



“Unearthing a treasure of inestimable value: Liturgical Music and the *Ars Celebrandi*”

Dr. Clare Johnson
Australian Catholic University

“A treasure of inestimable value” SC 112

- *Tra le Sollecitudini* (1903)
- *Musicae sacra disciplina* (1955)
- *De musica sacra et sacra liturgia* (1958)

***Tra le sollecitudini* (1903)**

“Nothing should have place, therefore, in the temple, calculated to disturb or even merely to diminish the piety and devotion of the faithful, nothing that may give reasonable cause for disgust or scandal, nothing, above all, which directly offends the decorum and sanctity of the sacred functions and thus (is) unworthy of the House of Prayer and the Majesty of God”

***Tra le sollecitudini* (1903)**

“...there have been substituted interminable musical compositions on the words of the psalms, all of them modelled on old theatrical works, and most of them of such meagre artistic value that they would not be tolerated for a moment even in our second-rate concerts. It is certain that Christian piety and devotion are not promoted by them; the curiosity of some of the less intelligent is fed, but the majority, disgusted and scandalized, wonder how it is that such an abuse can still survive.”

***Tra le sollecitudini* (1903)**

“...since its principal office is to clothe with suitable melody the liturgical text proposed for the understanding of the faithful, its proper aim is to add greater efficacy to the text, in order that through it the faithful may be the more easily moved to devotion and better disposed for the reception of the fruits of grace belonging to the celebration of the most holy mysteries.”

Qualities of sacred music (Pius X)

- Holiness
- True art (beauty)
- Universality
- Recognisably sacred music (not confused with anything else)
- Exemplified in Gregorian chant (proper to the Roman Church)

Qualities of sacred music (Pius X)

- Polyphony ✓
- Motets that use words approved by the Church ✓
- Modern music (so long as free from anything profane textually & stylistically) ✓
- Sung texts must reproduce texts of the liturgical books exactly ✓
- Music that respects liturgical form ✓

Tra le sollecitudini (1903)

“special efforts are to be made to restore the use of the Gregorian chant by the people, so that the faithful may again take a more active part in the ecclesiastical offices, as was the case in ancient times.”

Key link: sacred music is a constituent element of the liturgy & it has a unique ability to facilitate active participation of the faithful

Sacred music

(religious, church, ritual, pastoral, liturgical...?)

Criteria for judgment – Pius X 1903

- Music of liturgical celebration
- Participates in the glorification of God & the sanctification of humankind
- Clothes liturgical text in suitable melody
- Adds greater efficacy to liturgical texts so that the faithful may understand them, be moved to devotion & receive fruits of grace

60 years later... SC (1963)

– Criteria for judgment

- Does music supply a ministerial function within the liturgy?(SC112)
- Is it holy (i.e., how closely is it connected with the liturgical action?) (SC 112)
- Does it add delight to prayer, foster unity of minds, confer greater solemnity upon the sacred rites? (SC112)
- Can it be considered ‘true art’? (SC 112)
- Does it enable the faithful to contribute to that active participation which is theirs by right? (SC 114)

Sacred music (SC - 1963)

- Gregorian chant – pride of place
- Polyphony ✓
- Religious singing by the people ✓ (so long as it promotes FCAP)
- SC = mission statement – not big on detail (would be worked out later)

Musicam Sacram (1967)

- Sacred music has a holy sincerity of form (MS 4a)
- Sacred music includes: Gregorian chant, sacred polyphony, music for the organ and other approved instruments, sacred popular music, be it liturgical or simply religious. (MS4b)
- No kind of sacred music is prohibited from liturgical actions by the Church so long as it corresponds to the spirit of the liturgical celebration itself and the nature of its individual parts and does not hinder the active participation of the people.
- MS16c “the usage of entrusting to the choir alone the entire singing of the whole Proper and of the whole Ordinary, to the complete exclusion of the people’s participation in the singing, is to be deprecated.”

‘Music in Catholic Worship’ judgments (USCCB 1972)

- Musical
- Liturgical
- Pastoral

Other judgments...

