave rise to sacred music over 1600 years. Here we see growth, evangelism, and excitement as never before, and it stands in marked contrast to the gloomy art world of the established music companies who live off the victories of the modern past, forever selling the same tired hymns and settings and trotting out the folk performers of the past to somehow breathe life into a genre of music that has long past seen its day.

A truth that the Glory & Praise promoters realized long ago is that the battle for the musical soul of the Catholic Church takes place one parish at a time, and resists being imposed by large establishments no matter what their legal status and claims.

In a time when all media are being revolutionized by digital delivery driving costs of use and dissemination toward zero, we see technology being used toward the formation of a new form of musical evangelism, a new form that is very much like the old form that inspired the Solesmes monastery in its earliest years: the conviction that the music of the faith is holy and universal and should be experienced by all the faithful in all times and places. 

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# Strategy

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# *Israeli Hebrew and Latin Chant*

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Can Gregorian chant be reestablished as the primary and living musical language of Roman-Rite Catholics around the world? The prospect strikes many as undesirable, and, even if it were desired, it is improbable and even impossible.

A large gap separates normative legislation, which acknowledges the primacy of Gregorian chant, and the reality of a lived liturgy. We are told that this is no cause for alarm. Scholars and advocates point out that there is in fact a long tradition, traceable in the history of country after country for many centuries, in which Catholics have sung hymns and songs in liturgy that have no evident connection to Gregorian music.

When people gather and worship, it is said, they want to sing in their native tongue and employ stylistic idioms from their own time and place. This was as common in the Catholic world of the 16th through 19th centuries as it is in the current practice in all countries. For this reason, we are told not to express regret on the falling away of the purer form of music. Legislation is one thing; real life is something else entirely.

There is an additional and related argument against favoring a musical agenda that puts Gregorian music again at the core of worship. To attempt resuscitation is deeply impractical. Plainly, it can't be done. Music is like language in the sense that it must rise spontaneously from within the community, it is said, coming from the people and not imposed by deliberate efforts of intellectuals or leaders. The prescriptivist solution in music is just as hopeless as an impositionist view of language. Music and language must have an organic connection to the way people live their daily lives, and any attempt to get around that truth is destined to fail.

And yet, one might cite the idealism of the efforts of the Solesmes monastery of the late 19th century as an example of an attempt at prescription and imposition. Here was a restorationist project that began in earnest. It was not only dedicated to putting a restored chant tradition at the core of the Benedictine monastic life of this one institution. The monks had an evangelistic purpose not only to purify and perfect the editions of chant; they also sought to see these circulated internationally and become the basis of a worldwide practice. Some remarkable accomplishments came out of that effort, not the least of which was the *Graduale Romanum* in 1908 and almost all the important chant books in universal circulation in the 20th century.

Chant is undergoing another revival but it has yet to penetrate mainstream Catholic practice, a point that can be demonstrated by a random visit to just about any Catholic parish in the United States. There is a very strong chance that the visitor will happen upon a liturgy that employs no chant: not in the ordinary parts of the Mass and certainly not in the changing propers of the Mass.

An obvious factor in the disruption of the restorationist attempt was the abrupt liturgical reform that followed the Second Vatican Council. Vernacularization did not favor the use of Latin, and the encouragement of the profligate use of “other suitable songs” in place of chant led to a nearly complete abolition of the musical form.

Let us compare that experience with another restoration attempt that began in earnest around the same time as that of the Solesmes monastery: the movement to restore Hebrew as the living language of the Jewish people. The analogy is not exact, of course, but comparing the two attempts can reveal just how much more a daunting task Jews faced in this undertaking than Catholics did in theirs. What the Hebrew movement sought was not merely the use of an ancient language in worship or song but the re-institution of a vernacular language itself.

On the face of it, it seems like an impossible ambition. Hebrew was not a vernacular. It was a scholarly language and never a native one, even for those raised in all-Jewish communities. For a millennium and a half, Hebrew had the status in the Jewish world that Latin does today in the Catholic world. It was the language of theology and art, poetry and scholarly discourse. It was something



to study but not used in communication in the lives of regular people.

And yet here is the astonishingly fast sequence of events, as recounted in *A History of the Hebrew Language*, by Angel Sáenz-Badillos, translated by John Elwolde (Cambridge University Press, originally published in 1988, pp. 269–272).

The first public and prominent call for the restoration of Hebrew came in 1879 with Eliezzer Ben-Yehuda's article called "A Burning Question." He did more than merely advocate. He was a great teacher who wrote the monumental *Dictionary and Thesaurus of the Hebrew Language*. His method was to combine medieval and ancient sources, drawing on both rabbinic and poetic Hebrew traditions, to forge a composite vernacular that would standardize language. New words were created out of Arabic words that had some semantic relationship to Hebrew. Many words stayed in the language but many were not used and fell out of favor.

Jews who already lived in Palestine had become speakers of the language, first in small family units that found others who would join them in speaking Hebrew in their own homes. The language moved into civic discourse in small cells, academic institutions, and finally in public life. There are informal reports of how the most passionate among them would find someone speaking some other language and say to them: "Jew, speak Hebrew." And this was compelling in part because of the obvious need for an international language of Judaism in an area with a constant influx of immigrants from central and Eastern Europe.


New arrivals were inclined to continue to speak their own native language. But a unified tongue is a critical element of a unified people with a mission, in this case, the settlement of the Palestine under the Zionist idea. Other motivations for changing to Hebrew were the desire to renew Jewish culture and recapture the grandeur that they had once experienced as a people in the very place they now lived.

In 1922, Hebrew was accepted as one of the official languages in Palestine. When the state of Israel came into being in 1948, there was no question that Hebrew would be its official language. It became the native tongue of anyone born and raised Jewish in this country, and remains so today. It can and did happen, and in an astonishingly short period of time: some 40 years from proposition

to fulfillment of proximate goals and some 60 years until its complete realization.

Again, linguists regard language as the organic enterprise of a people, that emerges out of the utilitarian need of people to communicate. By its nature, it resists imposition, design, and prescription. But the restoration of the Hebrew language did not happen spontaneously. Nor did it emerge organically from within the community of Jewish people. It was the result of conscious design and effort on the part of an intellectual (and political) movement that understood that for a people to cohere and thrive as religious and cultural force required that they possess unifying mode of communication, a verbal expression of their identity that both came from within and served as a relentless external reminder of what brings them together.

It was an effort very much like that of the Solesmes effort combined with the work of Pius X. Indeed, the chant tradition was not nearly as unused in the 1870s in the Catholic world as Hebrew was in the Jewish world. The Catholic attempt was more modest in the sense that it did not seek to make Latin a living vernacular but merely a liturgical foundation for music at liturgy.

To restore chant as the musical language of Catholics was and is eminently achievable. Progress was being made by mid century. There is absolutely no reason to believe that it is a hopeless cause. We can take inspiration for the extraordinary triumph of Hebrew in our own times. What the cause needs more than anything else are passionate leaders at all levels of the Church who are willing to make great sacrifices to make this dream a reality. 

## A New Model of Musicianship

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Following the Sacred Music Colloquium of 2008, the major venue for the training of new Catholic musicians, many people said that something very special happened that week in Chicago, but they weren't entirely sure what it all meant. It seemed like some kind of

new era in Church music—a new model for the future, perhaps, but even more than that. It was something magical, mystical, and transforming. You can tell it from the image galleries. Everyone is smiling, filled with joy, people gathered in groups talking and laughing between rehearsals and liturgy. They are clearly happy and at peace with what they are doing.

You have to know something about the world of musicians to know why this is a bit unusual.

My own experiences in the world of professional music seem to be confirmed by enough people to warrant reporting here. I think back to my days in my late teen years, idealistic and in love with the power of music to make the world more beautiful, the capacity of music to embody and improve the whole of the human experience and point to something higher and more wonderful.

And yet, there was a problem. The world of professional and academic musicianship did not live up to expectations. Idealism was the exception rather than the rule. The cultural ethos of the students seemed to put a premium on disgruntlement. Individual players and singers believed themselves to be too good for the groups to which they belonged. Composers felt that they were “casting pearls before swine,” who would not recognize their value; if you throw pearls at swine, they would just duck. The professors complained constantly about low salaries and lack of funding. The sole goal of the creative types was to somehow stun the sensibilities of the bourgeoisie. Their loathing of the audience was commonplace, like a doctrine that no one doubted.

The mismanagement of their own lives was sad to witness. The classical musicians—totally dedicated—were nonetheless filled with bitter angst and self-loathing. The jazz musicians reveled in personal financial irresponsibility and self-destructive behavior. The choral musicians were better but encouraging words and a bright outlook on life was not the norm. Money worries consumed everyone and this bred a refusal to engage in non-remunerative music making. They were stingy with their talents, all of them. They demanded a union wage or higher. They would frequently turn down gigs because the pay was too low and then sit at home bemoaning the state of the world and its refusal to embrace (pay for) true art.

The combination of all these traits created a downcast spirit that struck me as integral to the whole scene, which seemed to worsen

by the day, shielded from hope in a dome of discontent. Backbiting and viciousness towards colleagues was pervasive. To congratulate others was a tactic, not a sincere impulse. It mattered not how successful a person became. Even the famous and rich among them—who were regarded by less successful musicians as sell outs—lived insufferable lives and looked down on their fans and turned up their noses at the music people really wanted to hear.

Knowing all this began to affect the way I heard performances. A chamber group would be playing Mozart and I would know that, in their hearts, these musicians on stage were secretly disdainful that this is what people wanted to hear. They would look out at us, the audience, and think: what a bunch of half-wits with their bourgeois sensibilities and consumerist ethics. Most of what the professionals sang or played was not for art's sake but solely to put food on the table, and they resented this to the point that it ate away at their souls.

I've searched for years to come to understand why the ethos of professional musicianship is this way, why this spirit of disgruntlement and demoralization is so pervasive. I have many theories, none quite capable of explaining the whole of it, but I knew in those days that I personally couldn't stand it. I had to get out, and I did. I went as far as I could from it, to business and economics, a profession in which people are happy to deal with the world as it is, with an ethos that sees barriers as challenges to overcome and knows the meaning of triumph and accomplishment, and seeks them out.


But enough of this sad tale and onward to that thing that seems completely and radically different, namely the cultural ethos of the church musicians gathered at the Sacred Music Colloquium. Here there was a spirit of joy, of collegiality, and common purposes, and love, true love, for the music and the opportunity to be part of it. Quite frankly, in all my years in the professional music scene I never experienced anything like it. People would compliment each generously and sincerely. We would listen to other choirs and congratulate them with all our hearts. There was a humility that was pervasive. In a full week of rehearsals and liturgy, dawn to late night, I never once heard a discouraging word or saw evidence of discontent.

Why? I wish I knew for sure, but it has something to do with the purpose of the art, which is not for its own sake but for the sake of the higher purpose of liturgy itself. Here was the source of unity, a common purpose that required submission to the true source of beauty. The ego is necessarily buried in the form of music we were involved in making. Gregorian chant and its stylistic descendants were created not to show off but rather to serve, and those who sing it absorb that sense of service, seeing themselves not as the creators of music but merely as privileged instruments through which the music was given voice.

The attitude of optimism and exuberance was infectious and irresistible. It's not the case that everyone there lived ideal lives. Every last person could tell a tale of woe if he or she wanted to: about pastors, Bishops, unappreciative parishioners, and the like. We've all heard it before and a million times over. These tales were not the news. The news was instead the miracle that 250 people were gathered together from around the country to improve their skills and work together to permit sacred beauty to blossom amidst this vale of tears. The gaze was upwards toward heavenly glory rather downward toward earthly imperfections. The result was a bright and awe-struck outlook that one can detect among new converts to the faith.

The venue of holy, beautiful, and universally-minded liturgy had much to do with it. So did the music, I believe. It is structured to elevate the senses. Chant, when sung well, takes flight and never quite touches ground. The art of polyphony generates complex pictures of heavenly glory, as if the composers were only passing on visions they saw in states of pure spiritual ecstasy. To assist in making this music is to add one's own voice to the choir of angels in which no single voice dominates but every voice works with every other, and this is surely the highest privilege a musician can experience.

Everyone at the colloquium knew this and felt this. It was magnificent on its own. But remember that these are all musicians who have probably experienced something along the lines of what I've experienced in the world of music. The contrast is striking, even disorienting. What the sacred music movement offers is not only a radical change in the way we think of the role of music in worship; it holds out an opportunity for the profession of music to become

what it is supposed to be, even to live up to its highest ideals. Perhaps there is more in store for this burgeoning movement in the Catholic music world. It may not stop at raising the level of liturgical art. It may have a mission to convert the culture of the music profession itself. 

## Remove the Roadblocks

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One morning I heard from a friend who attended a new Extraordinary Form (EF) Mass at Notre Dame University, a place that hasn't had one in forty years. They sang the full Gregorian propers with a new schola. And of course the entire experience was incredibly beautiful, with many people commenting how they felt like they experienced the Catholic Mass as it is supposed to be. The music in particular was the striking point. What a contrast with what several generations have known!

In this town with many Catholic parishes, this EF Mass is the one and only occasion where people can hear the music of the Church, and experience the solemnity of the Catholic Mass. Everywhere else in town—and this is true of all neighboring towns—Masses are all vernacular, facing the people, and the music is the usual hit parade. Instead of propers, there are hymns of various shapes and styles, and instead of a Gregorian ordinary, there is a peppy “Mass setting” in English.

If you go to the engine room in the choir practice area you will find a sheet that looks like this:

Setting:	Creation
Pro:	random hymn
Off:	random hymn
Com:	random hymn
Rec:	random hymn

Even aside from this contrast, when the EF comes to town, particularly when it is a sung Mass, it an occasion for great celebration

for anyone interested in quality liturgy. What is tragic is that for many people it feels as if Catholicism is back for the first time in 40 years. This is solely due to the shabbiness of ordinary form liturgies, and their tendency to exercise every option permitted in the rubrics except for the first and most preferred/normative option, namely, to sing the Mass setting and propers according to the Gregorian tones that are part of the structure of the Mass itself.

In other words, that so many would find the EF so shocking and different is wholly unnecessary and really pathetic commentary on the culture that has arisen alongside the ordinary form of the Mass promulgated in 1970. Now, to be sure, the “four-hymn sandwich” was not unknown in the preconciliar Mass; for some or even many, it was the norm. But for those who sought excellence, the structure was in place. For us today, it sometimes seems that our parishes are hostile to the very idea of excellence.

Anyone with experience in Catholic circles knows what is going on here. The battle for the soul of the *Novus Ordo* ends up being 10,000 mini-battles over the rendering of its individual parts. For example, let’s say you want to use an organ prelude and have the organ the only instrument used at Mass. You first have to somehow deal with the guitarists, trumpeters, flutists, and many other instrumentalists who believe they have a right to perform. You must explain to them why they should just give it a rest. Then they complain to the pastor, who has to have a good answer as to why you are trying to “exclude” them, and, quite often, he just does not want to fight this battle.

But let’s say you win this one. You move on to the Entrance. You want to sing the Gregorian Introit, the first preference of the General Instruction and the normative choice of the whole of Catholic history. One might expect that this should not be a controversy. But then the roadblocks appear again. What will the people sing during this time? What about our favorite hymn? What about the people who don’t find Gregorian chant to be welcoming enough? There are lots of people who don’t know Latin so they might feel alienated. The pastor gets another call and he again must explain why the Introit is actually the normative choice, and there is good reason to sing it.

The battles continue after that. You want to sing Kyrie, but won’t that make the opening rites too long, and should we save the

song for the Gloria? Also there is a deacon present and he wants to say the 2nd form, so the sung Kyrie has to go. As for a Latin Gloria, how can the people be part of this great celebratory hymn if they don't know the words and don't know the tune? In any case, this is a time for people to smile and feel great about themselves and each other, and droning on in ancient plainsong just doesn't do it. The answer is that there are many wonderful Gregorian settings that don't sound droning at all, but quite the opposite. Moreover, most any congregation can learn these words in a matter of weeks.

Win or lose that one, the biggest problems are still ahead. The great Psalm battle is among the bloodiest of all. The Psalms in the missalette and Missale are different from the sung Gradual in the Church's music books. They are shorter and designed so that people can repeat them back after the choir or cantor. If the schola wants to sing the Gregorian Gradual—the most glorious masterpieces among the whole repertoire and the very core of what is and has been Christian music since the earliest centuries of the Church—it is going to face a daunting minefield of confusion. For one thing, one of the purposes of the Psalm is to inspire reflection on the scriptural readings, which is why they are long and melismatic and do not call on people to sing antiphonally. This is a time for prayer, not for call and response. But try convincing the liturgical team of that. It is a nearly impossible sell.

We have only begun to chronicle the practical problems in the ordinary form in attempting to use the normative music of the Church, the very music that the Second Vatican Council says must occupy the principal place at the Mass. The alleluia verse confronts the persistent impatience of ordinary form culture. The Offertory chants are virtually unknown since the text isn't even printed in the Missal; the celebrant might not know there is prescribed music for the Offertory. Most people just assume that this is the intermission, the time for Mary Sue to sing a solo. If that is to change, all of this will very likely have to be explained to the pastor, and the mystery will persist as to why the Missale has no offertory text at all.

The Sanctus issue mostly concerns the polyphonic rendering, which has been part of the Church's music for 1000 years. Some people proposed depreciating it at Vatican II but that was specifically ruled out by those who drafted *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. Its



permissibility was reinforced in *Musicam Sacram* in 1967. Cardinal Ratzinger wrote extensively in defense of the polyphonic Sanctus. As Pope, he presides in many ordinary form Masses with a polyphonic sanctus. And yet if you suggest it in your parish, there will be a blizzard of objections, and someone at some point will cite the ambiguity in the General Instruction.

More issues are raised concerning the *Mysterium Fidei*, the "Great Amen," the communion proper vs. "One Bread, One Body," and so on, all the way to the end of the Mass. There are dozens of battles to fight and fight and fight, and hardly anyone has the stomach for all this. And yet this is what it takes in order to sing the music of the Church at the ordinary-form Mass.


Is it any wonder that people take refuge in the extraordinary form, in which the music is more intimately prescribed and integrated at all levels? What is more important here is that the propers are not optional. Nor is there any option to replace the propers with "another appropriate song," the definition of which ends up being decided by people whose musical consciences are not very well informed by our musical heritage. It is the argument of Laszlo Dobszay in his *Bugnini-Liturgy and the Reform of the Reform* that the provision to permit other songs to replace the propers needs to be completely stricken from the rubrics. The first time I read that I was shocked and wasn't sure that he needed to make such an extreme argument. I've come to believe that he is right. The propers should be mandatory in the Ordinary Form. Musicians need these mandates and so do the clergy. Such a mandate would be an act of peace because it would quell all this interminable debate and fighting.

If you back away from the situation, it is very striking. Pius X had already pushed the place of chant to the top. The commonality between the old form and the new form is precisely its musical dimension. And yet, because the options have become the norm and the norm has been marginalized in practice, people end up having to completely secede from the reformed liturgy if they want to hear and experience the Church's music.

These are all the practical realities, and there is real tragedy here. But even without a change of legislation, there is a way around this problem. The answer is simple: remove all road blocks to the normative form. Stop objecting to it. Just let it happen.

Encourage it. Then the musicians will respond with a new sense of duty. Pastors should purchase *The Parish Book of Chant* for their choirs and congregations. They should give the director of music a copy of the *Gregorian Missal* with a sticky note: "These are the propers of the Mass. Please use these as your ideal."

Visit St. Agnes in St. Paul, Minnesota, or St. John Cantius in Chicago, or St. John in Stamford, Connecticut, or St. John the Evangelist, St. Thomas Aquinas in Palo Alto, among many other great parishes. Here, there are ordinary form Masses that serve as models for the future.

Unless something is done soon to eliminate the road blocks to a well-sung Ordinary Form, it will lose the struggle for the Catholic soul. 

## Three Paths to Sacred Music

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In conversations over the years with people who have caught the sacred music bug, I've noticed certain patterns over how they initially came to fall in love with Gregorian chant and polyphony, the music codified as proper to the Roman Rite.

There are patterns that emerge in one's life experiences that correspond in an interesting way to Church teaching on the marks of sacred music itself, and I seriously doubt that these patterns are a coincidence. You might recognize yourself in these patterns.

I'll start with my own story because of its familiarity. My own background in religious music was in a Baptist church that spared no expense in putting together over-the-top production numbers. We had a well-paid music minister, a choir of 50 voices, and we frequently hired full-scale orchestras to play on Christmas and Easter. These productions came complete with t-shirts and advertising blitzes. We sang Handel and Mendelssohn, and our ideal was driven by visions of brass choirs on balconies and hundreds of voices singing praises. The more the better was our motto.

Then one day in my early 20s I stumbled into a Catholic Mass in which a single priest who was in his 80s chanted the Mass from the altar. There were no instruments. His voice was weak and old. His pitch was uncertain. There was no choir, no pomp, no advertising, no t-shirts, and the people who attended—mostly poor people—mostly just knelt and prayed as the simple notes were chanted by the celebrant.

What struck me was the overwhelming humility of the entire exercise, and how it achieved something that could not be bought or achieved through purely human efforts. It buried the ego completely. It was holy. That was the key. It actually arrived at the place that sacred music was striving for, and did it without any accoutrements or props. The sound of it touched me to the very depths of my heart and I came to understand the place of music in the faith in a completely different way.

I returned for many weeks with a tape recorder and recorded this priest singing the Mass, and listened all weekdays, morning and night, striving to understand how it was that something so simple and so humble could be so powerful, so real, so authentic, so saving.

Moving on to a second case, I have a friend who grew up in the Midwest in a medium-sized town in which the 1970s ethos of tie-dye-and-sandals Catholicism took hold. The preferred form of art was that phony folk music of Peter, Paul, and Mary, a time in which no music was considered true and human unless it was accompanied by guitar. Organs were considered “high Church” and therefore inappropriate for a “peoples’ Church.”

This ethos brought us “Earthen vessels” since gold was seen as a rich man’s metal, and it gave rise to felt banners and homemade signs all over the walls of the church. Nothing was too casual. Jeans, t-shirts, torn shorts, unkempt hair—these were the preferred garb. The music was amateurish and awful, to be sure, but this was seen as something to be preferred. The experts had to be tossed from the seats of power in order for the true voice of the people to emerge.

But then my friend discovered something else. He heard some renaissance polyphony with its incomparable beauty, its glorious drift upwards toward the heavens. This music wasn’t about the “people” and their grungy ways. It was about the majesty of God!

Yes! This is what is missing in this whole tie-dye ethos: an awareness that end of liturgy is not ourselves but the throne of God. In this case, the approach has to change completely away from ourselves and our needs, to the real task at hand. In this case, earthen vessels are not suitable when gold is available. In this case, felt banners are not appropriate when glorious art is in the corner. And in this case, the music too must reflect the purpose.

My friend gradually explored the whole genre of sacred music, moving back in time from Palestrina to Josquin to medieval organum to chant and back to the very origins of Christian song in the Psalter. It was all directed to that single end of giving glory to God. It was all marked by that form that constitutes that Christian idea of beauty: orderliness, harmoniousness, excellence—music that is true art.

A third case is of a person who grew up in a multilingual household at a time when multiculturalism was an idea propounded in liturgical catechesis. But the odd thing about the practice of multiculturalism is that it tended to divide people into segments. We had some forms of art and music for Hispanics, some for Anglo-Americans, some for various ethnic groups from here and yon, and a small sampling designed to reflect the needs and desires of immigrants to the United States.


It was a smorgasbord of identity sampling that tended to pigeonhole people into some group or class and keep them there, and it sent the message that it would be a violation of personal integrity to seek to transcend this identity. The marks were typically found in the rhythm used for music, since this is the clearest expression of national and ethnic attachment.

It is true that liturgy should have a universal voice, this person realized, but this tendency toward group segmentation was not making progress toward this idea. Actually it was doing the opposite, emphasizing differences rather than finding unity in Christ. And there was another problem. All of this music was time bound: it was from the 1960s, or 70s, or 80s, tending toward the evocation of a particular time and place here on earth.

Then chant came along and revealed something that this person had long been seeking but couldn't find. This was music in Latin, a language not used in the vernacular by any single group, so that it meant a special language of liturgy for all groups equally.

The rhythm is not of a single national origin but rather came from a period in Christian history in which the worshippers sought a form of music that was directed towards a goal higher than itself. And even after all these centuries, even after a millennium and a half, the music still sounded fresh and brilliant. The music not only transcending nation and identity but also time itself. The same cannot be said of other forms.

So here we have it, what St. Pius X identified as the three marks of sacred music: holiness, beauty, and universality. In each case mentioned above, the person (including me here) came to appreciate the other marks beside that which attracted their initial interest and drew them into a deep attachment to sacred music. But I do find it interesting that people tend to “get the bug” based on some aspect of music that has long been taught as the identifying marks of sacred music.

Maybe readers can reflect on these stories and see how it is that they were personally drawn to the chant and sacred music generally as the ideal expression of the highest liturgical aims. 

## The Heroic Generation of Chanters

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Today’s Gregorian scholas, mostly founded within the last several years, and almost entirely consisting of non-professional singers, face a task unlike most any in any previous age. They confront the largest single reserve of music of a certain type and are determined to make it live again in liturgy.

The style is unknown in today’s popular culture. The notation is not taught in music school. The language is neither a living vernacular nor a familiar liturgical one. Even experienced singers can look at a page of chant and find themselves unable to know what the tune should sound like or how it should be interpreted.

But they forge ahead in any case. They buy the books, study the tutorials, attend colloquia, read the forums and post on them, join email lists, share recordings, gather with others as often as possible, surround themselves with pronunciation guides, learn the musical language of solfege, all in what is really a heroic effort to make something that had been all-but-banished from our Catholic culture heard and internalized again in our times.

I'm struck by this remarkable fact in light of an experience we had a few weeks ago. Our schola was preparing to sing *Te Deum* for a special parish event. The chant is very long. The language is quite difficult. Intonation troubles are endemic. The rhythm of the piece calls on every skill that chant requires, and the style must be free and familiar or else it just won't sound like *Te Deum*. This piece ranks among the greatest and oldest and most persistent of all Christian hymns, and it can't be sung with caution and shyness. It has to be sung like it has been sung for all time.

Working off and on with this piece, in scattered rehearsals whenever there was time remaining when other demands weren't pressing, we would keep plugging away. Our schola director would have us speak the words, then sing the piece on one tone, alternating between high and low voices. We would focus on particular spots, and iron out pitch and language problems when they appeared. It took us the better part of a year working at this pace, two steps forward and one step back, but it finally happened. At the end, the piece began to seem joyful, effortless, inevitable.

Then we had some outside singers join us for the event for which this was being sung. They were from the local Baptist, Presbyterian, and Unitarian churches. We only had an hour to rehearse all the music, which left about 20 minutes for *Te Deum*, sight-reading. They stood among twelve singers who knew the piece perfectly. In twenty minutes time, they were up to speed on the chant: the words, tune, and style. They were impressed at how much easier chant was to sing than they had thought. In the performance, all the new singers did a wonderful job!

So how is it that our schola took nearly a year to learn this, while new singers took only 20 minutes? If you have ever sung in a choir, you know why. Singing with people who already know a piece requires only that you attach your voice to theirs and move forward. On parts on which you are unsure, you can back away,

and hearing the correct version next to you means that you can fix it the next time through.

The difference is immense. The first singers to confront unfamiliar chant are like people facing a forest of trees and a thicket of brush and are attempting to make a new trail with machetes and their own feet. Those who come along later to take the same route need merely to walk on the trail already made for them. The difference is that substantial.

In most past Christian generations, the trail was already there, and one generation rolled into the next so that most singers were in the position of those visiting singers on the day we sang *Te Deum*. From the 7th or 8th century forward, singers fit into a structure of something that was already there. Not that chant was sung in every parish or every cathedral, but the sound and feel – if not the tunes themselves – were part of what it meant to be Catholic. The music was in the air. Scholas still had to work hard but they didn't have to blaze completely new trails.

Even in modern preconiliar times where the chant was not sung, there were *Libers* around and priests who knew the chant, and always some parishioners who had a sense of it. In the best situations of the past, new singers were always in the minority among experienced singers, and they fit into an existing ensemble.


What singers confront today is something incredibly daunting and probably nearly unprecedented. They are conjuring up a two-millennium-long tradition that was abruptly stopped for several generations and trying to make it live again. To do this is roughly akin to a scene from a dystopian novel in which it falls to a few to reinvent electricity or make clothes from cotton and wool for the first time. It is a heroic effort, something far harder for us than for most any Christian singers in the past.

I can recall only several years ago standing in a rehearsal room staring at a complicated chant and trying to make it work note by note. It took me up to an hour to become familiar with a new chant and even then I would sometimes get on the wrong track and sing a wrong note again and again. It would take someone else from our schola to correct the mistake and make it right. We discover from these experiences that learning chant from scratch requires both private study and group effort. We have to learn to sing on

our own and then we must also learn to sing with a group in which we all teach each other.

You find very early on that recordings are helpful but they only get you a little of the way there. Ultimately you have to learn to render it on your own, and experience the chant physically within your own voice, ideally standing next to a person who knows it well. But that person isn't around, so you have to conjure up the entire piece on your own. There is no shortcut.

This is the great difficulty of the chant. It is not so much the chant itself but its novelty that makes its re-creation so daunting. The chant is not intended to be a novelty. It is a tradition that is supposed to be continuous from age to age, entrenching itself ever deeper into the culture and inspiring every form of elaboration. It never should have been abandoned, especially not after a Church Council that conferred on the chant primacy of place in the Roman Rite.

But it is a fact that the existing generation must deal with and overcome, carrying the tradition to the future. And that is only the singing part. There are parish politics to deal with, the remarkably fast pace of the liturgical year, and celebrants to persuade. Even given all the barriers, today's scholas press onward. For this reason, this generation of chanters really does deserve the title heroic. The challenges they face and the tradition they rescued will surely be recorded in the annals of the history of liturgical art. 

## Day for Training

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At the end of the liturgical year, thousands of Catholic parishes hurled into the trash bins hundreds of pounds of liturgical materials, missalette/hymnals that apply to last year, to replace them with new copies of the same thing, which will also be hurled into the garbage next year. What a symbol: disposable liturgy. Everyone feels squeamish about this, and for good reason.



That's only the beginning of the expense—and waste—that most parishes undertake to sustain and improve their music programs. Go to the music closet of just about any Catholic church, and you will see massive quantities of books and sheet music for every occasion, plus accompaniment books for organ and guitar and every instrument.

Just to acquire the choral parts to the hymns in the missalettes requires at least three separate books from one publisher, and as many as 20 copies of each, plus endless supplements and binders for all kinds of instruments and ensembles. Then there are Mass settings and octavo editions of songs and settings of every sort for every occasion, thousands of them, representing massive expenditures.

Parishes spend and spend and spend on all these items, but notice: the music in average Catholic Churches is not generally improving. In many cases, it is worse and worse. How can this be? There is a truth that many parish administrators need to face: paying for music is not necessarily going to translate into better music, any more than paying for health-club memberships is going to make you thin and beautiful.

What's missing here is the essential step: training. This is what parishes should be paying for. Training provides new skills and new inspiration. (And when people are properly trained and have skill, they should receive a salary for providing for the musical component of the Roman Rite.)

When you look at the budget, keep in mind that all the music pertaining to the Roman Rite and given primary place by the Second Vatican Council is free online at [MusicaSacra.com](http://MusicaSacra.com). Every last bit of it. That is true too of thousands upon thousands of motets at [CPDL.com](http://CPDL.com). It is even true of Psalms in English. You can choose among many styles at [Chabanel Psalms](http://ChabanelPsalms.com). If you still need a readings book, you can get that from World Library Publications for as little as \$1.85 per book for the entire liturgical year. Or you can print the readings in the weekly program.

In other words, with a few courageous administrative decisions, you can cut your music budget down to a fraction of what it is. Instead of throwing away \$15,000 per year, you can spend one-tenth that amount, and instead send your organists, pianists, and

singers to events that will actually train them to do what the Church is asking.

How do you test to see if your musicians are really ready to sing or play at Mass? Show them a simple chant such as *Rorate Caeli*. Ask them to sing it. If they can't or they protest, you have a problem. I would estimate that 80 or 90 percent of parishes have this problem. The point isn't to embarrass anyone; it is only to see if they are up to the job they have been assigned.

Do you let illiterates read the scriptures? If a deacon can't form sentences, do you still let him preach? If a layperson is clumsy and tends to trip and fall, do you still let him carry forward the gifts at offertory? If the sound technician can't get the mics to work right, do you keep him on contract or look for someone else?

Why, then, should we continue to tolerate musicians who know nothing of Catholic music? If they are willing, most any Catholic musician can be trained to sing chant, and organists can be trained to inspire choirs to sing polyphony. It is being done all over the country. After only four days of a chant intensive, singers are ready to sing, even lead scholas, and inspire others to join the effort.


This expense of time and money will pay huge returns, starting immediately. From that point forward, they can download all the music they need or the parish can get *The Parish Book of Chant*, and be set for decades. The savings over the years is unthinkably huge.

If your musicians do not have the training, they will continue to spin their wheels week after week doing the same old thing. And they will grow ever more defensive as the chant movement makes progress, knowing in their hearts that the attachment to bad hymnody is really just a cover for their inability to do anything else. They will argue and argue about how chant doesn't really work for this parish, when in fact they are just finding rationales for the status quo.

Pastors, know that it is not as easy as flipping a switch to make the transition from *One Bread to Adoremus in Aeternum*. People need to learn. They need to study under people who are ready and willing to train them. They need to have colleagues who share their anxieties and fears, and have already worked through them. They need to encounter examples of success. They need to be part

of a community. A training intensive or sacred music colloquium will provide all these things.

It is not only technical training they need. They need a vision of the ideal, something to inspire them as a goal forward. The music of the Roman Rite provides this very ideal. It ideal is nearly impossible to achieve. There are too many chants that require too much rehearsal time. The height of the polyphonic tradition is too elaborate for most parishes to achieve. But there are also many proximate goals, week to week, many things that can be sung that count as progress. This sense of going somewhere is essential for any team effort. Otherwise people grow tired and demoralized, and wonder what the point is.

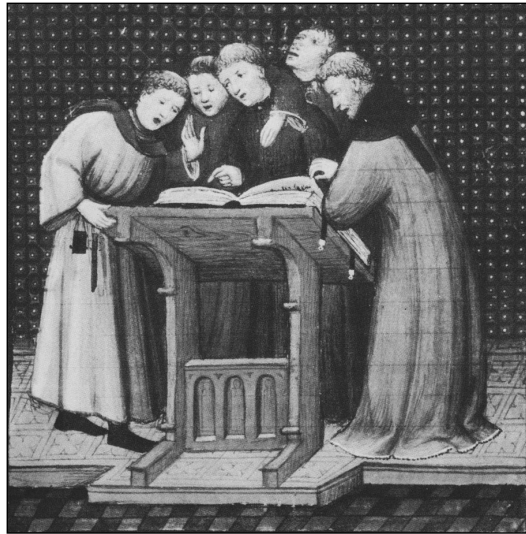
With chant, the schola has a *raison d'être* and can sense that they artistically progressing. Right now, many musicians in the Catholic Church are demoralized, and no amount of spending, no accumulation of expensive resources, will fix that. What they need is the inspiration and direction that sacred music can provide. 



