Perspectives on Sing to the Lord
Essays in Honor of Robert W. Hovda
Series V

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Adopted in 2007, *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship* (STL), is the first formal statement on liturgical music from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in twenty-five years and by far the most comprehensive. While this document does not carry the force of law, the foreword refers to it as “guidelines . . . designed to provide direction to those preparing for the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy according to the current liturgical books (in the ordinary form of celebration).” Because it is an official statement of the USCCB (approved by an eighty-eight percent majority), the bishops clearly stand behind it and intend that pastors, musicians, and other ministers take it seriously.

STL replaces two earlier documents—*Music in Catholic Worship* (MCW) and *Liturgical Music Today* (LMT). It deals with many topics and concerns addressed in those documents and even incorporates some of the same principles and insights found in them. Most notably, STL reaffirms the “three judgments” introduced in MCW and reflects that document’s pastoral spirit.

STL also serves to bring U.S. guidelines on liturgical music up to date. It incorporates norms and other material from ritual books and other Roman documents that have been issued since 1982, including the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (1988), the *Order of Christian Funerals* (1989), and the third edition of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (2002).

In addition to reaffirming and updating the earlier U.S. documents, however, STL enlarges the vision of MCW and LMT, and it even differs from them in a number of significant respects. It presents a broader theological framework that places greater emphasis on God’s initiative and action and is more deeply rooted in Scripture. It offers a much more extensive treatment of musical ministries, presenting the relationship and complementarity of
ordained and lay ministries and drawing on principles articulated in *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* (USCCB, 2005) for the development of lay ecclesial ministry. It also devotes far more attention to the cultural diversity of the Catholic Church in the United States than found in the earlier texts, and it provides guidance for music ministry in a multicultural context. While retaining the well-known “three judgments” from MCW, it re-orders them, restates them in somewhat different terms, and, most notably, regards them as a “single evaluation” with three inseparable components.

Perhaps STL diverges most strongly from MCW and LMT in its treatments of Latin, Gregorian chant, and musical priorities. It reaffirms the principles found in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Vatican II, 1963) on the continued use of Latin and the “pride of place” accorded to Gregorian chant, and it offers practical guidance in these areas. While the dialogues between priest and people were barely mentioned in MCW, STL places them with the acclamations as the most important parts of the liturgy to be sung, thus embracing a key principle from the Vatican instruction *Musicam Sacram* (1967) and reaffirmed in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*.

At the beginning of the drafting process for STL, the Music Subcommittee of the USCCB Committee on the Liturgy (now the Committee for Divine Worship) held an all-day hearing in Chicago to listen to liturgical music leaders. Music and liturgy associations, diocesan offices, universities, and other organizations—approximately forty in all—sent representatives with prepared remarks addressed to the subcommittee. It was an amazing experience to witness the intensity of those who spoke with such conviction and the respectful reception that each one received from the subcommittee and from the other speakers.

One of the most significant aspects of STL in my view is the extent to which it incorporates so many of the points raised during the hearing session in Chicago, such as its pastoral tone, its retention and careful reworking of the three judgments, its attention to cultural diversity, and its practical guidance on the use of Latin and Gregorian chant.

Even beyond the Chicago session, this document takes seriously the experience of rank-and-file pastoral musicians who foster the musical participation of the worshipping assembly. The bishops provide encouragement, guidance, and even some correction to the dedicated ministers, lay and ordained, who prepare and lead sung worship.

The publication of STL marks a milestone in the ongoing development of music for Catholic worship, but the journey is far from over. There is a need for continuing reflection on liturgical music and on pastoral music ministry.

We hope that this volume will prove to be an important step in that continuing journey. Each of these essays was originally delivered as one of the Hovda Lectures at the 2009 NPM National Convention in Chicago, Illinois. Five respected scholars and leaders comment on STL from varying perspectives. Each offers insights and raises questions that we hope will enrich the ministry of musicians and the worship life of American Catholics. We share the hope expressed by the U.S. bishops in their foreword to STL: “We pray that this document will draw all who worship the Lord into the fullness of liturgical, musical prayer.”

Dr. J. Michael McMahon is the president of the National Association of Pastoral Musicians.
Sing to the Lord: Gifts and Challenges

BY ANTHONY RUFF, OSB

Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship offers us, as the description of my Hovda lecture in the NPM national convention booklet put it, “many gifts and not a few challenges.” In this article, I hope to put the document Sing to the Lord (hereafter STL) in context and introduce its major themes.

Gifts and challenges in STL: One readily sees why the two really cannot be separated from each other. Every gift presents us a challenge, and every challenge may be a gift. Is the increased emphasis on singing the liturgy in STL, on singing the dialogues and responses, a gift, or is it a challenge? Is the increased emphasis on Gregorian chant a gift or a challenge?

After placing STL in context, including some comments about how and why the document came into being, I will discuss five emphases in STL which seem significant to me. All of them are both gifts and challenges.

Context: Where Did the Document Come From and Why?

Sing to the Lord is a document of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). It was approved by more than eighty-eight percent of the U.S. Catholic bishops at their meeting in November 2007. For those interested in canonical and legal distinctions, STL has the status not of “particular law” but of “guidelines.” However, even if STL is not particular law, it is important to state that STL is the teaching of our bishops and, as such, it calls for our respect and compliance.

STL supersedes two earlier documents of the U.S. bishops’ conference: Music in Catholic Worship (MCW, 1972, revised 1983), and Liturgical Music Today (LMT, 1982). Those two documents are now obsolete, but of course
much of their content and teaching is brought forward into STL. STL was drafted by a Music Committee of the bishops’ conference consisting of Bishop Edward Grosz, Monsignor James Moroney, Mr. Bob Batastini, Dr. Leo Nestor, Father John Foley, sj, Dr. J. Michael McMahon, and myself.

There are several reasons why STL came into being. First, many other documents had been issued since 1982. The bishops’ musical directives had to be updated to account for the new General Instruction of the Roman Missal, the new edition of the Roman Missal itself, Roman documents such as Redemptionis Sacramentum, and also documents on Sunday worship in the absence of a priest.

Second, much practical experience had been gained in the decades since MCW and LMT came out. I think here of issues such as the importance of acoustics for live music or the appropriate and proper use of microphones and sound systems.


Fourth, the Catholic Church in the United States has become increasingly diverse culturally and ethnically, and questions of multiculturalism and cultural diversity have become more pressing. There has been great development in this discussion among scholars and theologians in recent decades.

Fifth, STL came into being because, throughout the 1990s, the so-called “liturgy wars” became increasingly strident. New organizations such as Adoremus and the Society for Catholic Liturgy were founded which were, each in its own way, critical of the direction of liturgical renewal since Vatican II. Increasingly, sharp criticism was heard from a more “conservative” or “traditionalist” perspective. It was claimed that Catholic worship had lost its “sacred” dimension; that traditional art, architecture, and music had wrongly been abandoned since Vatican II; that the U.S. Church, including the U.S. bishops and their teaching documents, were not sufficiently loyal to the Holy See; that priests and liturgical ministers did not always obey official norms and rubrics in the liturgical books; and that the implementation of Vatican II had not been faithful to what the council actually called for. Some decisions of the Holy See in the 1990s were changing the liturgical landscape, such as the withdrawal of permission to employ the NRSV translation in the Lectionary for Mass, the rejection of the revised NAB translation of the Psalter in the lectionary, and the withdrawal of approval for the ICEL Psalter. Then the Holy See dramatically revised the guidelines for translation of the liturgy from Latin to vernacular in 2001, and in 2007 Pope Benedict readmitted the use of the pre-Vatican II liturgy without restrictions.

In the midst of all this evolution, ferment, controversy, and confusion, the U.S. bishops came to the judgment that it was time to offer clear guidance for the U.S. Church on how music is to be employed in the postconciliar liturgy.

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perspectives and uniting the Church. But one can take an initial assessment of the immediate reception of STL, based at least on anecdotal evidence. I have the impression that, even though STL emphasizes traditional themes such as interior participation and Gregorian chant and the use of Latin much more than previous U.S. documents, it seems that moderates and progressives are the ones welcoming STL most warmly, more so than conservatives or traditionalists.

This is counterintuitive. Why the unexpected reception of STL in various quarters? I suspect this is because STL allays progressives’ worst fears about official backpedaling. It was already expected on all sides that any new document of the bishops would be brought in line with Roman directives and articulate traditional liturgical themes, but STL does this in a way which clearly preserves the best insights of liturgical scholars and previous US documents. The liberals are relieved.

But ironically, even as STL emphasizes traditional themes and practices more than any previous U.S. music document, it is seemingly being received least positively by some of those who argue for greater traditionalism in the liturgy. For example, in the *Adoremus Bulletin*, Helen Hull Hitchcock has written, “Despite improvements, however, the guidelines are still inherently contradictory. . . . The result of this apparent attempt to cover all bases makes this long document (87 pages) essentially incoherent.” This writer openly suggests disobedience: “Perhaps the best news about ‘Sing to the Lord’ in its final amended form may actually be that it is merely a guideline of the conference without real authority. Thus the problematic principles carried over from the earlier documents cannot be considered in any way binding.”

Or consider Father Gerald Dennis Gill’s recently published book *Music in Catholic Liturgy: A Pastoral and Theological Companion to Sing to the Lord* (Chicago/Mundelein, Illinois: Hillebrand Books, Liturgy Training Publications, 2009), which in fact is part companion to STL, part commentary, and part critique. The last four chapters of this book compare STL to Roman documents and the official liturgical rites, apparently to show that STL is not sufficiently faithful to Roman documents.

Meanwhile, STL is being read, studied, and implemented in dioceses and parishes and communities across the United States. Already there have been innumerable talks, presentations, and workshops on the document, and innumerable articles on the document have been written. STL was a major theme and the topic of many breakouts at the 2009 NPM Convention in Chicago.

**The Gifts and Challenges of *Sing to the Lord***

Having placed STL in context, I turn now to the gifts and challenges in STL. I have selected five themes (or what we could call “gift/challenges”): a God-centered theology of worship, the sacred-secular question, Gregorian chant, sung liturgy with chanted dialogues, and the question of hymns in the Eucharistic liturgy.

**Gift/Challenge 1: A God-Centered Theology of Worship**

*Sing to the Lord* begins thus: “God has bestowed upon his people the gift
of song. God dwells within each human person . . . God, the giver of song, is present whenever his people sing his praises.” STL places the priority on God’s initiative. J. Peter Nixon has perceptively pointed out the contrast between STL and the 1972 document *Music in Catholic Worship*: In STL, the word “God” appears nine times in the first three articles, but in the first three paragraphs of MCW of 1972, the word “we” appeared eleven times (with one mention of God, two of Jesus Christ, and two of the Holy Spirit). Many pastoral musicians will recall the opening words and phrases of MCW: “We are Christians because through the Christian community we have met Jesus Christ . . . We gather at Mass . . . We come together to acknowledge the love of God . . . We are celebrating when we involve ourselves meaningfully . . .”

