

SACRED MUSIC & SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

The teachings on Sacred music coming out of the Second Vatican Council were very much aligned with the teachings over the centuries and include:⁹

§36 *“Particular law remaining in force, the use the Latin Language is to be preserved in the Latin rites.”*

§54 *“In Masses which are celebrated with people...steps should be taken so that the faithful may also be able to sing together in Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass which pertain to them.”*

§116 *“The Church acknowledges Gregorian chant as specially suited to the Roman liturgy; therefore, other things being equal, it should be given pride of place in liturgical settings.”*

§117 *“But other kinds of sacred music, especially polyphony, are by no means excluded from liturgical celebrations...”*

§120 *“In the Latin Church, the pipe organ is to be held in high esteem, for it is the traditional musical instrument which adds a wonderful splendor to the Church’s ceremonies and powerfully lifts up man’s mind to God and higher things”*

§121 *“But other instruments also may be admitted for use...only on the condition that the instruments are suitable for sacred use...”*

REFERENCE FOR FURTHER READING

Spirit of the Liturgy, Pope Benedict XVI, 2000

Tra le sollecitudini, St. Pope Pius X, 1903

Sacrosanctum concilium, Vatican II Constitution, 1963

Musicae sacrae, Pope Pius XII, 1955

Musicae sacrum, Pope Pius VI, 1967

Chirograph, St. Pope John Paul II, 2003

Divini Cultus, Pope Pius XI, 1928

⁹ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, (1963)

A TREASURE OF INESTIMABLE VALUE

SACRED MUSIC IN THE CATHOLIC CONTEXT

SACRED MUSIC DEFINED BY THE CHURCH

The Church defines three types of music:

Sacred music: used for the sole purpose of the sacred liturgy (i.e. the Sacrifice of the Mass, the Divine Office, and other liturgical rites)

Religious music: that which aids and supports Christian faith, but is not primarily a part of the sacred liturgy

Profane music: all other secular forms of music

Sacred music is further defined that “it must possess holiness and soundness of form: from these two qualities a third will spontaneously arise—universality”¹.

Holliness: not the ordinary, not the every-day, set aside for the purpose of glorifying God and edifying and sanctifying the faithful

Soundness of Form: to synthesize diverse ritual elements into a unity, to draw together a succession of liturgical actions into a coherent whole

Universal: is supra-national, equally accessible to people of diverse cultures; Latin serves as the unified liturgical language

“Liturgical music must meet the specific prerequisites of the Liturgy: full adherence to the text... synchronization with the time and moment..., reflecting the gestures proposed by the rite”²

¹ *Tra le sollecitudini* (1903, \$2).

² *Chirographa* (2003, \$5).

HONORING RELIGIOUS MUSIC

Religious music, but non-sacred, plays an important role in catechesis and enculturation and includes devotional music and vernacular hymnology.

Pope Pius XII says the following with regard to Religious music:

*"We must also hold in honor that music which is not primarily a part of the sacred liturgy...as experience shows, it can exercise great and salutary force and power on the souls of the faithful, both when it is used in churches during non-liturgical services and ceremonies, or when it is used outside churches at various solemnities and celebrations."*³

GREGORIAN CHANT: THE SUPREME MODEL

Developing directly and organically out of ancient Jewish and early Christian worship, Gregorian chant has been described as:

*"inherited it from the Fathers of the Church" and it is "the supreme model of sacred music" serving as "an element of unity in the Roman Liturgy"*⁴

*Within Gregorian chant the qualities of sacred music are found "in the highest degree" and making it "the Chant proper to the Roman Church"*⁵

*"the more closely a composition for church approaches...the Gregorian form, the more sacred and liturgical it becomes"*⁶

³ *Musicæ Sacrae* (1955, ¶136)

⁴ *Chirographa* (2003, §7).

⁵ *Tra le sollecitudini* (1903, §3).

⁶ *Tra le sollecitudini* (1903, §3).

SACRED POLYPHONY: GREATEST PERFECTION

Developing organically from Gregorian chant, is Sacred Polyphony. St. Pope Pius the X states the qualities of sacred music are also:

*"possessed in an excellent degree by Classic Polyphony, especially of the Roman School, which reached it greatest perfection in the 16th century, owing to the works of Pierluigi da Palestrina"*⁷

The "golden age" of sacred polyphony lasted from 1400 until 1650

SACRED MUSIC & THE MASS

The Mass is a prayer and in its perfect form it is to be sung. The sacred melodies clothe the prayer text coming from the heart of man, through his voice to God's ears.

"Active participation" in the context of Sacred music & the Mass includes three (3) degrees of participation that align to the Structure of the Mass:⁸

Order of Mass (Missale Romanum): Priest's prayers & dialogues.

[1° - the faithful should always sing]

Ordinary of the Mass (Kyriale Romanum): unchanging parts of

Mass: *Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei*

[2° - faithful should sing, unless complex Polyphony]

Proper of the Mass (Graduale Romanum): the prayers specific to the Mass of the day: Introit, Gradual, Alleluia, Offertory, and Communion

[3° - the faithful would sing if it is easily arranged, but this is likely reserved to the schola cantorum]

⁷ *Tra le sollecitudini* (1903, §4).

⁸ *Musicam Sacram* (1955)