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# *Parish Life*

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## Why the Stasis?

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Parish experience in the United States is highly diffuse and resists scientific assessment. But when you know of a dozen cases of a similar phenomenon, there is probably a good chance that it is a generalized problem. I'm speaking here of parishes with pastors who know better but are unwilling to make a change in the liturgical status quo, particularly as it concerns music.

There is a main choir that does the standard has-beens from the 1970s, a groovy communion hymn, with a few 19th-century favorites thrown in, but otherwise completely ignores the propers and is uninspired to sing chant (even the notation looks like gibberish to them). There is also a youth group that is without direction, and tries to sound like an easy-listening pop band doing Jesus music. Then there is the downer Mass (usually the vigil on Saturday) that features one cantor plus a pianist, and the repertoire is even more risk averse than the main Sunday Mass.

No change. Ever. One Sunday blends into the next and no one really complains. The pastor knows better, and he longs for sacred music in his heart, but he does nothing to change the status quo. I'll speculate on the reasons in a bit, but first I'll fill in some more detail.

Ever since the promulgation of *Summorum Pontificum*, the pastor has been intrigued by the possibilities of the old form. He studies it and he has even started saying it once a month. It began with Low Masses. But he has also cobbled together some stray singers who otherwise have nothing to do with the parish music program, and they work through Rossini propers and sing some old standbys, not great music but it still beats the oozy woozy sounds you get at the ordinary form in all the main Sunday Masses.

You look at the situation from the outside and wonder what the deal is. Why put this effort into the extraordinary form but do nothing about the stupor and tired status quo in all the main Sunday Masses? Of course status quo is always easier than change, especially in the area of parish music. There are always battles to fight, and all change rattles people in some way.

Priests are quite busy with hospital visits, parish functions, budget struggles, endless issues in the parish from wedding to funerals to lives falling apart everywhere. At the end of the day, who needs to take on yet another contentious area of parish life when things seem to be going just fine and reliably week to week? Ninety percent of success in life is just showing up and these musicians at least do that. What more can you ask?

There is the additional problem that all these musicians are banging and strumming away every week, with cantors lined up for Mass after Mass, and none of them are being paid much if at all. To march up to them and say, you know, it would be great if you could do chant or something, risks insulting their labors up to now. Are you saying that they aren't very good? That wouldn't be very pastoral (codeword for "tolerate mediocrity"). You don't make special demands of the people who bring casseroles to potluck dinners, so why would you impose special demands on singers and instrumentalists? The pastor knows that chant and Latin are not part of their skill set, so the request is only going to annoy them.

Now, it would be different if a schola formed on its own within the parish, practiced every week, became rather good at what it is doing, and then requested to sing at a Mass. This is something that the pastor could go for, because allowing them to sing would amount to giving time off to the other singers and instrumentalists. Everyone is happy.

But the truth is that this is not likely to happen unless the pastor intervenes and encourages it. As one pastor told me:

What I need is someone in the parish to take the initiative, form the schola, rehearse the singers, learn the rubrics, and make it all happen from its own internal energy. At the same time, I'm also aware that people who can initiate, inspire, and implement are the rarest people there are in the world.



So true. But in doing nothing, and bemoaning the lack of leadership, the pastor is making a choice in favor of a model of music that is alien to the whole history of Catholic worship. It is a model that came about in something resembling a stylistic revolution in the late 60s and 70s, and though it is tired and dull like Soviet life in the 1980s, the reality of the revolutionary origins of the status quo should not be forgotten. It is not a permanent state of being. Profane music shabbily performed does not go with the Roman Rite; at some point, either the music or the Roman Rite has to go.

What is especially insulting in the case described above is that the pastor is willing to make the extra effort in the case of the extraordinary form, and on behalf of the dozen or so people who attend that Mass at 2 p.m. once a month in the chapel, but not on behalf of the vast multitudes of ordinary form Catholics who actually pay the bills and constitute the very core of parish life. Are these ordinary form attendees being treated like the workers and peasants who know no better and don't deserve any better? Is there is a subtle disparagement of their worthiness at the root of the problem? That is something to consider.

There is another mistake that pastors make in suspecting that no matter what the Vatican says, everyone knows that music in the ordinary form is a loosey goosey thing, not subject to any real standards. They need to understand that the ordinary form also has propers. It has prescribed chants for all parts of the Mass. It is no less accommodating to polyphonic music and sacred music generally. Allowances are made for the vernacular but Latin remains the norm in the sung parts of the Mass. It's true that these facts contradict the seminary conventions of the 80s and 90s, but this represents not a model but a failing.


Another factor that plays into this has to do with the Father's own self-perceptions of his musical competence. He has grown accustomed to thinking of the musicians as these oddballs over there who have this peculiar skill of singing and playing, neither of which he possesses, so what business is it of his to intervene? He doesn't know much about the subject and is not entirely sure that he knows where or how to direct them to improve. If he gets in a tangle with them over resources and possibilities, he will surely lose—like arguing with the doctor over medicines and treatments. That could be humiliating, so it's better not to risk it.

There is a further problem of authority. There are all these established publishers and institutions that seem to say that what the choir is doing is perfectly fine within the structure of the ordinary form. If this music were really incompatible with the Roman Rite, why would 2/3 of American parishes subscribe to their publisher's missalettes? If these organizations were really promoting music that is contrary to the liturgical spirit, how is it that they attract thousands of people to their annual conventions and how is it that they are able to put out full-color glossy publications on the glories of music that is not so hot.

The pastor should recall that *Soviet Life* was also a very beautiful publication and that the collected works of Stalin were beautifully printed by Progress Publishers (top seller: "The ABCs of Dialectical Materialism"). Appearances can mask underlying decay. I believe that someday we will all wake up and wonder what the heck went wrong that for 40 years? The entire Catholic world lost track of the propers of the Mass, introduced silly songs into Mass, let the treasures of the Church rot in a closet, failed to teach the children to sing, let the organs fall into disrepair, and gave billions of dollars to institutions that were promoting everything but the music of the Church. On that day, everyone is going to feel very silly and embarrassed.

So why not give history a push forward and start reversing the error today? Contrary to what many priests believe, music has a massive influence on the shape and character of the liturgy. It is not something that can be overlooked. No matter how beautiful the vestments, no matter how thoughtful the homily, no matter how pious are the servers, insofar as all of this is framed up by the religious equivalent of the Mamas and the Papas, people will just not take it seriously. This is not merely a matter of ornamentation. The music of the Mass is integral to what people experience about the Mass. It is the major contributor to the aesthetic and it affects what people believe and how they live.

Yes, it is easier to let the status quo continue forever. It is easier, but it is irresponsible. It is crucial that pastors exercise leadership here. They must urge the formation of scholars. They must support them. They must not allow themselves to be intimidated or talked down to. They should treat the refusal to change as an act of insubordination, the same as they would with a parish secretary who

couldn't meet deadlines for the Sunday bulletins. People will respond, and it is the right thing to do. The pastor who takes the initiative here and doesn't shy away from the hard choices is a hero and he deserves all our support. 

## Sing or Else

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In the weeks before the Pope's 2008 visit to the United States, someone sent me a pre-Mass video interview with Thomas Stehle, director of music for the Washington Nationals Mass. It is very interesting because it allows us to compare theory and results. He tells the reporter some of his own perspective of what he hoped to achieve:

What I am most looking forward to is hearing the entire stadium, not just listening to some excellent music, which we hope we will have, that they will feel inspired to join in. And that unlike any other thing that might happen in that stadium ever again, you might have 46,000 people singing their hearts out, which will be an amazing thing. . . . So that's what I'm looking forward to, just having the whole stadium erupt, and have the Pope go, wow, this is the American Church. This is a beautiful thing.

The sincere conviction and hope here is a familiar one. In fact, this hope of unified action in song is the defining ambition of the ethos of Catholic music for the last several decades. The idea is to turn the Catholic people of God, who are legendarily unwilling to sing at Mass, into something resembling what you might see in a Baptist Church in the old days or a Pentecostal service.

This hope, desire, ambition, aim, has been the top priority of mainstream Catholic musicians, and this is mentioned nearly every article in the mainline liturgy publications dating back a very long time. They speak of the moral imperative for people to sing, how to effect the result, the failures of the past and the great promise of the future.

And what has come of the movement to get the people to sing as if that's all that "full, active, and conscious participation" can mean? We see the results in parishes all over the country. There is a song leader. There are persistent demands to sing. There are pre-Mass rehearsals. There are sheets of music, missalettes, liturgy aids, microphones, and even overhead projectors with words. But mostly people do not respond.

In the endless discussion of this issue, what we see is an amazing unwillingness to question the prevailing paradigm despite the constant failures—decades of failures. At times, the people who talk this way sound like old-time Soviet central planners and their prediction concerning next year's grain production, when all the workers and peasants will join together in harmony, under the wise leadership of the revolutionary vanguard, to achieve a production miracle that will impress the world. The next year comes and grain production falls. Again and again and again.

It's about time we ask whether or not the goal of the people's bursting into song has been achieved or even it is achievable as an intended goal. If we look at the Papal writings on music from all history, actually, there is not a word in here about the goal of causing every living soul to sing. There are passages that refer to certain liturgical texts belonging to the people but no insistence that every pew sitter belt it out. The priorities for music are a different sort: to ennoble the liturgical text, to inspire with beauty, to increase the penetrating power of prayer, to heighten the dignity of the occasion, to add an additional layer of interpretative understanding to the text, among other goals.

As a music director, it can be enormously satisfying. It works as a kind of confirmation that what you are doing is liked and appreciated, the people are paying attention. In fact there is a risk here. Do we seem to have people sing as a way of flattering ourselves? Do we enjoy knowing that somehow our work is causing people to behave a certain way, that people are willing to drop whatever else they might be thinking about in order to contribute to our project? This is not the goal, after all, and to seek self-affirmation in this way is contrary to the humility required of liturgical service.

Now, perhaps we have been in worship settings in which we have seen the Catholic people burst into song. We've seen such videos posted here and there, when, for example, at the recessionary

we see hundreds in a congregation sing *Salve Regina* with amazing gusto. This is indeed an inspiring event.


Most recently we saw this at the Papal Mass in New York at Yankee Stadium, when people sang *Credo III*. Note that this was in Latin. It was Gregorian chant. People sang it despite decades of assurance that Latin chant cannot work as people-inclusive music. What strikes me here is that people are willing to sing music that they sense is truly part of the liturgy but less willing to sing music that is external to it. There is a sense of the faith at work here. We see this every week in our own parish when we sing *Gloria XV* from the *Graduale Romanum*. People obviously love it, and sing with great enthusiasm.

When we do witness events when Catholics really do sing, we might note the absence of a song leader urging people on. The response isn't something demanded by a "liturgical facilitator" or an "art and environment committee." In fact, this kind of singing, when it does happen in the Catholic Church, is rarely intended as the primary purpose. The action is more spontaneous, a result of spiritually inspired human action and not of human design as such.

I wasn't at the Washington Nationals Mass of course, and every report says that the television rendering was misleading. To the viewers, it looked pretty much like a performance venue for a variety of groups to demonstrate different styles of music: samba, blues, light rock, and the like, music that is incompatible with the liturgical sense. There were a few hymns that everyone could sing, but none of the people I have spoken to mentioned these as being particularly inspiring. The music, they all said, was something they tuned out, mostly out of habit because this is what they do in their parishes too. And in the case of this particular Mass, this was probably a good thing, given the tendency of the music selections, which completely eschewed the Gregorian repertoire that the Pope himself has called upon all parishes to teach and use every week.

Of the half dozen or so people I've spoken with who attended that Washington Mass, the number one thing that people mostly mentioned had nothing to do with the music. They speak of the miracle of the silence. They talk about the spiritual comportment of the tens of thousands of people, that you could have all those people gathered in a space and that there were moments that were so still and so silent that you could hear a pin drop. This was what

moved people. This was the unforgettable thing that happened. (I'm reporting this because this is what people who were there reported, even if this was not observable through television.)

One priest noted that this silence could not have happened were it not for good formation that is taking place in the parishes. People knew why they were there, and it wasn't to impress the Pope with their singing. It was to be in the presence of the successor of Peter and to experience the real presence of Christ. When you think of that, awe-struck silence seems like an excellent response. 

## Should Liturgy Cater to Our Differing Needs?

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Elaine Rendler-McQueeney is one of the most influential liturgical writers in this country – but not because she has written a great treatise or has taught many students or manages liturgy in a great Church. Instead, she writes a liturgical column that is probably widely read, though inauspicious, in a publication called *Today's Liturgy* published by the Oregon Catholic Press (OCP).

It is received and read by music directors in as many as two-thirds of American parishes. The bulk of the publication consists of planning guides for music on Sundays. Musicians use this guide to pick their four hymns from OCP materials every week. It's remarkable to think how influential this magazine is, and yet most pastors know nothing about it. It comes in the mail and is just handed on to the specialists.

In any case, each page contains a little callout box with about 300 words of instruction for the day, a chatty little sermon written by Rendler-McQueeney. It is just long enough to get her point across but not too long such that it taxes the time of the director who does the hymn picking.

Rendler-McQueeney has a special talent for talking to parish musicians in way that connects directly their jobs. She is part theologian and part counselor, giving tips and reminders. That she is able to produce 52 columns each year dedicated to the week—same subject every time with a strict word limit—is an incredible feat in some ways. I really do marvel that she is able to do this. It must weigh on her personally, since she covers the same ground week after week and yet must write something compelling and helpful.

Most of what she writes is not objectionable in any way, and sometimes it is genuinely helpful. Sometimes, however, she offers opinions that are unsound and highly misleading —and it is these moments when she provides an insight into the sheer shallowness of a certain school of liturgical thinking, if it can be called that. Here is an example from her entry for the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, January 25, 2009:

You just have to love those Corinthians! They remind me so much of our Church today. They get into all kinds of liturgical intramurals, just like us. For example, in this time of transition in our Church, some are disappointed in the Church's implementation of Vatican II directives and bemoan the loss of Church tradition, particularly in music. Others perceive a trend toward the past and feel the Church has disappointed them. It's time for everyone to stand back and realize that it's a big, big Church, and people have differing needs. Live and let live. Let the Spirit lead. In the end, all that matters is how we've treated one another in Jesus's name anyway.

Well, how can I put this? How we've treated one another does matter, but is not all that matters. It also matters how we treat our time of community prayer at liturgy and how we manage ourselves in the presence of the Holy Sacrifice. If God is truly present, how we manage ourselves at liturgy is of utmost importance. To attempt to push that aside as something that doesn't matter, and to claim that interpersonal relationships are the only consideration, really amounts to a kind of pro-Jesus atheism. We end up behaving as if God has left us to our own devices and that no reality other than our "differing needs" exists at all.

As for the claim that some of us might be “disappointed” in the “loss of tradition” following Vatican II, I’m struck by the present tense of her claim, as if all of this happened last week. In fact, the span of time that separates this generation from the close of Vatican II is the same as that which separates the close of the Council from the age of speakeasies and flappers. In other words, it was long ago. Most Catholics today have never known anything but the reformed Mass and the unfortunate musical trends that washed into our parishes along with it.

But for some people who write in the way of Rendler-McQueeney, the past is the present. It was the defining event of their whole Catholic lives. It was a heady time of liturgical reconstruction when a certain take on ritual music swept all before it and came to dominate the Mass. That movement is now tired and aging, lacking in intellectual and artistic inspiration. In a sign of their increasingly reactionary posture, they assume that anyone who doesn’t like their jingles is seething with anger about events that most Catholics in the pews never knew and never experienced. What they need to realize is that not everyone who is tired of “Table of Plenty” is longing to refight the liturgy wars. Mostly, they just find this music trite and are ready to move on.


It is also not the case that our “differing needs” are factors which should dictate what music is chosen for Mass. The music of the Mass is part of the structure of the Mass itself, not merely the reflection of a community’s values. It is indeed a “big, big Church” and that gives rise to a need not to get used to an infinite multiplicity of styles, so that each parish becomes a mini-Tower of Babel, but rather a universal musical language, one that has developed from the earliest centuries up to our own time, which is to say that all music in Mass needs to have the same grounding in the universal solemnity of chant.

So, no, it is not enough just to brush away the problem with the slogan “live and let live.” Each liturgy must reflect a decisive choice. Even if that choice is to provide a sampling of all styles—chant, rock, jazz, rumba—there is still a total picture that emerges, and this diversity of styles yields nothing but incoherence. A painting or sonata or living room with all styles crammed in—something to meet all our “differing needs”—would not communicate anything but a sense of chaos and confusion. It suggests loss of belief in anything at all.



Moving on to her suggestion that many are disappointed in the Church because of the growing trend toward tradition, I've heard this many times. It is becoming a standard reflex among certain circles to bemoan what is happening under the Pope Benedict XVI, to the point that it has become a presumption that is taken for granted in all polite Catholic company. It's sort of like living in a community with a losing football team. Every time the topic comes up, everyone just sort of stands around gloomy-faced and regretting the course of events.

The trouble is that it is not a reasonable expectation that the Catholic Church is going to cease once and for all to be like the Catholic Church, nor is this a desirable expectation. The excesses and departures from tradition have destabilized Catholic teaching and liturgy in massively destructive ways. That we are slowly entering into a period of recovery is something for which we should be deeply grateful. Indeed, it is an answer to prayer.

Those who feel "hurt" by such transitions toward stability need to reflect on what this feeling suggests about their own expectations. There comes a time when the Church should not "meet people where they are"; rather it falls to us to rise to the level that the Church is asking us to be. We must not trust that our subjective desires are what should prevail. We need to put aside those desires and look to universals. To quote St. Paul writing to the Corinthians: "Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor." To quote Rendler-McQueeney, sometimes we need just to "let the Spirit lead." 

## To Be Young and Singing

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If your parish has a children's choir, thank both the director and the pastor, both of whom are crucially important to maintaining such a program in time when such choirs are ever more rare in Catholic Churches. If they are singing serious music, such as chant,

receiving real training in music theory using the voice, that is all the more spectacular.

When you read the personal biographies of great singers, in our times or the past, it comes up again and again that their first training occurred in church. Would that the schools were a substitute but even in the best of times, it was the liturgy of the Church that provided the most intense singing experience.

What happens when children's choirs are gone for more than one or two generations? We see the results all around us. Scholas have a hard time forming in parishes where very few people can read music or feel confident that they are singing notes at all. You might be able to get past the failure to read, but they don't understand how their voices work and they don't have the confidence to sing publicly (as versus in the shower).

There is also the problem of proper artistic formation. People cannot reliably distinguish what Pius X called "true art" from music that has long been said to be inappropriate for Mass. The capacity to know the difference cannot be spelled out in some rule book or scientific measure of beats and intervals. It comes from familiarity with music generally and the sacred music tradition in particular.

In a parish where there is a huge dearth of talent and a lack of common commitment to true art, starting fresh with a sacred music program can be a serious challenge. The ground can best be prepared by an active children's choir program that extends over a long period of time.

Starting is itself a challenge. In observing this in a number of parishes, it seems clear that it is not enough for there to be one music director with the goal in mind. That music director can carve out a place in the schedule, post signs, talk to many parents privately, and still find himself or herself standing in front of an empty classroom. It's not the case that parents don't want their children to learn to sing.

The problem is that there too many other priorities that come first, such a sports or studying or playing with friends or whatever. There are a thousand reasons not to show up.

Another problem is that parents expect fast results that cannot be obtained in a high-quality program. They want the kids to learn songs to sing to family and friends, in the hope that the child will

become some kind of singing phenom like you see on television. When this hope doesn't materialize, they take the kid out so that he or she can discover his or her true brilliance in another setting.

Careful music training takes place over a series of years in which the student discovers how to distinguish between high and low notes, whole steps and half steps, and learns how to sing on pitch and sight sing. Ideally, the child learns the do-re-mi system of singing as the first music instrument and finds out how to navigate up and down this scale, starting from any note and moving to any note. This is critically important for learning to sing and learning about music, but it is not the kind of talent that is going to impress extended relations at family reunions. This is source of frustration for parents who are themselves illiterate in this area.

Technology has helped pedagogy in most every area of life, but the field of music is highly specialized in that it requires an unusual interaction and coordination between abstract thinking and real-world doing. It takes time and relentless effort. Whatever tools we might have at our disposal today, music comes down to the relentless practice and the striving for improvement over a long period of time. In this sense, music pedagogy today and music training takes no less time right now than they did in the ancient world. It can't be rushed. And as time becomes ever more valuable, the willingness to make the sacrifices diminish ever more.

The music teacher himself or herself also needs a supportive pastor. Nor is it enough for the pastor generally to nod agreement with the idea of a children's choir program. He must also encourage parents relentlessly both publicly and also privately. He probably needs to personally call parents with young children and make sure that the parents know that it is a parish priority, that it matters, and why it matters.

Many pastors figure that they have enough on their plates without intervening in what is widely considered to be a matter of private family business. But without this support, it is too easy for parents to just figure that music education is not for their kid.

Even with a good teacher and an activist and supportive pastor, parish involvement might be low for a few years. The parents most likely to put their kids in a choir program are those who plan years in advance. The program has to first exist, probably at a small

level, and then young couples need to see the kids sing and dream that their own children will someday join. Children of 4 and 5 need to see older children singing and want to join them when they are old enough to.


I hate to say it but it is often the case that children who are already 10 and older when the choir forms are already interested in too many other things to change direction. So the plan for the choir must be a 10-year or 20-year plan, and the short tenure of pastors tends to shorten the time horizons.

Boys in particular are a challenge, given the public-school culture that regards singing as something that is not masculine in the same way that hunting or football is. Boys in general eschew the arts, and are more likely to require pressure to pursue them. In other words, it has to be seen as something crucial to education—a required course.

Pastors must also learn to deal with interruptions in the schedule, as kids go off to college and move out of town or possibly come back later in life. The full benefit might not accrue to the parish in particular but to the Church overall, and many years down the road.

It is possible to cite studies showing a link between music education and other coursework. It is possible to cite the historical precedence that regarded music education as part of a foundation for all education. We might cite its therapeutic achievements and its source as an outlet for creativity.

But for Catholicism, the benefits come down to the concern for beauty in the worship of God. If this doesn't matter, children's choirs in parishes don't matter. But if it does matter, we desperately need them, for music proves to be a difficult task to undertake for adults. The time to learn is when you are young. This is an investment that pays high returns only many years from now.

There are a million reasons not to have children's choirs but one good reason to undertake the effort: the liturgy desires our voices. At every stage in salvation history, music has been present. It must always be so. 

## When the Liturgy Committee Strikes

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A major impediment to progress in Catholic worship are the remains of the “liturgy committees” that were established decades ago. It is conceivable that they have a good influence, and operate as a bulwark against abuse of non-liturgical happenings, such as the sudden arrival of an American-Idol reject who wants to make the parish his or her new stage.

More likely, however, these committees work to impede progress, and they strike when they are least desired. It can happen, for example, that when a musician upgrades his or her knowledge and competence in music, the liturgy committee will sometimes emerge to “express its concerns” about the growing “conservatism” or “traditionalism” of parish music, and call for more peppy hymns. They might even commission a parish poll on what people want.

This sort of thing makes musicians crazy because it is a setting guaranteed to yield shabby liturgy and community chaos. It is the worst possible thing to happen to a parish music program, and not because the community shouldn’t have a voice. If the community has a point of unity, it concerns the faith itself and the tradition; otherwise, in terms of issues of taste and preference, there is no such thing as a community: there are only individuals with a multiplicity of conflicting desires.

A method of liturgical planning that exalts the “desires of the community” over the demands of the universal Church yields a divided parish, with egos clashing against other egos, and to heck with what the liturgy is calling for. It would be the same if we chose the texts or the vestments of the Mass with this method. Nothing good can come of it.

The most important thing for a musician to do in these cases is to remain calm and remember that those intervening are in deep need of catechesis. Its members might not be evil or out to dismember the Roman Rite. They just don’t know the great truth that the music of the Roman Rite is of a special sort. They need education. There is not much time to do this, since seminars are not

exactly the way people want to go. What a parish like this needs is for the liturgy committee to quickly face a different reality.

Documents such as the GIRM are good, but they can be confusing. What these people lack is an understanding that the music of the Mass is a given. It is an embedded part of our tradition. Chant is the indigenous music of the Roman Rite. By this I mean more than that chant is old or has a long history. What I mean is that there are chants applicable to every critical part of the Mass, for every day of the liturgical year, that grew up alongside and intimately with the Mass itself.

We can phrase the point in a series of questions. What is the core music of the Roman Rite? Gregorian chant. How can we know what music to sing at Mass? Look at the chant books first. What music is the only music that wholly qualifies as the Church music for the Roman Rite? Gregorian chant.

This truth is the great unknown in the world of Catholic music. It is an embarrassing fact that you can be a subscriber to the largest-circulation monthly magazine on Catholic music—and own all the archives—and this great truth would still have evaded you, even though it was clearly stated by the Second Vatican Council. It is also true that you can parish hop in city after city and never hear a note of chant. All of these realities are horrible but they do not diminish the truth of the claim that chant is the music of the liturgy in the Roman Rite.

I would suggest that the musician who comes under attack for choosing chant quickly get a copy of *The Gregorian Missal*, which has all the Sunday propers and the ordinary for Mass in Gregorian notation with English translations. No book better illustrates the point that the music of the Mass is part of the structure of the Mass, not something that is chosen by a committee or by democratic methods.

Let everyone pass this book around, so that they can see for themselves what the music of the Roman Rite is in fact. This is the core repertoire, what the Church is asking us to sing and has asked us to sing since the earliest years of the Church. The musician can explain that this is the liturgical ideal and that everything else that we sing or do is, in fact, a substitute for this ideal.

Once that is understood—and the truth can come as a shock—everything changes. People begin to see that it is not about the

community's needs or the musician's training or preferences. It is about the universal faith. The standards are different. Now, you can't do all propers and ordinary in your Mass; it is not practical in most cases (though there are plenty of parishes that have achieved this). But chant remains the standard by which all substitutes should be judged—a point made by every Pope dating back a thousand years, even back to early Church.

If the musician can get people to see this, and the pastor too, the entire environment will change. It is absolutely urgent that musicians do what they can to help people understand this point. Any other path can lead to disaster. To understand this point does not guarantee a safe environment for chant. It won't change the parish overnight. But the Gregorian chant could stand a chance of being the musical conscience of the liturgy, so that at least the musicians and the liturgy committee will begin to understand that there is an ideal. The direction of change should always and everywhere be tended toward it. ☞

## Father Scorched Earth

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Every so often, a case of pastoral mismanagement passes through my inbox that rattles me completely and cries out for correction, an example of an egregious injustice that is magnified by the lack of a viable means to correct it. As readers might expect, the issue concerns music, but if you are indifferent to such issues consider it by analogy to an architectural reform that guts a Church of high altar, tears out mosaics, smashes stained glass and replaces them all with a whitewash finish. We might call this approach musical iconoclasm.

The situation goes like this. A schola in a parish is making progress with Latin chant and polyphony. It is working forward on the propers of the Mass whether in English or Latin. The ordinary is being sung from *The Parish Book of Chant*, along with traditional Latin hymnody in certain parts. The Psalm is increasingly

taken from online resources like the Chabanel Psalms (completely free!). New polyphony is being sung from online downloads. An organist might be leading the effort or perhaps one is brought in under the tutelage of the director of music.

Tensions begin to arise with a cadre of parishioners who don't like the liturgical and spiritual challenge that the change represents. They find a sympathetic ear with a pastor who has not been properly trained in sacred music and feels oddly intimidated by all the new things that are happening, and perhaps he feels left out. After one too many complaints, the pastor flips out in a reactionary manner and makes a decision to completely revert the direction of progress.

The new policy looks something like this extreme case. There will be no more Latin ordinary chants. The people will sing in English only, but not chant. The ordinary will be the Mass of Creation, Mass of the Bells, or some other setting published in the missalette and none other. The choir will no longer do the introit for the entrance. The entrance will be a hymn from the missalette. The Psalm will not be anything but what is published in OCP's Respond and Acclaim, no matter how silly it might make the cantor feel. The Offertory will be an English hymn. There will be a communion song but not the proper of the day. It will be a hymn that everyone knows and can sing while receiving communion. The choir will not sing by itself except perhaps before Mass, but even then, they must sing in English if it all. The organ is fine as accompaniment to support the people's singing but not as a solo instrument.

Where does Father get all this stuff? Mostly it is an extreme application of a model that comes out of the defunct document called *Music in Catholic Worship* (1983), a document which was only recently taken down from the USCCB website and which famously said that distinction between ordinary and propers is no longer operable and praised the introduction of secular music at liturgy. It subtly but decisively put down the role of the choir. This document contradicted Roman legislation in many places, but it was the one under which a majority of priests now in the parish were trained in seminary. "Anything but chant" and "the people must sing everything" seemed to be the summary themes. The



document itself has mercifully passed into oblivion but its effects on the American Church are with us still.

Of course such a program is a model for ending musical excellence in any parish choir. Singers are quickly demoralized and leave, either quitting the “choir,” moving to another parish, or leaving the faith in disgust at the anti-art attitudes of the clods and rubes that are managing parishes, or so it seems. You end up with second-rate singers, guitar strummers, or piano hacks to help with banging out stuff week to week. Vision and ambition and ideals are all gone. Beauty is no more. The results, which are tedious and boring, satisfy no one and leave a trail of tears among all parishioners with a modicum of liturgical sense. The people themselves sink into the strange stupor that only bad Christian pop music can induce.

Now, it is blatantly obvious that such a scorched-earth policy contradicts the spirit of Vatican II, which could not have been more plain in stating that insofar as it is possible chant and polyphony are to assume the principal place in Mass, and even where this music cannot be sung, they still retain their status as ideals. The Council further wished that everyone know the parts that belong to them in Latin. These teachings have been reinforced in document after document, statement after statement, legislation after legislation, under Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI, not to mention every Pope that preceded them dating back to the earliest years of the Church.

How can Fr. Scorched Earth get away with this? Is there no mechanism in place that will stop these sorts of acts of destruction? A Bishop might intervene but it is unlikely. They are not drawn to intervene in parish musical struggles. After much experience, they find this area of parish life to be too contentious and complex to bother with.

Can the parishioners prevail on the pastor to change his mind and appeal to existing legislation? They can always try but there is a problem. As firm as the legislation is in exalting sacred music, there are enough loopholes in the law — mainly having to do with permission for “other appropriate songs” besides the propers — that muddy the case. I’ve personally never heard of a situation in which the right side wins in debates dealing with legislation, simply because the legislation allows too many options.


Here is the problem. Church law extols sacred music and celebrates it. But it allows discretion in what is to be sung. We can

choose what is right and true, or we can choose something else. In the end, it is the pastor who makes the choice, and choosing one thing necessarily excludes something else. In this sense, there is no such thing as eclecticism: you sing A or you sing B. For this reason, all this talk about choices and options is a bit misleading. Fr. Scorched Earth will observe that he can choose sacred music or something else, and just so happens to consistently choose something else.

A choice for something else is not contrary to existing law. Yes, it violates the spirit of Vatican II and the Spirit of the General Instruction, and the Spirit of *Summorum*, the Spirit of *Jubilate Deo*, the Spirit of the *Chirograph*, the Spirit of *Musicam Sacram*, and the Spirit of Catholic liturgy in general. But it is technically not contrary to the letter of the law. Essentially, then, the poor parish is at the mercy of the destructionists, with no real means of redress.

Now, the scorched earth policy obviously has no future. It ends up creating demoralized parishes that do not pray well, do not believe strongly, and are not inspired to make the sacrifice that a vibrant faith requires. In the short run, such a policy might satisfy those longing to slap around the snooty music crowd, but, in the long run, such a policy drains talent and energy from a parish.

What I've described above seems rarer today than in the past, but it is not unknown. It is true that legislation to stop this sort of thing would probably be welcome. Intervention by Bishops should take place.

Ultimately, however, I don't believe that either of these paths are the final answer. What we need is a change in the culture of Church music that leads to a change of heart about these matters. The attitude of the pastor who does things needs to change, but scholas themselves need to be aware of the need to forestall such reactionary impulses by including the pastor at all stages of the progress towards sacred music. It is a grave mistake to forge ahead without including him in the process. Finally, prayer is the ultimate answer here. No schola should take a step without asking for the intercession of a patron saint. 

## Rip Up Those Carpets!

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Every parish struggles with acoustical problems, some because of the large space, but some because of the wholly unnecessary existence of carpet in the nave and sanctuary. Many parishes have made the huge mistake of carpeting their church space because someone on some know-nothing committee thought that the carpet made the place feel warmer and friendly – like a living room – and perhaps too, someone found the echoes of children crying or hymn book dropping to be annoying.

Sadly, carpet is a killer of good liturgical acoustics. It wrecks the music, as singers struggle to overcome it. The readers end up sounding more didactic than profound. And even the greatest organ in the world can't fight the sound buffer that carpet creates. All the time you spend rehearsing, and all the money paying a good organist or buying an organ, ends up as money down the carpet drain.

Elementary errors are involved in the decision. When the church is being constructed and tested for sound, it is during a time when it is empty of bodies. The decision makers stand around and note that a new carpet won't make that much difference. Once installed, it only appears to muffle the sound of steps and things dropped. But once the place is packed with people, something new is discovered. The sound is completely dead – dead in the sense that it doesn't move. This is not the sound of liturgy.

This is when the acoustic engineers are brought in, usually from some local firm that specializes in studio recordings or some such. What they will not tell you is that you can save the expense of massively pricey sound systems and mixing tricks simply by pulling up the carpet. They don't tell you this because they are not in the carpet removal business. Their job is to make the existing space sound better. Sadly, this means sometimes tens and hundreds of thousands of dollars in equipment, the effect of which is to make it impossible for anyone to be heard unless surrounded by microphones.

Again, this is no solution at all. Chant will never sound right. The organ becomes a complete waste. The instruments and vocal styles that work in a space like this belong more to the American-Idol

genre of music than sacred music. This is a true tragedy for any parish seeking to reform its liturgical program. I'm very sorry to say this, but it pretty well dooms the reform. You can chant and play Bach all you want but you will never be able to overcome the acoustic limitations.

What to do? The decision makers need to gather the courage to take action. Pull up the carpets immediately. It might leave concrete or wood or something else. It might be unsightly until the time when tile or new concrete or wood can be installed, but the mere appearance alone will call forth a donation perhaps. What's important is that immediately the sound will be fixed, and the parish will have saved untold amounts in paying the acoustic firm. Not only that: funds will be saved from future carpet cleanings, repairs, and replacements.

Much of this information I learned from Riedel and Associates, a firm that does consulting on worship spaces. I ordered their pamphlet about sound called "Acoustics in the Worship Space" by Scott R. Riedel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986). It is quite technical and very informative. Here is what he says about floors on page 17.

The floor is typically the building surface that is largest and nearest to worshippers and musicians. It is important that the floor be reflective of sound, particularly near musicians, since it provides the first opportunity for much sound energy to be reinforced. Carpet is an inappropriate floor covering in the worship space; it is acoustically counterproductive to the needs of the worshippers.

The mood of warmth and elegance that carpeting sometimes provides can also be provided with acoustically reflective flooring such as quarry tile or wood that is of warm color and high quality. The notion that the worshiper covers the floor surface, making its material composition acoustically unimportant is false. The large floor area of the worship space has great acoustical influence. Appropriate floor materials include slate, quarry tile, sealed wood, brick, stone, ceramic tile, terrazzo, and marble.

