

SACRAMENTALIZES THE SONG OF HEAVEN



In the sacramental system of the Church, God's presence is mediated through earthly matter to the humans senses. Liturgical music seeks to reveal to the material world the very song of love between the persons of the Holy Trinity. In the Trinity we find the most perfect, true and beautiful Word, who is Christ, supported by the sweet "breath" of the Holy Spirit in loving praise of God the Father. The Church's liturgical singing combines word and breath, participating in this heavenly hymn, joining the voices of earth to the heavenly hymn of Christ to the Father.

**...sung liturgical prayer
returns to the Father
through the Mystical
Body of Christ in the
sacred liturgy,
made visible
as priest and
people acting
as Christ.**

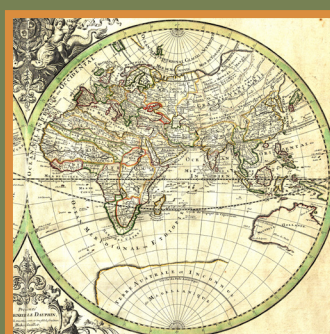
**The eternal
song of the
Trinity comes
sacramentally
to the
Earth as...**



"...God regulates all things to produce the beauty and harmony of a single, well-ordered universe." —Saint Athanasius

Thanksgiving and awe: "I will sing to the Lord, for he is gloriously triumphant" (Ex 15:1). A New Song emerges which speaks of Christ: "Sing to the Lord a new song" (Ps 96).


Christ takes man's plea to the throne of the Father, and when man comes into contact with God, "mere speech is not enough."



The purpose of sacred music is “the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful,” so Christ “joins the entire community of mankind to himself, associating it with His own singing of this canticle of divine praise.” (SC 112, 83)

"Christ Jesus, high priest of the new and eternal covenant, taking human nature, introduced into this earthly exile that hymn which is sung throughout all ages in the halls of heaven." (SC 83).



 Liturgical words
are the love
song of the Bride—the
Church—to the Father,
through Christ the Head...

"It is the Holy Spirit that teaches us to sing—first David and then, through him, Israel and the Church...Church music comes into being as a charism, a gift of the Spirit. It is the true glossolalia, the new tongue that comes from the Holy Spirit."

Selections from Church Documents on Sacred Music

“Sacred music, because it is an integral part of the liturgy, participates in the same general purpose of this solemn liturgy, that is: the glory of God and the sanctification and edification of the faithful... Since its chief function is to clothe with suitable melody the liturgical text presented for the understanding of the faithful, its own proper end is to make the text more meaningful for them... These qualities are found most perfectly in Gregorian Chant, which is the proper chant of the Roman Church...”

—Pius X, *Tra le sollecitudini*, 1903

“Gregorian chant, which the Roman Church considers her own, is proposed to the faithful as belonging to them also...It helps very much to increase the faith and devotion of the congregation...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...”

—Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*, 1947

“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 services. But other kinds of sacred music, especially polyphony, are by no means excluded from liturgical celebrations, so long as they accord with the spirit of the liturgical action...”

—*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 1963

“Only an artist who is profoundly steeped in the *sensus Ecclesiae* can attempt to perceive and express in melody the truth of the Mystery that is celebrated in the Liturgy.”

—John Paul II, *Chirograph on Sacred Music*, 2003

“Gregorian chant is uniquely the Church’s own music. Chant is a living connection with our forebears in the faith, the traditional music of the Roman rite, a sign of communion with the universal Church, a bond of unity across cultures, a means for diverse communities to participate together in song and a summons to contemplative participation in the Liturgy.”

—USCCB, *Sing to the Lord*, 2007

Q: What is the “Proper” of the Holy Mass?

A: The Proper of the Mass forms an integral, yet often overlooked part of the sung liturgy.

The **Proper of the Mass** consists of three **processional chants** and **two chants between the Lectionary readings**. These parts of the Mass, contained in the *Roman Missal* and *Graduale Romanum*, change according to the liturgical calendar, and therefore are “proper” to particular liturgical celebrations. Here we find the Entrance Antiphon, Responsorial Psalm, the Alleluia and its Verse, the Offertory Antiphon and the Communion Antiphon. While the Proper of the Mass is subordinated in degree of importance to the Order of the Mass and the Ordinary of the



Mass, the texts of the Proper form perhaps one of the most immense and deeply rich treasure troves in the sacred music tradition.

The texts of the Proper of the Mass, especially the Entrance, Offertory and Communion chants, are comprised of **scriptural antiphons** and **verses from a psalm or canticle**. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* also allows for the possibility of singing chants from “another collection of Psalms and antiphons, approved by the Conference of Bishops or the Diocesan Bishop” during the three Mass processions, and, lastly, allows for the singing of “another liturgical chant that is suited to the sacred action, the day, or the time of year, similarly approved by the Conference of Bishops or the Diocesan Bishop” (48, 87).

Q: How do we know which Mass parts ought to be sung?

A: The 1967 Roman document *Muscam Sacram: Instruction on Sacred Music*, provides useful instruction on this question.

In Article 40 of the *General Instruction on the Roman Missal* we learn that “in the choosing of the parts actually to be sung, **preference is to be given to those that are of greater importance** and especially to those which are to be **sung by the Priest or the Deacon or a reader, with the people replying or by the Priest and people together.**”

Muscam Sacram divides into **three degrees** the parts to be sung in the Mass to help “the faithful toward an ever greater participation in the singing,” given in order of priority.

The **first degree** consists essentially of the Order of the Mass (the chants sung in dialogue between the priest or the deacon and the people). The **second degree** consists essentially of the Ordinary of the Mass (Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus and Agnus Dei). The **third degree** consists essentially of the Proper of the Mass (the chants sung at the Entrance, Offertory, and Communion processions, and the Responsorial Psalm and Alleluia with its verse before the Gospel).

—Adapted from Bishop Thomas Olmsted, “Singing the Mass: Liturgical Music as Participation in Christ,” originally from *The Catholic Sun*.