Nixon speaks of an overwhelming “anthropological emphasis” in MCW, and STL clearly seeks a better balance. It was important here not to over-react, to over-correct MCW and replace an anthropological emphasis with a theocentrism which downplays or denigrates the importance of humanity. Humans are part of God’s creation, and creation is fundamentally good. In worship, as in the entire drama of salvation, humans are agents and active participants. If I may put it this way, the goal of STL was to be both pro-God and pro-human. I think STL succeeds in striking the right balance between God’s initiative and our importance as a graced community. STL begins, at number one, in a tone which is representative of the introductory section: “God has bestowed upon his people the gift of song. God dwells within each human person, in the place where music takes its source. Indeed, God, the giver of song, is present whenever his people sing his praises.” At number ten, STL says: “Through grace, the liturgical assembly partakes in the life of the Blessed Trinity, which is itself a communion of love. In a perfect way, the Persons of the Trinity remain themselves even as they share all that they are.”

In the opening section (nos. 8–9), STL nicely connects worship to daily life and to the needs of Church and society. “The Paschal hymn, of course, does not cease when a liturgical celebration ends. Christ . . . remains with us and leads us through church doors to the whole world, with its joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties . . . Charity, justice, and evangelization are thus the normal consequences of liturgical celebration.” One notes the felicitous reference to the world’s “joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties”—a direct quotation from the opening of the Vatican II Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*.

The gift of STL is that it reaffirms the primacy of God and the truth that the initiative in worship is always with God—and it does this much better than MCW did. The challenge to us is to recall that everything we do, as a graced community, is a *response* to God. Our further challenge is remember that worship equips us for our daily lives as Christians, as we seek to renew and transform all of society and build up the Kingdom of God on earth.

**Gift/Challenge 2: The Sacred/Secular Problem**

As I noted earlier, one of the critiques raised in the “liturgy wars” from some quarters is that the reformed liturgy has lost its “sacred” character.
Concerning liturgical music, some have criticized the admission of allegedly secular styles and genres of music into Catholic liturgy, including allegedly secular instruments. Some folks, in a throwback to the nineteenth century Cecilian reform movement and the 1903 motu proprio of Pope St. Pius X, now try to distinguish sacred music from secular music so as to “purify” Catholic worship. I think they are on thin ice philosophically, historically, and musically.

As I argue in my book *Sacred Music and Liturgical Reform*, a clear sacred/secular distinction does not hold up very well on any grounds:

In Franko-Flemish polyphony of the fifteenth century, there is the same vocal style throughout and the same musical technique of cantus firmus development, with no difference in style between church music and secular music. Similarly, one is unable to find any clear stylistic difference between Palestrina’s Masses and his secular madrigals . . . . Monteverdi borrowed the orchestral music from the prologue to his secular opera “Orfeo” for the “Deus in adjutorium” of his Vespers. One is unable to establish a clear stylistic difference between Mozart’s chamber music and his sacred music.

One aspect of the drive to restore “the sacred” to worship and music has been the privileging of some styles and genres as the highest models of truly sacred music. This move is actually rather recent in church history, dating only to the nineteenth century Cecilians and then to the 1903 motu proprio of Pius X, which took over many aspects of Cecilian thought. Although the papal documents from 1903 to Vatican II show significant developments in their listing of the genres of sacred music, with shifts of emphasis and outright contradictions, Gregorian chant is consistently upheld as the highest model of sacred music, followed by polyphony of the Roman school.

As Father Edward Foley has pointed out, the Vatican II liturgy constitution introduces a shift from the position found in Roman documents before Vatican II. Instead of treating holiness as an intrinsic quality of particular musical styles or genres, article 112 of “Sacrosanctum Concilium” (SC) locates holiness in its connection to ritual and its engagement of worshipers. Article 112 states, “Therefore sacred music is to be considered the more holy in proportion as it is more closely connected with the liturgical action, whether it adds delight to prayer, fosters unity of minds, or confers greater solemnity upon the sacred rites.” In its section on “Music for the Sacred Liturgy” (STL, 67–71), *Sing to the Lord* follows SC and does not consider some styles or genres to be holier than others. STL speaks instead of the ritual and the spiritual dimensions which make music holy — the first referring to liturgical propriety, the second referring to the community’s union with Christ and with each other. The question is not whether a particular piece sounds like chant or Palestrina or whether it sounds “Catholic.” Rather, the question is whether the piece fits the ritual action and engages a particular community in this ritual action. Both of these dimensions — connection to ritual and engagement of the community — are to be considered within a cultural context, according to STL 67 and 70. There, STL does not assume that chant and polyphony are absolutely the highest models of sacred and Catholic music in all cultures, as if there were no need to take into account whether one is in the Midwest of the United States, or Africa, or Japan, or whether the assembly is predominantly European or Hispanic or Native American.
It follows, then, that many instruments, even strings and percussion, are potentially usable in the liturgy, which is explicitly stated in STL 90.

To be sure, traditional music such as chant and polyphony is advocated with new vigor in STL. But these repertoires are not ontologized into greater sacrality. The end result is that STL advocates both traditional repertoire and the stylistic diversity of all the various contemporary cultures, without attempting to define definitively the relationship between all these styles or the parameters of their liturgical usage in every situation.

The gift of STL is that it reminds us what truly makes music holy: its connection to ritual and its ability to engage the community gathered for worship. Significantly, STL reminds us that we must take the cultural context seriously as we think about ritual and the people who celebrate the ritual. We need to know the ritual, we need to know our people, we need to know their cultural setting. The challenge is to open ourselves to traditional Catholic repertoires to see how they can fit our ritual and engage our people—not because they are privileged repertoires a priori, but because we discover that they do meet the demands of the liturgy.

**Gift/Challenge 3: Gregorian Chant**

This gift/challenge is closely related to everything I stated about the sacred/secular question, and its use raises very similar questions. It is worth treating Gregorian chant separately, though, because it is a topic so laden with strong feelings, misunderstandings, and pastoral challenges.

The fact is, Gregorian chant has become something of a political football in the Catholic liturgy wars. Some individuals and organizations seemingly use chant as a weapon to advance their agenda and judge others. Sometimes it sounds all too simple: the more Latin chant, the better.

Meanwhile, to be honest, most of the U.S. Catholic Church does not sing much Latin chant. Most Catholics have heard very little chant in worship. I state this without rancor or judgment but simply as an observation. Some—or, perhaps, many—Catholics do not like Gregorian chant much. They find it to be in the wrong language, or too difficult, or irrelevant, or just plain boring. But perhaps some or many of us have experienced chant as beautiful, calmly soothing, or deeply spiritual, or truly holy as it calls us to prayer. Experiences and practices vary widely.

The magisterium’s statements on Gregorian chant are very strong. Given how little that chant is actually sung in Catholic worship, one is struck (and, perhaps, surprised) by such strong statements. Depending on your point of view, the magisterium’s statements are either out of touch with pastoral reality or prophetic as they stand in judgment on the postconciliar Church. Gregorian chant is to have pride of place in the reformed liturgy, we read in SC 116. The faithful are to be able to sing the Mass ordinary in Latin, we read in SC 54. This means that everyone is to know in Latin “Pater noster,” “Credo,” and many other such chants.

STL steps into the subject of Gregorian chant keenly aware of two facts which stand in tension with each other: The official documents advocate chant strongly, and the use of chant in the U.S. Church is, with some important exceptions, rather minimal. STL strives for an intelligent obedience to the Roman documents with a pastoral sensitivity to the actual situation.
The judgment of Father Edward Foley on STL should be noted: “[STL] contains one of the best reflections on Gregorian chant in the liturgy that I have read.”

There is high praise for chant at STL 72: “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.” But STL immediately sounds some important cautions in the next article (STL, 73):

The “pride of place” given to Gregorian chant by the Second Vatican Council is modified by the important phrase “other things being equal.” These “other things” are the important liturgical and pastoral concerns facing every bishop, pastor, and liturgical musician. In considering the use of the treasures of chant, pastors and liturgical musicians should take care that the congregation is able to participate in the Liturgy with song. They should be sensitive to the cultural and spiritual milieu of their communities, in order to build up the Church in unity and peace.

One could say that STL is counseling us not to use chant as a weapon.

In articles 74 and 75, STL follows SC in advocating elements of the Latin chant ordinary (Order of Mass), first by admitting that most communities do not do this, and then by giving very specific and practical directives on where to start: “Each worshiping community in the United States, including all age groups and all ethnic groups, should, at a minimum, learn Kyrie XVI, Sanctus XVIII, and Agnus Dei XVIII, all of which are typically included in congregational worship aids. More difficult chants, such as Gloria VIII and settings of the Credo and Pater Noster, might be learned after the easier chants have been mastered.”

Some individuals act as if the goal is to have the entire proper (introit, gradual, alleluia, offertory, communio) sung in Latin by the choir. It may take a while to reach this goal, it is conceded, and progress probably must be gradual, but the goal must remain firmly in place. STL 76 tempers such misguided zeal as it cites number 33 of Musicam Sacram, the 1967 Roman instruction: “The assembly of the faithful should participate in singing the Proper of the Mass as much as possible, especially through simple responses and other suitable settings.” STL then mentions the Latin proper as an option—not as the highest ideal—for choirs with sufficient ability: “When the congregation does not sing an antiphon or hymn, proper chants from the Graduale Romanum might be sung by a choir that is able to render these challenging pieces well.”

It is relevant to this third gift/challenge to note what STL says at number 64: “Whenever the Latin language poses an obstacle to singers, even after sufficient training has been provided—for example, in pronunciation, understanding of the text, or confident rendition of a piece—it would be more prudent to employ a vernacular language in the Liturgy.”

The gift of STL is its invitation to use Gregorian chant in the liturgy wisely and with discretion. The challenge for some will be to learn more about this repertoire and to take the first steps in doing it well in the liturgy. The challenge for others will be to temper their zeal and realize the full range
of options recommended by the Church and permitted by the official documents.

There is another large challenge on the theoretical level regarding Gregorian chant. One could state two distinct views about chant. The first view is that it is the primary repertoire of the Church and should have pride of place. The second view is that it is a good resource which can have some place in the whole mix of musical styles and genres. We might term the two views “chant as ideal” and “chant as good option.” If one looks at the full range of Roman teachings, including statements about inculturation and appropriate relationship to modern cultures, one cannot simply state that the Holy See takes the first view. Although there are statements to that effect, and the official documents certainly tend in that direction, the Roman magisterium’s teaching is more nuanced. One may fairly ask whether STL follows the full force of the Roman magisterium’s teachings and directives on chant, even when these are understood with proper nuance. It seems that, in comparison to the Roman documents, STL downplays, however slightly, the “chant as ideal” view, and emphasize, however slightly, the “chant as good option” view. At the same time it must be admitted that many pastoral musicians, if they do not reject chant outright, can probably only bring themselves to support the “chant as good option” position.

Other challenging theoretical questions could be raised. Both the Roman documents and STL encourage the use of Gregorian chant in worship, however one interprets the relative weight of their statements. At the same time, it is the teaching of SC that music in worship should be able to engage the community and bring spiritual enrichment. What is the Church asking us to do in those concrete situations—the question is by no means merely hypothetical—in which Gregorian chant does not seems to be able to do that?

Gift/Challenge 4: Sung Liturgy

The 1967 Roman instruction *Musicam Sacram* [MS] advocates the model of a sung liturgy in which the responses and dialogues between ministers and people—such as “The Lord be with you” and “The Word of the Lord” and “The Mass is ended”—are chanted as well as the presidential prayers and even the readings. In contrast, the 1972 document MCW primarily emphasized the singing of acclamations, the responsorial psalm, and hymns at Mass—which probably was a good place to start in the early stages of the vernacular liturgy—without giving any emphasis to singing the dialogues. Some have criticized MCW sharply for not following MS on this point. In recent years, there has been increased discussion of this issue, and the practice of singing the dialogues and orations has increased in some places.