Wall and Ceiling. Durable, hard-surfaced walls and ceiling are also essential for good acoustical reflections. The ceiling is potentially the largest uninterrupted surface and therefore should be used to reinforce tone. Large expanses of

absorptive acoustical ceiling tile are to be strictly avoided. Appropriate wall or ceiling materials include hard plaster, drywall of substantial thickness, sealed woods, glazed brick, stone, mud and painted concrete block, marble, and rigidly mounted wood paneling.

The construction of walls, floors, and doors should retard the transmission of noise into the space from adjoining rooms, from the outdoors, or via structure-borne paths. Sound attenuators or absorptive material may be fitted to heat and air ducts to reduce mechanical noise also.

Some may consider using absorbing materials such as carpeting or acoustical tile to suppress noise from the congregation. Noise from shuffled feet or small children is usually not as pervasive as might be feared. It is unwise to destroy the proper reverberant acoustical setting for worship in deference to highly infrequent noisy behavior.

Some absorbing materials may be necessary in a space to reduce excessive reverberation periods, to increase acoustical clarity, or to suppress unwanted reflections and faults. Absorbents should be used very sparingly and only when necessary.

Let me now address the issue of noise. A building in which you can hear your footsteps signals something in our imaginations. It is a special place, a place in which we are encouraged to walk carefully and stay as quiet as possible. Pops, cracks, thumps, and sounds of all sorts coming from no particular direction are part of the ambiance of church, and they contribute to the feeling of awe.

It was some years ago that I attended a concert of organum—three voices singing early medieval liturgical music—at the National Cathedral in Washington, a vast space. There were only three small voices near the altar, and I was at the back and the people singing looked like tiny specs. Moving my foot a few inches created a noise that could be heard for 20 feet in all directions, loud enough to drown out the music. As a result, everyone sat in frozen silence, fearing even to move a muscle. This went on for more than a full hour. It was a gripping experience.

The closer we can come to creating this environment in our parishes, the holier the space will sound and feel. I've personally never heard an echo that is too extended for worship. It is possible I suppose but I've never experienced it.

One final point about Church acoustics that needs to be added here. The Introit of the Mass is not: "Please turn off your cell-phones." This line is increasingly common at the start of Mass. This really must end. Yes, it is a good thing for people to turn off cell phones but instructions to that effect are not what should be the first words one hears at the start of Mass.

And please consider that people are not dumb as sticks. Cell phones are a normal part of life now, and we are all learning to keep them off in any public lecture or event such as a worship service. These things take care of themselves over time. For someone's cell phone to ring ends up being a warning to everyone else for the future. ☺

## A Letter to Praise and Worship Musicians

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You are part of a Catholic generation that has chosen music as a path of spiritual discovery and expression within Catholicism, and music has been central to your own path toward greater understanding of the faith and its place in your life. You are using this gift to give to others, precisely as St. Paul instructed the Corinthians to do. You do this in retreat settings but, more and more, in worship settings, including Mass, as a means of helping others find what you have found.

You are not unaware that the style of music you have chosen has no liturgical precedent in the history of the faith. It is not that you have overtly rejected tradition in favor of innovation. Many of you have written to me that you would greatly appreciate a parish setting in which Gregorian chant and polyphony (the only two musical forms explicitly cited at Vatican II as proper to the Roman Rite) were sung as part of Mass.

But this is not the parish setting you inherited and it doesn't seem like an option now. The historical context here is everything.

You were the third generation raised after the major changes following the Second Vatican Council. When your parents were very young, the standard music was new and innovative, but by the time you heard it, it had grown old and tired.

And there didn't seem to be much of it: the same few *Glorias* and *Holy Holys*, and about twenty or so songs sung again and again, most of it suggestive of half-hearted attempts at folk music of some sort. This was what was considered "traditional Catholic music," and it didn't seem to mean much to young people by the time you were coming of age.

The music problem reflected a larger problem. In your childhood and early teen years, you were part of a parish structure that had settled into a kind of routine that you found to be uneventful and static, even faithless. The catechism materials used in your CCD classes, even for confirmation, were unchallenging and cliché. The adult teachers and leaders in your parish lacked enthusiasm.

Even Mass, as much as you tried to throw yourself into it, began to seem blasé. There were new and odd names for everything: confession behind a screen became face-to-face reconciliation, CCD became CFF, Mass became the "Eucharistic celebration," processions were "gathering songs," and you knew nothing of traditional devotions like Holy Hours and novenas.

The ghosts of the Catholic past were everywhere in movies and popular culture: people kneeling for communion, priests in black for Requiem Masses, Latin, elaborate vestments, stories of rigorous server training, incense, and tough nuns in schools—but you knew none of this. In many ways, the world in which you grew up had already been thoroughly de-Catholicized, and this was tragically true even of your own parish.

Gregorian chant was the same. It variously became popular on the radio and in bestselling CDs but it was sung by monks in far-off lands. It wasn't the music of the parish. Even such common tunes such as *Pange Lingua* and *Adoro Te*—the last remnants of a repertoire of tens of thousands of chants—were finally put to rest sometime in the 1980s. No one in the parish knew a thing about chant, and neither did there seem to be a way to find out more.

It was your misfortune that you inherited what can only be described as a desert, and you can vaguely recall being bored with the whole thing. At some point in your teen years, that changed

with a retreat or a parish mission or possibly World Youth Day or some other occasion. There was a spiritual awakening in your life, and it centered on the realization of the powerful presence that Christ can have in your life. It brought you back to the confessional you had long neglected, and gave you a new appreciation of the Real Presence in the Eucharist, as well as the power of the Rosary and of features of Catholic life. This was a transforming event.

This event was tied to the form of music called Praise and Worship, with its characteristic repeating phrases and dramatic beats and sounds. You could hear it on the radio. You bought the CDs. You followed the Catholic bands of the new generation. And yet in your own parish, the music was very different. It was then and still largely remains that “traditional Catholic music” from the 1970s that had made such a splash in the years immediately following the Council but didn’t inspire you in the same way.

This was when you decided to apply your own musical skills to making a difference, usually for a Mass that the pastor set aside as Life Teen or the Youth Mass. No one said that there was anything strange about this. Sure, some people objected to the style of music, that it was more like rock music than sacred music. But this is really an argument about taste. Why should you be expected to adopt the tastes of your parents and their parents? Their music, too, was based on the style of their times, and it doesn’t speak to your generation. This new Praise and Worship music connects with your time and your own religious revival. To sing it for Mass is only a matter of sharing your gift with others, in response to the call for evangelization.

What about Gregorian chant? You grant that there is an appeal here. You among many have the impression that choosing a chant rather than a Praise and Worship piece is merely a judgment call, a choice based on resources and timing. It is possible to sing *Adoro Te* instead of something else. In so doing, you are doing what Vatican II called for. All the better, perhaps, is to add some good chords and rhythm underneath it and sing it in a more familiar style.

What is truly tragic is that no one has alerted you to the real significance of chant. It goes far beyond using a chant as one of the four songs you can pick for Mass. The Gregorian chant grew up alongside the Mass itself, one step at a time. Some chants might date from the early Church, which sang the Psalms exclusively.



The tradition developed as the liturgy developed over the next one thousand years as the parts of the Mass were organized and systemized into a liturgical year. There was music to go with the prayers. It was sung by martyrs and saints and heard in all times and all nations where the faith thrived for century after century.

The essential musical structure of the Mass as it emerged in the middle ages had an Entrance prayer that was set to chant. This is called the Introit. Sometimes you hear the first word of the chant used to describe the Mass of the day. This is where we get the terms "Gaudete Sunday," "Laetare Sunday," and "Requiem Mass." What is called the "gathering song" or the "processional hymn" is really a replacement for this Introit.

When Vatican II said that the chant should have primacy, what it means is that this Introit should be sung, and that when it is not possible to sing it, the preference for chant still remains.

It is true with other parts of the Mass too. The Offertory is not a musical intermission but the name of a real prayer that is set to music. The same is true of Communion. These are gorgeous chants. Even the Psalm has a melody in the chant books. The more you get to know these treasures, the more it strikes you just how unified the text and the music are. Their assignment is not at all random.

Often the melody clearly reflects the story of the text, so that the melody goes up when speaking of Heaven and down when speaking of humility. The complexity of them can be enrapturing the more you study them. You find beautiful presentations of Gospel narratives and parables. Each chant serves a particular musical function. The Introit and Offertory are processional chants, for example, so they have a forward motion with less elaborate musical expression on individual words. The Psalm chants are more for reflection, so they are long and elaborate.

The chant, then, is not just one choice among many. It is the music of the Mass itself, and the only form of music that truly qualifies by definition. It is attached to the Mass, a given part of its structure.

The chants mentioned above are called "propers" and they change week to week. There are also chants for the "ordinary" of the Mass, so-called because their text remains the same. There are parts for the people: Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Agnus Dei. You have heard a few of these, most likely the ones people have started to

sing for Lent. But the Church has given us fully 18 sets of these pieces of music, and you can see from their structure that they are intended for everyone to sing.

In the experience of our parish, people can pick up these ordinary chants rather quickly. They love singing them. They don't need accompaniment. They use the human voice alone, the very instrument that God has given all of us. This way there is an absence of elitism in this music. It needs no specialists who know how to play piano and guitar and drums. Actually, you don't even need the notation really. In fact, for the first thousand years of Christianity, the chant was sung without being written out in a way that could be widely distributed. It was learned and carried forward by frequency of use, the way people learn "Praise and Worship" music today.

There are other marks of chant that make it distinctive. It lacks a regular beat-style rhythm such as that we hear in rock, country, soul, blues, or any other style. It is what is called plainsong, so there is an underlying pulse but it doesn't cause you to want to tap your toe or dance. What it does do is lift the senses. It assists in the goal of all liturgy, which is to take us out of time and help us pray and listen to eternal things. In contrast, music with a beat keeps us grounded and internal.

Another feature of chant is its humility. A major problem with Praise and Worship music is that it tends to focus everyone on the person doing the performing. The bands are featured in the front of the church. The band members are showered with compliments. The singing style elicits a kind of egoism that probably makes you uncomfortable but is integral to popular styles. Chant is completely different because it does not seek to put the talent of the singer on exhibit. Instead, it is all about community prayer. The ego is buried. It doesn't unleash the self but rather requires a submission of self to holiness. In this way, it is like the faith: as St. John the Baptist said, "let me decrease and let him increase in me." This is what the chant does – what the chant requires.

You are right to suspect that chant requires a substantial change of pace. It is not just a matter of substituting one song for another. The chant leads to the embrace of a completely different approach to liturgy itself. The music serves the liturgy and the liturgy serves God. Where does that leave the singers and the community? Precisely where we should be: not as consumers but as servants.

You are all too aware that you were cheated out of a robust form of Catholicism when growing up, not by design but merely because of the unfortunate timing. These were difficult days. In the same way that many aspects of the faith were not well presented to you, the music of the Church has not been presented to you either. But you were born into these times, as a musician, for a reason. Perhaps you are being called to make a difference.

The Pope has made the restoration of sacred music a centerpiece of his liturgical goals. He speaks about the issue often, and has written so much about it. Perhaps it is time to consider that he is onto something profoundly important here.

The Pope speaks of “two fundamental types of music.” One he associates with Apollo, the ancient mythical god of light and reason. “This is the music that draws senses into spirit and so brings man to wholeness. It does not abolish the senses, but inserts them into the unity of this creature that is man. It elevates the spirit precisely by wedding it to the senses, and it elevates the senses by uniting them with the spirit. Thus this kind of music is an expression of man’s special place in the general structure of being.”

The other type of music he says is Dionysian: “It drags man into the intoxication of the senses, crushes rationality, and subjects the spirit to the senses.” Rock music may have merit outside of liturgy but in liturgy, the Pope writes that it is “in opposition to Christian worship” because its musical structure encourages people “released from themselves by the experience of being part of a crowd and by the emotional shock of rhythm, noise, and special lighting effects. However, in the ecstasy of having all their defenses torn down, the participants sink, as it were, beneath the elemental force of the universe.”

Where does Praise and Worship fit into this divide? Be honest with yourself and consider that it tends more toward Dionysius than Apollo. That doesn’t mean that you must stop liking it or singing it or performing it. But providing music for Mass carries with it a special obligation. Everyone is asked to make a sacrifice and defer to the ritual. Musicians are being asked to do this too. But with this sacrifice and obligation comes liberation and the discovery of the purity and beauty of the faith.

Every Pope since the earliest years has made a similar distinction between the sacred and the profane, and it was Pius X who


stated so clearly that the standard by which all music at Catholic liturgy must be judged is the chant.

That doesn't mean that chant is the only music appropriate for Mass. Renaissance composers sought to elaborate on the chant with new forms that retained its spirit, and many modern composers are doing the same. There is also a place for English chant and for newly composed Psalms. What the chant provides in these cases is a standard to measure its suitability. It is essential that it remain the foundational song of the Catholic Church, for if we don't know or understand the foundation, it is impossible to make any judgment at all.

If the enterprise of learning something completely new sounds daunting, keep in mind that no one can become completely familiar with all chant. That would take several lifetimes. We are all in a state of relative ignorance on this subject as compared with the mind of the Church and the experience of tradition. It is the same with Catholic theology: no one can know it all. But that should not stop us from learning what we can, practicing what we can, and doing our part to hand on the tradition to the next generation.

We have a job to do, a job that we have been assigned. We are not the first to have been given this task. At other points in history, the chant was nearly completely lost, buried in the confusion over passing musical fashion. It returned again and again through the prayerful efforts of faithful musicians who were willing to give of themselves to bring the beauty back and make it live in our parishes in glorious ways.

The first step is to encounter the chant and consider its beauty. "The encounter with the beautiful," writes the Pope, "can become the wound of the arrow that strikes the heart and in this way opens our eyes, so that later, from this experience, we take the criteria for judgment and can correctly evaluate."

Perhaps the chant will touch you as it has touched me and millions upon millions of others since the earliest years of the faith, and will continue to touch people until the end of time. If it does, you too might enter into the stream of living persons who have sung the chant and played some role in showing the world the most beautiful music this side of heaven. 

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# The Mass

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## Music for Real Parishes

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*The Parish Book of Chant*, released in 2008, has sold some 6,000 copies as of this writing, and already been adopted in four seminaries and 10 parishes, the most recent one of which will use it as the sole hymnal in the pews. Replacing the floppy throwaway with this hardbound collection is a dramatic move to be sure, but I'm convinced that no resource offers a greater hope for giving Catholic people back their own music from all of history.

The Missal portion of the book contains both the ordinary and extraordinary forms, while every piece of music in this book is the original Latin alongside an English translation. It contains eleven settings of the Mass for the Roman Rite, all the sung responses, and enough hymnody for the entire liturgical year.

In many ways, the book represents the cleanest possible break from the distinctive musical confusion of the last several decades of Catholic life. I'm not just referring the introduction of pop styles and beats in our holy spaces. There is a broader and more general issue: the chant offers us a chance to shelve the debate between the 19th century hymnody and Glory & Praise. People are weary of this fight.

The fights are not only over musical style but English words too. Words that some people regard as elevated and dignified strike others as archaic excuses for patriarchal imposition. There is no accounting for taste, and certainly no accounting for political outlook, which means that so long as these issues are the primary consideration in selecting music for liturgy, these fights will go on forever.

What is the resolution? Well, think of the music that takes place during Mass over which there is no real argument. I'm thinking of,

for example, the Our Father. It is plainchant that is consistent with a prayerful sensibility. When a parish sings the chant version, there is a unity in the parish, and why is this? One reason is that we know that this prayer is real prayer. It is preceded in liturgy by the words “pray as Jesus taught us,” a phrase that connects to times other than our own and reminds us of our obligations. The chant also seems to stylistically cohere with the rest of the Mass. More parishes these days are adopting the Latin of this prayer, which is one step better because it permits us to sing in the holy tongue of our faith.

We can learn from this model and extend it. The music that grew up alongside the whole Roman Rite is precisely of this sort. Chants have been in the hearts and minds of Catholics since the catacombs. What we have in *The Parish Book of Chant* is the core of this music that has been most sung, most loved, not by specialists or trained musicians, but all Catholic people in all times. It has sustained its power through every period of political, economic, and aesthetic upheaval. It has lived from age to age, passed from generation to generation, in the same way as the Mass itself. No other music can make a similar claim.

It has integrity all its own because it is not music to be introduced into Mass but rather music that is already part of the Mass, literally and/or historically. The text advantage of Latin, in addition to being the most beautiful language to sing, is precisely that it does not live as a vernacular: it does not change with cultural and political trends. For this reason too it does not invite controversy and debate over associations with this or that word, and doesn't call forth committees to rewrite it every few years to keep it trendy.

Now, there is no denying the one objection you hear about chant in Latin: people say that that they don't know what the words mean. There is a serious point here, not something to be dismissed out of hand. It has been a major source of frustration for many years—and we've all become used to it—that many of the Latin hymns are not published with their translations in English. I find it incredible that even recent books of Latin chant published by the major Catholic publishers offer no translations. Not telling people what they are singing is an excellent way to keep this music out of parish life!



*The Parish Book of Chant*, then, provides a translation of every Latin word. The translations chosen are not bloodless and modernized but much older and selected to elucidate the meaning of the text. Now, it's true that some people will still complain about the translations but the point is that the controversy is abated by the fact that people aren't actually singing the translations. The Latin is what is audible. The Latin is the relevant text. But now we have a complete guide to what is sung.


In some ways, it is a surprising and distressing fact that this is the first combination Missal/hymnal published in the English-speaking world that contains the large core of the people's chant music plus translations for every song. There have been a few books for reference and books for teaching but never a book for the pew. When you think about it, it seems like this would be the first book to choose. Why nothing like this appeared 100 years ago or so, and stayed constantly in print, is completely beyond me.

What finally inspired its compilation and publication was, of course, *Summorum Pontificum*, the motu proprio of Benedict XVI that liberalized the older form of the Roman Rite one year ago. The two forms now live side by side as part of our Catholic culture. With more and more parishes using both forms, we need printed resources that serve both, not only for financial reasons, but also to illustrate the link between the two. The ordinary form as usually experienced at the parish level is in dire need of a linkage the whole history of the rite. And the extraordinary form can benefit too by broadening the range of Mass settings used, and by reviving the use of Latin music for the people.

And speaking of finances, it boggles the mind to contemplate how many thousands of dollars per year that parishes spend on seasonal missalettes with all the tie-in goods of psalm books, choral books, organ books, guitar books, liturgy guides, indexes, and liturgy planning guides. Most all of this material is thrown away and ends up in the landfill, on a quarterly and annual basis. It's a wonder that environmental activists aren't surrounding our parishes in protest. Certainly those are who paying the bills for this waste have good reason to complain.

*The Parish Book of Chant* is a one-time expense and a very reasonable one. Looking at its quality and binding, I can easily imagine that it will hold up after decades of use. It has a look of

permanence and seriousness about it that we really need right now. Even if it isn't in your parish, it can be in your home and study, a means of connecting your private prayer life to that of saints and martyrs of all ages.

There are few people outside of a monastery that will know all these pieces. When I pick up my copy, I always find that I'm discovering new pieces, and getting a better feel for those that I think I know already. For the beginner, there is a good tutorial in the back. For others, the key is repetition and time—and it goes without saying that all this music holds up over repeated use, and probably will until the end of time. 

## Should a Parish Impose Uniformity in Music?

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The issue confronts every parish. Should parishioners experience different music at different Masses or the same at every Mass? I will tell you my view upfront: the attempt to create uniformity sounds good in theory but it nearly always leads to disaster in the present context. To see why, we need to understand the background.

This background concerns an issue that has emerged in the last thirty or so years. Sometime in the 1970s or 1980s a pastor set aside one Mass that was called the folk Mass or the youth Mass to experiment with all the new material being sold by the big publishing companies. Usually, this was prompted by a pilgrimage that some song leader took to a convention or workshop somewhere and came away impressed by how the jazzy stuff seemed to energize people in some way.

Meanwhile, not everyone in the parish agreed. They held on to their traditional hymns. In many parishes, two hymnals eventually populated the pew racks. Their different colors and styles symbolized everything. It seemed like two churches in one parish, but

everyone more-or-less lived in peace. The “divisions” in the parish make people feel uncomfortable but no one had the strong desire to do anything about it since, after all, most people were rather happy with the “divided parish” model.

At some point, disaster strikes. A new pastor arrives with a new musician or liturgy director in tow. They look at these hymnals and see how the parish is split and think: this has to go! How can we lead a parish without unity among the people of God? So they call all the musicians together and announce a new plan. There will be a single Mass setting in all Masses. We will all sing the same hymns each week. We will gather in committee to make decisions. The various choirs can do different music for offertory but otherwise, the central plan must prevail!

And what is this plan? It is to have some traditional hymns, some contemporary hymns, a standard Mass setting that splits the difference between styles, and each Mass will have a bit of piano, a bit of organ, a bit of guitar, and so on. This is what is called an eclectic approach. The musical results are not impressive, of course: it produces a mish-mash of styles that might be uniform across the parish but is un-united within each Mass. All channels for experimentation and progress are now closed. That’s the musical and liturgical cost.

The human cost is far greater. No one will be happy: not the traditionalists, not the contemporary-music people, and, in fact, none of the musicians. In fact, it will break their hearts, and that goes for both the people who love chant and the people who love to strum to the latest offerings from the commercial publishers. In the committee meetings, they might arrive at consensus but no one tells the truth in a committee meeting. The appearance of consensus is an illusion that evaporates minutes after it is over.

It might seem viable for a few weeks or months, and then the dam breaks. Musicians leave the parish. Choir members stop attending because no one wants to sing music he or she hates. The talented organist quits. The guitar players take off too. All that remain in the end are the unprincipled people with moderate talents who will do anything for a small paycheck. They lead a handful of indiscriminating singers. If this situation persists, the meltdown can become total and spread through the entire parish, so that people no longer know which Mass to attend to escape the

music they hate. The parish is united only in its seething anger at the interlopers who upset their ways.

People can theorize all they want about united parishes and bringing everyone together, but this is an apodictic truth that no one can change: Catholics are attached to particular Mass times and have absolutely zero interest in what happens at the Mass before or after. Each Mass time is associated with a specific demographic and culture. It was always true before the council (Low Mass, High Mass) and it remains true now. These modern-day Robespierres who attempt to change this might as well try to reverse the flow of the Mississippi.


What is the right approach? Diversity. This permits progress to occur in increments, peacefully. Each Mass time learns from the other. This allows for experimentation and when something doesn't work, it affects only one Mass so the damage is limited. Also, inevitably, competition develops between the crews of people working in specific times. This is a good thing actually, not a bad thing. Pastors who permit this to develop normally and naturally are wise indeed.

This is particularly important for young pastors who desire a change toward sacred music. Such a transition absolutely requires at least one safety-valve Mass that permits people who hate chant and plainsong, not to mention traditional hymnody, a chance to do their thing. People vote with their feet and their dollars, and the patterns of Mass attendance do not go unnoticed. Not to worry: change will come in time.

Another major benefit of letting different Masses do different things is that this approach takes power away from committees. Actually, the goal should be to never permit another committee meeting to take place. Such committees accomplish nothing. They should all be abolished and immediately. This saves time too. Everyone will be relieved.

Remember that it does no good at all to drive the strummers out of the parish. It is their parish too. They have made a contribution over the years and don't believe they have any less right to be there than anyone else. They need to be brought slowly and surely into the current environment in which sacred music is making great advances. Moving too fast and too comprehensively risks losing a chance to do wonderful things over the long term.

That still leaves the problem of Holy Week liturgy of course. What do you do about that? There is no final answer, but many parishes have found peace in specialization here too. Let the contemporary group do Holy Thursday and the chant group do Good Friday. That leaves only the Vigil but surely something can be worked out here year to year with gradual change toward the good.

Parishes are a bit like families in which change occurs steadily and even unnoticeably as people grow up and become older and wiser, and new young lives emerge to remind us that time moves forward and that we will must all eventually leave the faith in the hands of the next generation. 

## The Gathering Song

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What happens at the start of Mass in many or most parishes is this. People arrive and kneel to pray. In the best cases, there is a sense of quiet and this is very much to be valued.

Suddenly there is an announcement about the "Gathering Song." As the music begins, and you are called on, and sometimes badgered incessantly, to pick up your hymnal and sing and sing. It goes on for a few verses, and the mood is transformed dramatically and decisively from penance and quiet to the attempt at loud celebration. I say the attempt because most people just stand there annoyed.

Then the music stops. The priest is at the altar, though people didn't see him get there, since people's heads were buried in a book. The celebrant might try to continue the pseudo-exuberant atmosphere with a few friendly words that fall flat. Still, the penitential rite must and does begin. The shift is too dramatic. You have time for neither authentic celebration nor authentic penance, and this is vaguely annoying.

What you witness, in fact, has very little in common with the Roman Rite entrance as it has been understood.

The first option for entrance music in the General Instruction on the Roman Missal is to sing “the antiphon from the Roman Missal or the Psalm from the Roman Gradual as set to music there or in another musical setting.” The wording is confusing mainly due to translation problems (and confusing differences between the Missal and Graduale texts). But what it means no more or less than what has been the Roman Rite standard for ages: the entrance antiphon in Gregorian chant.

It has long been the practice to name the Mass of the day after its antiphon. Some of the better known ones are *Gaudete*, *Laetare*, *Requiem*, *Quasimodo*, *Jubilate Deo*, *Cantate Domino*, and *Viri Galilaei*. The entrance chant takes place as the procession in both the ordinary and extraordinary form. (The exception for the extraordinary form takes place during the main Sunday Mass, at which there is a sprinkling rite. In this case, the Introit is sung following the *Asperges* or *Vidi Aquam*.)

Today, not one in a hundred Catholic musicians knows this, much less can sing them, which is very sad, because this is a piece of our heritage that is missing from our parishes. Gone too, largely, is even the knowledge that the entrance music does have (and should have) some intimate relationship with the Mass itself.

Part of the reason is the proliferation of the phrase “Gathering Song” to describe the entrance music. I wish I knew where the phrase came from. Perhaps it came from the impulse that many people have that musicians should give people a kick when they get in the door, let them know that Church is a fun and happy place, make people glad that they are together with each other.

But here is the problem. It is a sociological fact that the primary reason Catholics go to Mass is not to see and be seen. They don’t choose their religion in order to be adopted into a “community.” They certainly don’t go for the music (that’s for sure). The Holy Sacrifice is the reason, and even if people don’t entirely understand that explicitly, the idea that we are there for deeper reasons than social ones is a pervasive understanding even today in the Catholic Church. A chipper, welcoming song just doesn’t connect with the Catholic sense of things.

“Gathering song” implies that Mass is something like a family reunion, a dinner party, a staff meeting, or some other people-centered event in which people just sort of show up and enjoy each

other's company. This is decidedly what Mass is not. The Mass is the great miracle. As a symbol of what is taking place, the position of the people is in procession as led by the priest to the altar and toward the East of the risen Christ. We are not "gathering" but spiritually processing toward the focal point at the center.

The phrase "gathering song" is not mentioned in the defunct and otherwise highly misleading American document "*Music in Catholic Worship*." It is not in the General Instruction. It is not in the Missal or any rubrics that I can find. In fact, the GIRM says specifically that "*after the people have gathered, the Entrance chant begins...*"

The phrase "gathering song" really must be completely retired from use. There is a sense in which the phrase "processional hymn" is actually better. But to press the point further, we should take note that the music chosen for this processional is not just arbitrary. It is rooted deep in history, and there is usually a good rationale for things such as this.


In the practice of the ages, the introit from the music of the Mass is sung by the choir alone. The people do not sing. Is this a bad thing? Apparently many people think so. But they should consider that the Introit connects people to both their heritage and to the liturgical day. The music is also beautiful. It facilitates prayer. And it enables the people to actually watch and thereby better experience the procession itself.

Another option is to choose a very simple plainsong piece sung to the entrance text, in Latin or in English (I really like the *Anglican Use Gradual*, which is free online). The people can respond at the Gloria Patri, without having to dig around in some book or program. Or they might just want to continue the sense of prayer without singing. The sense of contemplation and reflection are maintained. There is no interruption between the pre-Mass prayer and the penance rite.

Many Catholic musicians, recently enlightened about the existence of the propers, have come to the view that this approach is far better than the "gathering song" approach to the beginning of Mass. But their pastors or liturgy teams are prohibiting a change. They have some sense that the people expect to sing a hymn, not listen to the proper text sung. They fear making the change because it might prompt some sort of backlash.

The experience at our parish, however, suggests that this “pastoral” consideration is completely unfounded. It is not necessarily the case that people come to Church with the goal of ripping into a big and loud welcoming hymn just as soon as possible. It is sometimes a welcome relief not to have to sing but rather being granted time and space to look and listen; indeed, the lack of an imposed obligation to vocalize can enhance interior participation.

Pastors: please let your musicians try an entrance with the proper of the day and see what happens. The people gathered will, for the first time, watch as the procession takes place. Because of the fitting nature of the proper text, the “homiletics” of the day — which can be of a higher form than mere didactic teaching of a lesson — can begin long before the readings and the sermon.

The Roman Rite is not structured to have two bookends on either side, one called the gathering song and the other called the “Sending Forth” (to bring up yet another absurd phrase that has entered into our liturgical language). Let the Roman Rite be the Roman Rite. This is part of what it means to trust the liturgy to do what it is structured to do. 

## The Trouble with Hymns

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An email arrived from a choir director in Canada who reports making progress in her parish with a small schola of ten people. They are nearly rid of silly hymns and sing-songy Mass parts and have replaced them with simple chant-like settings.

But now she worries that a crack down is coming and suspects that the tool will be the regulation that concerns the *Catholic Book of Worship*. Unless it is in there, says the Conference of Canadian Catholic Bishops, it becomes suspect, and the burden of proof falls on the choir.

Part of the move to come up with a list of approved music is all about hymns. Hymns have been the hot-button issue ever since



they came to dominate Mass, and the propers and ordinary chants were largely left aside.

The fact is that hymns are not central to the Mass. There are very few places in the extraordinary form in which they are permitted by liturgical law. It's true that vernacular hymnody has long been in use in the Low Mass but this has never been approved by the norms. In the ordinary form, the tendency really went out of control to the point that most Catholic musicians believe that their job consists in picking four hymns for each Mass and then forgetting about it.

Probably the most damaging hymn in the liturgy is the processional hymn. The truth is that there is really nothing in the Roman Rite by that name. The hymn has taken the place of the Introit proper, the beginning word of which has long marked our liturgical calendar: Gaudete, Laetare, Requiem, Quasimodo, Jubilate, and so on.

The introit procession is a beautiful time of Mass. Using the Gregorian introit, we gain the first look at the main theme of the Sunday and we get the first look at the beauty of the liturgy. We can watch the ministers process to the altar, which establishes the forward motion of the liturgy to the East toward the risen Lord. The sights and sounds of the introit draw us into the spirit of the liturgy, which is unlike anything we find in the world.

You can see how replacing this introit with a "Gathering Song" completely changes the focus of the liturgy from God to the community. We are given a song to sing and a job to do other than pray, and it means that our heads are buried in a hymnbook rather than watching the procession. Already, the meaning of why we are there is shattered.

It's true that the Gregorian introit is currently too difficult for most parish choirs. In that case, you can take the proper text and add a Psalm tone to it, inviting the people to sing the Gloria Patri. The *Anglican Use Gradual* has an unfortunate name because all it does is apply the proper text to a Psalm tone. It is suitable as a transition measure in every parish.

Other times that use hymns are the offertory, communion, and recession. The first two here also have proper texts that have been overlooked. And recession is not really part of the liturgy, so that can be dispensed with too. In other words, if we are singing the

proper chants, in English or Latin, and inviting people to join in singing the ordinary chants, hymns can be nearly done away with completely, which would be very much to the benefit of the Roman Rite.

If we have hymn-dominated Masses, and if you have complete freedom of choice over which to pick, you are going to end up with something like the current malaise, which is a disunited Catholic world in which going from parish to parish is like traveling up and down the FM radio dial.

So of course there is an ongoing struggle to push for approved music as a means for stopping the ongoing jukebox approach to Catholic music. Many people favor the idea of an approved list but then struggle with what should or should not be included in the list.

I'm personally very skeptical of these moves to create a white list of approved hymns. The process is certain to be captured by the biggest market players, the existing cartel of Catholic music publishers who own the copyrights and can spread their royalty checks around enough to buy influence with the committees making the picks. The process itself invites petty corruption of the most absurd sort, but it can also do lots of damage, freezing artistic creativity and further entrenching the existing problem.

You only have to ask yourself what is more likely to be on the list of approved music: Catholic hits from the 1570s or the 1970s?

But let's say that the people who favor the crackdown actually get their way with an approved list that will end up pleasing no one. What is the choral conductor to do? Think of it as an opportunity to do what you should have already, namely stop relying on hymns and sing as much of the liturgy itself, while allowing either silence or organ solos or traditional motets to fill the rest.

In other words, the best way to avoid this problem is to use music for the propers and ordinary from music that is embedded as part of the Mass itself, thereby surrendering your sense of discretion over hymnody and avoiding the problem completely.

For a choir just starting out, I would suggest that you choose a very easy English and Latin ordinary setting and use Psalm tone propers in Latin or English. The *Anglican Use Gradual* (AUG) is a wonderful resource here and is free online. Anyone can sing them.

Remember that the translations here are not a problem since there is no officially approved translation of the sung propers. The propers that appear in the Missal are for spoken Masses, not sung Masses. As for the music, the tones in the AUG are the foundational tones of the Roman Rite and unquestionably sound.

For the Psalm, go to Chabanel Psalms and use a setting there. They are completely free and far better than the ones you find in the missalette. The website is [chabanelpsalms.org](http://chabanelpsalms.org). The ones we favor are simple Psalm-tone settings that are unmetred.

The same is true for ordinary settings. For English, you can use something like the easy Psalm-tone settings on [Ceciliaschola.org](http://Ceciliaschola.org). Again, they are free and have a long history.

For Latin, you can have your choice of 18 settings that are part of the *Graduale Romanum*, which is the music book of the Roman Rite. The Mass settings in that book (free online) constitute the book that is called the Kyriale. Again, many editions of this book are online for free download at [musicasacra.com](http://musicasacra.com). There is no music committee on the planet that can legitimately deny that all the music in this book is approved.

Finally, the music in *The Parish Book of Chant* is all some 1,000 plus years old, at least, all of which is as much part of our liturgical structure and history as the prayers themselves.

By making this music the foundation of what is sung week to week, you avoid the whole problem of bullying committees and white-lists of music that is at best incidental rather than central to the Mass in any case.

From the pastoral point of view, it very much helps that most all of this music is free, so that parishioners are not being charged for music editions. The pastor will appreciate this fact very much, and will be inclined to look more skeptically on some interloping chancery official who demands that the parish should shell out the big bucks to well-heeled publishers.

The first step on the road to liturgical renewal in our times is to rethink the hymn completely. This is the path toward freedom from the liturgical-industrial complex and a major step back to singing the Mass itself rather than continue to accompany it with music that it is usually at odds with what is going on at the altar.



## Working Our Way to the High Mass

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Many of the new Extraordinary Form (EF) Masses that have been started since *Summorum* have been Low Masses. In fact, I might estimate that this is true three quarters of the time. There are a number of reasons for this.