Don Saliers:

- Emotional
- Ethical

James Caccamo:

- Symbolic
- Experiential
- Performative

Ars celebrandi

- Pope Benedict XVI
- 2007 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation
- ‘*Sacramentum caritatis*’

Beauty

- Not about aestheticism
- An aspect of God
- Reference to Christ – reveals God as love

Pope Benedict XVI:

“beauty then, is not mere decoration, but rather an essential element of the liturgical action, since it is an attribute of God himself and his revelation. These considerations should make us realise the care which is needed, if the liturgical action is to reflect its innate splendour.”

Ars celebrandi

- The art of proper celebration
- Liturgy celebrated properly is an act of beauty
- BXVI “The primary way to foster the participation of the People of God in the sacred rite is the proper celebration of the rite itself.”
- Liturgy is what sustains the faith life of the believer
- SC 14: “In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit.”

Music in Catholic Worship (1972)

“Faith grows when it is expressed in celebration. Good celebrations foster and nourish faith. Poor celebrations may weaken or destroy it.”

Proper celebration of the liturgy involves...

BXVI: Sacramentum caritatis (2007)

- “faithful adherence to the liturgical norms” (#38)
- fostering a sense of the sacred and outward signs that cultivate this sense (e.g., the harmony of the rite: liturgical vestments, furnishing, sacred space) (#40)
- “making known the current liturgical texts and norms” as found in the GIRM and Lectionary (#40)
- “attentiveness to the various kinds of language that the liturgy employs: words and music, gestures and silence, movement, the liturgical colours of the vestments” (#40)
- attentiveness to “every work of art placed at the service of the celebration...unity of the furnishings of the sanctuary...painting and sculpture” (#41)

Liturgical music & the Ars celebrandi

- Church has a rich musical patrimony of faith & love
- This heritage must not be lost
- BXVI: “As far as the liturgy is concerned, we cannot say that one song is as good as another”
- Liturgical song should be well integrated into the celebration
- Gregorian chant should be suitably esteemed & employed as the chant proper to the Roman Liturgy

Roman Missal 3rd edition (2010)

- Easily singable chant settings for the prayers
- Sung liturgy is the norm
- Presiders need to be willing to chant
- Assemblies can be taught to chant

Liturgy & evangelisation

“Respect for the established (liturgical) norms expresses love and fidelity for the faith of the Church, for the treasure of grace that she preserves and transmits; the beauty of celebrations, far more than innovations and subjective adjustments, makes evangelisation a lasting and effective work.”

(BXVI: Address to French Bishops, Nov. 17, 2012)

Role of the Liturgical musician in promoting the *Ars celebrandi*

- The entire assembly celebrates the liturgy
- Priest celebrant, musician celebrant, celebrating assembly
- Music leaders should foster a sense of the sacred
- Conduct, choice of music, ability to enable assembly's praise & worship of God
- Liturgical musicians as role-models
- Necessity for musical trust to be established

Liturgical music 'performance practice'

- Respects the nature of the music & directives of the composer
- Works intelligently within constraints & possibilities of instruments & acoustics
- Liturgical music performance is not about the musician as performer, but animateur
- Good liturgical music performance practice is the *ars celebrandi*

Musicam Sacram (1967) – skill & spirit

“organists and other musicians should not only possess the skill to play properly the instrument entrusted to them: they should also enter into and be thoroughly aware of the spirit of the Liturgy, so that even when playing *ex tempore*, they will enrich the sacred celebration according to the true nature of each of its parts, and encourage the participation of the faithful.”

So what?

Why is the *ars celebrandi* important?

- Liturgy is the central activity of the Church
- SC2: it is the “outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church.”
- Beautiful, artistic celebrations are vital for the faith-life of believers
- Co-creators of beauty with God

Pope Francis, Nov. 2013

“In the Church in fact art in all its forms does not exist having only as its end a simple aesthetic fruition, but that through it, in every historical moment and in every culture, the Church is the interpreter of the Revelation to the People of God. Art exists in the Church essentially to evangelise and it is in this perspective that we can say with Dostoyevsky: ‘Beauty will save the world.’ ...Music, painting, sculpture, architecture, in one word, beauty unites to make the celebrated faith grow, in prophetic hope, and in witnessed charity.”