STL follows MS by giving strong encouragement to the practice. Of “the parts to be sung,” the first category is “dialogues and acclamations” (STL, 115). I suppose strict adherence to *Musicam Sacram* could have meant that dialogues are the first category of importance, as their own separate category. But we have made great progress in the United States at singing the acclamations, and it has become virtually universal practice to sing the *Gloria, Sanctus, Memorial Acclamation, Agnus Dei*, and similar parts of the ordinary at Sunday Mass. If the first category listed were “dialogues,” this could
mean that, if the dialogues are not sung for whatever reason, then things of a lower priority such as acclamations should not be sung. That would be most unfortunate. Hence the interesting decision to call the first category of STL 115 “dialogues and acclamations.”

Other sections of STL consistently call for sung liturgy as it treats various aspects of the liturgy. STL 19 encourages priests to sing the presidential orations and dialogues; STL 20 calls for training priests and seminarians to be able to sing the liturgy; STL 23 calls for deacons to be trained to sing their parts of the liturgy; STL 153–154 recommends singing the responses after the Scripture readings and, with appropriate cautions, even the readings themselves. The singing of presidential prayers is treated in the various parts of the section “Music and the Structure of the Mass.”

There is some variety of opinion on whether it is desirable to chant the dialogues and responses. One senses that support for the practice is growing, and increasing numbers of leaders in the mainstream are calling for the practice. The goal is to make the liturgy more spirited, more engaging and participatory, more solemn and reverent, and more prayerful. Some traditionalist voices support the practice also, but there one gets the impression that the goal is to revive the High Mass/Low Mass distinction, with one High Mass per Sunday as the highest aspiration of Catholic church music. Some respected figures frankly question the practice, it is important to note. Father Ed Foley, for example, has written that STL has a “misplaced emphasis on singing the ‘dialogues’ in the liturgy (e.g., no. 115a, repeating an emphasis found in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (no. 41), which inappropriately relies on the 1967 document Musicam Sacram.”

The gift of STL is that it presents a model and genre of liturgical music which, however ancient and venerable it is, remains to be discovered by many U.S. Catholic communities. STL invites and encourages us to consider singing the liturgy in its dialogues and responses. The challenges to sung liturgy are many:

1. We are no longer a singing culture. Recorded and electronic music have made us into listeners rather than singers.
2. Liturgical ministers (priests, deacons, lectors) have not grown up in a Church where sung liturgy is the norm.
3. Many liturgical ministers are not comfortable singing in public.
4. Despite the stated goal, singing the liturgy can in fact make it seem heavier rather than more spirited. The liturgy becomes slow and dull, and consequently, less prayerful.
5. Acoustics in many of our churches impede chanting the liturgy because one needs a resonant space for the practice of chanted liturgy to work well.

For all these reasons and more, some people are skeptical whether it is desirable or possible for clergy and ministers along with the people to chant more of the liturgy. STL 19 (following MS, 8) recommends that priests who do not possess a suitable voice for singing instead recite in a loud and distinct voice, while adding that this is not to be done for mere convenience. Let us hope that we do not settle for mere convenience as we consider the gift and challenge of singing the liturgy.
There is an idea growing in some quarters that hymns at Mass are not very Catholic. The really Catholic thing is to sing the proper antiphons at Mass — preferably in Latin chant as found in the *Graduale Romanum* or at least in English in some other chant-like or polyphonic setting. I wish to counter this mistaken idea. It is based on historical misinformation, lack of concern for legitimate inculturation, insensitivity to ecumenism, and misquoting (or ignoring) the official documents in all their comprehensiveness. STL helpfully offers accurate information and prudent directives.

On this question of hymns versus antiphons, many of us are of two minds because we are drawn to both. This conflicted attitude is in fact in harmony with STL, which speaks positively of both proper antiphons and strophic hymns. By speaking positively of proper antiphons, STL is sounding a new theme in the U.S. documents, since MCW and LMT virtually ignored them. See especially what STL has to say about “Antiphons and Psalms” (STL, 115b): “The psalms are poems of praise that are meant, whenever possible, to be sung.” And “proper antiphons from the liturgical books are to be esteemed and used especially because they are the very voice of God speaking to us in the Scriptures” (STL, 117).

Regarding strophic hymnody at Mass, MS 32 had allowed “substituting” hymns for the proper antiphons at the entrance, offertory, and Communion. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* no longer speaks of “substitution” (GIRM, 48); it simply lists as an “option,” albeit the last option given, the use of “a suitable liturgical song.” (The proper antiphon is the first option.) Some zealous but misinformed voices in recent years, in their enthusiasm for the chant propers, have begun to attack hymnody at Mass as if it were not liturgical. It is thus significant that STL 115d states: “Because these popular hymns [at the entrance, preparation of the gifts, Communion, or recessional] are fulfilling a properly liturgical role, it is especially important that they be appropriate to the liturgical action.” And despite the Church’s strong commitment to ecumenism, some have begun to criticize the use of non-Catholic hymns at Mass, often under the mistaken impression that this is an innovation since Vatican II. STL 115d offers necessary clarification: “In accord with an uninterrupted history of nearly five centuries, nothing prevents the use of some congregational hymns coming from other Christian traditions, provided that their texts are in conformity with Catholic teaching and they are appropriate to the Catholic Liturgy.”

Many are anxious about possible impending limitations in hymnody through the development of a U.S. directory of approved English language hymns, as called for in *Liturgiam Authenticam*, 108. It is important to separate the issue of the hymn directory from STL. When the hymn directory is developed, it might well consist of a relatively modest number of hymns and songs in a “core repertoire.” This core repertoire would be available for use alongside many other pieces not in the directory but subject to episcopal approval, as are all the hymns and songs currently in hymnals and worship aids. It seems reasonable to surmise that bishops will exercise greater vigilance over the texts of vernacular hymns in coming years, in the spirit of STL 115d.
**Through Grace**

STL offers us many gifts and many challenges. May we be enriched by the gifts and stretched by the challenges. Above all, may we participate ever more fruitfully in sung worship, and thereby become more closely united to Christ and each other. For, as *Sing to the Lord* states: “Through grace, the liturgical assembly partakes in the life of the Blessed Trinity, which is itself a communion of love” (STL, 10).

**Notes**


8. On chant, see STL 72–80; on polyphony, see, e.g. STL 30: “At times, the choir performs its ministry by singing alone. The choir may draw on the treasury of sacred music, singing compositions by composers of various periods and in various musical styles, as well as music that expresses the faith of the various cultures that enrich the Church.”

9. STL is quite strong in affirming inculturation and cultural diversity; see especially STL 57–60, “Diverse Cultures and Languages.” STL typically moves from the affirmation of traditional sacred music to the affirmation of contemporary music of various cultures, e.g. in the move from the organ at STL 87–88 to other instruments at STL 89–90, or in the move from “the repertoire of sacred music inherited from the past” to “contemporary composers and the diverse repertoires of various cultures” in STL 54 on Catholic schools.


11. The presidential orations are treated at STL 151, 175, and 197, the Eucharistic Prayer at STL 181–182, and the final blessing at STL 198.


13. I treat this question in “Do Priests Need to Sing?” *Pastoral Music* 28:3 (February–March 2004), 41–43. In what follows I also draw on the address I gave, “Singing the Liturgy: What is the Goal, and What are the Challenges?” at the October 2006 meeting of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions.


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Good liturgical celebration, like a parable, takes us by the hair of our heads, lifts us momentarily out of the cesspool of injustice we call home, puts us in the promised and challenging reign of God, where we are treated like we have never been treated anywhere else.

Robert W. Hovda
From “Vesting of Liturgical Ministers”
Worship, March 1980
Liturgical Music Ministry as Communion for Mission

BY KATHLEEN HARMON, SND DE N

Our assigned task is to take a critical look at what *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship* (hereafter STL) has to say about ministry in general and liturgical ministry in particular. We are faced at the outset, however, with a problem, for STL says nothing about ministry in general and nothing about liturgical ministries other than that of liturgical music. What I offer here, then, is not a commentary on the notion of ministry in STL. Instead, I take the image of communion for mission used in *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* (hereafter CVL), the document on lay ecclesial ministry promulgated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2005, to see how that image forms and fleshes out the notion of ministry in STL.

Our procedure is simple and unfolds in three related steps. First, we consider ecclesial ministry in relation to the Trinity, Christ’s mission, and ordained ministry. Second, we consider how STL views liturgical singing. Finally, we pull the two together, using communion for mission as our lens. In the end we will find that much of what STL asserts about music ministry can, in fact, be said about all liturgical ministries because all these ministries serve the same purpose: to enable the liturgical action initiated by the Trinity to transform the Church into deeper communion for mission.

**Theological Foundations in Co-Workers**

The bishops’ statement *Co-Workers in the Vineyard* is remarkable both for its endorsement of lay ecclesial ministry within the Church and for the theological foundations on which it bases this endorsement. We can summarize these foundations under three headings.

*Communion for mission.* Theologically, CVL builds on developments in
ecclesiology and lay ministry which marked the latter half of the twentieth century, influenced the documents of Vatican II, and catalyzed an exponential growth in lay ecclesial ministry in the United States.\(^4\) The core of CVL's approach to Church and ministry is found in its integration of communion and mission: “Communion and mission are profoundly connected with each other, they interpenetrate and mutually imply each other to the point that communion represents both the source and the fruit of mission: communion gives rise to mission and mission is accomplished in communion.”\(^5\)

Both communion and mission begin in the Trinity: “The mystery of God is one of love, the love of Trinitarian communion revealed in mission” (CVL, 19). CVL defines the Church in the same terms. The Church, “a communion in which members are given a share in the union with God brought about by Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit” (CVL, 19), is “a mystery of Trinitarian communion in missionary tension.”\(^6\) The Church, founded by Christ, “finds its source and purpose in the life and activity of the Triune God” (CVL, 19). The Church does not make itself, nor empower itself, nor determine for itself its mission. Rather, the life, power, and activity of the Church are gifts of the Trinity given for the purpose of leading all of humanity into the very life of God, that is, into that communion of self-giving love in which all have fullness of life.

Defining God as “communion revealed in mission” and Church as participation in this divine communion for mission opens up a new dimension in understanding the Church and its ministry. Church is communion in service of mission. Moreover, the mission is communion, our communion with God, our communion with one another in the Church as Body of Christ, and our communion with all humanity as brothers and sisters called to live divine life in the reign of God.\(^7\)

**All are called to communion for mission.** Because of baptism, all members of the Church are gifted to live out in some specific way this communion for mission which begins in the Trinity and is the source of the life and activity of the Church: “Baptism initiates all into the one priesthood of Christ, giving each of the baptized, in different ways, a share in his priestly, prophetic, and kingly work. And so every one of the baptized, confirmed in faith through the gifts of God’s Spirit according to his or her calling, is incorporated into the fullness of Christ’s mission to celebrate, proclaim, and serve the reign of God” (CVL, 18). While re-affirming the distinctive nature and role of ordained ministry, CVL clearly moves away from a dualistic ecclesiology which holds that only some are called and gifted by the Spirit to continue the mission of Christ. Within a hierarchical structure the Church is called to a relational, complementary, and collaborative model of ministry which identifies, validates, and uses the charisms given to all members of the Church. Such collaboration marks the communion which is the Church and reveals the relational life of the Trinity as the source of the Church’s life and ministry.