Many of the prayers in the Low Mass are said in a low voice, and the celebrants who are just getting started on this prefer it that way for obvious reasons. They don't want to be bombarded by Latin scholars or aggressive traditionalists telling them of their mispronunciations. It is hard enough to learn the rubrics attached to the Mass. It can be humiliating when lay people come up to complain about your competence in Latin.

Also, in parishes where the extraordinary form begins, there are not developed scholas available to sing the propers or sing large Mass settings. It takes years for scholas to get going and to develop the ability to sing the propers, and it also takes time for the people in the pews to get to the point that they can contribute to the singing of the ordinary.

So the Low Mass is a solution. Even if the celebrant considers a sung Mass to be the ideal, it is not usually possible at the outset. He must settle for the Low Mass. I don't see a reason to delay the implementation until the perfect aesthetic arrives. That can serve as an excuse for inaction.

This near inevitability cuts both ways. For some people, the Low Mass is a wonderful relief. They like the absence of racket, the prayerful atmosphere, and the ominous silence that is present throughout large swaths of the time for Mass. It is touching. Many people in preconciliar days actually preferred Low Mass to sung Mass for a reason. Quite frankly, the bad experience of recent years (and before) has burned out many Catholics from music in general! Understandably so.

On the other hand, for many people, the Low Mass embodies the very caricature of the preconciliar Mass, in which the people did nothing, said nothing, sang nothing, and were largely

“excluded” from “active participation.” Not that I agree with these criticisms (silence can be terribly demanding!), but I simply note this as a sociological fact. Also, people can feel lost, and have no clue as to what is going on.

I’ve known people who showed up to Low Mass for the first time and went away thinking: “No wonder they want to change the rite!” To me this is a tragedy.

What is the solution here? I’m not sure I have one other than to consider that *Summorum*, in some way, is making an impossible demand. The Mass is not something that can suddenly appear in a culture in its most complete form. In fact, there is a sense in which no Mass lives in isolation either from eternity or from temporality. It always exists within a culture that it shapes and is also shaped by it. This culture cannot be instantly manufactured in one place. It must grow over time.

There is so much to reconstruct here. People need patience to see it through. Our society is unhappy with this approach. We want all songs to be instantly singable, all food to be delivered through a window in less than a minute after we pay for it, and all information to come to us via a few clicks of the mouse. We are the least patient people in human history (and I’m the worst offender, too!).

The Mass, however, is the most aesthetically robust, intellectually challenging, theologically thick, and musically rich experience there is on earth. It takes time to reemerge. We are not to sit in judgment over it but rather let ourselves be conformed to it.


The High Mass will come but it takes work. The celebrant must become comfortable with it and be trained to sing the Mass. Scholas must appear and march through the levels of repertory a bit at a time, from Psalm tones through full propers. The people need to learn the ordinary chants in order to sing with the schola. This needs to go on weekly for a period of years.

What about those who will miss the Low Mass? Many parishes that have developed a full program offer both low and high, and this is a good thing. But let us not discount the teaching that the sung Mass is, after all, the normative form and the ideal. Music has been central to the whole of salvation history. When Christ was born, the angels did not sing in a low voice, and when Christ was crucified he did not read the Psalm in a low voice; he cried out.

Singing ennobles the liturgy. In addition, we miss so much information when the music is not there. The meaning of the introit text and the communion chant are enhanced by their musical shape. Also, these tunes are as much part of our own Catholic history as the text, and the music alone serves to unite us mystically with all those who came before. If we exclude the music, we exclude this aspect of unity too.

Part of the advantage of the liberalization of the EF is precisely that the EF is a beautiful home for the whole treasury sacred music that has been so neglected in the postconciliar years. It would be a tragedy for the EF to return in full force but in only half voice. In addition, it is clear enough from reports of days gone by that the Gregorian repertory had been unjustly neglected. People settled for Psalm tones or English hymns.

Surely we can do better this time around.

So let us do what we can but never forget to work toward doing what we must. 

## Happy Birthday, Graduale

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Last week in my parish, we celebrated the 100th anniversary of a book, but not just any book. It is one of the most glorious treasures of true art that the Church ever produced. It is the *Graduale Romanum* of 1908, reconstructed after several hundred years, and displaying the fullness of Gregorian chant for the whole world to see and sing. Following a Mass where the schola and the people sang music from deep in history, we gathered for a social and had a cake, wore silly party hats, and tooted party horns.

Why all the fuss? Here is music that is holy, beautiful, and universal in way that is beyond compare to music you will hear in your lifetime. It is also timeless: it sounds as fresh today as it must have sounded in the 8th century. The next time someone asks what music the Catholic Church uses for Mass, you can answer it in one

word: *Graduale* (or Gradual in English). The *Graduale* is the music book of the Roman Rite. It has been this way from the very early in our history.

The story of how this modern edition begins at the Council of Trent, and the period of reform that follow it. There was a revised Missal, Breviary, Catechism, and even Vulgate. It was inevitable that Trent would spawn a revision of the *Graduale* too. G.A. Palestrina of polyphonic fame was put in charge of assembling a team that would adapt medieval chant books to modern times. It turns out that though he was a great composer of polyphony, he was not a specialist in chant. He thought better of it and passed it on to others.

The fundamental principle of this reform was to let the text drive the music, so the music was adapted in every way under the view that this would make the text ever more clear. They took out the extended note passage on off-accent syllables. They rearranged words. They reconstructed musical phrases to be more predictable, going from low to high and back to low again.

Unfortunately, the application of rationalist principles to art almost always leads to egregious error. So it was in the late 16th century when the first Medicean *Graduale* was being produced. The process had been successfully and mercifully stopped by the intervention of the Spanish court, but it was picked up again later. The first edition of the Medici *Graduale* appeared in 1614. Some glorious art was in the process of being lost to fashion.

Meanwhile, there was a different trend taking place within the religious orders, which have often been spared the main trends in the Church at large. They all had their own chant books. There was monastic chant, Dominican chant, Cistercian chant, Norbertine chant, Franciscan chant. Here we had an uninterrupted chant tradition at work—preserving the past and continuing to develop it in continuity.

In the main Roman Church however we saw a long period of decline taking place. This was due to two main factors: the development of polyphonic music apart from its chant roots, and the corruption of that chant tradition in a manner that had little to do with its long tradition.

But let us be clear what we are speaking of here. We are not speaking about the chants of the Ordinary. We are not speaking about chants of the celebrant. Nor are we talking about the main

chant hymns, though all those were affected to some extent. The main area affected were the propers, which is to say the chants that are mostly sung by the choir alone. This is the core of the Gregorian repertoire and its most elaborate and rooted part. The chants most profoundly affected are five: Introit, Gradual or Tract during Lent, Alleluia, Offertory, and Communion.

In the 19th century, two trends were at tension with each other. Scholars and monks all over Europe undertook the serious effort to restore chant manuscripts. What would become the fountainhead of the reform effort was the newly founded monastery of Solesmes, which attained a high status because of the liturgical writings of Dom Gueranger. This monastery was refounded in 1833 and over the years attracted many of the greatest scholars. In addition, they accumulated manuscripts that permitted the chant to be restored.

At the same time, the Vatican was being pushed to authorize a single version of chant for the whole Church. In 1883, the Vatican settled on the Medici edition now being printed in Germany, so it became known as the Ratisbon edition. This was the corrupted edition that came out of Trent.

For Solesmes to prevail against the approved edition was a daunting task. It had to repeal the official status of the Ratisbon edition, and it had to overcome an entrenched practice in Cathedrals and parishes all over the world. The main musical establishment at the time was dominated by the growing Cecilian movement, which was attempting to purge music of its classical and operatic influences and replace it with reduced versions of Renaissance polyphony and chant, and the version of the *Graduale* to which they were deeply dedicated and firmly attached was the Ratisbon edition.

Impetus for reform came with Pius X's Motu Proprio on Sacred Music called *Tra le Sollecitudini*. It was (and is!) a wonderful document. Despite the fact that that Pope was also personally attached to the old Ratisbon *Graduale*, it was this document that gave energy to the movement for new and restored chant books for the Roman Rite, with the goal that the chant would be heard and sung in every parish.

The main players at Solesmes were Dom Joseph Pothier and Dom Andrew Mocquereau. They worked diligently, using 9th



through 12th century manuscripts, to build on the prior work of Dom Pothier to produce a new Vatican *Graduale* to replace the one that emerged after Trent. The Pope himself, now convinced that Solesmes was the institution to lead the effort, had imposed an extreme deadline for publication. The two great scholars split on what many people today would consider minor issues before the *Graduale* came to print. These splits and differences manifested themselves in long battle over copyright that wasted fantastic amounts of time and resources and delayed progress.

The new *Graduale* benefited greatly from technology and economic development, which allowed the wide circulation of printed books. After the *Graduale* appeared, Solesmes went ahead with its own version under the direction of Dom Mocquereau, and this one included rhythmic signs. More publications began to circulate, including the *Liber Usualis*. Eventually the reformed chant displaced the old Medicean edition. Progress in chant mastery continued through Vatican II, which took further steps to place chant at the center of Catholic liturgy.


The story of this reform effort belies certain stereotypes. It is not the case that older is better in this case. The further we look back to Trent, the more ahistorical the emergent chant is likely to be. The restorationist effort—to return to pre-Trent chant—was a 20th century phenomenon.

Nor is it the case, as is usually assumed, that “we used to sing chant in Latin but now we sing hymns in English.” The Latin chant that prevailed for hundreds of years was deeply flawed and was only restored 100 years ago, and the effort to bring chant to the people met with a long tradition of vernacular hymnody that had largely displaced chant.

Vatican II, in at least its musical intention, hoped to further this progress for chant against vernacular hymnody. This hope was fulfilled in 1974 with a new *Graduale*, rearranged for the ordinary form of Mass. The chants themselves were largely unchanged. The edition we use today is largely unchanged in its musical formation from the 1908 edition, which in turn reflects first millennium practice. The tradition lives!

We can learn from the Vatican edition that progress towards authenticity and liturgical ideals is a struggle that has existed in every age and will continue. The patience, scholarship, integrity,

and evangelistic efforts that were part of Solesmes's restoration should serve as a model for reformers today.

At the party, we sang the communion song *Simile Est* from the Graduale. It tells the story of the merchant who sold all he own to acquire the pearl of great price, which is the kingdom of heaven. The chant too gives us a glimpse of this kingdom here on earth. 

## The Datican Said It, and It Was Done

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From his writings and from his example of his papacy, it is clear that Benedict XVI's approach to leadership is different from what his critics expected. He resists the imposition model in favor of leading by example and teaching. He prefers a manner of governing that might be said to accord with a 19th century Catholic liberal perspective—one found in the works of, for example, John Henry Cardinal Newman: theologically orthodox but eschewing the temporal power and the authoritarian mode it represents.

*Summorum Pontificum* is an example: it imposed nothing but rather removed restrictions to tradition. And this approach, rooted in faith, has accomplished wonderful things for the Church, to the point that we are truly living in times of renaissance of best of what is beautiful and true.

And yet there are times when decisive action is called for, even that which prohibits in no uncertain terms. A case in point is the letter issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments on June 29, 2008.

“By directive of the Holy Father,” it began, “in accord with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, this Congregation . . . deems it convenient to communicate to the Bishops' Conferences the following as regards the translation and the pronunciation, in a liturgical setting,

of the Divine Name signified in the sacred *tetragrammaton*, along with a number of directives.”

It begins by explaining that the importance of integrity and accuracy in translations. It cites *Liturgiam authenticam* concerning the *trigrammaton* rendered in Latin as Dominus. It is an “immemorial tradition” not to pronounce the God of Israel’s proper name, written with four consonants of the Hebrew alphabet YHWH. This practice in “recent years” has “crept in.”

The text continues to cite St. Paul in this regard that “God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,” and that name is not Lord, for he continues to say that “Jesus Christ is Lord.” Other biblical cases are cited, with the conclusion that “from the beginning” the “sacred *tetragrammaton* was never pronounced in the Christian context nor translated into any of the languages into which the Bible was translated.”

The letter concludes with some of the most decisive language I’ve read from the Vatican in modern times: “In liturgical celebrations, in songs and prayers the name of God in the form of the *tetragrammaton* YHWH is neither to be used or pronounced.”

What did not happen is also striking. There were no special meetings or press conferences. There were no committees set up to study the questions for years and years. The directive was not preceded by public hearings or debates. There were no protests following the ruling. It just happened – and quickly.

The U.S. Bishops published the letter. The mainline Catholic publishers announced that they would pull music that used the word – and we all know which songs those are. They apologized that they had already gone ahead and print their missalletes without having made the change, but promised to make it next time around.

Meanwhile, the National Association of Pastoral Musicians has issued the following:


Last month the Vatican issued directives that the Hebrew name of God, usually rendered as Yahweh, is not to be pronounced in the prayers, readings, or songs of the liturgy. The new norms are based on long-standing Jewish and Christian traditions of not pronouncing the divine name and of substituting “the Lord” wherever it occurs in

the biblical text. Publishers will be removing or changing song texts making use of the name, but pastoral musicians should immediately refrain from using these texts until appropriate changes have been made.

Immediately refrain! Those are very strong words. We are not used to such words, not now and not as long as I can remember. What's more, we are not really used to such compliance. The usual tactic taken in the United States is to find loopholes in Vatican directives to permit the status quo to persist. One can usually find them. But not this time. The ruling was plain and clear and admitted no exceptions.

And, it was effective. And fast. There might still be some parishes that are using the offending songs but it is because they have yet to get the word. Mostly it is not outright disobedience at work. Among those who have heard, the rule has been obedience without question.

As someone who thinks of himself as a 19th-century liberal, I find this rather refreshing in many ways. Perhaps this is not a model for dealing with all issues. It is not a rule or a principle or an all-encompassing strategy. Nonetheless, there comes a time for decisive, non-nuanced edicts, particularly as regards the liturgy, particularly in our times of continued liturgical upheaval.

One point against this style of management is that it can produce a backlash that is worse than the problem the edict solved. There doesn't seem to be a risk of that this time. On the contrary, everyone I know is grateful for the clarification and to be done with all the bureaucratic and diplomatic processes that seem to cloud decision making. Sometimes, it is unavoidable: action must be taken. I suspect that there are many other issues to which this event can serve as a model for the future. 

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# The Texts

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# The Church's Open-Source Musical Culture

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In the golden age of Gregorian chant, the centuries in which it was written, developed, and applied, were times of imitation and innovation—and both were necessary and mutually reinforcing. Willi Apel and others have documented how tone formulas developed in many directions, as popular and useful devices became more elaborate, and how sounds that strike the ear in a certain way, signaling certain kinds of moods and thoughts, were reused in a different context to conjure up similar ideas. Within the developing musical ideas we begin to see a theology of music taking shape alongside the cognitive theology of text.

A good example is the Christmas proclamation, which we hear at midnight Mass. It tells the story of the prehistory of the Birth of Christ, using the tone usually distinctively associated with readings in the Hebrew scriptures. The descending fifth at the end of the sentence is the mark that tells us, even if we could never understand the words, that we are hearing prophetic words. Finally near the end, on the words “born of the Virgin Mary,” we encounter our first departure from this formula, with a sudden and striking rise in the pitch to the octave above the final note. Here we hear the fulfillment of the prophecy.

Thousands of chants have been closely analyzed by scholars to discover which parts were borrowed, which parts adapted from a previous and contemporaneous tradition, and which parts constitute innovations designed to more perfectly render the idea of the text. Those who sing these chants every day will discover something new in them every day, parallels within the Church year. Even casual singers have variously noted similarities between

formulas used on Christmas and those used on Palm Sunday — the former welcoming a King in the form of an infant and the latter welcoming a King back into Jerusalem.

This glorious pattern of repetition, imitation, adaptation, development, quoting, borrowing, and innovation—with tones and melodies all informing each other in complicated ways over a thousand years—became the rich and endlessly complicated tapestry that was inherited by the polyphonic composers of the second millennium.

The early composers of polyphony drew almost exclusively from the chant tradition, making explicit in the musical notation what had only been implicit in the acoustic effects of the chant sung in large spaces with a striking reverberation. Their compositions and practices further inspired Perotin, Obrecht, Machaut, Josquin, Dufay, and the hundreds of others working in the 15th and early 16th century. Their work was in turn a necessary precondition for the emergence of Victoria, Guerrero, Palestrina, Lasso, Tallis, and so many others in the new golden age of polyphony.

They quoted chants and quoted each other, and wrote compositions in hopes of inspiring others. There was a dynamic between them that was both competitive and complementary. An 8-voice setting that achieved some measure of fame would be followed up by another composer who copied the style and approach and went further with a 10-voice setting, followed by a 12-voice setting, followed by a 14-voice setting, and so on until we encounter such *fin de siècle* pieces as Tallis 48-part *Spem in Alium*. They were a competitive society that also practiced the greatest form of musical collegiality, at once dependent on the innovations of others as a precondition for their contribution.

The idea of a single *ex nihilo* composition, in which one solitary genius in one generation wrote a completed piece of music, was not an ideal that they knew or understood. To aspire to this would be been contrary to the idea of organic development, and no more justified than for one person alone to aspire to introduce a liturgical innovation. The idea was first to defer to the glory of what had existed and what did exist before daring to make one's own humble contribution to the edifice of what became the treasury of sacred music.



It goes without saying that polyphonic music of this period was freely copied, imitated, duplicated, borrowed, and performed in every suitable venue. This was not a threat to the composers or those who published their works but rather the goal, the highest compliment that true art could receive. It was not considered piracy to repeat what came from another source but rather an obligation, what Thomas Day calls the Unwritten Law of musical composition: "The icon painters prayed and fasted as they struggled to put the holy images into the exacting forms prescribed by tradition; you must try to do something similar." Even Beethoven himself obeyed it, having studied Mass settings dating back hundreds of years before writing his own *Missa Solemnis*.

For the nearly the whole of the development of music until the modern age, the idea of copyright—taking exclusive possession of a musical innovation and prohibiting imitation—was not only unknown and inaccessible via the laws of the time. It was something that was contrary to their vocations as composers, since their art was a gift to the Church and the world.

A side note on William Byrd here: It is a well-known fact that he and Thomas Tallis were granted a monopoly on the printing of music in England by Queen Elizabeth in 1575. The very existence of such a right and privilege was unprecedented and was extended with a political goal in mind of maintaining some control over music. The patent was to last 21 years, but if the goal was political control, it failed miserably. English schools and Churches continued to import music from abroad, and failed to provide the expected market for the music of Byrd and Tallis. It is a deep irony that one of the most prolific violators of the patent was Byrd himself, who privately printed and freely distributed music written for Catholic Masses and services that were banned by law. Byrd, holder of the monopoly in printing, became the biggest practitioner of music piracy, paying relentless homage to his forbears and writing music that was circulated in the underground, "peer to peer," we might say.

The chant itself was never subjected to copyright, as editions proliferated throughout Europe for the following four centuries. Every order and monastery produced its own edition, furthered its own tradition and developed it in subtle ways. Reformed music books circulated alongside the traditional ones. As printing technology

improved and more firms entered the production market, the entire field became wildly rivalrous, with competition between nations and within them, together with striking debates about chant technique, adaptation, notation, and far more. The open society of Church music benefitted from development in polyphonic technique as well, with relentless borrowings and imitations, theme upon theme, the sacred borrowing from secular and back again.

This glorious and productive society of musical development changed dramatically in the 20th century with the push toward applying a rigorous regime of patent and copyright to musical editions, including the chant itself. Because of a dispute between Solesmes and the lead influences behind the Vatican edition of chant, the leaders in the field took refuge behind national laws that restricted and hid their music, forbidding imitation and duplication and restricting dissemination and channeling all remuneration to a single source. No one really understood this in those days but the result created what might be called a widespread resentment against the supposed power and might of the chant monopolists.

In an age of digital delivery of nearly everything, it is easy to forget that the economic and technological means for universal distribution of printed matter only became the norm only a century and a quarter ago. Competitive editions of Gregorian chant were circulating all over Europe and America, as published by many different firms and printing companies. The *moto proprio Tra le Sollecitudini* set off furious work toward standardizing the chant, recovering what was lost during the Renaissance and producing editions for the entire world.

It was an inadvertently related development that the issue of copyright also vexed the production of the new *Graduale Romanum*. The Solesmes monastery was using new rhythmic signs as a unique feature of its editions, even as the Vatican edition, produced under the leadership of the past Solesmes chant master, rejected the use of these signs. The battle played out in a mutual and highly confusing dispute over intellectual property. After the 1908 *Graduale* from the Vatican, there would be no more editions from Rome, leaving the monastery as the primary producer of

chant. It was an institution that had become unusually protective of its exclusive use of its markings and therefore its editions.

In time, the incredibly brilliant volume called the *Liber Usualis* would become the world standard for use in parishes and cathedrals, and it was produced by the monastery in cooperation with Desclée printers in Belgium. Periodic litigation broke out in the early years that established a precedent that stuck for many decades: there would be no copying of the chants. Even the fonts that went into making the chants were held as proprietary, under the laws of France, which had to be respected in the U.S. due to new international copyright conventions. The result that no one in particular intended but that was nonetheless undeniable: a system-wide limitation on dissemination set in at the very moment when the chant should have achieved universal availability.

What was the alternative to the Gregorian repertoire? In the effort to provide one for choirs who couldn't handle the demands of the full repertoire, publishers got busy and produced a variety of options, the most common of which depended on Psalm tones. Of their public domain status, there was no doubt, and hence no fear associated with publishing them, singing them, copying them, and disseminating them far and wide. If we understand something about the relationship between open- and closed-source materials, it should not surprise us that Psalm-tone proper became the norm for sung Mass. They were easier, of course, but, just as importantly, they were open source and non-proprietary.

In his book *Where Have You Gone, Michelangelo?* (1993), Thomas Day, in passing, notes that the Solesmes monopoly on chant created an "undercurrent of bad feelings," which he suggests might have contributed to what happened to Church music in the 1960s and 1970s. The new music of the folk composers was completely open source. There was a thrill associated with overthrowing an entrenched establishment. Their music was new and fresh, and its means of delivery was entirely different. It was not copyrighted or even published in the conventional way. It was written by hand, and commonly mimeographed and passed parish to parish, and also transmitted by ear.

This was part of the cachet of the music itself, and central to the idea that this was "folk" music even though it obviously was not folk music in the sense that the term was used. However, it was

folk music in the same way that chant had been: its distribution was informal and its dissemination was controlled not by a marketing apparatus but rather by word of mouth.

What gave rise to the new music were the needs of the moment. What inspired the compositions were the tunes that were in the air at the time, from all sources but mostly secular ones. What led to its spread was the desire of the people for something different, more organically connected to the social context they knew. In this way, there is a sense in which the “folk music” of the 1970s had more in common with the early chant music—speaking institutionally here—than the “sacred music” of the establishment of that day.

After the promulgation of the new Mass in 1970, it would be fully four years before Solesmes, which by now had been charged by the Vatican with maintaining the Church’s chant book—would come out with the *Graduale Romanum* for the new Missal. It was expensive and in a language hardly anyone knew. Its appearance made no dent whatsoever in new trends in Church music. An English-language version didn’t appear until 1990.

Already by the mid 1970s, however, the conditions were in place that were planting seeds that would lead to the current reversal in the fortunes of sacred music. What happened is what everyone knows about today: the folk music pioneers found new publishers, who applied all the existing rules concerning “intellectual property” to their music, and a lucrative and large new publishing establishment grew up around this music. Old publishers died and a new establishment came into being. Litigation followed, as spies for the large publishers started entering parishes and riffling through their music collections, discovering photocopied works everywhere that violated copyright terms. Judgments followed, some in the multi-million dollar category. The open-source folk music of yesterday became the closed-source establishment music of today.

Today every parish musician knows about the copyright quagmire, which rivals and exceeds anything that existed in preconciliar times. Parishes pay for expensive licenses. Publishers brag about their immense collections of copyrights. No one dares publish a hymnal without jumping through the intellectual property hoops, and this can take many years. Even more absurdly, publishers themselves go to great lengths to publish new and strange

arrangements of traditional public-domain tunes solely for the purpose of re-copyrighting them in an attempt to recoup ever more in the form of royalties. These days we can't even imagine a profitable Church publishing firm without the dominant revenue stream being generated by licensing fees.

That it is a quagmire is beyond dispute. What is not often understood is the big picture: any industry that enters into this thicket will, over time, find itself artistically stagnating and dying. Why is that? Because the music published can no longer benefit from the critical source of dynamism and life within art: imitation, widespread and people-driven dissemination, and innovation without the context of an existing milieu. There can be no art without these forces working—vibrantly and constantly.

Intellectual property regimes operate on a premise that is a complete myth: that of the lone creator who finishes a masterpiece that is a hermetically sealed off from all outside influence. Instead what we have is a tired establishment, legally sealed off from an important source of life and dynamism, which goes a long way toward explaining how it is that something so spectacular and beautiful throughout history—the music of the Catholic Church—could be so frozen in time, almost like a repeating loop of sound that lulls the whole Catholic world into a stupor.

There has never be a time in all of human history in which the dispersal and dissemination of music for Catholic worship has been so easy, so inexpensive, so efficient. It is a striking irony of history that mainstream music today is caught up in a legal thicket so complicated and entrenched that it has not been able to take advantage of the new environment. On the contrary, Catholic music publishers have taken a cue from the established film and music publishers and waged a war on piracy, which is really a war on the great vehicle of artistic creativity.

In the heyday of Glory & Praise music at Mass, the well-trained and serious musicians who favored a restoration of Gregorian chant and polyphony largely worked in alienated secrecy, afraid even to publish their own settings of Psalms and chant editions even if they could find a publisher. The old publishing institutions of the preconciliar days were long gone and the new ones were unfriendly to their work. There was a doubt about whether there

was a financially viable market for their work, but that wasn't the only concern. Issues of copyright weighed heavily on them.

I can recall correspondence with some from the 1990s. These were masters of music at cathedrals and universities who lived in fear that someone would discover that they had put an episema over a punctum, or added a dot at the end of a phrase, and the fear was that these small dashes and lines were held by someone somewhere as a proprietary font, and that they would be risky lawsuits by making their editions available even through email.

What was unknown then, and what only came to be known, in the last several years, is that the Gregorian editions of the past had long since passed from the proprietary stage into the open-source stage of publishing. Inquiries with the Library of Congress yielded results that most any intellectual property lawyer might have expected: the chants are the whole property of the Church, and the only editions that remain proprietary are those published in recent years since the Second Vatican Council. What applied to the music also applied to preconiliar texts: because most of them were not renewed in copyright, they had become the common property of all Catholics, which made them uniquely suited to delivering in the digital age.

But let's take a step back and look at the origin of the new world of digital polyphonic downloads. Music of the 16th century is available as never before, with regular parishes able to instantly access vast amounts of the music of Palestrina, Byrd, Tallis, Victoria, Josquin, and many others, and pay no fees whatsoever. Yes, there are mistakes in these editions, and, yes, edited volumes available for purchase are generally more reliable. But what matters here is that these digital editions have brought the music recommended by the Church out of obscurity and into the mainstream. They have increased the range of choices and made the world aware of options.

When our own choir began, we would otherwise not have known about this music or where to find it. It would have been a matter of spending endless hours in the library photocopying or spending parish money on editions that we may or may not have been able to sing. With many online sources of polyphony, we were able to print hundreds of pages and sort through them, finding the best pieces that we could for the parish choir and its

abilities. We ended up creating our own music library on CeciliaSchola.org that many other parishes have used. Again, this gives immediate access at zero expense to the parish. The contrast to the methods and means of the mainstream publishing houses is striking.

This model of distribution began with polyphony but expanded to chant. MusicaSacra.com uploaded and made available its first *Kyriale* in 2005, the eighteen settings of the Mass that had been handed on from the middle ages, now available to the whole world, including the poorest of the poor. This was also completely new. The same occurred with the propers: many editions of the *Graduale Romanum* were newly available, having long since past into the common property of the Church. Hardly a week goes by when new editions aren't made available and downloaded all over the world.

An interesting development is the push to get musical settings of English propers online. As of this writing, there are fully seven complete editions of English propers available for free download. Some are Gregorian in style. Others use Psalm tones. Others are newly composed. Some use the Gradual text and others use the Missal text. They are all worth looking at and experiencing. And, again, because of the medium of delivery, choirs and directors are in a position now of being able to look at the full set of music and try it out in real time.

There can be no doubt that this method of distributing Church music is the path ahead. This is true for ordinary settings, proper settings, hymns, and new polyphonic compositions as well. In the area of Psalms, the internet has transformed the most vexing problem facing Catholic musicians into the greatest opportunity. Chabanel Psalms now offers as many as ten settings of the Responsorial Psalm for choirs to use, and almost all are a vast improvement over existing published volumes from the mainstream houses.

All of this new activity has coincided with the liturgical flower prompted by *Summorum Pontificum*, which provides equal rights to the older form of Mass and blasts open a massive and extended tradition that had been previously closed to us. This knowledge will never again be put back in the bottle. It is out there and spreading. The Catholic musician will no longer be contained by the narrow offerings by two or three publishers living off the proceeds of




material written after 1972. The whole history of Catholic music has been opened up.

There are many challenges ahead. One that is often brought up concerns how, in a world of open sourcing, will composers be paid? The model here is essentially the same one from Catholic history: their services are purchased not through royalties but honoraria. Other innovative approaches involved high-quality recordings available through paid downloads. There is the possibility of cross-subsidizing through advertisement, retail purchases of related products, and other innovative strategies that cannot be foreseen.

Many historical and institutional factors have contributed toward restoring sacred music as an open-source community in which imitation, free distribution, widespread dissemination,

and the resulting dynamism are the characteristic features. In this respect, we are seeing a restoration of the status quo ante that gave rise to sacred music over 1600 years, and once again gave a boost to the folk music movement of the 1970s. Here we see growth, evangelism, and excitement as never before, and it stands in marked contrast to the gloomy art world of the established music companies who live off the victories of the modern past, forever selling the same tired hymns and settings and trotting out the folk performers of the past to somehow breathe life into a genre of music that has long past seen its day.

A truth that the innovative (if often misguided) Catholic musicians of the early 1970s realized long ago is that the battle for the musical soul of the Catholic Church takes place one parish at a time, and resists being imposed by large establishments no matter what their legal status and claims. In a time when all media is being revolutionized by digital delivery driving costs of use and dissemination toward zero, we see technology being used toward the formation of a new form of Catholic musical evangelism, a new form that is very much like the old form: it stems from the conviction that the music of the faith is holy and universal and should be experienced by all the faithful in all times and places. 



## The Problem with Options

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The normative music of the Mass before and after Vatican II and the promulgation of the New Missal remained the same. It was and is Gregorian chant, a point that was firmed up in the documents of the Council itself. Some chants were moved around to accommodate the new calendar; some modifications of the chant were made in light of new scholarship. But other than that, the songs in the books remained the same.

The reason that this is such a surprise for people is that undeniable and shocking reality that many things seemed to change after the new Missal now called the ordinary form. There was folk music, rock music, calypso music, sweet songs from here and yon with words grabbed from anywhere and everywhere. A massive new publishing industry sprang up to publish not the music of the Church but rather new compositions with new texts for use in Mass.

How can both be true? You might at first think it was merely a matter of disobedience. There is some truth to that. Two kinds of music are specifically named by *Sacrosanctum Concilium* as appropriate for Mass: chant and polyphony. That is the letter and certainly the spirit of the music legislation of the Council. By jettisoning chant completely, publishers and musicians were certainly violating the spirit of Vatican II.

However, there is another factor, and it relates to the core issue that changes concerning music for the new Missal. In addition to chant propers for Mass, which remain the first choice, the operative legislation now, for the first time, in the history of the faith, permitted unspecified "other appropriate songs" to replace the propers at sung Mass.

On the face of it, this doesn't seem to be a big deal. One can easily imagine hymns set to the same themes as the propers, and one wonders why this should create such a stir. No one imagined that the proper texts would go away completely and that the obligation to do the propers would vanish so completely that even a USCCB document on music could appear in 1983 (now defunct) that showed no awareness that there were even such things as propers.

This was coupled with a few other destabilizing features of the new Missal. New propers were written for spoken Masses and it

was these, and not the *Graduale* propers, that were printed in the Missal. Also the Psalm was completely changed with the addition of a new option: instead of the Gradual Psalm you could now sing the much shorter and reduced “Responsorial Psalm.” Finally and strangely, the new Missal just dropped the Offertory from the printed Missal. It still exists in the *Graduale* but the celebrant would never even know about it.

These were strange features of the new Missal but they are not the fundamental reason that the sound and shape of the liturgical music went through such upheaval. The core reason was the option to replace propers with something else at sung Mass. No guidance was given. It was left to the discretion of musicians and liturgists and fashion and anything else.

Now, this introduces an often unwelcome aspect of the human personality: the desire to use any and every venue to express ourselves on our own terms. There are times for individual expression (Facebook, MySpace, graffiti) and times when this is not a good idea (Mass, for example). The invitation to use Mass as a time for musical creativity unleashed the musical ego as never before.

People who couldn’t perform anywhere else begin to see the Catholic Church as a place where they could have a captive audience much larger than if they set up on the sidewalk. People with peculiar personality disorders that demand constant ego stroking latched onto the new permissions to do their thing and bask in the glory that followed. It really has become an occasion of sin.

This is a serious problem since humility is a core value of the Catholic liturgy. It requires deference to an order larger than ourselves and a burying of the ego. It requires work and discipline to do what the Church is asking. If new permissions open to simply avoid the work and do whatever you want to do as an option, all ideals get ploughed under in favor of laziness and worse.


I’m coming around to agree with Lazslo Dobzsay on his argument that completely shocked me the first time I read it: the option to do something as a replacement for propers in Mass needs to be completely done away with. That doesn’t mean that you can’t sing something in addition to propers, but something needs to be done to restore the musical ordering that has always been a feature of the Roman Rite.

In addition, it is increasingly clear that the results were the very opposite of what the fathers of the Council intended to do. Gregorian chant was given primacy as a way of pushing away from a world in which Low Mass was accompanied by a four-hymn sandwich. They believed that they were working toward making every Mass a High Mass with sung parts. *Musicam Sacram* of 1967 even went the full distance of providing a plan.

The point was that the role of the vernacular was to decrease and the role of the sung liturgy — the actual liturgy and not some hymn chosen by the music regime — would increase. This also accounts for the strong interest in having people sing the parts of the Mass that belong to them. It was to be a fulfillment, not a negation, of Pius X's call for Gregorian chant to be universalized in all parishes.

There are of course many reasons why this didn't happen — cultural changes among them — but the great loophole was precisely this permission to replace propers with a song of the music director's choosing.

We don't have to wait for a repeal of the plank that permits "another appropriate song" to replace the propers. We can sing these right now and do something about the problem. Pastors can insist on propers immediately, starting this next Sunday. They can be sung in English, according to a Psalm tone as a first step. There are many options out there in both English and Latin, with Gregorian propers as the shining jewel of the musical repertoire, and these should be the goal of every Catholic musician, without exception.

Mistakes were made but they can be corrected. 

## The Mass Translated at Last

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Having spent some time with the new texts of the Mass from ICEL, and one can't but breathe a sigh of relief. We've gotten so used to a text that departs from the Latin to a shocking extent. It requires something of adjustment to adjust to the new versions, realizing

that we can finally attend Mass and participate in an actual English version of the universal Missal written in the holy tongue.

