

**SESSION 5 – Introduction to Liturgical Music****Understanding our Heritage**

- Throughout the Scriptures are stories of “singing,” along with texts that are “songs,” especially in the Psalms.
- St. Augustine says “the one who loves sings,” as love (which is God) is the motive for singing.
- Cardinal Ratzinger in “The Spirit of the Liturgy” – singing is done in the tension of past (what God has done), present (what he is doing), and future (what he promises)...We praise God for his works, anticipating the ever new and unending song of heaven. (In this way, singing captures a sense of “longing” for God.)

**Music is essential to liturgy (not as something added to it, but inherent to the true nature of the liturgy)**

- Pope Pius X, in 1903 “Instruction on Sacred Music,” *Tra le sollecitudini*: Goal of music is “to add greater efficacy to the text.”
- Pope Pius XII, in 1955 encyclical “On Sacred Music,” *Musicae sacrae*: Music renders worship “ever more splendid and more pleasing to the Christian people...[however, the Church] must prevent anything profane and foreign to divine worship [he speaks here of the nature of worship] from entering into sacred music with genuine progress, and perverting it...”

**Consider these two statements:** “to sing at Mass” and “to sing the Mass.”**As the liturgy glorifies God and sanctifies people, liturgical music is offered according to these goals.**

- Vatican II, “The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963) “The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art...[mainly because] it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy.”
- Sacred Congregation of Rites, in 1967 “Instruction on Music in the Liturgy,” *Musicae sacrae*: “The proper arrangement of a liturgical celebration requires...that the meaning and proper nature of each part [of the liturgy] and each song be carefully observed. To attain this, those parts especially should be sung which by their very nature require to be sung, using the kind and form of music which is proper to their character.”

**Types of Music: (When investigating types of music, Gregorian Chant is given “pride of place” by the Church.)**

- Pope Pius X, *Tra le sollecitudini*: Music is to be “holy” (not profane,) and seen as art: “These qualities are to be found, in the highest degree, in Gregorian Chant...On these grounds, Gregorian Chant has always been regarded as the supreme model for sacred music.”
- Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* #116—Gregorian chant is “specially suited to the Roman liturgy,” and therefore has “pride of place in liturgical services.” Other kinds of sacred music are admissible in so far as they are in keeping with the meaning and purpose of the liturgical prayer.
- Sacred Congregation of Rites, *Musicae sacrae*: #s 47-53—seek the preservation of musical heritage, mindful again that “Gregorian chant should be given pride of place.”
- General Instruction of the Roman Missal: #41 repeats earlier words of Gregorian Chant, but with openness to other types of music so long as these correspond to the meaning of the liturgy.

**What is it with Gregorian Chant that makes it “suited to the Roman liturgy?”**

- Origins: Chant is the “Church’s own music,” composed by the Church, for the liturgy.
- Simplicity – Basic forms of “plain chant” are simple to learn and sing.
- Maintaining the true meaning of texts – chant allows the text itself to maintain primacy.

**Instruments: Meant to sustain singing (As with types of music, the Church has a preference:)**

- Pope Pius X, *Tra le sollecitudini*: “Although the music proper to the Church is purely vocal music, music with the accompaniment of the organ is also permitted, (along with other instruments, by proper permission)...[so long as] the organ or other instruments should merely sustain [the singing] and never oppress it.
- Pope Pius XII *Musicae Sacrae*: #59—“Besides the organ, other instruments can be called upon...so long as they play nothing profane, nothing clamorous or strident, and nothing at variance with the sacred services or the dignity of the place.”

- Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*: #120—"The pipe organ is to be held in high esteem." However, other instruments may be "admitted for use" if judged suitable or can be made suitable according to the bishops.
- Sacred Congregation of Rites, *Musicam sacram*: #s 62-67— Especially #63: While culture can be considered in allowing some instruments, "those instruments which are, by common opinion and use, suitable for secular music only, are to be altogether prohibited from every liturgical celebration and from popular devotions."
- General Instruction of the Roman Missal, #393 – in dioceses of the U.S., "while the organ is to be accorded pride of place, other wind, stringed, or percussion instruments may be admitted into divine worship...according to longstanding local usage, in so far as these are truly suitable for sacred us, or can be made suitable."

**Bottom line on types of music and instruments: Music is always to be offered in service of the liturgy (not as an entity onto itself – hence, not all "good music" or "classical instruments" are fit for liturgy...**

### **Music for Mass**

- Sacred Congregation of Rites, *Musicam sacram*: #16—First priorities: the acclamations, followed by other parts that pertain to the people.
- General Instruction of the Roman Missal
  - #s 35-37 Distinguish between those acclamations which serve as "an independent rite or act," (like the Gloria, Resp. Psalm, etc.), and those that accompany another act (like the entrance chant, the offertory, etc.)
  - #s 39-41 give overview of the importance of singing and music. Noteworthy remarks include:
    - Masses ought to include singing.
    - Repeats other statements on Gregorian chant having pride of place.
    - The faithful should: "know how to sing together at least some parts...in Latin."
  - #48 and #87 speak of "the Entrance chant" and "the Communion chant," respectively, giving this order of preference:
    - The antiphon from the *Roman Missal* or the Psalm from the *Roman Gradual* as set to music there or in another musical setting.
    - The seasonal antiphon and Psalm of the *Simple Gradual*.
    - A song from another collection of psalms and antiphons, approved by the bishops.
    - A suitable liturgical song (a.k.a., a hymn), similarly approved by the bishops.
  - #61-64 speak particularly of the Responsorial Psalm and Gospel Acclamation, once again giving criteria for approval, noting that songs or hymns are not to replace the Resp. Psalm.
  - #103 speaks of choirs: saying they have a proper function, including the "fostering [of] the active participation of the faithful through singing."
  - Note: There is nothing said of a "closing hymn."

### **Recent Statements**

- Pope Benedict XVI: in Apostolic Exhortation On the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church's Life and Mission, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 22 February 2007: #42: "In the *ars celebrandi*, liturgical song has a pre-eminent place. Certainly as far as the liturgy is concerned, we cannot say that one song is a good as another...Generic improvisation or the introduction of musical genres which fail to respect the meaning of the liturgy should be avoided...Finally, while respecting various styles and different and highly praiseworthy traditions, I desire, in accordance with the request advanced by the Synod Fathers, that Gregorian chant be suitably esteemed and employed as the chant proper to the Roman liturgy."
- The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: "Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship," This statement from 2007 is meant to reflect all that precedes it from the Holy See. Therefore it echoes the earlier statements regarding types of music, instruments, and principles for music in Mass and the sacraments.

### **Moving Forward**

- Renewing the inherent place of music in the liturgy.
- Revival of Chant: mindful of its capacity for us to sing texts as given.
- New compositions welcome – and needed.