**Ordered communion for mission.** The Church, the Body of Christ, has many parts, many gifts, all oriented toward fulfillment of the Church’s mission. Nonetheless, by virtue of the sacrament of orders, the ordained participate in the priesthood of Christ in a manner that is different both in degree and essence from the participation of the lay faithful. Ordained ministry holds a unique place in the Church and carries a unique empowerment. All other ministries function in relation to it (CVL, 21).
Here CVL reveals the ongoing tension in the Church between the rise of lay ecclesial ministry and the role of the ordained, between the hierarchical priesthood and the common priesthood of all the baptized. By grounding all ministry in the communion of the Trinity, however, CVL clearly follows a shift initiated at Vatican II from “viewing the common priesthood in terms of the hierarchical priesthood to viewing the common priesthood in terms of the community, the whole church in its relationship to Christ.” In this light, ordained ministry, while unique in essence and distinct in forms of service, is fundamentally an ordering for the sake of communion for mission. Thus the diocesan bishop is the locus, guide, and protector of communion for mission in the local church: “The ontological and functional differentiation that sets the Bishop before the other faithful, based on his reception of the fullness of the Sacraments of Orders, is a manner of being for the other members of the faithful which in no way removes him from being with them.” The pastor is locus, guide, and protector of communion for mission in the parish: “The ministry of the priest is entirely on behalf of the Church; it aims at promoting the exercise of the common priesthood of the entire People of God.”

CVL makes clear, then, that its endorsement of lay ecclesial ministry does not undermine ordained ministry as an essential and constitutive element of the Church. Both forms of ministry are needed, each serving different aspects of Church life; both arise from the same baptismal communion; both serve the same mission of Christ. The ordained priesthood and the common priesthood of all the baptized are ordered to one another so that all members of the Church may grow in holiness and service (CVL, 21). Hence the model for interaction between ordained and lay is to be one of collaboration, one that honors varying gifts and authorities and uses all in faithful service to the Church’s communion and the Church’s mission. The appropriate model of the Church is not a vertical structure which divides laity from ordained but concentric circles, each of which delineates appropriate lines of authority and responsibility and all of which interact to further the mission of Christ, both within the Church and in the world. Within these circles some are called by the Spirit to ordained ministry, others are called to lay ministry, but all are called to live in communion and serve the same mission: that of the coming of the reign of God.

Summary. CVL defines the Church as communion called into being by the Trinity and missioned in communion to draw all humankind into the relational life of the Trinity. Because of baptism, all members of the Church are gifted for and called to ministry in furtherance of this mission. All ecclesial ministry—that is, ministry within the Church on behalf of its life and activity—is directed toward enabling the Church to deepen its self-identity as communion for mission. Ecclesial ministry serves to build up the communion of the Church so that it may serve the mission of the Church more effectively. Because the source of the Church’s communion for mission is the relational life of the Trinity, all such ministry must be marked by collaboration, respect for differentiation, and unity in diversity.

Theological Foundations in Sing to the Lord

Liturgical song comes from God. “God has bestowed upon his people the gift of song. God dwells within each human person, in the place where music
Perspectives on Sing to the Lord

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takes its source” (STL, 1). God gives us song that it might lead us beyond our earthbound selves to higher realms (STL, 2). Song begins, then, as the gift of a God who loves us into greater being.

We generally think of music as a human creation, but STL suggests that we are the object for whom God creates song rather than its subject. We become its subject when we use song to sing back our love to the God who first loves us and sings within us. One implication of this theological insight is that we do not generate who we are, what we have, or what we do; all is gift from the God who holds nothing in reserve. Such gifting defines the very nature of the Trinity: three Persons who exist in a communion of self-giving love and whose self-giving flows into the divine work of creation, incarnation, redemption, and, ultimately, the divinization of humankind.

A second implication is that liturgical singing is not our self-expression but God’s self-expression in and through us. What God expresses in our song is the mystery of Trinitarian life given for the sake of the other. This mystery is most fully revealed in the “song” of Jesus on the cross: “Into your hands, Lord, I give up my spirit” (Luke 23:46). In an act of ultimate self-offering, Jesus gives the Father back the breath given him at his human birth. In Trinitarian terms he returns the Spirit continually given him by the Father. Every time we celebrate the liturgy we enter ritually into this mystery of the cross: We join our self-offering to the self-offering of Jesus. We express this self-offering through our singing because this is the way we give our spirit back to the God who first gave it to us. This self-gift is not generated by us, however, but is instigated by God, who gives us the Spirit and a body-soul created to sing. Even our self-giving is not self-expression, then, but is God’s self-revelation in and through us.

A third implication is that since singing is not human self-revelation but the self-revelation of God, our liturgical singing needs to be an act of self-emptying so that God can give the divine self to us and reshape us according to the divine life poured into us. What a paradox: Singing, which is by nature an activity of self-awareness and self-expression, becomes, in the context of liturgical celebration, an activity of self-emptying.

Liturgical song is sacramental. Because song is God’s gift to us, liturgical singing is a sacramental revelation of divine presence (STL, 1). Moreover, this singing reveals our presence to one another as Church (STL, 2). Liturgical singing is a sacramental sign of God’s presence within and among us and of our presence to and union with one another as Body of Christ. Liturgical singing makes God’s love for us and our interior response of self-gift to God and to one another physically present and tangibly felt.

When we sing liturgically, then, far more goes on than the mere production of musical sounds. The song generated by vibrations within our body is revelation of the unseen vibration of God’s presence within us. Our body-song vibrations reveal the interiority of both the deep presence of God within us and our choice to make that Presence known to others.

Liturgical song binds together the Body of Christ. “By its very nature song has both an individual and a communal dimension” (STL, 2). The shared resonance generated by our liturgical singing binds us together as the community of Christ’s presence in the world. The vibrations our song sends out into physical space enter the bodies of all the other persons in the space, causing them to vibrate in synchronization with us. Song binds persons together in
a reciprocity of physical vibrations generated by unseen will and intention. The vibrations are tangible; the interior dispositions which generate them are not. The shared resonance which marks communal liturgical singing is more than a symbiosis of physical vibrations in ear, bone, and brain. What is shared when we join together in liturgical singing is the resonance of our common will and intention to be one Body of Christ given over to the worship of God and to the mission of the Church.\textsuperscript{13}

One of the outcomes of this shared resonance is that those strong in faith support those who are weak (STL, 5). Those in the assembly who feel doubt or diffidence are embraced by the shared resonance of the rest of the community singing its faith and commitment. On days when our faith is wavering or marginal, those whose will and intention are sure and strong carry us, and vice-versa. The compassion and care the liturgy calls each of us to show the world begin already during the liturgy itself and are made sacramentally present through our singing.

\textit{Liturgical song celebrates the paschal mystery.} “The primordial song of the Liturgy is the canticle of victory over sin and death” (STL, 7), the canticle of the paschal mystery that death undertaken out of self-giving love yields new and greater life. Every celebration of liturgy is a ritual enactment of the paschal mystery in which we unite ourselves with the self-offering of Christ and are filled with the new life which communion with him and with one another brings. In this ritual enactment we confront head-on that we must die to self in order to receive this new life. In order to be filled by God with God’s own life we must empty ourselves.

So, like Christ, ours is a song of self-emptying. But our song of self-emptying is also one of unimaginable fulfillment. Our self-emptying makes room for the God who, from the beginning of time, has never ceased to make room for us. We are taken up into the life of the Trinity (STL, 10). The self-giving which our liturgical singing reveals and expresses is simply response to the God who has first given self to us. Where is the sting in a death such as this?

\textit{Liturgical song propels us to mission.} “The Paschal hymn, of course, does not cease when a liturgical celebration ends. Christ, whose praises we have sung, remains with us and leads us through church doors to the whole world, with its joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties. The words Jesus chose from the book of Isaiah at the beginning of his ministry become the song of the Body of Christ” (STL, 8).

The gift of song which flows from God to each of us, and from each of us to one another as Body of Christ, now flows from the Body of Christ to the body of the world. Song which is given that we might offer God praise is also given that we might offer care and compassion to our neighbor. The song which sacramentalizes our love for God and our union with one another also sacramentalizes our mission to the world.

Just as our liturgical singing is not self-generated, neither is it self-serving: “Charity, justice, and evangelization are thus the normal consequences of liturgical celebration. Particularly inspired by sung participation, the body of the Word Incarnate goes forth to spread the Gospel with full force and compassion” (STL, 9). We do not sing to entertain ourselves, or to satisfy ourselves, or to bloat our sense of self. Rather, we sing so that we might march together with greater courage and conviction into the melee of the
world where injustice, violence, poverty, oppression, and division fracture the body of humankind. Emboldened by the paschal mystery song of the Body of Christ, we gather these fragmented parts into the healing embrace of Christ. With Christ, we sing over the world. With Christ, we become God’s song for the world, willingly emptying ourselves that God’s melody may blow where it will, bringing life.

Authentic liturgical singing enables us to participate fully, consciously, and actively not only in the liturgy but also in the life of the world as agents of salvation. In both liturgy and living such participation is challenging, “but Christ always invites us to enter into song, to rise above our own preoccupations, and to give our entire selves to the hymn of his Paschal Sacrifice for the honor and glory of the Most Blessed Trinity” (STL, 14).

**Liturgical Music Ministry and Communion for Mission**

While STL does not explicitly define ministry, the document certainly follows the lead of CVL. For example, STL indicates that all members of the assembly share in the mission of the Church and in the ministry of liturgical music. To this end all musical choices for liturgy are to be directed toward full, active, conscious participation of the assembly in the liturgical action. By implication, STL is indicating that liturgical music ministry is an ecclesial ministry serving to build up the Church as communion for mission.

*The purpose of liturgy is communion for mission.* The purpose of the liturgy is to draw the gathered assembly more deeply into the life of the Trinity (STL, 10). Our liturgical singing is a sacramental revelation of the presence of God (STL, 2, 6) and of our communion with one another in Christ (STL, 10). In our liturgical singing we both receive one another as members of the Body of Christ and strengthen one another in this union (STL, 5). The deepest meaning of full, active, and conscious participation in the liturgy is that we open ourselves to God’s offer of divine life and surrender ourselves to the action of the liturgy as it transforms us into being more perfectly the Body of Christ sent on mission to the world.

*All members of the assembly are called to communion for mission.* Through baptism all members of the assembly—ordained and lay—have been drawn into the communion of the Church and are called to full, active, conscious participation in the liturgy (STL, 10–11). All are to join themselves with Christ’s self-offering to the Father in the Spirit. The participation of all in the celebration of liturgy is an activity of collaboration, first with the Trinity who initiates the action, and secondly with one another as each member fulfills his or her proper role in order to enable the others to fulfill their proper roles. For the sake of communion for mission, every member of the assembly must let go of self-preoccupation and individualism. The role of liturgical music is to facilitate this surrender so that all gathered for the celebration may become the one body offered with Christ for the sake of his mission in the world.

Furthermore, because the communion of the Church is universal, music chosen for liturgy must reflect the diverse cultures and languages of those gathered for celebration (STL, 57–60). Responding to the multicultural diversity and intercultural relationships characterizing many American parishes is one of the greatest challenges facing liturgical music ministers today. Liturgical music must be chosen with regard for the cultural and linguistic
diversity of the people who have gathered for celebration, but it must also respect the demands of the rite. Two things are at stake here. The first is the unity in diversity of the communion of the Church. The second is the power of the liturgical rite to transform those who have gathered into being this communion more perfectly. These two values stand in “missionary tension,” and dealing with this tension requires collaboration and self-emptying on the part of all members of the Church.