We will actually be using the words of the actual creed. We will say a real translation of the Gloria, one that actually follows the text line for line, word for word. Our responses in the dialogues will actually parallel the Latin.

What we've had up to now has can't really be called a translation at all but a new text entirely, one cobbled together by folks who somehow believed that they were smarter than the whole of history that had put together the Latin text. It sort of gives one chills.

Somehow it is more alarming in retrospect, now the poor rendering is being replaced, that we lived with this stylized paraphrase for nearly forty years. I know we should let bygones be bygones, but those who had a hand in giving us such weak excuses for translations in the past really are without excuse. The arrogance of that generation or that committee or whoever is responsible boggles the mind.

There is a way in which the new translation represents a much-welcome and thorough repudiation of the immediate past. That the bad rendering lasted so long underscores how difficult it truly is to change things in the Catholic Church. This is usually a good thing, except when matters get on the wrong track. At the same time, tremendous credit goes out to those involved in pushing for and getting the changes made. The frustrations and battles they faced must have been immense, but what a glorious victory in the end!

Four distinct opportunities present themselves:

1. With a new text comes a pedagogical obligation, which also means a tremendous opportunity. An entire generation has lived amidst a separation of their liturgical language from the universal language. It wouldn't surprise me to find out that many Catholics, even most Catholics, are today unaware that their Mass text is not an autonomous thing but actually has a direct link to a parent language that is normative.

The new text will be described as a better rendering of the Latin. This alone serves to heighten consciousness that the English itself, that the national language of the Mass, is accountable to something else that is ancient and universal. This fact alone will

help re-orient people in terms of how they should judge what takes place at Mass: not in terms of their own needs and cultural expectations but rather the requirements of a universal liturgy.

2. In parishes that are accustomed to merely saying the text, pastors will find that a change will create confusion as people stumble over the words of the Creed, for example. Actually the best way to teach a new text is to make it into a song. This is why so much children's pedagogy uses music to teach: it helps everyone remember. Everyone learns differently, of course, but in my own case, memorizing Latin—and English for that matter—is far easier when I have a song in my head. Even memorizing the Latin Ave Maria, Pater Noster, or mealtime blessing, proved a challenge for me until I knew the music. So if parishes are not currently singing, this is a great chance to get people singing and also teach the new text.

The GIRM presumes that the Credo as something that is sung as the first option but I can't remember ever hearing it sung in any parish I've been to. Maybe the new texts will inspire a change in the practice of merely saying the creed. As the Second Vatican Council said, "liturgical worship is given a more noble form" when the texts are sung.

3. New texts will require new musical settings. Many will regret this. Many will see a profit opportunity in the change. Actually, we have here a chance to not only embrace the true text of the Mass ordinary but also the musical sense that is intrinsically connected with it.

**Problem:** Many of the Mass ordinary settings that are in use in American parishes have no connection at all to the liturgical aesthetic. They are borrowed from popular commercial sounds and beats. They show off the choir and instrumentalists and seek to engage people by presenting catchy tunes and rhythms. What is lost here is the greater purpose of music at Mass: to engage us more fully in the Mass itself which seeks to take us to God.

**Solution:** The most ancient and effective musical approach here is plainsong. The texts under consideration are not poetry but prose. Plainsong lets the prose sing in a natural and normal way without the force-fit of musical metrics. This kind of music also elevates the senses and directs our attention upwards. It keeps the peace within the liturgical space and directs our hearts and minds

toward prayer. Plainsong is integrated with the chants of the priest so that Mass is not an hour-long song sampler but an aesthetically seamless period of solemn spiritual drama.


There would be no great loss if all this music were to vanish, I'm sorry to say. Yes, there are always exceptions but on the whole, it is just not suitable. In an odd way, the music that went with the poor textual renderings were an integrated package: both departed substantially from the intrinsic qualities of the Roman Rite.

Nor is there any reason for parishes to shell out the big bucks for new music. As a service to American Catholics, the Church Music Association of America will be making available free downloads of suggested ideas for the Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei. They are based on Gregorian, Ambrosian, and psalm tone settings. In the coming weeks and months, they will appear along with audio samples. They will be copyright free (but for the text; ICEL still insists on copyrighting the Mass text).

4. Some pastors and parishioners may find themselves frustrated at the change and wary about the idea of plunging into another English setting. People have limited patience for liturgical language change, so why not just avoid the issue altogether by embracing the Latin text? Those who have already done so won't have nearly the transition problems of parishes that have not. The beauty of the Latin is that it has not and will not change. What the Church sang in the year 1000 it still sings today. Here is the timeless workaround to continuously shifting vernacular.

Some new texts will need to be taught regardless. One might as well go the full way and do what we should have done all along. After all, both the Second Vatican Council and the GIRM both say that everyone Catholic needs to know the basic parts of the Mass in Latin. All the music for them is available for free as well. There is a pastoral benefit too. At first people don't like learning the Latin; there is a sense in which learning all new things is slightly painful. But after a time, the people in the pews develop a sense of accomplishment once they can sing it and stop stumbling over the words. One might say that they take pride in it, and the very act of singing the Latin increases our sense of being part of something larger than our own time and place.

Once the text is taught through a simple song, a new world of music opens to us. The choir can begin to sing polyphonic settings of the ordinary of the Mass, and people will recognize the way the Gregorian melodies are related to the polyphonic tradition. If you have never explored 16th century liturgical music, you will be astonished at how much is available to you. You will see why it is that the Second Vatican Council singled out this music for special mention as appropriate to the Roman Rite. There is nothing in English to compare.

So there we have it: an opportunity to connect with the true text of the universal Mass, to sing the rite, to sing with better music, and so finally embrace Latin as our primary language of worship. We have been given a wonderful gift. 

## The Trouble with ICEL

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Most of the focus on the translated Mass texts of the future has concerned language issues. But regardless of what is finally chosen and printed, a very serious issue has not been part of public discussion: namely, the rights of people to print and distribute these texts online and in new musical settings.

To the naïve among us, this probably doesn't sound like an issue at all. These are the texts of the Mass that belong to all. Part of the Church's evangelistic mission is to promote and distribute the theological import of them, and to inspire creativity in their liturgical presentation. It's one thing to claim exclusive rights over presentation, art work, or commentary. But the required texts themselves? Surely they are the property of all.

The International Commission on English in the Liturgy doesn't see it this way. In part this is an unintended fallout from vernacularization. The Latin texts are age old and a gift to the entire world. But by authorizing vernacular translations, the texts of Mass themselves become bound up with national copyright laws in which the



state collaborates with private producers to create and protect publishing monopolies.

By way of background, this kind of copyright didn't formally exist in the English-speaking world until Queen Mary and then Elizabeth used them for purposes of securing political and religious loyalty toward the Crown and against those musicians or clergy or publishers who might have other loyalties.

These actions set a new precedent in the intermingling of church and state. Producers awarded such exclusive privileges appreciated the system but those who were not merely found themselves ensnared with the law. The copyright system, when used in this way, became an intrusion on the freedom of conscience and speech as well as religious liberty in general.

Nowadays, few know of this background. But everyone in Catholic liturgical publishing is aware of ICEL's policies, which can be summarized in the following statement. "Any publication produced for sale which contains ICEL translations is subject to a royalty or flat fee." Now, the fees may not seem to be high but small margins of this sort of publishing tax can make the difference in whether or not to go ahead with publishing. This is especially true with today's astonishingly tight financial margins.

The producers of the text of the Mass are effectively taxing us all just to use them. This constitutes a massive violation of the whole spirit of the liturgical enterprise.

Now, there are conditions under which ICEL does not charge. This is for what is called a "one time use" by an institution or congregation. Examples would be "convention program booklets, jubilee Masses, ordinations, baptisms, first communions, confirmations, funerals, weddings, etc." One time use means, presumably, in some way that the program cannot be reused, to use a literal rendering. But what if you post it online for, for example, the parish to see and download? Is that one-time use or more? It is hard to say.

The incredible fact is that ICEL does not anywhere in its policies explicitly account for digital posting or rendering of its texts. But we do know that last year, a British blog called "Hermeneutic of Continuity" posted the proposed translation. Here is the message he was sent by ICEL:



It has come to our attention that the proposed translation (Gray Book) of the Order of Mass circulated in January 2006 by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy has been included on your blogspot (the—hermeneutic—of continuity.blogspot.com). This translation has been produced without the Commission's permission and in violation of the ICEL copyright. We ask therefore that the text be removed immediately from the site.

This case set a precedent and scared the wits out of bloggers the world over, who were terrified even to quote the new texts for fear of getting in trouble. Now, most Catholics who would otherwise publish these texts have good hearts. They want to get the word out and discuss them. But ICEL has said no.

What about when the texts are finalized? The presumption is that the current policy will hold. The copyright policy will be the same, and the ambiguity concerning online posting will continue. This is a serious issue and a major problem that needs to be addressed, and soon, before tragedy ensues.

By the way, the ambiguity is an issue not only for those who would give away their music, for example. What if someone wants a bound version of this music? These days it is as easy as providing a click-through to permit people to purchase a bound volume printed on demand. Are we supposed to believe that only this action would cause ICEL to sit up and take notice, slapping around the individual or institution and fining them for royalties?

It is not clear, but you can see how a resolution of the problem of non-commercial distribution is not enough. No clean line exists any longer between commercial and non-commercial uses. It's not like we have philanthropists on one hand and greedy capitalists on the other. Commercial use really amounts to a mutually beneficial exchange that has the desire to serve at the very root of the action.


The blogger who was harassed complied with ICEL's demand but wrote:

I know that many good priests and lay people share my concern that the enforcement of copyright by ICEL over the past decades has not served

the Church well. The restriction of publishing rights to one or two publishers has given rise to a monopoly with the result that only poorly produced books are available for priests to use in their parishes.... There are many Catholics who would be willing to finance the production of good quality, beautifully produced Missals were it only possible to do so without falling foul of copyright restrictions.

He is speaking of the English case but it is also true in the United States. Only a few firms seem to be able to afford to become liturgical publishers. And those that can are the source of many of the problems that the new translations are designed to overcome, namely liturgical deviations from the history and practice of the Roman Rite. In other words, if only these publishers are able to overcome the barriers to entry in the market, we are going to get new texts in the same old musical package that has proven to be too much of a change. The attempt to bring about change will be foiled and solely because of a copyright policy.

Online digital publishing and printing has led to fantastic innovations in copyright policy as well, simply because the old models no longer work in a digital world. Creative Commons offers many opportunities for retaining a proprietary relationship with texts (attribution) while still permitting a generous use, even when it involves a commercial relationship, as the blog *Cantemus Domino* points out. The Catholic faithful have a very strong interest in making sure that ICEL adopts some new policy in this regard.

Will this mean less money for ICEL? Certainly. I'm sorry about that. But right now, its "royalties" are coming from poor parishes that cannot afford them—for it is they (their parishioners) who ultimately pay the price for them. There has been speculation that ICEL will shut down after this task is completed. That is all the more reason to stop the flow of money from the pockets of average Catholics into the coffers of these extra-ecclesiastical outfits and permit fair and open rivalry among all those who want to contribute to the Church's liturgical life. For the good of the Church and the faith, something must change and now. 

## Tethered Psalms

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The Catholic News Service (CNS) reported that the US Conference of Catholic Bishops have approved the Revised Grail Psalter as the new translation for Responsorial Psalms in the English Missal. Close observers of the translation controversies, such as Helen Hull Hitchcock of Adoremus, report that this translation is superior to previous versions of the Grail because it conforms to the mandates of *Liturgiam authenticam* (2001) to reject verbal contortions driven by concerns over “inclusiveness.”

However, a problem immediately became apparent in the ownership of the texts themselves. Their copyright is held jointly by Conception Abbey in Missouri, which produced the new translation, and The Grail of the UK, whose book of Psalms is published by Harper/Collins, which controls rights. A worldwide agent for the new translation is GIA Publications, a highly capitalized, private, for-profit corporation that is the leading publisher of music used in Catholic Churches in the United States.

GIA is also known for its highly restrictive permissions policies and high royalty fees. Extreme fees have been charged for previous versions of the Grail translations, sometimes as high as 10 percent on retail sales, just to print the texts. The combination of the two could impose fees high enough to give the GIA an effective and legally enforced monopoly on Psalm composition, keeping others out of the market, and also resulting in the shutting down of websites such as the Chabanel Psalms, that post beautiful and traditional music for the Psalms for use at Mass.

The CNS news story said nothing about the serious copyright problem with the texts. The first indication came with a note posted on the GIA’s own website. “GIA Publications, Inc., is proud to serve as the worldwide agent and pledges to administer the rights in an efficient and impartial manner.” The only real copyright status that complies with that promise is for the USCCB to buy the rights to the translation and make them public domain or put them into “creative commons” so that anyone can compose with the texts or publish them.

That, however, is not what either the GIA or the USCCB intends to do, as became clear from correspondence with them. I wrote them specifically as follows: "My question concerns your policies for the newly chosen Revised Grail Psalter. Many composers are setting the Psalms to music and posting the results online for distribution at no charge. As the agent for the copyright holder, you have publicly promised 'efficient and impartial' rights administration. Does this include the rights of composers to set the Psalms and post them for free download? Certainly that would be efficient and impartial. Please clarify your precise policy."

Michael Boschert, permissions editor of GIA, did answer. "I am happy to report that the copyright holders are committed to making this text available on terms consistent with the licensing of liturgical texts ever since the introduction of the vernacular to the liturgy. Specific details of the licensing policies, however, are still being refined."

What he is referring to is the policy of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy, which charges fees for its texts. Until recently, when it adopted a new and liberal policy on digital posting on texts, it was bringing legal pressure to bear on websites that posted the text of the liturgy. ICEL's monopolistic practices have netted millions in royalties over the years and created something like a publishing cartel. What GIA means, then, is that it actually has no intention of providing a policy that is both efficient and impartial. It intends to keep the texts proprietary and charge money, while using legal means to prohibit market entry, though the final policies are yet to be worked out.

When publishers work with copyright holders, there can be contracts involved that restrict access to texts that are closed for decades. Under these conditions, anyone who blogs a Psalm could face legal penalties. Composers will be under a cloud unless they seek legal sanction and pay fees to GIA. Even composers who write for their own parishes and make copies will be putting their parishes in legal danger.

All money to pay the royalty fees will be paid by Catholic parishes and other publishers, which raises barriers to entry into the market and gives a monopolistic privilege to GIA over everyone else. The money paid for these royalties comes directly out of the pockets of faithful Catholics in the pews, who will be charged

money just for the privilege of singing the Psalms. That alone is enough of an outrage to inspire protest.

This is a major threat to Catholic composers, who might be prevented from posting their Psalm settings online for paid or even free download, without jumping through whatever hoops GIA wants to set up, and this institution will have every incentive to hold the hoops high if only to reinforce its own monopolistic position as rights administrator to the text. Anyone who thinks that the GIA won't favor its own composers over independent composers is woefully naive about the publishing business.

The existing Psalm settings coming from the likes of GIA are not varied enough to warrant holding a monopoly, which is why sites such as the Chabanel Psalms, which already garners vast web traffic, and not only because the Psalms there are free for the taking. It is also because they are dignified and fitting for liturgy—and consistently so. You won't bump into any Samba settings there or settings that sound like 1970s rock ballads, for example.

GIA will clearly favor having Catholics buy their Psalms rather than download them for free, so the question is what is GIA going to do about this? GIA is in the position of shutting down anyone who posts Psalms for download, as well as charging high enough fees to exclude smaller and less well-heeled publishers. Just who is going to police the GIA in this regard? Are we just supposed to trust them with this power? This is not a good idea.

It is of interest to know precisely what kind of financial arrangements that the USCCB has made with GIA in order to bring this result about. Did GIA pay the USCCB in some form or any form to bring this result about? If not, a flat denial would be a good way to start. If there was some sort of arrangement, Catholics have a right to know what it was. After all, the USCCB has no money that it didn't gain from the voluntary gifts of Catholics in the pews. Everyone has an interest in knowing more about this.

What would be the downside of having the USCCB purchase the whole rights to these Psalms (from the monastery, for example) and making them public domain, free for anyone to use? Of course people will say: but what about the money needed to compensate the translators? But consider that we are talking about a monastery

here, and surely a one-time payment should cover whatever justice requires. In any case, from my read of the situation, the fiduciary beneficiary of this scheme is not going to be the monastery. It is going to be GIA, which had *nothing at all to do with translating the Psalms*.

It is an awful enough situation that ICEL demands the retention of copyright over the text of the Mass. ICEL has been at least gracious enough to say that people are free to post the texts online at no charge and to set the ordinary chants to music and post those for free download. ICEL is not a profit-making corporation with a massive commercial presence. GIA is a different animal entirely. It is astonishing that the USCCB would permit such a massive company to own and control the monopoly to the Psalms—the very foundation of all Christian song.

We must never forget that the very idea of copyright is an invention of positive law, enforced by the state at the point of a gun. The world came to know of such a thing first under the rule of Queen Elizabeth in England, who used the copyright power as a tool for enforcing religious adherence to the Church of England. It is a striking fact that today the *Book of Common Prayer* uses no copyright protection, for the simple reason that we live in a different age that respects the rights of religious liberty and encourages wide access to service texts.

Meanwhile, we see the Catholic Church making use of these state institutions to variously include and exclude people from the field of religious publication and composition. This has done grave damage to the liturgy, since it has enshrined a kind of establishment that has not been accommodating through the years.

It is long overdue for the Catholic Church to detach itself from the old forms for enforcement and embrace the new world of digital and rivalrous publication and composition, so that at least people with an interest in improving the liturgy can have a voice in the distribution and shape of the texts of Mass.

Think of it: A private company using a legal monopoly to sell at a profit the Psalms we are mandated to sing and using the state to crack down on all who attempt to compete or give them away for free. The GIA and the USCCB are playing with fire here. The Reformation was prompted by injustices less egregious. All Catholics must stand up and insist that this must not be allowed to

happen. If the Church is going to authorize the Revised Grail, access must be efficient and impartial in the only way it can be: the rights to the texts must be completely open-access. ☞

## Questions on the Psalter

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The decision by the US Catholic Bishops to approve the Revised Grail Psalter for text of Psalms at Mass pleased some and upset others. The main concern that led to the approval is the quality of the translations. They are said to be better but no published version yet exists.

As important as this is, another legal aspect of the chosen Psalms could end up being more significant. These Psalms are currency tied up in a publishing cartel that involves major profit-making companies who will be printing these for Catholic parishes at a major profit while prohibiting anyone else from quoting them or printing them. In the course of approving these Psalms, the Bishops have approved this publishing cartel arrangement as well, one that could cost average Catholics many millions of dollars over time, and also entrench poor quality music in our parishes.

The government grant of copyright protection belongs to The Grail in the UK, while the Conception Abbey in the US owns the copyright to whatever changes they made to prepare this for the new release. The most significant part here is that GIA Publications has been named as the worldwide agent for administering permissions.

The GIA is a for-profit music publisher that makes its revenue through music sales to US parishes, and which bears a great deal of responsibility for the sad state of music in the Catholic Church today. It would be naive to believe that GIA will not favor itself in its administrative policies over the Psalms.

GIA, Conception, and The Grail, have been unwilling to give anything beyond perfunctory, legally-driven replies to inquiries



on the exact nature of the arrangement, the financial exchanges that may have taken place, and the eventual policies on permissions and printing of the Psalms.

Normally these types of arrangements are the business of private enterprise. Consumers are free to buy or not to buy. But with the USCCB having approved these Psalms, it becomes the business of every Catholic in the United States and beyond to know more about what these arrangements are. Otherwise there could be dire consequences for non-GIA publishers, for independent composers, for every parish that is try to save its resources by downloading liturgical materials, and also for the quality of music in our parish.

The bottom line is that it amounts to a conflict of interest for the most powerful, for-profit Catholic publisher to be given a legal monopoly of ownership rights over the text of the Mass that belongs to all Catholics, and permitting that private company to charge fees for access to what has been the very foundation of Christian liturgical prayer since the Apostolic Age.

Two myths need to be exploded because they keep coming up. Some people think that the purpose of copyright is to protect the integrity of the texts. In fact, copyright does nothing to protect the integrity of the text. The people who use the text themselves have the strongest interest in maintaining its integrity. Millions of liturgical manuscripts are out of copyright protection and this has not compromised them. In fact, the reverse is true. Material printed before the Second Vatican Council is largely unprotected, including the 1962 Mass itself, and it has not been corrupted. For that matter, leaving a text to the public domain helps assure its integrity because it creates a thriving market for accuracy.

Second, some people think that the purpose of copyright is to make sure that people who use the text acknowledge its source. This is also nonsense. Source acknowledgement can be guaranteed through source private-sector devices as Creation Commons Attribution license, such as that invoke by the freely downloadable Psalms at [ChabanelPsalms.org](http://ChabanelPsalms.org). No coercion is involved in this arrangement. No government monopolies are granted. And there is no problem.

Let us be clear that the sole purpose of putting a liturgical text under copyright protection with a private, for-profit company is



rent extraction from those who use them. It is to get money, and exclude non-payers from the list of approved producers. Its purpose, its sole purpose, is to get you to pay that monopoly rights holder, which in this case is GIA, Conception, and The Grail.

Another point might be argued, that Conception and The Grail, are entitled to earn money from its creations. If so, it is possible to sell the product of that work to an institution such as the US Bishops, with a one-time payment. It is not necessary that religious institutions received a 100-year stream of income collected from the pockets of average Catholics. In any case, whatever happened to the idea of a monastery serving the Church?

The Bishops, GIA, Conception, and The Grail need to be required to be completely open and accurate and honest in answering the following questions:

1. What precisely are the legal terms under which GIA plans to give permission to people the rights to print these Psalms? In the past, even some lowly bloggers have been beat up by The Grail for daring to quote Psalms without permission on their private blogs. They have charged up to 10 percent of proceeds for publishers. GIA will naturally have the incentive to charge high prices to keep others out of the market.
2. They have pledged “equitable and efficient” distribution policies but the only terms under which this could occur is to put the Psalm into Creative Commons so that they can be used for free. Will they consider this?
3. What precisely are the financial arrangements made between The Grail, Conception, and GIA? What kind of revenue do they expect to earn over the coming years?
4. Was any money involved in the decision of the USCCB to embrace this translation of the Psalms? GIA is in a position to pay a high price to have its Psalms proclaimed as appropriate to the liturgy. Did they happen to offer the USCCB a donation to see this result come about? A clear, clear statement of “no” is the only morally satisfactory answer.

5. In what way does the arrangement as currently constituted avoid the sin of simony, which the *Catholic Encyclopedia* defines as: “a deliberate intention of buying or selling for a temporal price such things as are spiritual or annexed unto spirituals.” This of course needs to be qualified that there is nothing wrong with allocated scarce goods such as books and materials. But the translations themselves are not scarce goods. To charge for the use of the text itself would be an injustice. It is bad enough that ICEL maintains a copyright but they have at least granted free online rights; moreover, ICEL is not a for-profit capitalist company. GIA is a different animal entirely.

Catholics in this country are financially strapped enough as it is, trying to keep their buildings in good repair and their schools running. They don't need to be charged money for access to their own Mass texts.

All Catholics have a strong interest in getting answers to these questions now. 

## The Mysterious Sixties

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I'm like most liturgy geeks in that I find bibliophilic archeology impossible to resist, especially when the epoch in question is filled with mystery.

The 1960s are filled with mystery. Sometime within this decade, the conditions were ripe for a wholesale revolution in all the forms of worship, doctrine, and morals that Catholics had known for their entire history. It was not a legislated revolution, for the legislation gives no support for such a thing. It encouraged gradual development in certain areas insofar as change was needed, even while warning against any unnecessary change.

I suppose many of us will never tire of trying to make sense of this whole period. For those who say, give it a rest, I can only suggest you move on and read something else.

There are two items on my list of artifacts for the day.

If you look at the 1965 edition of the old form of the Roman Rite, you find an odd juxtaposition in the text itself. The readings are in English. This seems reasonable in some way. I've personally felt that the biggest barrier to the popular expansion of the preconciliar Mass are the readings in Latin. I know and respect the contrary arguments—the Word read in the Sacred Tongue—and I would never have been the one to push the button to translate them.

And yet if you are going to make a case for a revision in the old Mass, the readings are a very reasonable place to begin. So much of the structure of the music of old is based on the notion that the readings are being cognitively comprehended. In that case, you can make a case for the vernacular, and, though I could be persuaded otherwise, it seems that no fundamental violence is done to the liturgical structure by English readings.

Now we move into stranger areas. The ordinary of the Mass is presented in English. Why? Here are the parts of the Mass that people knew in Latin. Centuries of polyphony had been composed for the Latin. The Gregorian Mass parts were bound up with Latin. Meanwhile, the Catholic Church possessed little at all in the way of music for the ordinary in English. On this basis alone, the idea of issuing a new Missal with no preparation for the musical side of things strikes me as irresponsible. You just have to wonder what they were thinking.

However, adding to the peculiarity, the 1965 Missal also prints the first phrases of the sung parts in Latin with notation. Why? It is hard to say. Surely the priest was not expected to sing the Latin incipit followed by a recitation of the English. And keep in mind that this Missal edition was issued only two years following the Vatican Council's declaration that Gregorian chant would heretofore assume a much higher role at Mass than it typically had in practice. It would be given primacy of place.

Now to the oddity that strikes me most profoundly: While all of the celebrant's prayers are in Latin only, the propers of the Mass (Introit, Gradual, Alleluia, Offertory, Communion) are given in

English only. The translation is very nice (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) and faithful to the Latin original.

Maybe this doesn't seem to be a radical step but consider: this step alone obliterated the whole of the Gregorian tradition. Treasures of the centuries were rendered unusable. The work of multitudes over centuries since the Apostolic age was rendered irrelevant for anyone but musicologists and historians. The propers are the core of the whole repertoire, and without notice or explanation or justification, they were suddenly blasted away into the ether.

Who can make sense of such a thing? It's not as if there were ready replacements for the Gregorian chant. You can't just take a chant melody and stick in a new language. The proper chants are bound up with the Latin. It takes vast amount of work to re-fit them. We are still in the process of doing this. And yet in 1965, suddenly there they were in the Missal: English propers.

There was no music written for them. Everyone was just expected to forget about the chant. Imagine the demoralization that set in for the Gregorian scholas of the time. It would be as if a new management of the Metropolitan Museum announced that everything but watercolor prints had to come down. This wouldn't be reform. It would amount to a ghastly demolition job.

Why? My own guess is that it was a case—as described by Fr. Ruff in his new book on music—in which the liturgists prevailed over the musicians. The liturgists were famously ignorant on many matters of music. They couldn't understand the musicians and their relentless complaints and demands. Music is music, they figured, and if the old music doesn't work, just write new music (a paraphrase of Bugnini's own attitude as revealed in his autobiography). They really hadn't understood the gravity of what they were doing.

The second artifact that I have in front of me is a charming little book called *The Propers of Masses for Sundays and Feasts* (1965) by Frank Gorton, as published by the Liturgical Press in Collegeville, Minnesota. It is a valiant effort. He took the texts of the propers in English from the new Missal and pointed them one by one so that they can be sung to Psalm tones. The introduction explains the Psalm tones in detail and shows how they work. (I would be glad to scan the book and put it up but it is still technically under copyright.)

The introduction says: "As this book was going to the printer, the Second Vatican Council acted to allow the vernacular's entrance in the liturgy."

Hold it right there. The document in question says: "The vernacular language *may* be used in administering the sacraments and sacramentals."


Where did the authority come from to translate propers and impose them on the Mass? The document also leaves it to "competent territorial ecclesiastical authority" to make the final decision. Now, this opens up a can of worms. There was real potential for calamity in this phrase.

Sure enough, the intro to book continues: "The American hierarchy moved with promptness to bring us this privilege."

That sums it up. The remarkable thing is that this is actually a good book, at least an attempt to provide something approximating music for the propers. But consider the next step in this sad evolution of change. The new Mass appeared in 1970 with completely new propers. Not only was the calendar changed, which would have been confusing enough. The traditional translations were tossed out in favor of pedestrian alternatives.

Even more bizarrely, the new Mass came with an alternative set of propers printed in the Missal. They are different from the official sung propers, shorter and not sweeter. That meant that all of the work done between 1965 and 1970 to provide English propers went straight to the dustbin of history.

The poor souls who tried to make some sense of the new age had wasted their time. Is it any wonder that after the new Mass appeared, musicians finally just threw up their hands? They were demoralized, first at the inadvertent scrapping of Gregorian everything and then by the astounding change from traditional propers to new fangled propers intended only for spoken Masses but printed in the Missal as if they were universally applicable?

I end on a hopeful note: this history is behind us. The port in this storm are the Gregorian propers, which are now universally available thanks to the wonderful charity of the Solesmes Monastery, which has made available the *Gregorian Missal* through the servers of the Church Music Association of America. 



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# Criticism

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# The Hidden Politics of Liturgical Commentary

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I share the conviction with many that liturgy should not be politicized in any respect. It is a holy enterprise and matters of political ideology do not belong, and this is for one simple reason: the liturgical gaze strives to leave temporality. It is an act of “giving unto God what is God’s,” in the words of our Lord.

In this way, liturgy makes a radical claim that both the ancient world and modern world reject as futile and dangerous, namely the claim there is something real in the universe, and something that demands primacy, that draws its strength not from civic associations but from all eternity.

And yet, it is always a struggle to purge liturgical analytics of political categories, and there are some commentators who, like the “teachers of the law” who questioned Jesus about who owns the money, seem unable ever to leave politics behind.

For example, I recall some years ago watching a film on the history of the Mass that rendered all events through the eyes of a post-Hegelian dialectic: the people versus the clergy, the peasants versus the elites, the exploited proletariat versus the exploitative bourgeoisie. All change in a direction of which the film approved was seen as the fulfillment of a rising class consciousness to take back the Mass from the usurpers.

In this version of events, bliss was to be alive in the dawn of 1970 when polyphony and chant were overthrown for “people’s music” and the clergy on the right side of history became the vanguard of the proletarian dictatorship.

This model of looking at liturgical history is more common than one might think. I’m looking now at a column by Elaine Rendler-McQueeney from Winter 2009 issue of *Today’s Liturgy*, pp. 68, 70.

She begins her riff with the Gospel of the day, which concerns Jesus's healing of the leper. Similarly, she says, Benedict XVI is a Pope who is trying to embrace everyone, including those who believe that our heritage was unjustly abandoned "after the Second Vatican Council."

She then begins to instruct "young readers" in the truth of what happened. In response to *Sacrosanctum Concilium's* call for "full, conscious, and active participation," there was "an all-out effort to write music in English."

Already, this is not precisely correct. The endlessly quoted passages about participation appear in the document in a section devoted to instruction (section II). The idea is that people and clergy should be taught and instructed about liturgy, not mainly that the rite must be changed to accommodate the demand. Further, the rise of English was a response to the permission granted to the national conferences to use the vernacular for "readings and directives" and "to some of the prayers and chants." The rationale was simply to further the cause of liturgical cognition. There was no revolution intended here, no grave class conflict that needed to be resolved, no attempt to expropriate the expropriators.

Professor Rendler, however, has been glossing over these issues for so long that she no longer senses the burden to even defend her thesis, which she fills out in greater detail in the following.

"Lest we forget, only the choir sang the chant of the pre-Vatican II liturgy, and it was beautiful when beautifully performed. But it was performed for us, that is, the congregation just listened, and in some cases it wasn't all that beautiful. Chant and polyphony—our heritage—belong to specialists, people who knew how to sing it, namely trained choirs. They are the caretakers of that musical treasury, not the assembly."

Hold on a minute. The Gregorian repertory does contain music designed for specialists, which is another way of saying that if you want to sing them, you are going to have to spend time on it and work hard. You have to take your responsibilities seriously. This is a bit different from those who sing and play under the theory that "good enough for Mass" means just showing up and strumming away on whatever strikes your fancy.

Not all Gregorian music requires this level of commitment. Take a look at the Mass ordinaries. They can all be learned by rote.

And millions and millions of people for 1000 plus years have learned them through repeated singing at Mass. This was true in most all places and ages. They are specifically structured as easier chants precisely for accessibility. In other words, chant is not homogenous. There is a range of ability and time required. Further, it is just false to say that the people in preconciliar times didn't sing chant. Many sang the ordinary chants.

To her credit, she grants that "chant and polyphony are part of our music heritage" and she has no problem with its promotion. However, she says: "the error is the assumption that chant and polyphony are the only worthy music in the Church."

Now, this is really a caricature. Who is claiming that only chant and polyphony are worthy? What many have realized – and this is a point underscored by *Sacrosanctum* – is that they represent ideal types: a standard against which all other music should be measured. That doesn't mean that other forms of music must be somehow prohibited. Mass settings by Schubert or Mozart are not polyphonic but I know of no one who would somehow ban them. The same is true of many hymns sung at recessions or postcommunions.

I've never understand why this is such a difficult point to grasp. The Christian faith is all about establishing ideals, and yet these have been decidedly lacking in the musical area for a long time. What the sacred music community seeks to do is reestablish them, not with the goal of making black and white lists but with the hope that ideals will inspire musicians to take their jobs more seriously.

Now, comes the political part of her article, though it is not overtly presented as such. She urges us not to "underestimate the contribution" made by composers of "contemporary" music after Vatican II. Their songs are "attractive and accessible." It is because of them that we are "able to understand the text." "If you can understand the words sung during the sprinkling rite, thank a post-Vatican II composer."

Well, you know, there are only two texts for the sprinkling rite. There is *Asperges me: Asperges me, Domine, hyssopo et mundabor, Lavabis me, et super nivem dealbabor*. In English, Sprinkle me, O Lord, with hyssop and I shall be clean, Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Then there is *Vidi Aquam* for the Easter season: *Vidi aquam egredientem de templo, a latere dextro, alleluia*. In English: I saw water coming out from the temple, from the right side, alleluia.


One of these two is sung every Sunday at the principle Mass of the day. Are we really supposed to believe that people are unable to grasp these texts after hearing them every week for their entire lives? I dare say that many people understood these texts in the old days. Indeed, people can grasp them today with simple worship programs. It takes only a few weeks and people might indeed be singing along.

It is beyond me how it is that Rendler cannot see this simple point. But here is a theory. She and many like her have a fixed model of how they understand the world. The old days, in this view, was the era of the elites, who walled themselves off from the people of God so as to perform their music in a foreign tongue that no one understood. Vatican II, however, ushered in the "era of the laity" in which the people took back their Church from the elites and demanded popular music written in a language they do understand.

This is a revolutionary dogma that no amount of contrary evidence seems to be able to overthrow. This is because it serves as the fixed starting point for liturgical commentary, a kind of frozen cast of mind that is unshaken by any reality. It is a dialectical worldview shaped by political categories that are deeply entrenched in an ideological-mental apparatus characteristic of a certain generation.

Because of certain mental blocks, they see the people of God singing chant with joy and don't know how to deal with it. Maybe these people are possessed by "false consciousness" or perhaps they are unwitting dupes of the elites who seek to rob the masses of their liturgical project?

If we are going to see the way forward out of the fog, we are going to have to remove our political lenses and come to grips with the reality that people love and need their traditions, and there is in fact a great deal of resentment against what happened after 1970. Even in the absence of such resentment, there is a just and praiseworthy desire on the part of many to be true to the Catholic faith and stop using it as a plaything in a politically driven morality play.