Liturgical music is ordered for communion for mission. By beginning with the musical role of the bishop, chapter two of STL indicates that the ministry of liturgical music is ordered. Read through the lens of CVL, this ordering is for the sake of communion for mission. The primary person responsible for the use of music in the liturgy is the local bishop, who encourages sung liturgy by his own example; pays attention to the practice of liturgical music in his diocese; and promotes the musical education and formation of clergy, seminarians, deacons, and musicians (STL, 16).

Second in importance is the priest-presider, who is the visible presence of Christ leading his Church in prayer. He is to join in the assembly’s singing of the acclamations, chants, hymns, and songs (STL, 21) and, to the extent possible, to sing the presidential prayers and dialogues (STL, 19). The dialogues are among the most important elements in the liturgy to be sung because they “foster and bring about communion between priest and people.” The priest-presider’s chief ministry is to “convey to the faithful the living presence of Christ.” In other words, he is to be the locus through whose leadership the communion of the gathered assembly is deepened.

Third among the liturgical ministers is the deacon who, like the priest-presider, is to join in the singing of the assembly and, to the extent possible, to sing those parts of the liturgy assigned to him, such as, for example, the dialogues at the Gospel proclamation and at the dismissal (STL, 22–23). In particular, his proclaiming the Gospel, announcing the intercessory prayers, and dismissing the people from the liturgy indicate his chief ministry is to send the Body of Christ on its mission to the world.

Listed fourth among music ministers is the gathered liturgical assembly, but STL’s presentation here is muddled. The relevant paragraphs (STL, 24–27) do not do justice to the musical role of the assembly other than to state that “singing is one of the primary ways that the assembly of the faithful participates actively in the Liturgy” (STL, 26) and to imply that this singing is an avenue for the assembly to eschew “individualism and division” (STL, 25). The section then jumps to the need for continual musical formation of the assembly (a ministerial role for pastor and the music director) and to the necessity of choosing music within a given assembly’s musical capability (another role for the pastor and the music director). Nothing is said to explicate the meaning of full, conscious, active participation in the liturgy. Nothing is said about how the assembly through their communal singing is enabled to enter more fully into the liturgical dynamic of becoming communion for mission. STL would be a stronger document if it addressed the music ministry of the assembly more thoroughly.

STL next describes the ministerial roles of the various specialized ministers of music: the choir, the psalmist, the cantor, the organist and other instrumentalists, and the director of music ministries. Concerning the role of the choir, STL affirms its importance but adds the caution that it must
never “minimize the musical participation of the faithful” (STL, 28). Even when singing alone, the choir’s role is to serve the liturgical participation of the assembly. Choir members are to see themselves as members of the assembly, joining in the congregational singing and participating fully in the ritual action (STL, 31–32). What STL offers here is a concrete example of the self-emptying that is to mark all music ministry and the collaboration that is to characterize all ecclesial ministry.

Indicating how much we have grown in understanding the importance of the responsorial psalm in the Liturgy of the Word, the section on the ministry of the psalmist (STL, 34–36) offers new material. This ministry requires not only musical capability but also spiritual and pastoral skills. The psalmist must be able to express the text of the psalm not only with clarity but also with the conviction of personal faith; he or she must be able to sing with sensitivity not only to the text and its musical setting but also to the assembly members who are listening. Not said but implied is the principle that the ministry of the psalmist is to build up faith within the members of the assembly and to lead them to deeper communion with the God who speaks the Word of life and with one another who have gathered to receive this Word. The psalmist’s ministry, then, is to collaborate with the Trinity in building up communion for mission.

The section on the cantor (STL, 37–40) clearly offers a collaborative, other-serving model of music ministry. As song leader, the cantor has two principal roles: to sing in alternation or dialogue with the assembly for such musical elements as the Gospel acclamation and to assist when the assembly needs help to do its part. In the latter situation the cantor’s voice should never dominate the singing of the assembly. Moreover, the cantor should only be seen by the assembly when needed and never in such a way that he or she draws attention away from the liturgical action. Clearly, the ministry of the cantor is one which minimizes self for the sake of building up the assembly.

The ministry of the organist and other instrumentalists is also one of collaboration for the sake of supporting others in their ministry. Instrumentalists are to lead the singing without dominating or overpowering (STL, 41). STL indicates times when instruments may be played alone as part of the liturgy (STL, 43–44) and, while not explicitly saying it, the document implies that whatever is played is appropriate to the liturgy, never a distraction from the liturgical action, and is directed toward leading the assembly to its full, conscious, and active participation in the celebration.

Finally, the director of music ministries — parish or diocesan — collaborates with both ordained and lay people in overseeing, planning, and coordinating a program of liturgical music that ensures the active participation of the assembly and promotes the involvement of many individuals in the doing of music ministry (STL, 45–47). Here STL directly quotes CVL, defining the role of the director as one that “finds its place within the communion of the Church and serves the mission of Christ in the Spirit.”

Analysis of STL’s hierarchical ordering of liturgical music ministries reveals an implicit understanding that these ministries are ordered to one another for the sake of communion for mission. They are also an ordering in collaboration. No liturgical music minister functions in isolation from the rest of the assembly; rather, all function for the upbuilding of the whole. This hierarchi-
cal ordering enables and assures the unity of the whole precisely because it functions in collaborative differentiation. Such collaborative differentiation requires the discipline of self-emptying, for each minister must do his or her part with integrity, then step out of the way so that other ministers may do their part, thus enabling the unity of the whole to emerge. In the very celebration of liturgy, then, music ministers are to do what they are called to do in daily living: empty themselves so that God may bring all humankind into the fullness of divine life.

**Liturgical Music Ministry as Communion for Mission**

“All pastoral musicians—professional or volunteer, full-time or part-time, director or choir member, cantor or instrumentalist—exercise a genuine liturgical ministry” (STL, 50). This ministry, as all ministry in the Church, finds its roots in baptism and rests on a personal experience of the loving embrace of the Trinity (CVL, 38). Pastoral music ministry is primarily one of enabling the assembly members through music to surrender themselves to the action of the Trinity transforming them into being more fully the Body of Christ sent in mission to hasten the coming of the reign of God. To do this ministry, pastoral musicians must first surrender themselves to this action of God. The very doing of liturgical music ministry in communion and collaboration with others will lead them in this direction. Music ministry is itself communion for mission.

On June 28, to mark the closing of the Year of Saint Paul, my parish hosted an archdiocesan celebration of solemn vespers with coadjutor Archbishop Dennis Schnurr presiding. Since the parish has a very small choir, I knew I needed to swell the ranks for this auspicious event. So I called the music directors of two neighboring parishes and made my plea, anxious about bringing relative strangers together with minimal rehearsal for such a solemn liturgy. The result, however, was marvelous because my choir plus the sixteen additional singers who joined us gave themselves over to their ministry. They knew they were there to serve the liturgy and to enable the assembly to enter into full, conscious, active participation in the rite. Collaborating for this purpose, they became a communion for mission. And everyone gathered for this liturgy followed their lead: We became Church, the Body of Christ bonded in the communion of the Trinity and nourished for the work of drawing all of humankind into this communion.

**Notes**

3. Agreement has not yet been reached on an official definition of lay ecclesial ministry. A working definition in line with current thinking on the subject would be: ministry rendered by the non-ordained within the Church on behalf of the Church’s life and activity. Ministries such as directors of religious education, directors of music ministries, directors of liturgy, and pastoral associates would fall within this category.


7. Note that the term used here is “communion” not “community.” “Communion” refers to our union with the Trinity because of the gift of divine life given us in baptism and to our union with one another in Christ through baptism: We are daughters and sons of God; we are Body of Christ. This union with God and one another through baptismal transformation is far deeper than any sociological “community” we may ever experience, deeper even than family blood. It is not achieved by any activity on our part but is the free gift of God and the source of all authentic “community” within the Church.


11. Hahnenberg develops the argument of Yves Congar that a shift in ecclesiology toward Church as communion necessitates a model of interaction between ordained and laity “where the community appears as the enveloping reality within which the ministries, even the instituted sacramental ministries, are placed as modes of service of what the community is called to be and do” (Congar, “My Path-Findings in the Theology of the Laity and Ministries,” *The Jurist* 32 [1972], 178; italics in original); cited in Hahnenberg, *Ministries*, 9.

12. The following section is a condensation of my Music Notes column, “Commentary on *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship, Part 1: the Underlying Theology,” Liturgical Ministry* 17 (Spring 2008), 100–102.

13. For an expanded discussion of song as shared resonance and as revelation of hidden will and intention, see chapter two of my book *The Mystery We Celebrate, the Song We Sing: A Theology of Liturgical Music* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2008).


15. General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 93; cited in STL, 18.

16. CVL, 17; cited in STL, 46.

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Sing to the Lord and the Treasury of Sacred Music

BY KEVIN VOGT

This is the third of five Hovda lectures exploring Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship, a welcome set of pastoral guidelines on liturgical music issued in 2007 by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. As Anthony Ruff noted in his presentation, these guidelines do not carry the weight of particular law, but they nonetheless embody the pastoral wisdom of our apostolic leaders and therefore call for obedient embrace.

Sing to the Lord supersedes the previous documents of the national conference—Music in Catholic Worship and Liturgical Music Today—taking into account several developments during the preceding twenty-five years: intervening Roman documents, practical experience, recent scholarship, and escalating polarization within the Church pertaining especially to liturgy and music. According to Father Ruff, who was a member of the drafting committee for the document, the purpose of this document is threefold: to calm controversy, to clarify Church teaching, and to stake out a “high middle ground.” It is that high middle ground that I will explore in this lecture, considering the ways that Sing to the Lord seeks to harmonize the conciliar notion of a “treasury of sacred music” with the ritual requirements of the reformed liturgy and the receptive culture in which the liturgy is celebrated.

The words “treasury” and “sacred music” provide convenient touchstones for our reflection. I will first consider “tradition and treasury,” and then will examine the understanding of music as “sacred” expressed in Sing to the Lord. Finally, I will consider some implications of the practical guidelines offered in the document from the perspective of:

1. traditional musical philosophy, which may illuminate and contribute to an understanding of opposing and critical points of view on repertoire, and
(2) the performing art of making music, which may provide practical pathways to the cultivation of a radically receptive liturgical participation, both active and contemplative.

But first a word about disposition. If Gregorian chant has been used as a political weapon in the so-called “liturgy wars,” the “treasury of sacred music” has been a virtual armory, providing an arsenal of ecclesiological litmus tests to those who are more certain than the institutional Church itself about what everyone ought to sing in the sacred liturgy. Alternatively, everything that might be included in a “canon” of traditional music—particularly music that we have inherited from our European ancestors in the faith—is regarded by others as a still-potent remnant of now-defunct European empires.

It should be obvious to everyone that defensive posturing at either pole will be at best unproductive and at worst damaging to one’s soul and to the unity of the Church. A more productive, healthy, and charitable disposition will entertain the views of others willingly without fear of losing our grip on objective Truth and slipping into a relativism. Literary critic Stanley Fish has observed that “while relativism is a position one can entertain, it is not a position one can occupy.” In our efforts to communicate, however, we sometimes are presented with an opportunity to modify our positions and to arrive at that high middle ground that is perhaps a little closer to that objective Truth that we so ardently seek to know.

Tradition and Treasure

As we find our way into a discussion about “tradition and treasure,” it might help you to know something about me. I am currently the music director for a growing parish in suburban Kansas City. I have served rural, urban, suburban, and university churches as well as two metropolitan cathedrals. My bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees are all in organ performance and literature, which means most of my higher education has been focused on interpreting and performing inherited musical repertoire—not “making” music per se but adapting historical music to contemporary liturgical celebrations. In fact, finding authentic ways to incorporate the Church’s inherited musical treasures has been a preoccupation for me. This has been especially true during my tenures in cathedral churches, which are charged by the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy with a special role of diligently developing choirs.

I have to confess to you that the sheer effort—amassing human and capital resources, persuading the powers that be to support such rigorous vision, and fostering a communal culture that is receptive to anything older than most recent memory—has been exhausting. I must admit that as much as I love the fullness of the Church’s musical tradition, I have found it to be an enormous burden. I wonder about the motives behind my attachment to old music. I sometimes find it hard to hang on to what feels like an authentic and healthy reverence for tradition.

The meaning of musical tradition came home to me five years ago, when my daughter was born.
weeks of my wife’s pregnancy applying my musicological skills, researching the correct and authentic versions of those poems and songs. After all, it was my job to convey to my infant daughter the cultural treasures of childhood. Somehow, the possession of these treasures would help her to have a good and happy life.

When she finally arrived and we began the round of feedings, burpings, diaper changes, and all-too-short periods of sleep, I forgot about all of my research, and I just lived the mystery of new parenthood. In order for her to sleep at night, I had to walk with her in my arms . . . and walk . . . and walk . . . and walk. And I sang:

Moon river, wider than a mile,  
I’m crossing you in style someday.  
O dream-maker, you heart-breaker,  
Wherever you’re going, I’m going your way.

Two drifers off to see the world,  
There’s such a lot of world to see  
We’re after the same rainbow’s end,  
Waitin’ round the bend,  
My huckleberry friend,  
Moon River and me.

Night after night for weeks I crooned this lullaby, until I stopped to wonder: “Where in the world did this come from?” I eventually realized that this was a song my own mother had sung to me when I was a child. It was indeed a treasure, a gift of a winsome melody and wispy poetry to lull my little girl to sleep but also a trove of deep affections, night after night teaching my heart the language of love for a child, of hope, imagining, and blessing for her life ahead. I understood for the first time how musical tradition works, how song resonates through time and space with a little help of ritual remembering and the quickening of the Holy Spirit.

Robert Taft says: “Tradition is not the past; it is the Church’s self-consciousness now of that which has been handed on to her not as an inert treasure but as a dynamic inner life. . . . Tradition is not the past, but present understood genetically, in continuity with that which produced it.” This is not simply a matter of precedent, but rather of “faithfulness in handing on something that is ever developing.”

With this sense of tradition in mind, let us consider the historical background of the “treasury of sacred music” as a term identifying a comprehensive body of inherited liturgical music. In his encyclopedic study of this topic, Sacred Music and Liturgical Reform: Treasures and Transformations, Anthony Ruff convincingly asserts that the notion of “treasury” (thesaurus) is not established as an all-embracing concept until the Second Vatican Council and that the term “sacred music” is similarly too unstable to be of assistance in determining a musical “canon” for Catholic worship. While the seeds of historical musical consciousness and the veneration of an inherited repertoire can be found in the Carolingian era with respect to liturgical chant, and while old music has sometimes served as a model for historically-inspired new music, historical musical consciousness did not come into full bloom until the twentieth century. In other words, concern for the conservation of inherited music is
a relatively recent phenomenon, even if it can be considered in some sense traditional.

The clear concept of a *thesaurus musicae sacrae* or “treasury of sacred music” begins to take shape only at the Second Vatican Council, first applying broadly to “tradition” and preeminent in its integral relationship to the liturgy:

> The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art. The main reason for this preeminence is that, as sacred song closely bound to the text, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy.¹¹

A more specific reference to a body of inherited music appears next to a concern for the development of choirs, with a caveat favoring one of the principal values of the Constitution: participation of the whole assembly.

> The treasure [thesaurus, treasury] of sacred music is to be preserved and fostered with great care. Choirs must be diligently developed, especially in cathedral churches; but bishops and other pastors of souls must be at pains to ensure that whenever a liturgical service is to be celebrated with song, the whole assembly of the faithful is enabled, in keeping with art. 28 and 30, to contribute the active participation that rightly belongs to it.¹²

Article 116 acknowledges Gregorian chant to be “distinctive of the Roman liturgy,” and, “other things being equal,” it “should be given pride of place in liturgical services.”¹³ However, “other kinds of sacred music, especially polyphony, are by no means excluded from liturgical celebrations.” Furthermore, composers, “filled with the Christian spirit,” are urged to “feel that their vocation is to develop sacred music and to increase its store of treasures.”¹⁴ Finally, composers are nudged toward developing new genres: “Let them produce compositions having the qualities proper to genuine sacred music, not confining themselves to works that can be sung only by large choirs, but providing also for the needs of small choirs and for the active participation of the entire assembly of the faithful.”¹⁵

While the terms and values articulated in the Constitution can be traced to seeds sown in Pius X’s *motu proprio* of 1903, *Tra le sollecitudini*, they coalesce into a clearer form by the beginning of the Second Vatican Council. The treasury seems to include music that is both old and new. It includes Gregorian chant, polyphony, and other forms of sacred music. It includes music for the choir, for instruments, and, with special emphasis, for the whole assembly.

The instruction *Musicam Sacram* of 1967 affirms the existence of a treasury of sacred music, in ways similar to the Constitution, but also sustains and even intensifies the ambiguity in the scope of that treasury, suggesting that parts of the treasury may not be able to be integrated into the reformed liturgy (which was being developed at the time that *Musicam Sacram* was published). In any case, the treasury of sacred music remains a central theme in *Musicam Sacram*. In contrast, *Music in Catholic Worship* (1972) barely mentions the musical patrimony, except in relation to its limited use:

> Musicians must search for and create music of quality for worship, especially the new musical settings for the new liturgical texts. They must also do the
research to find new uses for the best of the old music. They must explore the repertory of good music in other communions. They must find practical means of preserving and using our rich heritage of Latin chants and motets.  

(LMT, 1982) significantly redresses the lacunae of its predecessor, acknowledging the profound impact of the use of vernacular language in the liturgy:

Some have viewed this situation with profound regret. For some, the setting aside of the Latin repertoire of past centuries has been a painful experience, and a cause of bitter alienation. “Now is the time for healing” [quoting a 1978 statement by the Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy]. It is also the time to make realistic assessments of what place the music of the past can have in the liturgies of today.

On the eve of the Council few parishes were performing the authentic repertoire recommended by Saint Pius X in his famous motu proprio on music. Rather, most parishes generally used only a few of the simple chant Masses along with imitations of Renaissance motets and Masses. Moreover, the great music of the past was seldom the music of the ordinary parish church. Most often it was a product of the cathedrals and court chapels.

However, singing and playing the music of the past is a way for Catholics to stay in touch with and preserve their rich heritage. A place can be found for this music, a place which does not conflict with the assembly’s role and the other demands of the rite. Such a practice no longer envisions the performance of “Masses” as set pieces, but looks more to the repertoire of motets, antiphons, and anthems which can be harmonized more easily with the nature of the renewed liturgy and with its pastoral celebration.

At Mass that place will typically include the time during the preparation of the gifts and the period after communion. A skillful director will also be able to find suitable choral repertoire for use as prelude to the Mass, at the end of it, and at the Glory to God. Jubilate Deo, the basic collection of simple Gregorian chants, should also be employed as a source for the assembly’s participation.

Finally, LMT considered musical expressions of cultural diversity along with treasures of inherited music from the past:

Just as the great liturgical music of the past is to be remembered, cherished and used, so also the rich diversity of the cultural heritage of the many peoples of our country today must be recognized, fostered, and celebrated. The United
States is a nation of nations, a country in which people speak many tongues, live their lives in diverse ways, [and] celebrate events in song and music in the folkways of their cultural, ethnic, and racial roots.22

Twenty-five years after *Liturgical Music Today, Sing to the Lord* (STL) affirmed both the trans-historical and trans-cultural elements in the treasury of sacred music as well as affirming the ministerial role of the choir:

At times, the choir performs its ministry by singing alone. The choir may draw on the treasury of sacred music, singing compositions by composers of various periods and in various musical styles, as well as music that expresses the faith of the various cultures that enrich the Church.23

Though not explicitly contained in the concept of *thesaurus*, the breadth of the Church’s musical tradition is implicitly expanded to include not only the *ars artefacta*—the music made, but also the *ars artefaciens*—the art of making music.24

Catholic educational institutions have a special obligation toward music and the Sacred Liturgy. Catholic schools are called to foster the joy of singing and making music [emphasis mine], to cultivate the repertoire of sacred music inherited from the past, to engage the creative efforts of contemporary composers and the diverse repertoires of various cultures, and to celebrate the Sacred Liturgy worthily.25

Beginning in article 72, STL attempts to temper zeal for the privileged place of Gregorian chant while spelling out in some detail opportunities and universal goals for first steps in revitalizing the tradition of Gregorian chant in the liturgy. It acknowledges with a broad sweep the inspiration of historical repertoires, noting that “throughout history, God has continued to breathe forth his creative Spirit, making noble the work of musicians’ hearts and hands” in forms that have been “many and varied.”26 The guidelines further echo preceding Roman documents in suggesting a canon that is not closed: “The Church joyfully urges composers and text writers to draw upon their special genius so that she can continue to augment the treasure house of sacred musical art.”27

Finally, STL urges that instrumental music be employed “from the treasury of sacred music by composers of various eras and cultures”28 and that the tradition of liturgical improvisation be encouraged to continue.29

In summary, *Sing to the Lord* heartily affirms and encourages the use of traditional sacred music—old music, new music, and music of various styles and cultures. While STL is more explicit than its American predecessors in outlining the scope of the Church’s musical treasury, and while it offers new layers of specificity as to how these repertoires might be employed, it remains faithful to the Roman conciliar documents in not defining a closed canon but offering “a set of convictions regarding the employment of traditional music in the renewed liturgy.”30

**Characteristics of the Sacred in Music**

The issue of sacrality is the other major area of dispute in the so-called “liturgy wars,” for it not only impinges on the perceived reverence of the
liturgical act but also cuts to the core of the controversy. There is no doubt that the proponents who influenced the inclusion of the “treasury” language in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy held strongly the categories proposed by Pius X in his 1903 motu proprio Tra le sollecitudini. The sainted pope outlined three defining characteristics of sacred music: holiness, goodness of form, and universality.31

The first characteristic draws a classical distinction between the “sacred” and the “profane.” The term “sacred” refers not to God, as God cannot be defined, but rather to that which is excluded from ordinary reality, related in some way to the “proximity” or “density” of the divine presence. “Profane” (meaning “outside the temple door”) is not necessarily “ unholy,” but is rather in the “realm of the commonplace.” Goodness of form refers to the necessity that sacred music be “true art,” and “universality” means that the “general, universal characteristics of sacred music take precedence over any forms or styles particular to local cultures,” although these are allowed in limited ways.