All Catholics, whether specialists or people in the pews, have good reason to become caretakers of our heritage and the treasury of sacred music. In this project, we can all cooperate toward the common goal of experiencing the impossible miracle of the Mass, presented in a way that is true to itself. 

## The Problem with Glory and Praise

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It is striking how few open defenders of “praise music” there are. Most Catholic music publishers just assume without argument that this is the music of Catholics in America, and they are largely correct. That its persistence flatly contradicts all Church legislation doesn’t bother them so long as people keep singing and buying the stuff.

So what do I mean when I say “open defenders?” In terms of electronic media, I mean blogs, forums, and websites. Try to look around for anyone to defend the use of praise music in Catholic liturgy and you just won’t find much of anything. In contrast, chant and polyphony has a thousand blogs, forums, websites, and the like. It is everywhere. This alone tells you something about our future.

The print media is a bit different but, here again, most of the print journals that celebrate rock, blues, and other secular styles in liturgy are somehow connected to the very businesses that publish the material. You have to consider the source.

But I can think of one exception. His name is Todd Flowerday, and he directs music for campus ministry at Iowa State University. Pretty much alone, he has come to the defense of praise music and even that now – ancient symbol of the genre: *Glory & Praise*. His article appeared on [InsideCatholic.com](http://InsideCatholic.com) on April 30, 2008. His defense is of a book that is a relentless source of jokes among the clergy. It is seen as the musical equivalent of the shag carpet or the leisure suit, and taken no more seriously than that.

So you have to give Flowerday credit here for daring to go where hardly anyone else has been willing to go. I’m not going to comment on the general theme of his pieces. The comments on his article on the site are withering enough. But I would like to remark on an interesting and innovative aspect to his thesis. In effect, he argues, *Glory & Praise* was an improvement (in the sense that it was more suitable) over the folk music that had come to dominate liturgy during the years of great confusion between 1965 and 1975.

Two-hundred-plus pieces of music replaced virtually every mimeographed folk song sung in the 1960s and 1970s. In part, it happened because the music itself was better. . . . When I consider *Glory & Praise* today, most songs wouldn't pass muster in a modern music ministry. But in their day, they worked. It's doubtful they replaced the treasures of Western music in many parishes—I'd say it's far more likely they superceded weak folk music from the 1960s and replaced some Catholic and Protestant hymnody in the 1980s.

Although my musical tastes have evolved, I don't begrudge the *Glory & Praise* repertoire its place in our history. Like the chant classics, they evolved in the composers' own parishes and religious communities. They functioned to assist Catholics giving voice to heartfelt prayer. For that, I say without shame or hesitation, *Deo gratias*.

So let's be clear on what he is arguing here. He is not saying that *G&P* was a great hymnal or that it made possible great liturgy. He is saying that it was an improvement over the folk song tunes that were taking over in the 60s and 70s. It is an interesting point. Keep in mind that the definitive history of this period in Catholic liturgy has yet to be written, a fact which Thomas Day has pointed to several times. All that most of us have to go on is personal anecdote, and I don't have any because I was too young. (Can someone please get to work on that definitive history?)

Of the hundreds of people I've talked to over the years about this subject, and the vast amount of articles on the topic—all devoured in the great quest to understand what happened to bring us to our present strife—so far as I know Todd is the only one who seems to argue along these lines. This is why I'm not inclined to believe that *G&P* exercised something like a solemnizing influence. Its reputation for dragging liturgy into the banal, the secular, and the thoroughly superficial is well earned and deserved. And yet his theory might be sustainable if we think less of the national culture and more of specific cases. In large cities and many seminary venues, it was probably the case that bad folk tunes came to dominate in the 60s and 70s before *G&P*. In these cases, this book might have meant improvement, whatever that means in this context.

But what about the rest of the country? Again, I'm speculating here but it is very likely that most Catholic parishes from 1965 to 1975 went into a holding pattern waiting for the liturgical squabbles to come to an end and settle down. What *G&P* meant for them was a standardization of the folk revolution of the 60s, a mainstreaming of what had previously been experimental and spotty. One might say that it was the consolidation of a revolution. In this sense, for most parishes, *G&P* would not have been an improvement but a shift from moderately bad to moderately worse.

Now, one response might be that at least *G&P* employed lots of scripture, and surely that is a good thing. I would simply respond by pointing out that the text is not all that matters. What *G&P* represented was a first in the history of Catholic music: the importation of musical styles intended for secular-venue dancing into a liturgical environment (I owe this insight to Arlene Oost-Zinner).


By "dancing" I'm not talking about the fox trot or samba (such as we heard in the Papal Mass in Washington) but dancing of the sort you find at a suburban high-school prom night. You know, music with a beat, whether for "slow dancing" or for something more up-tempo. Even when the beat is not overt, you can hear the implied dance beat in most of this music, even when it is not accompanied by drums and guitars. You almost feel like the drums should be there given the musical style.

It's my view that this fact, more than any other, may account for the widespread impression that something fundamental changed about Catholic music after *G&P*. Whatever can be said of the *St. Gregory Hymnal* or the sappiest of the sappy songs of yesteryear, they did not have that dance-like sensibility about them. They might not have been ideal but at least they didn't make you want to turn down the lights and take out the mirror ball.

Now, my own views on this type of music even outside of liturgy are well-documented enough. When it comes on at Mass, it's all I could do to keep myself from finding the exit. At the same time, I've received a great deal of communication from many people to the effect that this music is hugely important in their spiritual lives, that it was what came to define for them a rich and living form of Christianity. I have no reason to doubt their word on this, even if I don't happen to share this subjective point of view.

What the pro-*G&P* perspective shows (and this applies also to the purely preconiliar sentimentalist) is that we need some other benchmarks besides personal taste to guide us forward. This is why there is so much wisdom in the Church's teaching that Gregorian chant should be the foundational song.

In chant, we find the very heart of the liturgical sensibility, with its constant upward motion to the Heavens. It has been the timeless teaching that the closer a composition comes to Gregorian chant, the more suitable it is for liturgy – and this is a lesson that applies as much now as it ever did. The postconciliar period was a missed opportunity but there are plenty of great opportunities to do what is right in our future.

The problem is essentially one of education, which follows from desire. The desire is there, witness the explosion of interest in the Church Music Association's annual Colloquium on sacred music (see [musicasacra.com](http://musicasacra.com)). But we also need the means of educating musicians on how to sing chant, and, as the Pope has called for, teaching chant in seminaries. Yes, chant can be difficult. The faith is difficult. But it is worth our efforts. Surely it is. 

## Pastoral Musicians Embrace Chant?

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The June–July 2008 issue of *Pastoral Music*, the journal published by the largest Catholic music organization in the US, devotes its cover story and two additional articles to the issue of Gregorian chant. This is a milestone, no question. Browsing the archives online, I've not found any issue in decades that has so prominently and (somewhat) favorably looked at this subject in some depth.

I'll provide my summary reaction. The articles are interesting and worthy, and cause for celebration. The authors are experts who are worth reading. They make some good points and some



points that I personally find weak but this latter point is a matter of opinion.

But in another way, the issue and these articles miss the mark and this is not the fault of the writers so much as the editors here. This issue does not sufficiently address the top questions that Catholic musicians have about Gregorian chant: how to read it, how to sing it, what to sing, and when to sing it. These are the practical points that vex musicians all over the country when they think about this subject. In fact, only one of four articles addresses some of these points, and even in this article, the author doesn't quite speak the language of parish musicians.

This is a magazine that is devoted to such practical issues in every other area they cover. They specialize in this service, never forgetting the needs of parish musicians. This is one reason this magazine has been such a success. It is not focused on pronouncing from on high. It deals with parish realities above all else. But when it comes to chant, the editors took a different direction, dwelling in high theory and arcane debates that have no relevance to new chanters in any way.

The lead article is by Fr. Anthony W. Ruff, a monk of St. John's Abbey who lives and breaths the chant as a schola director. It surrounds him day and night and it is his true love. Few scholars can compete with his knowledge. In the chant world, he is known both for his expertise and also for his dispassionate approach, seeing the merits of chant and also expressing broad tolerance for every manner of praise music in liturgy in just about any style.

So, characteristically, Fr. Ruff writes a two-handed article, literally using the motif of "on the one hand" chant has pride of place, while "on the other hand," there are many situations that argue against chant. He cites many reasons not to attempt chant: "it will be rather difficult for us to reconstitute world of sung liturgy"; "the acoustics of our modern churches all too often inhibit sung liturgy"; "lay involvement in Catholic worship, centuries before Vatican II, generally took the form of vernacular hymnody"; "there is a bewildering range of options for ritual music in the Roman Rite, and Gregorian chant can no longer claim to be the uniquely appropriate choice in all cases"; "liturgy is always affected by local cultures, and its must always draw on the unique strengths of those cultures for the sake of engaging the

assembled worshippers”; “the goodness of all creation . . . overturns any notion of holiness as being opposed to the secular or the profane.”

I’m not going to argue against these points, but rather point out that the article doesn’t really speak to parish realities. Musicians these days do not know how to read the notes. They are terrified by Latin. They fear the people’s reactions. They are dealing with skeptical pastors and Bishops. They have weak singers who use instruments as a crutch. Also, Catholic musicians tend to be a bit too satisfied with doing the same thing week after week, and there needs to be some inspiration to bring about change. To introduce chant is a major step. It takes work and there is a risk here. The musician will be called on to provide a serious defense. He or she has to believe. Doubt will lead to failure.

I’m not entirely sure that our author understands this dynamic because he lives in a world in which chant is taken for granted, as much part of the fabric of his life as mealtimes and the rising and falling of the sun. Perhaps he doesn’t see either that musicians need inspiration to enter the world that is already or perhaps he doubts that it is possible? I’m not sure. But I can easily see a musician reading his piece and concluding that taking the risk and doing the work is just not worth it. His article just isn’t enough to provide the intellectual breakthrough that will cause a change in the status quo, and that status quo is that chant is not part of the lives of American Catholics.

The next article by William Tortolano provides an excellent look at the formation and development of Gregorian music, from its roots in Jewish Psalmody to the Solesmes restoration. It is all very interesting, and all very historical. Again, I have no criticisms against what is written here—it is an excellent article—but only desire to point out that this history has no real bearing on what parish musicians should sing next week or next year. The magazine might have profitably published an excerpt from the chant tutorial he has written.

Next we have Columba Kelly, a Benedictine monk, and I found this article especially engaging and interesting. He delves into the rhythmic controversy between the old Solesmes school, which posited integral structures of pulses, and the newer Cardine school, which argues for text-driven structures that rely more heavily on the

interpretation of the chant master. My question is: what does any of this have to do with whether the choir is going to introduce chant into the parish? I would say that it has essentially nothing to do with the question.

Let's say that you are speaking to a group of high schoolers about the glories of classical music. This is what they expect and want. Instead you give them a long disquisition on the various controversies about the correct tempo for the last movement of Beethoven's 5th symphony, or on the various upsides and downsides of using valved vs. valveless french horns. Would they be inspired to throw themselves into the repertoire? No, they would probably suppose that you are some out-to-lunch fanatic who can't see the forest for the trees, obsessing on arcania and blowing an opportunity to make a difference in their lives. In fact, the more I learn about these rhythmic controversies, the more they seem like a major distraction to me that has no bearing at all on parish life. It strikes me as a sad thing that novices would be force-fed all this material when they can't even read the notes or pronounce the words.

The final article by Peter Funk of the Monastery of the Holy Cross in Chicago is entitled "Using Chant Repertoire in Today's Parish." This is the one designed to address the issue of how to do this realistically. Mercifully, this article is free of skepticism and doubt. Fr. Funk loves the chant with his whole heart. He points out the challenges but believes they can be overcome.

"Chant is an ancient musical form," he writes,

developed in an era far removed from our own. It takes time to grow to appreciate its peculiar modes of expression. That said, chant's beauty and effectiveness as a means to prayer are so broadly attested that we can be confident of great spiritual discoveries in the repertoire if we approach it with an open mind. . . . When we chant, we enter into a musical meditation on the Word of God in our midst, spoken to and through us.

He recommends starting with ordinary chants: Kyrie, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei. For the schola he recommends the communion chant and the introit. This is fine advice. He further points to the simpler chants of *Jubilate Deo* as excellent for parishes, as well as

the seasonal propers of the *Graduale Simplex*. A curious omission, however, is the most obvious one: the chant hymns that are especially suitable as peoples' music, the melodies that have been known and loved by Catholics for many centuries and that can be easily "plugged in" at offertory or post-communion time. If I were starting over in a parish, I would do these first before even approaching the ordinary chants—but I've noticed a tendency among the experts to overlook the chant hymns for reasons I can't entirely grasp. There is a sense in which chant is the authentic folk music of Catholic people, and it makes no sense to bury the most loved chants as if they do not exist.

A major disappointment in this article is that it nowhere provides a sample of music that people can sing, and when it comes to the critical question of how to read the music, he goes no further than suggest that people buy method books from Paraclete Press. So the "how to" article turns out to merely point to other "how to" books, which might suggest that the search for basic answers to universal questions is perpetually remote.


Another problem is that readers are likely to go to Paraclete and buy the book called *Chant Made Simple* which is not really a simple intro to reading chant but rather an introduction to the ancient staffless signs of the *Graduale Triplex*. And there the journey into chant will likely come to a stop. It would have only taken a few paragraphs to explain, right in this issue, how to read the clefs and discover where the whole steps and half steps are and how the rhythm works.

My fear, then, is that the novice will read all of these articles and still not have a strong rationale or inspiration to take the next step, or anything like an intellectual apparatus that will prepare them to sing a single piece of music with their choirs or congregations.

Let me conclude by assuring readers of this issue of Pastoral Music that it is really not that hard, not that weird, not that objectionable, and not that controversial. Chant is the fundamental music of the Roman Rite. It belongs as the core music of every single Catholic parish in the entire world, without exception. All the qualifications you can dream up can't change the fact that this music more than any other constitutes the universal music of Catholic people.

As for how to, you can read it the same way that you read modern music, remembering that the clef sign indicates the C or the F, on the line below which the half step occurs. As for counting, you can't go wrong in making each note receive one pulse.

As for tutorials, have a look at *The Parish Book of Chant*, which provides a pronunciation guide, a guide to reading the neumes, as well as 11 ordinary settings, the Mass ordo in the ordinary and extraordinary forms, as well as a core hymnody of 71 pieces for the whole parish to sing.

Let's issue a strong congratulations to *Pastoral Music*, and hope that this is just the beginning and not merely a token bow to authentic sacred music. 

## Carefully Editing Pius XII

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The August–September issue of *Pastoral Music*, published by the National Association of Pastoral Musicians, is dedicated to liturgical ensembles. The pictures of musicians in various parish settings tell the story.

The cover has a flute player in a jeans jacket playing next to two cellists in front of a youth choir. Page 14 has a guitar player with a conga player. Page 17 has two guitar players and a conga player. Page 18 features a guitar player. Page 22 has three bongo players. Page 24 has two flute players with a recorder player in front of a youth choir. Page 26 has a cellist and a violinist. Page 27 has a string bass player plucking his instrument. Page 28 has two guitar players with singers crowded around microphones. Page 31 has a pianist with a clarinetist, two flute players, a violist, and a trumpet player. Page 33 shows another flute player. Page 34 has two guitar players. Page 38 has two guitar players with a recorder player and two singers. Page 52 has a cantor in the “touchdown” position.

Now at last we come to page 59, which has an op-ed sized article called “Interior As Well As Exterior” by Pius XII. It's an excerpt

from *Mediator Dei* (1947), and it includes the pull quote: “Let the full harmonious singing of our people rise to heaven like the busting of a thunderous sea.”

As much as I appreciate learning from *Pastoral Music* that there was a Pope that came before Paul VI, there are a number of issues this raises. The first is the good point that the call for active participation is not a unique contribution of Vatican II. It’s good to be reminded of that.

On the downside, the excerpt they publish provides no paragraph numbering other than to mention in a note that these are excerpts. Not even the full paragraphs are included. On the contrary, the selections are judicious and agenda driven. Moreover, the cherry-picked quotations here have no ellipses. In fact, the casual reader could be easily led to believe that what appears in *Pastoral Music* is what appeared in 1947.

So, for example, the reader has no idea what precisely that Pius XII wants to bust like a thunderous sea.

The editors completely cut the section that explains this, which includes the last section of the paragraph 105 that the article claims to quote:

This can be done in more than one way, when, for instance, the whole congregation, in accordance with the rules of the liturgy, either answer the priest in an orderly and fitting manner, or sing hymns suitable to the different parts of the Mass, or do both, or finally in high Masses when they answer the prayers of the minister of Jesus Christ and also sing the liturgical chant.

The Pope goes on to explain that the dialogue Mass in no way replaces the High Mass, and that even if people do not know Latin, they still benefit from singing it:

106. These methods of participation in the Mass are to be approved and recommended when they are in complete agreement with the precepts of the Church and the rubrics of the liturgy. Their chief aim is to foster and promote the people’s piety and intimate union with Christ and His visible minister and to arouse those internal sentiments and dispositions which should make our

hearts become like to that of the High Priest of the New Testament. However, though they show also in an outward manner that the very nature of the sacrifice, as offered by the Mediator between God and men, must be regarded as the act of the whole Mystical Body of Christ, still they are by no means necessary to constitute it a public act or to give it a social character. And besides, a "dialogue" Mass of this kind cannot replace the high Mass, which, as a matter of fact, though it should be offered with only the sacred ministers present, possesses its own special dignity due to the impressive character of its ritual and the magnificence of its ceremonies. The splendor and grandeur of a high Mass, however, are very much increased if, as the Church desires, the people are present in great numbers and with devotion.

107. It is to be observed, also, that they have strayed from the path of truth and right reason who, led away by false opinions, make so much of these accidentals as to presume to assert that without them the Mass cannot fulfill its appointed end.

108. Many of the faithful are unable to use the Roman missal even though it is written in the vernacular; nor are all capable of understanding correctly the liturgical rites and formulas. So varied and diverse are men's talents and characters that it is impossible for all to be moved and attracted to the same extent by community prayers, hymns and liturgical services. Moreover, the needs and inclinations of all are not the same, nor are they always constant in the same individual. Who, then, would say, on account of such a prejudice, that all these Christians cannot participate in the Mass nor share its fruits? On the contrary, they can adopt some other method which proves easier for certain people; for instance, they can lovingly meditate on the mysteries of Jesus Christ or perform other exercises of piety or recite prayers which, though they differ from the sacred rites, are still essentially in harmony with them.

He further clarifies a great error in understanding that was prevalent then and now:

114. They, therefore, err from the path of truth who do not want to have Masses celebrated unless the faithful communicate; and those are still more in error who, in holding that it is altogether necessary for the faithful to receive holy communion as well as the priest, put forward the captious argument that here there is question not of a sacrifice merely, but of a sacrifice and a supper of brotherly union, and consider the general communion of all present as the culminating point of the whole celebration.

As for Gregorian chant, let the Pope speak:

191. As regards music, let the clear and guiding norms of the Apostolic See be scrupulously observed. Gregorian chant, which the Roman Church considers her own as handed down from antiquity and kept under her close tutelage, is proposed to the faithful as belonging to them also. In certain parts of the liturgy the Church definitely prescribes it; it makes the celebration of the sacred mysteries not only more dignified and solemn but helps very much to increase the faith and devotion of the congregation. For this reason, Our predecessors of immortal memory, Pius X and Pius XI, decree—and We are happy to confirm with Our authority the norms laid down by them—that in seminaries and religious institutes, Gregorian chant be diligently and zealously promoted, and moreover that the old *Scholae Cantorum* be restored, at least in the principal churches. This has already been done with happy results in not a few places.

192. Besides, “so that the faithful take a more active part in divine worship, let Gregorian chant be restored to popular use in the parts proper to the people. Indeed it is very necessary that the faithful attend the sacred ceremonies not as if they were outsiders or mute onlookers, but let them fully appreciate the beauty of the liturgy




and take part in the sacred ceremonies, alternating their voices with the priest and the choir, according to the prescribed norms. If, please God, this is done, it will not happen that the congregation hardly ever or only in a low murmur answer the prayers in Latin or in the vernacular." A congregation that is devoutly present at the sacrifice, in which our Savior together with His children redeemed with His sacred blood sings the nuptial hymn of His immense love, cannot keep silent, for "song befits the lover" and, as the ancient saying has it, "he who sings well prays twice." Thus the Church militant, faithful as well as clergy, joins in the hymns of the Church triumphant and with the choirs of angels, and, all together, sing a wondrous and eternal hymn of praise to the most Holy Trinity in keeping with words of the preface, "with whom our voices, too, thou wouldst bid to be admitted."

And what of modern music?

193. It cannot be said that modern music and singing should be entirely excluded from Catholic worship. For, if they are not profane nor unbecoming to the sacredness of the place and function, and do not spring from a desire of achieving extraordinary and unusual effects, then our churches must admit them since they can contribute in no small way to the splendor of the sacred ceremonies, can lift the mind to higher things and foster true devotion of soul.

And, finally, the following little passage did not make the cut:

195. . . . Nevertheless, in keeping with the duty of Our office, We cannot help deploring and condemning those works of art, recently introduced by some, which seem to be a distortion and perversion of true art and which at times openly shock Christian taste, modesty and devotion, and shamefully offend the true religious sense. These must be entirely excluded and banished from our churches, like "anything else that is not in keeping with the sanctity of the place."

Pastoral Music has been making progress lately, with special issue on chant and other signs of a new openness to the changed times. But this sort of editorial manipulation really has no place in materials that are distributed with the stated goal of helping Church musicians do what the Church intends. 

## Are People the Only Concern?

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Over a weekend in January 2009, I enjoyed an interesting interview with a reporter from a national Catholic publication. The reporter was professional and thorough, and we covered many important issues on the topic of musical transitions in parish life. The idea was to cover the rationale and methods for moving from what is the status quo to something more in keeping with the tradition of the Roman Rite.

The interview presumed the absolute urgency of change. The “four-hymn sandwich” of 1970s tunes has people bored out of their minds. The great traditions of chant and polyphony as urged by the Second Vatican Council are mostly unheard in parish life. The Mass text is not the source of the music we hear; instead we hear music at Mass, most to texts written by a generation disconnected from the past.

The interviewer and I talked about many subjects, among which the now-defunct document called *Music in Catholic Worship* (1972, 1983). This document, which emerged from some bureaucracy within the US Bishops’ Conference, was a calamity. It claimed that music of past is not a model for music of the future. Talk about discontinuity!

We talked about the rise of a new generation of singers and organists who are dedicated to change.

It was only after I got off the phone—the interview lasted about an hour—that something struck me. The interview went well, but on one subject, the interviewer and I were speaking two different

languages. It didn't prevent us from communicating but there was certainly a gap throughout the entire conversation.

Let me give you a feeling for this.

His questions mostly involved the people's response to change. How will the people respond to chant? Can the people sing Latin? Will people feel alienated by Latin? Do people have the capacity to make the Gregorian tradition their own? Will people miss their favorite groovy tunes from the 1970s? Will people feel that they are leaving behind something important to them? Will the people eventually warm up to plainchant? Do our parishes have the people necessary to sing polyphonic music and play the organ?

And so on.

These are all important questions. But are they the only questions?

In retrospect, I realize that while I answered these issues, I was continually returning to a slightly different focus. The chant is tied to the liturgy in an intimate way. It is about singing the Mass rather than some exogenous text. Plainchant has an upward lift that points out of time rather than a metric that keeps us grounded. Chant and its polyphonic elaboration is most fitting to the holy action at the altar, and makes the liturgical project true to itself. The focus of sacred music is always toward prayer and transcendent concerns. The Church recommends chant and grants it primacy among all music for a reason. The liturgical purpose of the chant is revealed in the music. It is the universal music of the Church so that our aesthetic is shared across time and space.

And so on.

Do you see the difference in the way we approached these questions? I don't doubt that the "pastoral" dimension here is an important one. What happens at liturgy must indeed connect with people and assist in the formation of community. But sometimes the sole focus on what is pastoral can blind us to larger truths. Is pleasing the people the primary aim or a secondary effect of integrity in the liturgical art?

In this writings, Benedict XVI has continually emphasized that to focus on the gathered community at the expense of the transcendent amounts to a distortion of the purpose of Catholic liturgy, the primary aim of which is not to foster a people-centered sense of unity. It is instead to lead a procession out of time and assist the prayerful

encounter with the sacred. It is Christ who unites us, and Christ that must remain the center of our reform efforts.


Catholics have come to regard themselves as consumers at Mass. We want everything our way. If the liturgical music radio dial is on the wrong station, we demand that someone change it. This way is fraught with peril. There is no way to please everyone. The attempt will end in disaster. Imagine if we tried the same approach on the Eucharistic Prayer or the Collects? There would be no liturgy remaining.

What's more, we make a mistake in thinking that the "people" have a homogenous interest. There are young and old, black and white, rich and poor. Moreover, the people present are not the only concern of Catholics. We must also consider our unity with our brothers and sisters in the faith around the globe. There is one Mass for us all. There need to be universal signs of unity present at every Mass.

For this reason, it is sheer folly to speak as if the gathered community is all that matters. Even if we could get a true temperature rating of the people there, there is more to consider here.

No, I didn't make these points in the interview, though I should have. I found myself distracted by all the demands that the "reform of the reform" camp come up with: strategies that have popular appeal. I don't doubt that this is possible and necessary. But I question the single-minded focus on the anthropocentric aspect of the reform as if it is all that matters.

We've all attended religious gatherings in which we have felt a strong sense of community unity, and yet discover a certain lack of spiritual fulfillment in that idea alone. What precisely is the purpose of the unity? Or is this a goal that serves as the end point?

If we are to approach this subject with a true Catholic sense, we have to redirect our concern beyond earthly goals and look with humility and obedience to a higher purpose. Our faith makes a strong claim for the Mass and for our community's prayer life: in some ways, it is an impossible claim to believe so long as our hearts and minds are bound by practical and temporal concerns alone. For this reason, we have to distrust our own intuition and turn in trust to the will of the Church of all ages. It is the faith that is the point, not our own wishes and desires. 

# Progressives and Reactionaries

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## Music to Remember

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It was the grace of all Americans to have Pope Benedict XVI visit this country. And it was to the grave embarrassment of all American Catholics that the music employed at the papal Mass at the Nationals stadium in Washington, D.C., represented a repudiation of everything that this pope has written on music appropriate to Mass. Leaving the Pope's known preference for great music aside, we can go further to say that there is no robust tradition of liturgical scholarship that is capable of defending what happened, and that is because it is indefensible.

The news is out—the whole world watched this liturgy—and I don't want to rehearse all the details of the pieces of music in question, nor of their performance. It is too painful, and there will be plenty of Youtube videos around for many years to remind us more than we want to be reminded.

Instead, let us talk about principles.

In the name of a much-advertised “multiculturalism,” the Pope was subjected to music more suitable to dingy dance halls than Churches. The Psalms of David were distorted to the point of ear-splitting dissonance. The congos, pan flutes, merengue rhythms, the jazz and blues and rock, the swaggering vocals, the puffed-up soloing, went beyond even the most pessimistic predictions that were made in the weeks before.

Indeed, when Marty Haugen's “Mass of Creation” finally came on at the Sanctus, it was a moment of comparative dignity—so much so that I want to take back all my negative comments I had made about this setting, back when I thought that it was unsuitable for a Papal Mass. I don't think anyone knew before this liturgy what the phrase “unsuitable” could really mean.

I personally felt the greatest hurt toward American Catholics of diverse races and ethnicities, who were quite viciously caricatured in the musical selections. How wounded they must have personally felt by this presentation done in their name.

Blues and jazz –intended to appeal to African Americans? Talk about stereotyping. What about those African Americans who sing in chant scholas, are accomplished singers, are working to actually compose excellent sacred music?

Merengue and samba for Hispanic Americans? Does this include the Hispanic scholar who wrote me after the Mass with heartbreak at what saw and heard? He is an expert in the polyphonic music tradition of Latin America, and has done extremely important work in showing how the themes from chant strongly informed the construction of 16th century mass settings.

And were all those wacky instruments somehow supposed to appeal to Asians? I really can't go on here. There is an insult at the heart of all these attempts to construct styles that appeal to all people, pigeonholing their tastes the same way a racist writing or Nazi propaganda posters in the 1930s might do. This is not unity but dangerous division.

I know that none of this was intended, but let us remember that we are united in Christ, united in our Catholicism. The Pope has written in his book *The Spirit of the Liturgy* that the issue of multiculturalism was confronted and dealt with early in the Christian history, as the Roman Rite developed to deal with intense diversity of early converts from many regions and language groups. The result was the Latin language in liturgy, and Gregorian chant and its timeless and universal sound, together with the text of the Psalms that speak to universal impulses in the human person. True multiculturalism is achieved in the Roman Rite itself, a point which is still emphasized in Church teaching.

This is not inaccessible knowledge. The Second Vatican Council stated very plainly that Gregorian chant and polyphony should enjoy primacy of place at Mass. This teaching has been restated by the Pope time and again. This is not his personal taste at work, nor mine. Chant is the music of the Mass. Styles that elaborate on chant are also suitable. What the liturgy does not admit are styles that are at war with the liturgical sense and purpose of



reaching outside of ourselves and into eternity. We face a choice between Apollo and Dionysis, wrote Cardinal Ratzinger.

The Church's Tradition has this in mind when it talks about the sober inebriation caused in us by the Holy Spirit. There is always an ultimate sobriety, a deeper rationality, resisting any decline into irrationality and immoderation. We can see what this means in practice if we look at the history of music. The writings of Plato and Aristotle on music show that the Greek world in their time was faced with a choice between two kinds of worship, two different images of God and man. Now what this choice came down to concretely was a choice between two fundamental types of music. On the one hand, there is the music that Plato ascribes, in line with mythology, to Apollo, the god of light and reason. This is the music that draws senses into spirit and so brings man to wholeness. It does not abolish the senses, but inserts them into the unity of this creature that is man. It elevates the spirit precisely by wedding it to the senses, and it elevates the senses by uniting them with the spirit. Thus this kind of music is an expression of man's special place in the general structure of being. But then there is the music that Plato ascribes to Marsyas, which we might describe, in terms of cultic history, as "Dionysian". It drags man into the intoxication of the senses, crushes rationality, and subjects the spirit to the senses. The way Plato (and more moderately, Aristotle) allots instruments and keys to one or other of these two kinds of music is now obsolete and may in many respects surprise us. But the Apollonian/Dionysian alternative runs through the whole history of religion and confronts us again today.

Let me add here as an aside that I do not believe it is correct to describe this as a typical "American" event, illustrative of our decadence and egoism. The fact is that there are hundreds of Catholic parishes in this country that have wonderful liturgy, gorgeous music, and musicians all over the country are working very hard, at sometimes little or no pay, to learn sacred music and use

it in liturgy. This is a movement of great vitality and growing numbers, and all the trends here are up in every way. The Sacred Music Colloquium in Chicago this year will have hundreds of participants. This movement involves mostly young people who are seeking to do their best. They are Americans too. It is wrong to let a small cabal that took control of the Washington liturgy define the whole country and its liturgical sense.

What is the current situation in the aftermath of this Mass? There is no question that anger, even fury, was immediately palpable. The USCCB has been deleting comments from its own website. Fr. Richard John Neuhaus, in his running commentary on EWTN, expressed astonishment. The blogs overflowed with bitter comments. The traditionalists had a grand time, unjustly trashing the “Novus Ordo,” as if the ordinary form of the Roman Rite were responsible for this.

Something tells me that this Mass will be remembered as a defining moment, and possibly the end of an era. For many years, a certain tendency of liturgical aesthetic has said that we need to loosen up, use music that appeals to our sense of things as collected from the secular world, to use music that has a beat and is drawn from the world in which we live. We need to forget all that solemn chant and “classical” stuff and move on. And what we saw this morning was the result—perhaps not the intention, but once you lose track of the liturgical ideals, there are no limits. The “no limit” model was put on display for the Pope.


The question is how it can be turned toward the good? Now that we have witnessed the *reductio ad absurdum* of the pseudo-multicultural, non-liturgical approach to music, where can we turn to re-root ourselves? The answer is the same now as it has always been: The *Graduale Romanum* and Church legislation. The propers attached to the Votive Mass of the Holy Spirit, the Mass that was offered are available to all. You will hear in them the true music of the Church.

But can these propers and a Gregorian ordinary really sound right in a stadium? It’s all the more important that they be used in this setting, as a way of infusing the place with the dignity and solemnity of the Christian liturgy. And who will sing them? There are Gregorian scholas around the Washington area. There are workshops. There are chant books and tutorials. There is a

way to learn them and sing this music that is appropriate to the Mass. If it is done properly, the music not only enhances the Mass; the Mass itself dwells within the music, not as performance art but as sung prayer. This is the ideal. No effort to provide music for Mass should ever proceed without an awareness of that ideal.

Without that ideal, what are we left with? Let the Pope answer:

When the community of faith, the world-wide unity of the Church and her history, and the mystery of the living Christ are no longer visible in the liturgy, where else, then, is the Church to become visible in her spiritual essence? Then the community is celebrating only itself, an activity that is utterly fruitless. And, because the ecclesial community cannot have its origin from itself but emerges as a unity only from the Lord, through faith, such circumstances will inexorably result in a disintegration into sectarian parties of all kinds—partisan opposition within a Church tearing herself apart. This is why we need a new Liturgical Movement, which will call to life the real heritage of the Second Vatican Council.

Let us use the occasion to recommit ourselves and re-root ourselves to the Church's own liturgical language. Let us close the chapter on this event and move on. Let us stop what we have been doing to our heritage of inestimable value. We can do better. We must. The Vespers service at the Shrine illustrates the point. Benedict's own writings show the way. 

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## Guido the Innovator

The people who make modern inventions are often celebrated for improving our lives but what about those who laid the very technological foundation of civilization as we know it? They served the

Catholic faith and they served the world. I'm thinking here of those who solved the architectural problems to build the great cathedrals of the middle ages, and the scientists of the period who took the first steps toward modern medical knowledge.

Also we don't often consider the innovations in art that make all music possible. There is one person who stands out there, the late 10th and early 11th century Benedictine monk named Guido d'Arezzo. He is credited with fantastic musical innovations that led to the creation of the modern system of notes and staves, and also the organization of scales that allowed for teaching and writing music.

His contributions have usually been seen as technical innovations and evaluated as such. But a new book by Angelo Rusconi, translated into an article format by Patrick Reynolds from the Italian, and appearing in *Goldberg #46* (2007), offers a more complete picture of what drove him, and the results will be very exciting for any Church musician.

Consider first the technical feat. Imagine a world without music staves. It's one thing to render words on paper in a way that others can read them. But what about sound? It floats in the air and resists having a physical presence at all. How can you share the melody without singing it for them, by just writing things down? People tried since the ancient world without success. Some attempts in the 8th and 9th centuries came a bit closer. But it was Guido who made the break through with lines and scales that illustrate for the eye what the voice is to sing, and precisely so.

What a remarkable innovation, if you think about it.

Now, Rusconi shows that Guido's primary interest was in notating not just music in general but the chant in particular. He was frustrated that the chant was passed on by oral tradition only. He worried that melodies would be lost. So while writers have usually treated him as an innovator, what's been forgotten is that his innovations were driven by the desire to conserve and preserve for future generations. The desire to maintain the chant and pass it on was the key issue for him; the technical aspects of the music and writing were merely tools and not ends in themselves.