Through development in several Roman documents over the subsequent sixty years, Pius X’s definition of sacred music was gradually transformed into one that was functional. Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC) reads: “Sacred music will be the more holy the more closely it is joined to the liturgical rite, whether by adding delight to prayer, fostering oneness of spirit, or investing the rites with greater solemnity.” The sacredness of music appears now to be on a continuum consisting of the “more” and “less” sacred. SC immediately qualifies this statement: “But the Church approves of all forms of genuine art possessing the qualities required and admits them into divine worship.” Does this imply a persistent sacred/profane distinction, and is the profane now admitted into worship?

Subsequent documents seem increasingly to de-emphasize any distinction between the sacred and profane (or secular) in music, adhering closely to the equation of holiness with integral relationship to the rites. This is, in fact, a traditional position. Philosopher Josef Pieper notes that “within the realm of the sacred the ‘sacred action’ clearly holds primacy and is more representative of the sacred than are other sacred phenomena.” He bolsters this assertion by quoting Thomas Aquinas: “A thing is called sacred [sacrum] by virtue of its relation to divine worship [ad cultum divinum].”

There are plenty of precedent assertions to support the case on either side of the argument for or against the inclusion of “profane” or “secular” music, but Richard Schuler acknowledges that at various times in history there has been “little concern for a distinction between the sacred and the secular” and that “in times of great Christian strength and influence, secular music has been absorbed into the Church’s worship without fear of secularization or profanation, but when the Faith declines in influence great concern is shown for the dangers involved in such a process.” Schuler acknowledges that there is nothing inherently sacred in any style of music or its characteristics. Music is considered sacred rather through connotation, the result of associations made between some aspect of the music and extra-musical experience.

Because of the recent vintage of the term “sacred music,” the inability to distinguish in music itself characteristics of the sacred and secular, and because the demarcation of certain styles has historically had harmful ef-
fects on artistic excellence, Anthony Ruff concludes that he cannot support the notion of “sacred music” as a banner over all music appropriate to the Catholic liturgy:

The term does not necessarily express the imperative that worship music share in the purposes of liturgy: the term says both too little and too much. It is too narrow, insofar as it intends to eliminate styles and repertoires that might well be mediatory of God’s holiness in some cultural contexts. It is too broad, in that it is appropriately applied to music used both within and outside of worship.41

Ruff concedes, however, that “sacred music” is “one useful term among many for describing worship music,” and that while “liturgical music has a sacramental dimension . . . this sacramentality should not be understood in terms of an alleged sacred characteristic that can or should be distinguished from secular or profane characteristics.”

Schuler’s situational analysis of attitudes toward secular music in the liturgy is transparent enough, and one can see that if one fears that Christian faith and culture will be overwhelmed by secular culture, drawing a distinction through historical and culturally-specific connotation could be a useful tactic of conservation. Indeed, the restoration of all things to Christ from the grip of secularism and modernism was a central “program” behind the motu proprio of Pius X. There is certainly room—and doubtless widespread support throughout the Church—for a continuing critique of secular mass culture in the developed West, and such critique may provide helpful insights for locating and appreciating signs of a renewed vitality of traditional Christianity in the North and West as well as in the burgeoning Christian churches of the so-called “two-thirds” world.42 The universal Church continues to refrain from hitting the panic button, however, because of the hopeful and hospitable witness of its Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et Spes.

We can say with confidence that Sing to the Lord affirms the traditional insight of Sacrosanctum Concilium that music is sacred insofar as it is connected with the liturgical action. STL makes a considerable contribution, however, in developing this principle to include a “ritual dimension” corresponding to the outward enactment of the rite and a “spiritual dimension” corresponding to the aspects of receptive participation by the worshiper.43 In addition, STL directs attentiveness to the cultural context in which the ritual and spiritual dimensions of sacred music come into play.44

Perhaps one regrettable omission in STL is that the question of beauty is not really addressed at all. I am referring not to the excellence of craft, which the document certainly encourages, or to the attractiveness of music within a given cultural context, but to the classical marks of the objectively beautiful, namely wholeness, harmony, and radiance (claritas).45 Perhaps unconcealed philosophy has no place in a pastoral document, but I think this is one currently submerged piece of tradition that could bear acknowledgement. Perhaps such recognition is veiled in the reference in article sixty-nine to the “inner qualities” of sacred music “that enable it to add greater depth to prayer, unity to the assembly, or dignity to the ritual,” to mediate the holiness of God and to form “the Holy People of God more fully into communion
with him and with each other in Christ.\textsuperscript{46}

I suggest that more work could be done in this area to affirm and entertain the philosophical dimensions of the Church’s musical tradition in a way that doesn’t endanger the core values of the conciliar reform of the liturgy. I recognize that this is a philosophical concern and not necessarily a pastoral one, except for the possibility of reaching out to those who hold what may appear to some to be a hopelessly outdated worldview.

\section*{Some Thoughts on Repertoire}

In addition to affirming and guiding the use of Gregorian chant, STL makes a considerable contribution to the vision of a sung reformed liturgy, proposed in \textit{Musicam Sacram} but more clearly and realistically articulated in the current \textit{General Instruction of the Roman Missal}. Part V of the \textit{Instruction}, “The Musical Structure of Catholic Worship,” outlines article by article, element by element, how the sung liturgy might be enacted.\textsuperscript{47} There appears to be a growing number of people who support this vision.

During the 2007 Hovda Lecture Series on \textit{Musicam Sacram}, Edward Schaefer opined that “for the musical treasure of the Church to find a home again in the liturgy, I think it will be critical to restore the sung Mass.\textsuperscript{48} Schaefer was speaking specifically of “polyphonic” music. It is not clear to me whether he was referring to multi-voice music in general or the Renaissance polyphony idealized by the nineteenth century Cecilian Movement (which I would venture to say that most Catholics in the United States have never heard or experienced in the liturgy). In any case, my own experience bears out Dr. Schaefer’s thesis.

When I was serving the Cathedral of Saint Paul in St. Paul, Minnesota, in the mid-1990s, I struggled with the pressure to foster an excellent practice of choral singing in the liturgy. No matter what we did, the offerings and contributions of the choir never seemed to form an integral part of the liturgy, and the choir was not perceived by others in the assembly as having any more than a decorative role. Those who didn’t appreciate the musicians’ offerings had less charitable ways of describing it. Moreover, the contrast was stark—and even jarring—between the well-rehearsed liturgical art-music and all that was going on in the rest of the liturgy, which tended to be a little too free-form and unpredictable in the sanctuary to be considered “musical” in even the broadest sense and barely perceivable from and among the folks in the pews of the cathedral’s vast nave.

So, after long, thoughtful conversations with our visionary rector and a pretty sophisticated parish liturgy team, we embarked on an experiment—not at the mid-morning Mass with the choir but at the 7:30 AM “silent” Mass—adopting the gradual implementation of a modified version of the pastoral plan in \textit{Musicam Sacram} for fostering sung participation by “degrees.” One Sunday, the priest intoned the simple Mode VI Alleluia before the Gospel. The people responded without cue or explicit invitation. A few weeks later, the priest started the Our Father using the Robert Snow chant adaptation. Instant participation! A few weeks later we added the \textit{Sanctus} from David Hurd’s \textit{New Plainsong Mass}, which participants in the other Masses had been singing for some time. The collects followed, \textit{recto tono}—or as one of
our cantors liked to call it, the “Johnny-One-Note setting.” Over the course of the year, the “silent” Missa lecta became a Missa cantata.

We finally decided to solicit opinions about the new “music at Mass.” Almost all of the respondents replied, “What music? We don’t have music at the 7:30 AM Mass.” Aha! Now we were on to something. I had always assumed those who went to the “silent” Mass were those who wanted to get out onto the links to golf on Sunday morning. It turns out that they were very devout people who really knew how to pray liturgically. Many of these folks chose the 7:30 Mass because they could pray better in a liturgical celebration that was not loaded with the extremes of personality-dependent, conversationally-toned chatter of a recited Mass and the exaggerated outbursts of emotionally-charged music (which could have been in any style). The pervasive cantillation at the 7:30 Mass was judged by almost everyone as reverent and prayerful, and several people described experiences of the “numinous.” Sacred music, indeed!

Anyway, our liturgy team discerned that the reason the experiment worked is that the music at this early morning Mass was intimately wedded to the words of the liturgy; it was “logogenic,” or “word bearing.” In contrast, the various musical expressions at the otherMasses tended to be highly “pathogenic,” aimed at expressing or arousing feeling or emotion. This is not to suggest that there is no place for the pathogenic in liturgy, for Jesus’ own passion was a result of his sharing in our human condition. But he is also the Divine Word, the Logos, and so Christian liturgical prayer has been at its core logogenic, even as lyrical expression continually erupts out of the human spirit and experience.

It is for this reason, I think, that ritual chanting is basic and normative to Catholic liturgy, even if it is not very common. Likewise, since it is at once lyrical in its vocalization and highly ordered in its bearing of words, chanting becomes a plane of reference against which all other pathogenic and complex logogenic forms can be judged. Furthermore, the cultivation of the chanted liturgy as a liturgical-musical genre may someday go the furthest in calming the tensions of the liturgy wars, may prove key to revealing the true scope of the Church’s treasury of sacred music, and may collectively sensitize us to the inner qualities of sacred music that mediate the holiness of God and bind us in deeper communion with Christ and one another.

The logogenic-pathogenic dialectic should not be used arbitrarily (although it could be) to exclude genres and styles of music that someone intuits to be undesirable for worship. In STL, the leaders of the Church in the United States have affirmed the open and hospitable stance of Christians in the modern world that “nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo their hearts.”49 Through their practical suggestions for implementing a truly sung liturgy, they have also opened the door for rediscovery of an elemental genre of worship music and recovery of a basic modality of Christian prayer.

At a deeper spiritual level, the embrace of liturgical chant may be good for the souls of Americans of all backgrounds and cultural heritages. Don Saliers worries that “North American mass culture makes it increasingly difficult to know the difference between immediacy of feeling and depth of emotion.”50 In contrast, he reminds us that “the liturgy seeks to form the dispositions and affections of gratitude in season and out, of hope even in tribulation, of compassion over time, of awe and wonder at the created order of things.”51
Saliers urges that “our way forward is to discern what the relation between restraint and exuberance requires of our music, our celebrants, and all the other liturgical ministries within the assembly itself.”

**Some Thoughts on Participation**

I have saved one of the most important topics for the end of this lecture, but it is one with which you are perhaps quite familiar: participation. “Full and active participation by all the people” is one of the primary tenets of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, “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.”

STL affirms this tenet with great clarity and force, but it also recovers important insights from earlier Roman documents, specifically the recognition that participation in the liturgy must be “internal, in the sense that by it the faithful join their mind to what they pronounce or hear, and cooperate with heavenly grace.”

The notion of interior participation has often been used as an interpretation of *participatio actuosa* that allows an unmodified use of inherited choral literature in the reformed liturgy. STL does not advance the employment of an historical-musical repertoire as its purpose for re-emphasizing interior participation. Rather, interior participation is aimed at the union of heart and mind with the words, songs, or actions of the ministers or the choir, so that “by listening to them they may raise their minds to God.” The document quotes Pope John Paul II in acknowledging that the art of interior listening is not easily learned in a culture that “neither favors nor fosters meditative quiet.”

The late pontiff points out that though “liturgy must always be properly inculturated,” it “must also be counter-cultural.” External participation must be cultivated so that “internal participation can be expressed and reinforced by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes.”