And there was an interesting sociological element here: he wanted the chant to be freed from the control of a few masters and put into the hands of everyone. For this reason, his first great project

was a notated Antiphoner: "For, in such a way, with the help of God I have determined to notate this antiphoner, so that hereafter through it, any intelligent and diligent person can learn a chant, and after he has learned well part of it through a teacher, he recognizes the rest unhesitatingly by himself without a teacher."

He goes further. Without a written form of music "wretched singers and pupils of singers, even if they should sing every day for a hundred years, will never sing by themselves without a teacher one antiphon, not even a short one, wasting so much time in singing that they could have spent better learning thoroughly sacred and secularly writing."

As a result of his innovation, his monastery in Pomposa tossed him out (the elites having resisted his attempt to democratize the knowledge) but he was taken in by the Bishop of Arezzo, where he was allowed to continue his preaching and his work.

Now, one can't but think of mistakes that have been made over the years with the Gregorian chant: the attempt to keep it the private preserve of musicologists; the dominance of singers by a single master who believes that he knows the one true way; the perception that chant is only for monasteries but not parishes; and on and on. Here we see Guido embodying that the same principle that drove Solesmes at the early part of the restoration efforts: innovation in order to preserve, teach, and distribute this glorious music as widely as possible, in the service of the faith.


This story illustrates a general principle in the history of liturgy. There does seem to be a real pattern here. There are those who believe the liturgy is for everyone and ought to be accessible to all—that everyone should be permitted to have access to the forms and structures and that the Church should evangelize and spread. This side loves technical innovation not for its own sake but in the service of both preservation and growth, and this side has a general faith in the capacity of everyone to make sense of things and progress toward a kind of universal offering to God. This is the spirit of Solesmes, of St. Gregory, of Pius V, of the great preachers and teachers from St. Paul to Benedict XVI.

Then there is the other side, which is reactionary, hates technical innovation, wants to reserve liturgical forms to a tiny elite, fears freedom, detests the idea of human choice, and advances a kind of gnosticism over doctrine and liturgy—always wants it to

remain the private preserve of the elect who appoint each other and operate as a kind of liturgical guild. This Gnosticism wants to guard and exclude and privatize, and the people are ultimately their enemy. This perspective harkens back to the ancient world where priests served the philosopher kings, and sparingly handed out religious truth to the masses based on what they believe they should know in the service of their agenda. One can detect these two tendencies from the earliest part of the Christian age to our own.

Indeed, in our own times, we can detect the existence of these two sides in the debate about the future of liturgy. The people who claim the mantle of the "spirit of Vatican II" want to freeze liturgy as it was in the 1970s when they were in full control. They have their own private (Gnostic) interpretation of documents and they operate as a kind of guild that desires control above all else. They don't want people reading the documents of Vatican II for themselves for fear that they would arrive at different conclusions and question the claims of the elites.

In contrast, the new liturgical movement as led by Benedict XVI is encouraging the widest possible distribution of the documents of Vatican II, and evangelizes on their behalf, and believes in freeing the classical usage of the Roman Rite so that everyone can have access to our tradition and grow to love it and embrace it as our own. This movement trusts the priests and trusts the people in their capacity for learning, loving, and restoring our deepest traditions so that they can live again in our own time. This was the spirit of Guido and it is the spirit of the *motu proprio*.

It is the spirit driving those who are working to make the Church's music available to all the world for free download, without legal tethers and without the limitation that comes from physical books. We are faced with the technological possibility of infinite and universal reproducibility of the chant, one thousand years after Guido d'Arezzo first imagined how to put sound on paper. 

## A Hero of the Century

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The day that Mary Berry died was the day that I got to know her through disciplines around the world. They came from all corners of the earth to blogs, forums, comment boxes, and sent articles and praise in every which way. It became clear that everyone who loves Catholic liturgy and Catholic art is deeply in her debt.

She was a nun and a don of Cambridge University, born of an academic family on the Feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul in 1917 and died on the Feast of the Ascension in 2008. If it is possible for a musicologist to be an apostle, she qualified in every way. Her contributions exhibited a wonderful scientific curiosity, but, based on the outpouring after her death, it is clear that there was much more to this woman. Working nearly alone, she sustained the interest in Gregorian chant after the postconciliar meltdown. Actually, she did more than sustain it. She inspired many people to the point that they took up her cause in academia and in parishes all over the English-speaking world.

As example here, I had a nice conversation with Jeffrey Morse, who is the director of music at St. Stephen the First Martyr Parish in Sacramento, California. Here is a parish that is wholly and exclusively committed to the extraordinary form of the Roman Rite. There are some 800 families that attend, and Morse works with many choirs to provide Gregorian propers at the Masses, as well as sacred polyphony. He directs a children's choir that learns how to read and sing chant—a choir filled with the future directors and singers in our own parishes. His is a fully funded professional position. Here we see the highest of the Catholic musical arts flourish in their fullest form—secure, beautiful, and building for the future.

And why? Because of Mary Berry. When Morse was 17, he called Monsignor Richard Schuler at St. Agnes in Minnesota and asked where he could go to study Gregorian chant. Nowhere in the United States, he replied. You must go to Cambridge to study with Mary Berry. So he did. And there he learned to master the art. She shared her knowledge and her gifts. And today all these live in this parish. So it is in Australia and all over the United Kingdom. There are Mary Berry students and followers who caught

that fiery love for chant from her. So too in Austria, Germany, Italy, and France. Her followers seem to be everywhere and they all credit her.

Can one person make a difference? My goodness, yes. And consider the times. Think of the intellectuals, musicians, priests, and liturgists who had obtained mastery over their craft in the late 1950s, working diligently and productively to improve the Church and its worship. Think of the institutions they were building and the great things they were achieving for the glory of God. Now imagine these same people ten to fifteen years later in the turbulent times following the Second Vatican Council, and put yourself in their place. If you have ever spoken to one of these people, you have to marvel at what they saw, which was essentially this: their whole world was swept away, seemingly over night, buffeted and finally wrecked by the crazy confusions and disastrous fashions of the day, which led to an abandonment of all that was revered as holy and true in the past.

We think we have it hard now. Imagine having lived through it all. Would you despair or have hope that truth will eventually prevail? Would you fight or relent? How would your decision work out in practice: with patience and prayer or anger and protest? Also, what if you found yourself alone, an outcast among your peers? Would you then decide to change directions along with everyone else? Or would you have been steadfast and continue to build in every way you could? These are extremely difficult questions and I'm only happy to not face them with the severity that this generation faced them. But Mary Berry faced them with great courage and hope. It's almost as if all the experiences of her life lead her to do this.

Following her initial schooling at Cambridge, she went to study music in Paris with Nadia Boulanger, who was perhaps the most influential music pedagogue and conductor of the 20th century, having taught Copeland, Piston, and Virgil Thomson. Berry converted to Catholicism in 1938. When war broke out, she was a nurse with the Red Cross and joined the Canonesses Regular of St. Augustine of the Congregation of Notre-Dame in Belgium. She and the sisters fled to Paris and then to Portugal. After the war she was sent to Rome to teach music and also to help manage a



typhoid epidemic. It was in this period that she studied more deeply at the Gregorian Institute in Paris.

After returning to England, she completed her PhD in music in 1968, with a dissertation on the relationship between chant and polyphony in the middle ages. And it was at this point that her entire world changed. The interest in chant that she had loved came to an end. And with only a few others such as an aging Justin Ward and Theodore Marier in the United States she set out to keep the art alive for another generation. She saw that there was continuing interest in chant as pure music and assisted in placing its performance in music festivals and continued to write and teach about its use in liturgy. She founded the professional Schola Gregoriana of Cambridge, an ensemble that still sets the highest standards of performance.


As an example of how she worked, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, she was very concerned that the onslaught of Western culture would create pressure for Catholics in these countries to abandon chant. So working with the British Consulates, she invited Catholic musicians from Poland, Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania to Cambridge to be part of a Holy Week "song school." The gathered group sang all day for the entire week, the entire liturgical glories of this most moving time of the year. This event, more than any other, secured a high place for chant in the newly open countries.

For a lifetime of service in the cause of the faith, in 2000 she was awarded the Papal Cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice. A few months ago, a colleague wrote and suggested that she be interviewed at the age of 90 and that this interview be printed in *Sacred Music*. It struck me as a splendid idea. But it came too late. This child of the day of the Holy Apostles was called home on the day of the Ascension. And observe what she has left behind! There are hundreds of Gregorian scholars in the United States. Around the world, they number in the thousands. She must have suspected that the post-conciliar hiatus would be short, a small parenthesis in the 2000-year history of this art, and I'm only guessing that before she died she had already begun to suspect that the hiatus had ended.

One of her discoveries concerns the song we all know so well as *Veni, Veni Emmanuel*. Like so many others, I had always assumed that even though it sounded old, it was really a modern song, as in 19th century. She, however, discovered a 15th century manuscript

version in a French Processionale. So it turns out that Veni has a much longer heritage than we knew. And this raises a very serious question about the applicability of the scientific method when it comes to dating the music of the faith. It is an obvious fallacy to date it from the earliest known physical copy. Music is not like painting; it can be and was passed on orally. The printing on a paper can't capture of the fullness and richness of this grand art that links our entire history.

And the longer you know the chant, the more you come to understand how it is that someone like Mary Berry could so fully dedicate her life to it. Each chant of the *Graduale Romanum* is a masterpiece. Even the shortest communion chant achieves a miraculous integration between words and music, and quite often the singer is just struck with awe, the way we are at a Mahler symphony or a glorious cathedral. It is art that was created in this world but it is not of this world.

In fact, I've had some suspicion that though many chants are dated from the Middle Ages, we might find out differently in Heaven and it will be revealed to us that the essential core of what is today Gregorian chant can trace its roots to Jerusalem and even back to the earliest Church. If that is true, we might not ever discover the proof in this world. It will be revealed to us in eternity, to which the music and liturgy that Dr. Berry loved with such passion points unceasingly. 

## Four Catholic Musical Masters

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At the Sacred Music Colloquium in 2008, 250 Catholic musicians were privileged to study under four fantastic masters of sacred music: Horst Buchholz, Scott Turkington, William Mahrt, and Wilko Brouwers. We need to thank God for them and their dedication to this cause. They are doing the bulk of the training for today's liturgical musicians and their work is going to have a massive influence on the music in all our parishes in the coming

decades. Indeed, their influence will be pervasive long after they have left this earth.

In some ways, it is a miracle that they exist at all. Beginning at some point in the late 1960s, the music to which they are devoted was marginalized to the point of near extinction. We were told that it was a new Church and that chant and polyphony would no longer be part of our liturgical experience. There was a mad scramble to throw out the accumulated musical capital of many generations and start over completely with pop and folk music exclusively in the vernacular. Choirs and musical mastery itself came under attack. All music was supposed to be by the people, from the people, and for the people. (How strange that all this occurred only a few years following a statement from a Church council that choirs need to be fostered and that chant and polyphony deserve primacy of place in the liturgy!)

These four musicians, however, did not go along with prevailing trends. They chose Catholic music as their vocations and underwent all the necessary training with the seriousness that the subject deserves. They studied chant closely and wrote and conducted, keeping the flame burning during the dark years. They never lost hope.

There is not a trace of bitterness or malice in any of them. What we find is a burning passion to teach and to make the Church's music take flight in a liturgical setting. In these past decades, they carved out a special place for themselves within their parishes and institutions and cultivated singers and organists, keeping the repertory alive and seeking pupils wherever they could find them.

Today, they face a completely different environment. Their services are being sought out. They are revered by thousands of aspiring chanters and organists. Their insights are being shared with excited musicians of all ages. Their influence is already being felt in the Catholic world, and their names are on the lips of students of chant in colleges and universities around the country. And you know how this odd new fame has affected them? It has made them happy and encouraged them, but there is not the slightest hint in any of them that they sense vindication for their lifelong struggle. They are as humble as always and thankful to God for the opportunity to make a difference.

Let's look at each.

HORST BUCHHOLZ conducted the final recessional of the Mass of the colloquium at which the entire colloquium sang Anton Bruckner's Ave Maria. You can listen to the results as MusicaSacra.com. There are no words to describe it. The singers are confident and emotive, strong and precise. Their dynamics move together, and they have no fear of soaring to the heights. This is a sense that Buchholz elicits from singers, with his sure-footed approach. At the same Mass, his own choir sang Monteverdi's Mass in F, and the results were similar.

In rehearsal, Maestro Buchholz, who has been music director at the Denver Cathedral for several years, is demanding but charming and fun. Singers want to please him, and the rehearsals go quickly. I enjoy watching him when he first opens a score. He doesn't see black lines and spots on a white page. Instead he seems to hear the music on the page, and an ideal enters his mind. The rest of the time is spent gently and carefully molding the choir's sound to conform to that. Intonation is a problem in every choir but his method of fixing that is to create a secure framework for singers so that they feel a sense of confidence. The pitch takes care of itself.

He is as at home with symphonic music and 19th century choral music as he is with the Renaissance tradition. What he loves more than anything else is beauty and drama and he excels at making it happen, no matter the constraints of time or place. He has none of the pomp or arrogance to which his talent would entitle him. He is approachable and personable, seeing his role as director as nothing more than first among equals.

SCOTT TURKINGTON, who directs music at a parish in Stamford, Connecticut, is the recognized American master of Gregorian chant pedagogy in our age. This is a man who single handedly taught a week long course in chant for 50 people the week before the colloquium, teaching 8 to 12 hours per day. Can you imagine such a thing? It takes enormous personal stamina to do this, especially since no class break or mealtime takes place without his being surrounded by eager learners asking questions. He did this for 6 straight days and then taught both chant and polyphony the following week, doing 14 and 16 hour days for another solid week. I find that just amazing.

The students were enthralled at every step. They never missed class. They never became bored. In fact, they were standing the whole time or, when sitting, perching on the edge of their seats with eyes wide open. When I had to interrupt class to make an announcement, you could observe the impatience on their faces: "that's fine, but can we please start singing again?" I recall the first class in which the schola sang Kyrie XI. I thought, "well, that sounds great. What's to say?" But Maestro Turkington had plenty to say. He focused on pronunciation, on making beautiful phrases, on helping singers to visualize the liturgical function of the chant. He never missed a moment to teach both the details of chant and also the big picture. He further taught on conducting, on Psalm singing, on the musical language of solfege.

From his point of view, he is only passing on the great tradition that he inherited, one that dates back to the early Solesmes school that began with Doms Pothier, Mocquereau, and Gajard, which was passed on to his own teacher Theodore Marier. But he adds his own special touch: a lovely humanitarianism and patience that helps singers feel great about what they are doing. He is demanding but he never raises his voice. The music itself fills him with great joy. He is quick to laugh. When he conducts a chant, a gentle smile comes over his face and his hands move like living art. And because he knows the chant so well, his sense of phrasing and beauty infuses the polyphonic music he conducts, so that there develops a seamless integration between the two.

WILLIAM MAHRT, who is a music professor at Stanford University, would be a rare person in any age. He is both an academic musicologist, who has a long list of prestigious writings for academic journals, and a parish musician of forty years. His own choir never abandoned the music of the faith. His conducting style is minimalist in the best sense, and seems to convey a sense of freedom. The choir rises to the occasion and sings with great affection and unity. One person described the sound of his colloquium chanters as being like "a rich, deep, old wine." He avoids all the detracting controversies over chant rhythm and instead urges people to sing from the editions they have.

His consistent message to singers is that they must develop a spiritual and liturgical understanding of what they are doing. They must see how the text integrates with the melody, and, more

importantly, how the whole of the chant in question serves a very precise liturgical function. The Introit is for processing. The Gradual and Alleluia should provide an environment for reflecting on the readings. The offertory chant tells a special story that creates a setting of anticipation. He explains all of this during his sessions with singers, drawing upon his encyclopedic knowledge of the literature and tradition.

The musicological literature can come across like rocket science, especially in the area of criticism, which can be incomprehensible to laypeople. But Mahrt completely eschews this approach. When he offers a running commentary on a particular chant, he uses plain and evocative language, speaking spontaneously with interesting words and descriptions. He seems to see the lines of chant as colors in the kaleidoscope and views his role as merely describing what he sees. This allows listeners to be part of his mental process so that we too can join him on his journey toward ever deeper understanding.

What I find most striking about him is disarming humility. Musicians of his caliber are often puffed up and spoiled, anxious to show off in front of others. Not so with Maestro Mahrt. He listens carefully to what others have to say, hoping to learn more from them. And when he begins to speak, it is always in soft and affectionate tones, his sentences taking on the character of liturgy itself. You can see how Catholic liturgy is infused the whole of his life. As with the others, he is overjoyed about the changing Catholic musical scene but there is no sense of "I told you so" about his attitude. He is awed and excited that so many are coming to learn and sing, and feels nothing but gratitude for what he is now experiencing after so many years.

WILKO BROUWERS is the head of the Ward Center in Holland, which has an uninterrupted chant tradition. Generosity of spirit defines his method of teaching. He is exceedingly gentle, hoping that his choir members will always feel comfortable and good about what they are doing. Indeed, his specialization is to help singers come to believe that they are doing something other than singing. His teaching method involves using metaphors that are anything but biological. He urges us to think about other sights, sounds, tastes, and smells. As we follow his imagination as it wanders off, the singing takes care of itself. The phrase that nearly

defines him in my mind comes after a description of how we might approach a particular passage: "let's try it please."


How does his choir sound? The chant sounds hot, quick, and completely free, like a blue flame that catches your eye and entralls you with its movement. His method is to break down the chant into its essential melody line and treat all the remaining notes as gentle elaborations on that core theme. The result is uniquely beautiful: it is not notes on a page but an image in the air that flies freely.

All week, I kept pestering him about his approach to rhythm. I couldn't understand how he approaches the subject. To which school of thought does he adhere? He never gave me a clear answer. Finally, in the end, I came to realize something. He loves looking at the paleographic evidence of old, but has no dogma on the subject. He sees that chant is a lyrical music, not strict method. His goal is to help singers see the pictures that he sees in his mind and to use the instrument that God gave them, the human voice, as a paint brush to contribute to making those pictures.

Maestro Brouwers brings the same sense to conducting polyphony. He led a choir of 50 singers to sing a full Mass setting by Morales that required six sections of singers, as well as several motets. The musical apparatus of this music is more complex than pure chant, but that sense of innocent exuberance that inform his chant renderings was similarly conveyed in his polyphonic music as well.

His gentleness and generosity of spirit cultivated in his choir members nothing short of total devotion but he didn't revel in it. I caught him often in the early morning hours going on long walks and looking upwards at the movement of clouds and being fascinated at how the light of the sun played with the world around him. Once he said to me: "Look at this lake. It is different at every hour." Of course it was the same lake but it looked different to him. So it is with his take on the music of the faith. It is the same music of old but it is ever new in his hands.

Do you see what I mean about how fortunate we are to have these musicians with us? They stuck it out during the decades of confusion and now emerge to teach us the way to move forward. In some ways, they do represent a new school of thought in Catholic music, one that is infused with a kind of love that matches

the love that new Catholics have for the faith. There is freshness to what they do. They've been through their share battles but bear no visible scars. What they offer is a light to the path of the future of music for all Catholics. 

## The Gregorian Missal

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All the world knows that Americans are peculiar people when it comes to language. If it is not in English or if an English translation isn't nearby, we tend to treat the text as if it belongs to someone on another planet. Foreign tongues boggle our minds, and rather than get busy and actually learn another language (never!) we just toss it aside.

It's my own private theory that this tendency has long hindered the dissemination of the church's music in the United States. The *Graduale Romanum*, the official songbook of the Roman Rite, is entirely in Latin.

Hand it to a typical musician and it will not penetrate their brains. It's not the Latin in the music so much as the absence of English. Call it ignorance or bigotry if you want but it is a fact of reality. Latin chant will never go anywhere in this country until singers can feel a sense of ownership over the meaning, and that means translations.

This is why the CMAA produced *The Parish Book of Chant* as the new book for people. It opens up the Latin chant tradition to all English speakers.

The complementary book for the scholas—the book containing the propers of the Mass—is the *Gregorian Missal* published by the Solesmes Abbey in France. This book is a treasure, a glorious thing to behold. The running headers are all in English. All Latin texts are translated. And this allows the great revelation to unfold: here is the music of the Mass.



Probably 9 in 10 Catholic musicians would be shocked to know that music at Mass isn't really about picking hymns. The Mass comes with music already built into its structure—and that is as true of the new Missal as the old Missal. There is the ordinary but there is also the great repertoire of the propers inherited from the whole history of the Church. This is not only the music of the Mass; it is also the most wonderful and meaningful music ever written.

I can personally recall the first time I saw this book and opened its pages. It was like the dawn. Here it all is right before me: the Sunday and its music, the next Sunday and its music, the next Sunday and its music, for the entire year. And there is more music than you can possibly sing week to week, which is an inspiration!

Why didn't I know? Why didn't someone tell me? Here are the jewels long hidden from view. What a liberation. What a exciting challenge. What a comfort to know that this critical part of the Mass is not something we make up on our own but rather can embrace in the same way we embrace all the teachings of the Church!

It's been my dream—and many share it—that the Gregorian Missal could be examined by every Catholic musician in the English-speaking world. It wouldn't cause an immediate outbreak of chant in every parish. I know this. But it would change the debate. It would illustrate what we fanatics have been saying for so long. It would illustrate what Vatican II intended. It would instill a sense of the ideal. It would make it clear that chant is the music of the Roman Rite. It would provide direction for the future. The hermeneutic of continuity between old and new would become clear. We could begin again to stitch together our practice with our tradition.

Glorious news: the Solesmes Abbey has made this possible. The monastery has given permission to the Church Music Association of America to upload a beautiful copy, fully bookmarked, online at MusicaSacra.com. It is here, the first world universally downloadable presentation of the *Gregorian Missal*. Now and for the first time, it will be clear to musicians in the postconciliar period that chant is deeply and intimately connected with the rite.

<http://musicasacra.com/books/gregorianmissal-eng.pdf>

I strongly suggest that you send the link to every priest and every Catholic musician you know. They will be astounded. They might ask where this music comes from. The answer is that it dates to the earliest years of the Church. It developed as the Mass developed, with the music as the perfect expression of the liturgical meaning of the movement through the year and in the Mass. How did it manage to come to be so integrated into the 1970 Missal? It was part of what the Vatican did in response to the changes in the calendar. It also adapted the chant books. Solesmes completed the job with its *Graduale Romanum* of 1974.

This wonderful book came out in 1990. The magnificent decision of Solesmes to go digital with this publication is the fulfillment of a long heritage of progressive means of chant scholarship and distribution. The monastery had previously worked with the Church Music Association of America with the *Liber Cantualis*, so it was a natural partnership to take modern chant into the modern age.

What this means from an educational point of view is extraordinary. I fully expect to see a massive and rising demand for this book, which is also available from many distributors linked in the front matter of the digital version. In addition, poor parishes will now have a resource from which they can sing—consistent with the Benedictine dedication to the poor. In many ways, it is the fulfillment of the dream of Dom Gueranger, the founder of the monastery who prayed for a worldwide re-dedication to the beauty of the liturgy.

The first thought of people when seeing this for the first time is likely shock that the Mass is not just a text but a song. The next is likely to be disappointment that most musicians are not able to sing this music or even read it. It does indeed take a bit of study but it is not nearly as tricky as it seems. The staves have 4 lines because that is all the human voice needs. The opening clef marks: the Do or Fa, below which the half step occurs. Every note gets a pulse, and the dots add a pulse. That's all you need to know to get started.

Other interesting features: note the near total absence of hymns. No entrance hymn; rather we have an introit. The offertory is a chant, not an intermission. When the GIRM refers to the communion chant, this is what it means. And note the inclusion of the

Gradual Psalm instead of the Responsorial Psalm. The Gradual Psalm has a far deeper history in the Roman Rite and remains a valued option in the rite. It is also a wonderful challenge for musicians.

In any case, all Catholics everywhere should say a prayer of thanksgiving for the Solesmes Monastery, for its founding, for its remarkable work over the years, and for its inspired vision to take the music of the Roman Rite into the new millennium with this far-seeing and progressive step.

*Te Deum laudamus:  
te Dominum confitemur.  
Te aeternum Patrem  
omnis terra veneratur.  
Tibi omnes Angeli;  
tibi caeli et universae Potestates;  
Tibi Cherubim et Seraphim  
incessabili voce proclamant:  
Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus,  
Dominus Deus Sabaoth. 6*



# Reviews

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## Music for the Soul

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Gregorian chant is back again in the billboard charts, hitting number one in the UK classical charts and in the top ten of all music, besting Madonna and other groups I've never heard of but which are apparently hugely popular. The CD in question is "Chant: Music for Paradise," or, as it is called in the US release, "Chant: Music for the Soul." (It is interesting to ponder why the production company believes that the word "soul" is more popular in the US and "paradise" is more popular in Europe.)

The singing is done by the Cistercian monks of Stift Heiligenkreuz (Holy Cross) in Austria. The chants are from the Requiem Mass and office. The opening song is "In Paradisum," which sounds hopeful and beautiful but takes on a new cast when you realize that its historic association is with a graveside procession or possibly a coffin being lowered into the ground.

The quality of singing is unspeakably beautiful, even perfect. That 20 singers could so perfectly coordinate every consonant, vowel, crescendo, phrase, and cutoff must amaze any and every choral conductor. And it is not just perfect on one song but every chant and everything about every chant. Your jaw will drop on the first hearing, and then you feel the desire to listen to it a thousand times over.

The chants they sing are not from the Roman Gradual that is used in our parishes and cathedrals (or should be, in any case). The Cistercians have their own music books, so the chants are slightly different. There are different expressive neumes in them, and some extra melismatic phrases. For those who know the Roman chants, these make fascinating listening, as a highlight to

the diversity of style of chant. There is not one tradition called “Gregorian chant” but many editions of music for the Roman Rite.

We can learn something about the debates within chant scholarship just by listening. The monastery was founded in 1133 by St. Leopold III of the House of Babenberg. The chant there has never stopped, so we have a case of a continuous tradition, as one generation of singers rolls into the next. It is highly unlikely that a new monk could show up and say, “here is a great new way to render this rhythm!” and get away with it. Chant masters like Ted Marier and Anthony Ruff point out that they have never had success in changing the way monasteries sing. The groups revert to the old way overnight.

So what do we hear here? We can detect a relentless pulse underneath the music. The melodic lines are free and undulating like a vast river but there is a sturdy substructure that is firmly organized to keep the singers together and secure, and this substructure is neither random nor dictated from on high. It is a shared understanding among all singers, one that partakes of the precise apparatus culled together by the Solesmes chant masters when they set out to teach the entire Catholic world to sing. So what we have in this recording is a reliable indicator of how the chant might have sounded in the 12th century and earlier. All those involved in the debates about chant rhythm would do well to listen and learn.

Let us ask the obvious question: how can we account for the secular popularity of chant?

First, it is enormously beautiful and worthwhile from a purely musical perspective. The tunes are varied and express the widest possible range of emotion. They are also singable—some of the most beautiful music ever composed. And they have that special quality that causes them to last through the ages. If you have ever attempted to write a song, you know how difficult it is to come up with anything that lasts longer than a few years at best. Master melodists like Haydn and Brahms could do this but in Gregorian chant we have the model and ideal. Also, consider the sheer length of phrases in chant. They last and last, with seamless integration over extended periods. I mean not only the development of the melody, but the melody itself. We marvel that Mahler could do this in his symphonies but in chant we have tens of thousands of examples of the same thing using not orchestras of




hundreds of players but just unison lines of one part. To me, that is amazing.

Second, the music has a holy quality that suggests a sacred space, and this comes at a premium in a world devoid of sacred spaces. Our intellects and souls cry out to touch something pure, fundamental, and eternal. Not even our churches qualify in most cases, especially with their loud drums and guitars or their boring metrical hymnody that never quite takes flight. With this CD, however, we can put it in our car stereos or home systems and experience something of a sacred space that we can create ourselves. It is no substitute for being at the monastery or in a church where it is sung, but it is a substitute we can conjure up quickly. The demand for this CD expresses the universal demand for the sacred. Why is the music holy? Here we delve into a mysterious area that I can't quite understand. Is it the modal structure, the lack of evenly divided metrics, the language, the compatibility with the God-given instrument of the voice, or that this music has all those elements? Maybe this issue will always remain as mysterious as it is undeniable.

Third, this music represents something unifying, depoliticized, and harmonious in a world of national division, war, economic crisis, and controversy between peoples. Here we have music that is trans-multicultural, as appealing to a peasant in Brazil as a hunter in Uganda or a latte-sipper in Seattle. There is an ongoing fashion to learn about the music of other peoples as a means to unifying our world. But unification doesn't come through mere appreciation of differences but by finding commonalities. I might suggest that Gregorian chant might be uniquely qualified as constituting universal music in our times. After all, we find here the very roots of nearly all that is known as music in the developed world.

Consider, too, the striking irony that this new CD has been produced and is being marketed by a thoroughly secular company: Universal Music. This company might be responsible for some of the most disgusting and culturally degrading trash music being produced today. And yet, here, in this recording, the secular and sacred meet in a glorious way to bring holy art to the whole world. Benedict XVI often refers to the need for a "healthy secularism" in which non-sacred institutions can work to serve

sacred ends. Perhaps this is an example of what he means. May the work of Stift Heiligenkreuz and Universal come together to convert our church musicians and then convert the world. 

## National Treasure

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In the movie series “National Treasure” there is always a last scene in which the treasure hunters break into the hidden cave to find a world-historic stash of rare and beautiful things of priceless value. In terms of Catholic music, I feel as if I’ve walked into that hidden cave.

In the summer of 2008, I was in Portland, Oregon, at the Byrd Festival, which is several weeks of concerts and lectures and services, including Masses, that use and celebrate the music of William Byrd. The point of my being there was to distribute *A Byrd Celebration*, a new collection available from the Church Music Association of America, but what I found there just amazed me.

For starters, I heard the talented Cantores in Ecclesia, a singing group that surely ranks among the best polyphony choirs attached to any Catholic parish in the English-speaking world. It was founded by Dean Applegate and sustained all these years by his total dedication to the cause. He very wisely maintained a children’s choir too, so now Cantores is populated by the grown members of his children’s choir. The average age of these 35 singers is probably 32 years old—just my estimate.

The first night I attended, they were being rehearsed by choir-master Richard Marlow, now retired from Trinity College, Cambridge. The rehearsal lasted 3 hours. Sometimes rehearsals can be as interesting as concerts, and this was the case here. I heard so much music that I’ve never heard before. I know Byrd’s Masses and a few common motets but there is a whole world out there that has just been opened to me. During that time, they sang some 15 motets from Byrd’s corpus of music.

And though most choir members would deny it, each one of these could have been recorded on the spot and distributed. The balance, the confidence, the tone, the phrasing, the pitch—everything was in place as it should be. I've never heard a choir that makes all this music seem so easy and effortless.

I was able to follow along with the scores as they sang. It suddenly struck me that Byrd has been terribly neglected in the polyphonic revival. We tend to be so focused on the Italian tradition of Palestrina and the Spanish tradition of Victoria that we don't look to England like we should. This was true half a century ago as well. Byrd's *Gradualia*, an incredibly rich source of polyphony based on proper texts, have just not been part of the apparatus of Catholic music as they should.

Most of this music is free on CPDL.org. Most of it is in four or five parts. It is fresh, energetic, creative, and magnificent in every way, satisfying to both singer and listener alike. Most of it is short—and that is for a reason. It had to be short because it was largely used in secret Masses in which singers and the congregation had to be in and out in a hurry. There could be no long languishing on huge motets. But this constraint ends up being fantastic for modern choirs, simply because there is less to learn. Each of these pieces—and there are many dozens more—are suitable for parish choirs, right now. If you are not in a position to sing Gregorian propers right now, these make a great substitute. Ideally of course you would sing the plainsong followed by the motet.

As for Cantores in Ecclesia, it is a national treasure. Why some entrepreneurial recording company has not seized on them is beyond me. They could make a dozen CDs right now that would be splendid contributions. For that matter, the Oregon Catholic Press itself is right in Portland. Cantores has recorded one CD of chant for this publisher and it remains their bestseller. This project should be dramatically expanded and immediately. If OCP doesn't jump on this opportunity, someone should.

If you think that the Catholic Church in America doesn't have much to offer in the way of professional musicianship, come to Portland. Hear this choir. See what they are doing. Observe the professionalism and love at work.

We also need to appreciate the vision behind both Cantores and The Byrd Festival. There is nothing in the structure of the universe

that demands that these exist. They are product of crazy dreams, impossible goals, relentless determination—and then the reality exists and it changes the way we think, and live, and worship. Tremendous credit goes out to all those who have worked so hard to make this happen.

On the events themselves, here are some notes from just a few. The Pontifical High Mass, August 15, Church of St. Stephen, Portland—Bishop Basil Meeking, Celebrant—was celebrated in the extraordinary form as part of the Byrd Festival. The propers for the day—introit, gradual, alleluia, offertory, and communion—were all sung to polyphony settings by William Byrd, while the Mass ordinary (IX) was sung by the people in alternation with the choir. This is inverted from everything I had previously heard.

The Mass was the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, some of the most wonderful Gregorian propers, so these were always in the back of my mind as I listened to a scaled-down choir of Cantores in Ecclesia sing: *Gaudeamus, Propter veritatem, Assumpta est Maria, and Optimam partem.*

Byrd scholar Kerry McCarthy directed the choir and when I asked her about the relationship between the chant and polyphony, she suspected that there was none, though I thought I could hear it. It might have been my imagination, and I wondered whether the congregation in Byrd's time could hear it too. But there seems to be some controversy as to whether the Gregorian propers were known among English Catholics in 1605 after all those years of liturgical undoing. In addition, the Sarum rite offers slightly different settings from the Roman Gradual.

Whether there is a relationship or not, it hardly mattered for the beauty of these propers which stood alone in their stead. It was an interesting thing to hear the introits and the period of reflection following the readings to be sung in these elaborate but short polyphonic settings. It somehow brought a special "highness" to the liturgy, and seemed to actually heighten the importance of the propers as critical to the liturgical structure itself. It seems that during times when the propers have been all-but forgotten by Catholics, these settings serve the important role of saying that they are critical and not something we can casually set aside.

It goes without saying that they were sung perfectly, which is what I've come to expect from this remarkable choir. As for the

ordinary setting, I'm not sure that I had ever experienced Mass IX in real liturgical time before. The chants are bright and beautiful but very difficult. Director/organizer Dean Applegate holds the unusual view that the harder the setting is on paper, the easier it is for the congregation to master, because the more difficult settings have more of a melodic quality that congregations can really learn well.

And while it's true that people sang the ordinary with gusto, there was an additional factor here that helped. The Kyrie, Gloria, and Credo were all done in alternation between choir and congregation, with the switch taking place at the double bar of the music. A cantor intones the piece, and the high-voice choir sings the first line. Then the congregation picks up. The choir continues to sing the next phrase in the higher octave. And so on, with everyone singing the Amen.

The wonderful thing here, that I hadn't realized before, is that the choir tends to keep the congregation singing correctly—keeping things moving in terms of tempo and maintaining the pitch. If the congregation falls apart on one phrase, the schola puts it back together on the next phrase, and so on. This serves a very important pedagogical and performance purpose. It made me realize that sometimes we expect too much from the congregation by insisting that it sing the entire piece all the way through. This is too intense a demand for some of these pieces.

This is something that regular parishes should strongly consider doing! As for the Mass itself, there is no ceremony quite like a pontifical high Mass in the old form.

Each year, the Byrd Festival has sung all three Byrd Masses: for three, four, and five voices. On another evening was the five-voice Mass at the Solemn Pontifical vigil Mass in the ordinary form for the 20th Sunday of the year, at the Church of St. Stephen, Portland, Oregon. Celebrant: Most Reverend Basil Meeking. Concelebrant: Very Reverend Monsignor Dennis O'Donovan.

From the first notes, something was remarkable about the music. The Gregorian introit was sung by the children's choir of Cantores in Ecclesia. You might read that sentence again and consider what it means. Children's choirs hardly exist anymore in our parishes. Those that do are centered on singing unbearable seasonal songs. Hardly any training goes on anymore. This is a major

reason why the Catholic Church is in such a bad way concerning music.

But my point in writing is not to complain about what we already know. Here was seen something that hardly anyone knows: children can sing Gregorian propers, and they do this almost every week, or, at least, they are prepared to do this almost every week.

A major point of the liberalization of the older use of the Roman Rite is that it permits us to understand the new use of the Rite in its proper context. The world was not reinvented in 1970. The ordinary form divorced from its parent in the extraordinary form takes on a distorted shape. However, when the ordinary and extraordinary forms are celebrated back to back, you begin to see a pull at work that leads to greater continuity between old and new.


This is what was illustrated at the Byrd Festival with Masses for the twentieth Sunday of the year in both forms: vigil (ordinary) and Sunday morning (extraordinary form). The propers were the same. The ordinary was the same. The Gradual was sung at both. Neither Mass used any “hymns” (in the sense in which we think of that term) and yet the people sang and were involved at every step of both Masses.

The extraordinary form with its far more elaborate ceremony, was held at the Dominican parish Holy Rosary in Portland. There are a few other notable differences: the positioning of the Asperges, the silent Canon, the Pater noster sung by the celebrant alone, the presence of a deacon and subdeacon with appointed roles (as versus concelebrants). But to someone who had just encountered the Mass, they would have certainly seemed like two somewhat different forms of the same Rite—precisely as Benedict XVI has said. This is in contrast to the usual impression people have of the OF and EF as two separate planets.

The celebrant for the Mass was Fr. (and Dr.) Richard Cipolla of St. Mary’s, Norwalk. His homily spoke of the liturgy as a contribution to the social order by what he called (in light of Josef Pieper) “leisure,” which is to say, not something that is work (toil designed for physical sustenance alone) but rather something we take time out of the course of our lives to love and embrace because it is beautiful and true. He explained why it is essential to treat the Mass as not only faith but art, not something ordinary but

extraordinary, something that is not our work but the work of God.

As an example, he pointed to chant as pure joy—a “festival of neumes”—and likened polyphony to a waterfall that yields beautiful rainbows of color. We knew precisely what he meant because we had been listening to the children chant the Gregorian propers and the adult choir sing Byrd’s Mass for Three Voices. Three voices doesn’t sound like many. But there is something magical about the way Byrd scored this Mass. It sounds like many more. He does so much with so little, with impressive cascades of entrances throughout. His use of the ranges of the voices and their combinations to illustrate the text were well brought out by Cantores in Ecclesia.

From the singer’s point of view, this is a very satisfying setting. Every note matters. If one thing is out of place, you certainly sense it. But of course nothing was out of place with Cantores. 

## The Glory of Byrd

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All music before the time of Bach is at a cultural disadvantage given prevailing biases, and in the case of William Byrd, the disadvantage is intensified by the extent of his liturgical output. Such music tends to be dismissed as somehow composed under clerical duress, for an oppressive and reactionary venue. Thus are the greatest cultural and intellectual achievements of the Renaissance dismissed as not worthy of our time.

So when Dean Applegate and Richard Marlow set out to create a Byrd Festival in Portland, Oregon, more than ten years ago, they were engaged in a heroically implausible effort. It is easy to forget this. When institutions grow and become established, there is a temptation for newcomers to take them for granted, as if they are just supposed to be this way: as if the interest, funding, and talent are just part of the landscape.

The fact is that the very existence of this institution is the product of a dream backed by hard work and dedication, with countless hours of unpaid labor poured into this at every level. Of course it is still underfunded, very much so. It would have been so easy at the beginning of this enterprise, or anywhere along the way, for the organizers to just observe that there is no real payoff to doing this sort of thing. But they didn't. They keep pressing on, and the audiences and enthusiasm grew year by year.

And why go to all this work? It has to do with the very biases I mentioned above. If Byrd is to assume his rightful place in the history of art, he must have his champions, people who are willing to step out front and let his music be performed or heard. There was a time, we must remember, when Bach himself needed such a champion and Mendelssohn was there to become that, and all generations following are grateful. Palestrina found his champions with the German Cecilians. Likewise, Byrd needed people to step forward and put his music forward so that it can assume its rightful place.

The organizers have done even more than that. They have taken upon themselves the task of showing that this is not only wonderful music but also that it is music that is liturgically viable in our times. To me, this effort is deserving of special praise because Renaissance polyphony itself, though extolled in the documents of Vatican II, has been largely shelved in the postconciliar period, much to the impoverishment of Catholic liturgical music. Liturgical choirs themselves have come under attack, and were target for destruction by dangerous fanatics in the postconciliar period.

So, yes, there are several herculean tasks that this institution has taken on: show the magnificence of Byrd's music, demonstrate its cultural relevance in our times, illustrate its use in liturgy, and provide a setting for the continued cultivation and promotion of polyphonic choral music in worship as performed by the best singers and organists.

So the Byrd Festival has taken many tasks, and they have worked to maintain a good balance between them all. The festival, then, features pure concert settings for Byrd's organ works and secular and religious songs. They provide choral concerts in which Byrd's liturgical music can be appreciated as pure music. Then



also there are the many liturgical services—both Catholic and Anglican, for purposes of demonstration—in which it is shown how Byrd’s music is eminently suitable to the task of worship. How is it possible that this enormous enterprise can so completely center on the work of a single composer? All I can say is that it works, and that’s because Byrd’s output is so varied and brilliant it can hold up to this level of focus.

It is a different task from, for example, the CMAA Sacred Music Colloquium. Its purpose is not so much teaching and singing by non-specialists. It is more of a demonstration program to show the riches that Byrd’s music has to offer. But the festival organizers have been very kind and wise to hold many receptions following events where enthusiasts can gather and get to know the singers, directors, and each other.

As a result, the organizers have managed the implausible task of creating an institution that has contributed mightily to several sectors: early music enthusiasts, academic musicologists, liturgical scholars, musicians working in the sacred music field, as well as regular people who desire more meaningful worship environments. This is no easy task, but the Byrd Festival has accomplished this. The conference volume *A Byrd Festival*, edited by Richard Turbet, nicely illustrates the integration of all these goals.

It’s not as if music not by Byrd is banned here. Before the Choral Evensong service, we were treated to a revealing and powerful organ concert by Mark Williams of London. The title of the concert: “From Byrd to Bach,” and it included selections from Cabezon, Byrd, Titelouze, Sweelinck, Scheidt, Rossi, Bruhns, Couperin, and the concert ended with Bach’s D major Prelude and Fugue.

At the organ concerts I’ve been to in the last years, there was much in the way of explanation, announcement, and commentary by the organist. All of this is very enjoyable, but this concert was completely different, and it gives us a reason to reflect on the different modes of communication and what they mean.

The concert was set to start at 4:15pm. People began to arrive at 3:45, and there was much milling around, with people still arriving just on time. At the appointed time, the organ just began without announcement. There was no introduction, no grand bow of

welcome, no demand that we turn off our cell phones, or anything else. There was nothing to see, since the organist was hidden.

As the music started, you could see that people were just a bit confused as to whether it had indeed begun. But after a few minutes, people settled in and they listened very carefully. The organist let the music call the people to order and narrate the event.

The selections sampled a range of stops, tempos, and styles — as if to show us what had led to Bach and why it matters. No one could possibly doubt after this demonstration the merit of this early organ work or why the organ has been given such a privileged place in liturgy.

Mercifully, there was no applause between pieces. The whole focus was on the music. The splendor of the pieces built and built, and the tension grew and grew to the point of astonishment, until the last notes of the Bach selection 45 minutes after the concert began. Then people in the audience burst into applause with genuine love, appreciation, and respect. Mr. Williams, now clearly established as an amazing talent, rose from the bench, walked from behind the sanctuary that hid him, and humbly bowed and walked off.

Here is a model of concertizing that other organists might consider. Actually, it seems a great model generally. The complete absence of any discussion or explanation led the listener into a different realm of understanding, away from the words of casual conversation and into a higher sense of letting the notes and music speak for themselves.

Now, I'm not somehow against narrated concerts. I like the idea of communicating with people and anything that helps people more fully appreciate music is great by me. So there is no "snob appeal" to me for not having announcements, jokes to put people at ease, and the like.

And yet now I see that there is a point to completely eliminating verbal communication and verbal audience engagement. Without words, we are compelled to make sense of what is happening on its own terms — not merely rely on conventional modes of cognition to be led to a higher means of comprehension. I believe that this is what happened at this concert.

There is a lesson here for liturgy. Sometimes we believe that when people come to Mass, they should be greeted by the celebrant

and urged to greet each other. We give them a song to sing that we call (with no basis in history) the "gathering song." The idea is to put people at ease, make people happy to be there, and help people feel at home.

The problem with this approach is that it doesn't ask anything of our hearts and our higher sense. If we let the Mass be the Mass, on the other hand, we see that it also begins with a slight "discomfort." We fall on our knees and we pray. The introit begins, and the purpose has nothing to do with greeting each other. It is the beginning of a procession to the risen Lord. We are drawn, almost against the will of our lower sense that drives our everyday lives, into a higher spiritual mindset that prepares us for contemplating mysteries that are not part of our everyday life.


There is great wisdom in this tradition. Let's face the truth that sometimes we really don't want to be at Mass. There are other things we would rather do during this time. We are thinking about all our troubles at home and work or wondering about mundane issues that consume us day to day. We aren't really prepared. A zippy bouncing processional hymn plus a greeting is a way of saying: don't worry about it, just be yourself!

In fact, that is precisely what we do not want to be. Mass needs to convert us and change us. It should take us away from the mundane, away from our selfish desires, and show us the divine. When we arrive at Mass and don't really want to be there, we need the environment and the music to compel us into thinking differently and praying. This does indeed produce something uncomfortable, as we leave the passage of time and enter into the eternal realm. Then we truly do leave renewed.

This concert took something of the same approach. I'm grateful to Mark Williams for showing how the middle voice between temporality and eternity can be heard in the music alone, provided we let it speak uninterrupted.

I can easily imagine that in the years ahead, there will be more expansion into other English repertoire from the period and possibly into other regions and traditions as well. There will be an ever greater variety of ensembles taking a role. There will be discussions about format and the problem that in these times, no one can really take off two and half weeks for a festival event that is so

spread out. There are tradeoffs with any choice about the future, and there are likely to be difficult decisions ahead.

It is important to remember that something as spectacular as this institution comes with no guarantee of perpetuity. Every year, it is something that must be worked for, struggled for, paid for. It is always a leap of faith. It could come to an end the instant that it stops being supported in this way. This cannot be permitted to happen. This is why the Byrd Festival deserves the support of everyone who believes that beauty and truth can find their voice in our culture in our times. 

## A Turning Point in Recordings

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I had eagerly waited the release of the chant CD “*Inclina Domine*” from the Oregon Catholic Press for nearly a year. It is sung by some of the finest singers in the country. And it is not what you might expect from OCP. It is the entire Mass sung in Latin, not the old Mass but the 1970 Missal. As much as I’ve come to love the group that sings on this recording, *Cantores in Ecclesia*, even I was startled at how magnificent it is.

It took about a week for the significance to fully dawn on me. When really serious revolutions are in process, sometimes one doesn’t entirely notice them. This CD might in fact be a sign that we’ve turned the corner. It could portend some wonderful changes in our future.

I don’t need to rehearse for anyone the background of the OCP. Founded nearly a century ago, once called the Catholic Truth Society, in the postconciliar period it has been a leader in the commercialization of music for Catholic liturgy, and I mean that in two senses.

OCP forged the model that marketed music for parishes in the same way other products are marketed to us everyday: not by appeal to ecclesiastical authority or doctrine but by the pure art of

selling stuff that the proprietor thinks we might like and want to buy. They figured out how to appeal to and teach the regular guitarist, pianist, and cantor who were selecting music for the Mass each week. They learned the language and the approach, speaking not from on high but directly to people's regular experiences.

The advent of this approach came with the massive confusion over what music was supposed to match the new Mass; OCP beat everyone in capturing that market. And the products they have sold have also generally (and famously) fit within the category of what might be called commercial too. There is much to say about this—and I'm hardly alone in believing this to be a problem—but this is not the time or place.

Right now I would like to draw attention to the utility, meaning, and significance this new CD, which would be a major event no matter who the publisher is.

For most people who listen, it will be the first time they have ever heard the Roman Rite in the modern form sung in its normative form. The new Missal has been around nearly 40 years and yet because of vernacular permissions, cultural upheavals, too many "choices" within the structure of the Mass, and other factors, it is hardly ever heard in the way that accords with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. For this reason alone, this recording serves an extremely important purpose. It shows us what might have been and what might yet be.

You can try this at home. Put it on with Catholics around. Someone will say, oh yes, that's the Mass from the old days. You can just respond, no, this is the reformed Mass from 1970 sung in its universal form. You might see a look of shock. Listening to this will help focus arguments and hone intellectual clarity on precisely what it is that you are for and against, and what precisely it is we are speaking of when we talk of the *Novus Ordo Missae*.

This is the *Novus Ordo Missae*. No matter what else you hear in your parish, no matter what else OCP is selling, no matter what else your director of music says, this is the music of the *Novus Ordo Missae*. When I was listening to this, I asked another parishioner what section of the Mass we were hearing. She didn't have a clue but she found it very beautiful. Well, it was the Prayer of the Faithful—which is probably the most dreaded part of the Mass aside from the Sign of Peace. Well, in the normative form in which

Cantores sings it, it is wonderful. Another sign that this is the new Mass is the tutti singing on the Pater Noster.

In all, this is one of the most inspired performances of chant I've heard: convincing, confident, and full of conviction. It is an unusual lineup: a fully sung Latin Mass in the ordinary form for the 21st Sunday of the year, using the propers that employ a theme of harvest, as well as Mass XI for the ordinary chants. The voicing uses trebles (boys, girls, women) and low voices, both alternating and together. The idea here was to get away from holiday chant CDs and CDs of chant hymns, and focus instead on the core of the repertoire that makes up the music of the Mass in the Roman Rite.

What strikes you immediately is the interesting absence of caution. It is as if an ethos is alive among the singers: we are here to really sing this music and everyone must pull his or her weight. There are no followers or leaders; only singers. I noted this when I spent a few days with Cantores last year during the Byrd Festival. The singers love what they do and can't wait to do it. Nothing is brittle. Nothing is reticent. Nothing is fearful. The music leaves the page completely and takes flight as if it were never written down.

The sound and feeling of the chant has a fiery quality that gives it a notable forward motion, through melismas and held notes. The sound never lags, never pulls back. Every phrase is linked to the next. The pauses and rhythmic approaches are unified as if every singer is thinking about the music in precisely the way every other singer is.

The results go beyond most recordings of chant you hear. These are neither monks nor novices. They are experienced professionals who have sung every week for many years. The results strike me as completely persuasive at every step. You might say that the approach is eccentric in some way, a distinct "Portland chant" that beautifully reveals the capacity of this music for endless reinvention.

Second, this is an important CD for priests who aspire to sing the Mass. There are training seminars in the extraordinary form going on around the country, and I'm involved in helping to organize one in Connecticut (see [MusicaSacra.com](http://MusicaSacra.com)). But even if you have no interest in the EF, you can still sing the Mass in your own parish right now in Latin. This recording provides all the

dialogues, readings, and priest's parts, expertly sung. Any priest can use it as a tutorial. Indeed it is one of the best there is.

Third, it is massively significant that OCP itself is responsible for the production and distribution of this CD. The liner notes alone provide an important tutorial in truth. They are beautifully written.

Now, you might say: oh it doesn't matter at all. This is only OCP serving a niche market. These capitalists will do anything for a buck, even good things. So what that chant is now part of the Catholic jukebox that includes reggae, rock, calypso, and jingles of all sorts?

Well, here is the thing that I think even the promoters of pop sounds have to recognize. With Gregorian chant, we cannot be speaking of just one form among many choices. Chant is the ideal. Chant is the standard, normatively and historically. There is no getting around this fact. It is stated plainly in the documents. Moreover, most all Catholics know this in their hearts. It's like a multiple choice exam. There are many options but only one answer that is correct every time.


This is one reason I believe that chant has been suppressed in many circles; indeed that there was a war on chant in the 1960s and 1970s is a well-documented truth that no one need deny. Let the chant out and it tends to spread. It defines, clarifies, and draws people. We begin to measure other forms of music against this ideal. In other words, it changes everything. It is not likely to remain just one part of an overall diversity. It will ascend.

I do think there is a mystical role that Cantores in Ecclesia plays in this great historical drama. Dean Applegate is a man of quiet temperament and sweet demeanor but they mask a dogged determination and fearlessness in doing what he knows to be right. He has learned through the years to never compromise in pushing for the ideal. He will leave a parish before he will give up one note from the *Graduale Romanum*. His approach is so fierce that even his friends have sometimes winced; but in the end, look what he has done!

He came to Portland, Oregon, many years ago with the idea of a transplanting the English liturgical choral tradition via Mary Berry in the United States. He succeeded. So we can see how the tradition was transmitted: Solesmes to London to Portland.

In the same town, the center of the “contemporary” church music movement was developing. These two very powerful forces with two opposing views of music at Mass grew up alongside each other. But it would be a miracle if the OCP could remain untouched by Dean’s work, which is world famous.

The first steps toward cooperation occurred last year with a recording that quickly became the best-selling CD in the entire catalog. That is a beautiful recording but it is only chant hymns. This, however, is the Mass. The Mass!

Take note of this seemingly inauspicious release. We might look back someday and see it as a turning point in the history of American Catholic music. 



# The Future

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## The New Youth Mass

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Some of the worst liturgical abuses in the last decades have taken place in the name of appealing to the youth. Liturgists set up this category called the “youth” to be an archetype within a dialectical drama that pit tradition against innovation. The youth were supposedly uninspired by solemnity and preferred laxity, pop music, casual celebrant demeanor, and practices such as liturgical dance and liturgical puppeteering that had no precedent in the entire history of the Roman Rite. The music in particular is my concern here, and in this area we heard the use of music that was not only incompatible with true spirit of the Mass but utterly contrary to it. The idea was that the Catholic Church had better embrace this stuff or else it risks losing an entire generation.

So many parishes complied, first with set-aside youth Masses in which all heck broke loose, and any savvy Catholic in America knows exactly what I mean by that. Then the next step took place: the culture of these Masses began to flow into the other Masses at the parish. The *reductio ad absurdum* was the phenomenon known as Life Teen, at which garage bands were encouraged to unleash their talents and celebrants were encouraged to use any and every method to entertain people rather than draw people’s attention toward the transcendent. One must also observe that previous World Youth Days—with their exhibitions of pop stars and over-the-top displays of emotional unlashings—have not been a help in this regard.

Well, there is a slight problem with hinging an entire liturgical project around a dogmatic demographic claim. Time moves forward: “The present is infinitely vanishing,” as Kierkegaard said.

Demographics change. The youth get old, and the vanguard of the movement eventually gets trampled by the sheer passage of time. Thus do we observe the absurdity of obviously aging old-timers attached to styles and approaches that are as dated as shag carpet and big-bell jeans telling the actual youth of today what they should and shouldn't desire in liturgy. It comes across like 1970s kitsch, the stuff of low-budget comedy films about a time that today's real youth only know in caricature.

Well, that was then and this is now. Observe the Masses at World Youth Day in Australia in 2008. The trappings of the "youth Mass" of yesteryear were gone, replaced by a new solemnity that included Gregorian chant, traditional vestments, beautiful altar arrangements, attention to the rubrics, and so much more. Far from being an example of what not to do, these Masses were, in many ways, models that today's truly progressive parishes would do well to follow.

What were the youth doing during the event? Many of the most active were involved in Gregorian chant scholas, either with the main event or side projects such as the group *Juventutem*, which has a special attachment to the extraordinary form of the Roman Rite. The group brought in chant master Scott Turkington to train the new generation, which sang Mass ordinaries and hymns from *The Parish Book of Chant* published by the Church Music Association of America. They sang propers from the *Liber Usualis*, a book with a grand tradition that was being tossed out in the 1960s and 1970s but which is now experiencing a glorious resurgence.


But even in the ordinary form Masses celebrated during the main events, we heard Gregorian introits and communion antiphons. Here we see what was even a step forward from the best of the U.S. Papal Masses, which provided only selected seasonal communion antiphons in chant. It seems like the Vatican advance team, led by Papal MC Guido Marini, is getting ever more vigilant in encouraging a recovery of traditional practices and liturgical ideals. They have not been 100 percent successful (the final Mass in Australia included a few highly unfortunate moments), but they learn to be less naïve as time goes on. As Fr. Zuhlsdorf frequently says, progress in this area takes place "brick by brick."

An example of an important step that represents an ongoing transition is the Benediction altar arrangement that we see in Papal Masses. The altar is not the high altar of the extraordinary form. It is the altar of the ordinary form, but with an important difference. The candlesticks are on the altar itself and there is a crucifix in front of the celebrant so that he can truly be turned toward the Lord rather than the people as if they are some kind of audience for his actions. The altar arrangement carries with it the important symbol that the purpose of liturgy is directed toward eternal things, glorying God rather than the tastes of the congregation. This arrangement of course is not the final ideal but it is a step forward toward the historic Roman Rite practice of saying the Mass oriented toward the liturgical East, together with the people in procession toward the risen Lord. If the goal is to unseat the cult of personality and to get away from these entertainment-focused liturgical events, no step is more important.

As for the entrance and communion propers in chant, this is music that is deeply embedded as part of the Roman Rite. It is the music that is heard in its normative form, and the Popes have long taught that any music that substitutes for chant must in some sense grow out of its style and approach and unmistakable holiness. This realization is not a burden but a relief for musicians who struggle week to week to program music as part of Mass, using every manner of liturgical guide. When they turn to the very music of the Roman Rite, they are truly singing the Mass as it has been given to us by tradition. This is a musical form of liberation for musicians and for people of all ages. Newly discovering this truth is a new generation of young people who find in it both artistic challenge and profound spiritual energy.

Meanwhile, there is the persistent problem in many parishes that some Sunday Mass has been set aside as the Mass designed to appeal to the youth. Ironically, it is precisely these Masses that are most open to reform in the direction the Benedict XVI is calling for—much more so than the main Sunday Mass. These are the Masses where a dignified ordinary setting can be used, either in Latin or English. The new schola can sing propers, again in either Latin or English. They should be encouraged to sing all music without instruments, as a way of clearing the air, encouraging participation, and emphasizing a core truth that the primary liturgical

instrument is not the guitar or piano or even organ but the human voice itself. The celebrant can do his part by singing the parts of the Mass that belong to him. The Mass can be said *ad orientem* and use incense and bells, all of which today's youth find intriguing precisely because these symbols of holiness are not available in the secular world. Here we have the basis of a new Youth Mass, and perhaps the approach of this Mass will have a meritorious influence on the other Masses of the parish.

The goal of such a reform is not to appeal to a certain demographic but to use an opportunity presented by the existence of such Mass times to institute a new pattern of liturgical use that defers to the tradition and puts a premium on the idea of sacred space. What we find in such spaces is something completely unlike what the rest of the world offers: actions designed to reach outside the passage of time and into eternity. Here we should find a form of beauty for which the world itself offers no parallel. To attend Mass and be part of this mystical action is a privilege of the highest order. It can be offered to today's youth so that they can be part of something much larger and infinitely greater than their own times and their own generation. 

## Support Your Local Organ Recital

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A Scott Turkington organ recital on November 13, 2008, at Christ Church in Greenwich, Connecticut, was a smashing success, with 250 plus attending and accolades all around. Of course this is a credit to the organist, who put together an outstanding program and pulled it off with grace and charm. And yet we all know cases of excellent organists who have played outstanding recitals in churches with far fewer in attendance. Turkington himself told me of a case some years ago when a parish pulled together several thousand dollars to bring in a world-renown organist but fewer than 20 people ended up attending.

I talked to Turkington about what, in his experience, makes an organ recital successful. He cautioned at first to remember that they are almost always destined to fail. People are busy and disinclined to get in their cars to go to a church to do nothing but sit and listen to a recitalist on the organ. You can't really see much of the performer. It is not the fashionable crowd. The environment is a church, not a concert hall. And the organ has already left the culture as an instrument of popular culture. It is still beloved, of course, but as a liturgical instrument, something to assist in worship.

There is also the problem that preparing for recitals takes an incredibly vast amount of time, many hours per day and often for many months. The practice schedule is grueling. It displaces anything else you want to do or think about. The opportunity costs associated with this sort of preparation are enormous, especially for the employer of the organist. This is why people who play recitals regularly do their best to make it their profession, if that is at all possible.

You hear about the practice regime here and are reminded that music has long been a peculiar thing in the culture, one in which excellence is always and everywhere associated with the expense of vast amounts of time with no shortcuts. In our society in which everything we do is faster—blogs allow us to read articles the instant they are written—advancement on a musical instrument takes the same amount of time now as did in the ancient world.

The first lesson here is to show as much appreciation as you can for anyone who plays an organ recital. There are many hours, hundreds of hours, that go into it, and you, the listener, enjoy the fruits of this. It is not financially worth it, of course, so thank goodness we live in a world in which there are pursuits of the highest sort that continue to take place despite their lack of financial viability.

So what are the ingredients that go into making a wonderfully successful organ recital? Scott says, and this might surprise you, that just bringing a wonderful player in town is not enough. Neither is it enough for the organist attached to a parish to practice, announce, and play. This is not enough to get over the hump that causes organ recitals to default to fail, it is not reaching the hump.


Is promotion the answer? Not necessarily and sometimes not at all. Scott knows of many causes in which the town was blanketed

with posters for weeks leading to a recital but even then hardly anyone showed up. Marketing is necessary but not sufficient. A great organist is necessary but not sufficient.

The single most important factor in a smashing success is an established time and venue. That is to say, they should be in done in Churches that have regularly scheduled recitals that have built up a devoted audience over the course of years. If the church does not have this and has a weak instrument, all the promotion in the world will not be enough. These programs have to be done as series and be talked up through word of mouth, sometimes for years, to the point that they become an institution and attract people who are inclined to attend such things.

In other words, organ recitaling is not a one-time event. It is a long-term institution that becomes part of the local culture, something that people come to love with deep attachment over a period of years. It is an institution that can take years to develop and entrench itself into the life of a community, but it will happen: the people who do attend come back again and again for good reason.

Praise be to those parishes that have such programs! If one does not, it is possible to start one, but it could be a very long time before they take hold and attract a reliable audience. It is a matter of making a long-term commitment. Organists who aspire to play recitals need to seek out these venues that are already established and make themselves available to assist in the effort. Once their name gets around as a recitalist, other invitations will be forthcoming.

In the meantime, let me make a personal plea to each to everyone to attend your local organ recitals. There is no instrument in the world so commanding and glorious and varied in its musical possibilities. The repertoire is vast, grand, and exciting. The calm of the audience and the attentiveness of everyone to a single player who fills up the entire space make for an experience that cannot be reproduced in any other setting, a beautiful unity of art and contemplation that is the irreplaceable drama of live music. 



## Can the Catholic Church Again Be a Patron of the Arts?

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Does the Catholic Church still support the musical arts? The contrast between the Renaissance and today is striking, when you take a step back and look at it. There was a time when every world-class composer had Cathedrals and Bishops competing for their attention, and the demands on their services—composition, teaching, rehearsal—were intense. Today, music for liturgy is mostly a commercial venture backed by quasi-secular outfits that create and push music through the conventional pro-profit methods that rely heavily on the copyright-royalty model.

The separation between these publishers and the needs and desires of Cathedrals and regular Catholic parishes is deep. A very strange indifferentism and agnosticism afflicts the culture of these publishers, such that hardly anyone in the management structure itself really believes in the bulk of what they are doing—not the employees, not the composers of their music, and not those who are recording the music for demonstration purposes. Hardly anyone is happy with the system as it stands, and that is especially true of Catholic musicians at the grass roots level.

I'm all for free enterprise, but to what extent should purely commercial interests dictate what music dominates Catholic liturgy? There is a serious problem here. The sounds and texts that the Church asks for in her official documents are not those of the commercial marketplace. Instead, they need to be produced on the model of the university of old or the Church herself—less of a profit and loss model and more of a benefactor/expenditure model.

In fact, the other day I attempted a test of the proposition: you can know that music is not appropriate for Mass if you can find something like it on AM-FM radio. So far, I've not found an exception to the rule. There might be some commercial radio somewhere that can make a buck playing Josquin and Byrd, but I have my doubts.

In any case, what is needed in our time is what the Church provided in the past: support for new composition and distribution of liturgical music. A major advantage here is that this will further remove us from the copyright/royalty model of the commercial marketplace and assist in promoting music in a way that doesn't tax parish financial resources. Commercial publishers have become insanely obsessive on the one topic of prohibiting piracy, so much so that they forget that the real problem serious liturgical composers in our time face is not piracy but obscurity. They need to find ways to get the word out about their work.

Todd Flowerday on a radio interview the other day proposed a number of practical suggestions that I think the US Bishops should think about seriously.

1. The Bishops should use every major liturgical event to commission new pieces of music. Think in particular of the Papal Masses in the United States, and the enormous controversy surrounding the hodgepodge of music that was selected. A much better route would have been to select one of the many serious American composers in the Catholic Church today (a list would have to include Kevin Allen, Kurt Poterack, Michael Lawrence, Don Roy, Richard Rice, among many others) and commission a major setting of the Ordinary parts of the Mass or of the Propers. This action would have made those Masses not only impressive events for Catholics but would have also shown that liturgy remains an important venue for serious art as well. There are many opportunities to do these apart from Papal Masses. Corporate matching gifts can be sought. There are many creative ways.
2. Bishops should consider purchasing the rights on serious compositions suitable for general use and republishing them under a Creative-Commons-type license and making them available for free download. This would take financial pressure off parishes that end up spending thousands of dollars to pay for music every year, money which ends up not in the hands of composers but mostly in the coffers of the big publishers themselves. Putting an end to this problem would be a major contribution.

3. Continue the pressure on ICEL to make its texts free to the world, not only for free download but also for commercial use. As it is, everyone who publishes the text of the Mass has to pay very high royalties to ICEL, which, despite assurances that the money is well spent, runs contrary to the charitable spirit of the faith. I'm not sure how else to put this: there is something that is just unseemly about the idea of profiting from selling the right to print the Mass texts. If the Bishops wanted to put an end to this strange system, they could do it in one day. This one action would open up the field for new composition and for the re-setting and re-publication of older works.

The Church Music Association of America is doing its part by encouraging composers to set the new Mass texts and publish these settings under a Creative Commons attribution license. What this license does is permit the free and commercial distribution of these settings without any limit whatsoever. Fire up those photocopy machines. The only restriction is that the source music be acknowledged. This is one step short of public domain, and a wonderful model.


How do artists and composers get paid under this system? This is where commissions, benefactors, and arts patrons have a big role to play. No one is in a better position than the US Bishops to raise money for this purpose. The arts community would be thrilled, and benefactors would emerge if they knew that their support were needed. There is hardly a Catholic alive that is happy with the way music is in Mass. Everyone has an incentive to make a contribution. All that is needed is an organized effort.

My friend Aristotle Esguerra adds an interesting point however. "Why follow the bishops' lead? . . . nothing other than inaction is stopping an individual member of the faithful from becoming a patron of the arts. That could come in the form of: requesting children's music lessons from the parish music director; commissioning an original work for a parish's own patronal feast; specifically earmarking donations to support the promotion of worthy art and music; etc. If 'We Are the Church' as much as some say we are, we should take the initiative as much as possible on an individual basis. But at the parish level, a call for such activity originates best from the pastor. If he does so, things like this may actually happen.

There must be people out there ready to respond to such a call; it needs only to be made.”

This is an outstanding point! In the end, no serious artist is finally happy and fulfilled with the “art for arts sake” model of composition and performance.

The Catholic Church needs again to be the haven for production of musical works of immortal value, and should always stand ready to accept musical gifts when they are ready to be given. Today, serious musicians are mostly not attracted to liturgical venues, simply because it seems that the Church isn’t very interested. This can change with a heightened consciousness.

That consciousness is dawning today, in the digital age, with its increasingly open source materials, and the inspiration that comes from a rediscovery of ideals, combined with the embrace of the hard work that has been required of musicians since the ancient world, and, above all, from the intercession of St. Cecilia, St. Gregory, and St. John the Baptist, who have guarded and promoted sacred music in all ages. There is every reason for hope that in all our parishes, and in our time, we will begin again to sing like Catholics. 

## Appendix

# Resources for Catholic Musicians

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The first book for every Catholic musician is *The Parish Book of Chant*. It has English translations of 70 Latin chants for the people, plus 11 Mass settings from the Gregorian tradition, orders of Mass for the extraordinary form and the ordinary form, a pronunciation guide, and a chant tutorial. There are other books along these lines but none that have all these features.

It was my great pleasure to be involved in the production of the book, but the real genius here is Richard Rice, who did the typesetting and chose the translations. It is thrilling to see the book take off as a resource in our time. It is available through MusicaSacra.com.

Beyond that, every Catholic singer needs the *Gregorian Missal* from Solesmes. This contains all the proper chants for Sunday and feast days in the ordinary form. It is also available online, and from all major Catholic book dealers. Books not currently online but still needed are the *Cantus Selecti* from Solesmes and *Papal Legislation on Sacred Music* from Roman Catholic Books.


Further, I would draw your attention to all the sidelinks at MusicaSacra.com along with its books in print. There is the helpful *Communio* book for scholars to sing Psalms for communion. There is a book of simple Gradual chants called *Chants Abrégés*. The *Graduale Romanum* 1962 is also in print, along with many books on chant.

Every musician working in the ordinary form needs to know about the English propers that are available on MusicaSacra.com, including the *Anglican Use Gradual*, the propers of Samuel Weber, the propers of Bruce Ford (*American Gradual*), and those of Paul

Abrogast (which are arranged according to the old calendar). In addition, the CMAA website has resources for children's choirs and many historic Graduals from many sources.

The Catholic musician also needs a copy of the General Instruction on the Roman Missal, available for download from the USCCB. This is important for dealing with internal parish issues. And again, I reiterate my relentless promotion of the Chabanel Psalms online, as a free and excellent alternative to the mainstream fare.

Finally, every Catholic musician needs to join the Church Music Association of America and receive the quarterly journal *Sacred Music*: 12421 New Point Drive, Richmond, Virginia 23233. Contact@musicasacra.com

For those seeking a community of friendship and support, please join the CMAA forum at [musicasacra.com/forum](http://musicasacra.com/forum). It is a bustling environment that will answer any and all questions you have. And please feel free to write me at [sacredmusic@musicasacra.com](mailto:sacredmusic@musicasacra.com) 

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