What does participation have to do with the tradition of sacred music? Yes, the use of certain inherited repertoires depends on deciding who sings what. But my aim is to get at an aspect of participation that is inextricably bound to the traditional art of *making music*, in contrast to what we have been mostly talking about: the *artifacts of music*. My experience has borne out this observation: The cultivation of the performing art of music contributes to the capacity not only for exterior participation, which is obvious, but also for interior participation.

As an initial approach to this ephemeral topic, I would like to recall Pope John Paul II’s final letter to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments regarding a topic on the agenda of the Congregation’s plenary assembly: the art of celebrating or *ars celebrandi*.

The effectiveness of [Christ’s] action [in the Eucharist] is a fruit of the work of the Holy Spirit but also requires a human response. The *ars celebrandi* precisely expresses the capacity of ordained ministers and of the entire assembly, gathered together for celebration, to bring about and live the meaning of each liturgical action. This “art” is one with the commitment to contemplation and Christian consistency. Through rites and prayers, we must let the Mystery reach and permeate us.
The late Holy Father strongly implies that the art of celebrating is a priori an interior, receptive act. This corresponds to Pieper’s notion of leisure and festivity as a radically receptive, wherein effortless knowing, and even complex—though effortless—activity aimed at no secondary end, leads to—of all things—worship. The equation of celebration and radical receptivity can be illustrated by the following experiences from my own music ministry.

I was giving a workshop to cantors, and I wanted them to experience radical receptivity while singing. I first gave them the text of an unfamiliar hymn and asked them to sing along with me, which they did eagerly. As most people can, they were able to sing the unfamiliar melody a split second or so behind me, but we made it over the finish line at the same time. Then I asked them to reflect upon their experience of singing the hymn. After a few initial superficial answers, some volunteered that they had felt anxious, that it was hard work, that they felt self-conscious and worried that their ignorance of this supposed well-known, excellent hymn would be exposed. After everyone had acknowledged that the experience was unanimously negative, I suggested that this may in fact be the sort of experience many people in their own liturgical assemblies were having every time they came to Mass!

Then I intoned the good old Mode VI Alleluia, with which most were already familiar. Then we played around with it. I asked them to sing the first two syllables lightly, as if running briskly up some stairs. Then I asked them to “bloom” or “lift” the voice on the high note. We did that a few times, listening for the most pure, “blue” ōō vowel they could imagine. Then I asked them to close their eyes and I intoned the Alleluia again. After a slight hesitation, they sang beautifully, artfully, confidently, but sensitively, coming to a crisp consensus at the start and end of each “alleluia.” No visual cue, no obligatory arm waving, no vocal dominance (no microphone), no autocratic stick beating—just a gentle consensus. I ask them to reflect on and verbalize their response to this exercise. One man was amazed that he had become aware of the collective breathing of the group (after a couple of repetitions). Then one woman, emerging out of an ecstatic vision, exclaimed, “I think I became an Alleluia!” Ars celebrandi, indeed!

Another window into the mystery of radical receptivity occurred in the middle of an organ lesson with a male pediatrician named Bob. Bob is an excellent pianist but coordinating all of his limbs at the organ was still a challenge. In fact, Bob had hit a wall. He tried very hard but couldn’t make it through a single piece of music without something falling apart. I finally tried a technique involving distraction and affirmations encouraging the player to let go of control, to give up all effort. This time Bob played the entire slow movement of the Mendelssohn Fourth Sonata for Organ perfectly, fluently, and elegantly. I asked Bob what the experience of playing that way was like for him. He replied that it was as if he wasn’t even playing the piece but as if he was just listening, drinking it all in.

The final vignette in my set of stories occurred at a diocesan clergy conference. One of the priests, whom I knew quite well and who had at one time been a Benedictine monk, had an epiphany during morning prayer on the third day of the conference, at which we were trying out our new Mundelein Psalter. After prayer, he approached me looking stunned, and said, “After all of these years of praying the Divine Office, something happened to me
during the antiphonal chanting of the psalm-verse couplets. Somewhere in the middle of the second psalm I stopped waiting for my turn to sing and started waiting for the Word of God to be sung to me.” Of course, the next step would be for him to have a receptive experience while chanting his verses.

In each of these stories, someone had an experience of an altered state in which they experienced themselves to be radically open and receptive, in some cases while doing something very difficult and complex. As ministers concerned with fostering the *ars celebrandi* in ourselves and in others, how do we do formation for this kind of internal participation in the liturgy that is congruent with our outward expressions?

I propose first that simply doing the performing art of music engenders this capacity. But I’d also like to suggest another avenue for continued inquiry and reflection drawn from contemporary psychology, namely, the clinical work in treating the seemingly common attention deficit disorder and the theoretical work by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi on “flow,” the mental state or process experienced by the folks in the preceding stories. In his book, *The Childhood Roots of Adult Happiness*, Dr. Edward Hallowell uses Csikszentmihalyi’s theory of “flow,” identifying a five-part cyclic process by which joy is discovered (created) and sustained:

1. **Connection** (experienced as love of life, basic trust, security, courage, optimism, and the ability to deal with adversity);
2. **Play** (in which one learns to create and sustain joy and experience “flow,” to learn how to fail, to build imagination and confidence, to feel ease in chaos, and to learn cooperation);
3. **Practice** (in which one learns control, discipline, persistence, and the ability to seek and receive help);
4. **Mastery** (the root of self-esteem);
5. **Recognition** (resulting in a sense of belonging, in moral behavior, motivation, and healthy self-esteem).61

It is easy to imagine applications of this model in music pedagogy, but in the context of liturgical music formation, I wonder if such a model might be helpful in devising pedagogy for the cultivation of—and not simply the description of—the *ars celebrandi*. In any case, the re-emphasis of *Sing to the Lord* on the “Christian consistency” between outward activity and interior disposition and receptivity is replete with potential to encourage the vigorous cultivation of the traditional art of music making that is also sacred in its unity with the sacred rites enacted and lived by God’s Holy People.

**Conclusion**

*Sing to the Lord* is our pastoral guide for now in light of what has been handed on to us, a tradition of inestimable value. It is affirmative of inherited repertoires—the appropriation of which may itself be considered an act of adaptation and inculturation—and of a storehouse open for deposits of new treasures. The spirit of this approach seems to intend that the treasury of sacred music not be a burden but a source of delight and joy.

The spirit of *Sing to the Lord* might be summarized in Anthony Ruff’s sur-
prising and disarming peroration at the conclusion of his book *Sacred Music and Liturgical Reform*:

For those of us who cherish inherited musical treasures, the task since the liturgical reform is not to see how much we can “get away with,” despite the liturgical reform. This has it upside down. It even borders on an idolatrous attachment to the music we cherish.

A certain spiritual detachment, even a kenotic self-emptying, might be called for. Then, the treasury of sacred music is for us not a burden, something which places demands on us because of its intrinsic worth, but a gift and a grace. Then, our inward letting go of the treasury is an act of faith that the treasury will take care of itself, and God will take care of inspiring wise use of the treasury. Then, from our position of spiritual openness, we will employ inherited musical treasures not for their own sake, but precisely because they correspond to the nature of the reformed liturgy in exemplary fashion. Music of the past will be employed precisely because it glorifies God and sanctifies the faithful, fosters festivity, enhances kerygmatic proclamation, strengthens bonds of community, promotes participation, and fosters cultural goods.62

*Kenosis*—letting go—is always hard to approach, but once we pour ourselves out we find freedom to re-connect, to play, to practice, to master, to belong. “There’s such a lot of world to see,” so many songs to sing, so many gifts to treasure, so many reasons to celebrate, so many provisions from our God to sustain us on our pilgrim way.

We’re after the same rainbow’s end,
Waitin’ round the bend,
My huckleberry friend,
Moon River and me.

Notes

5. Quoted in Fagerberg, 149–150.
7. Ibid., 312–313.
8. Ibid., 58.
10. Ibid., 180.
12. SC, 114.
14. SC, 121.
15. Ibid.

18. LMT, 50.
19. LMT, 51.
20. LMT, 52.
21. LMT, 53. *Jubilate Deo* is a collection of basic chants presented as a gift to the bishops of the world by Pope Paul VI in 1974.
22. LMT, 54.

13. Gilson rejects the equation of “art” with “the things which art makes (*ars artefacta*),” and proposes that the “very essence of art conceived in its true nature” is “the art that makes things (*ars artefaciens*).”

25. STL, 55.
26. STL, 81.
27. STL, 82.
28. STL, 92.
29. STL, 43 and 92.
30. Ruff, 338.
33. Ibid., 23.
34. Ruff, 277–278.
35. SC, 112.
37. Ibid. The taxonomy of sacred music might become clearer were we to combine Aquinas’ insight with that of Etienne Gilson that art (and by extension, music) is *a priori* an act of making and not a thing that is made (Gilson, 13).
39. Ibid., 308.
40. Ibid., 309.
41. Ruff, 29.
43. STL, 67–69.
44. Ibid., 70.
46. STL, 69.
47. And see STL, 137–258.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid., 50.
53. SC, 14.
54. Sacred Congregation of Rites, instruction *Musicam sacram* (March 5, 1967), hererafter MS, 15.
55. STL, 12.
56. Pope John Paul II, quoted in STL, 12.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
Mr. Kevin Vogt is the music director at St. Michael the Archangel Church in Leawood, Kansas.
What is culture? Many scholars grapple with this question in contemporary academic discourse. What was once the primary lens through which cultural anthropologists came to analyze inhabitants of “other countries and territories” has become a useful tool for other social scientists working across multiple disciplinary fields. For example, in the field of sociology, interpretive approaches to cultural analysis continue to generate much interest. Today, in our postmodern context, many social theorists are exploring how culture sites are marked with competing negotiations of power, dominance, and resistance.

Contemporary understandings of culture may be divided into three subgroups: (1) culture as representing bounded social identity groups; (2) culture as material artifacts and special social activities; (3) culture as practice involving dynamics of power and negotiation. I offer this description in order to challenge us to move beyond our conceptions of what constitutes worship practices of cultural groups. In many Roman Catholic writings about culture, as I will show, the word “culture” usually connotes specific ethnic identity groups: e.g., Filipino devotional practices, Eucharistic celebrations in the Spanish language, African American gospel services, etc. A broadened understanding of culture, therefore, will enrich and nuance our investigation of the “cultural elements” found in the USCCB document Sing to the Lord (hereafter STL).

With this goal in mind, the first part of this presentation provides a short overview of the three approaches to culture that currently dominate academic discourse. In the second part, these concepts of culture are the lenses through which one may read STL (and some of the achievements of STL with regard to culture will be highlighted in this section). Finally, other areas of interest with regard to culture and liturgical music will be examined — interests which
are absent from STL and which future official documents on liturgical music may want to address.

**Part One: Three Approaches to Cultural Studies Today**

**First Approach:**
**Culture as Representing Bounded Social Identity Groups—Culture in the Plural ("Cultures")**

The first approach to cultural discourse is historically derived from the expansionist mindset of nineteenth century Europe, and it arose from the field of anthropology. Lyn Spillman writes:

> By that time, new reflection about differences among human populations had been prompted by European exploration and conquest across the globe. This gradually generated a *comparative way* of thinking about human society which ultimately became commonplace in modern life, and was also crucial to the formation of anthropology as a discipline . . . . *In this anthropological sense of the term, the entire way of life of a people is thought to be embedded in, and expressed by, its culture.* Cultures are thought to be evident in anything from tools to religion; and different cultures are seen as distinct units.\(^5\)

In light of this expansionist mindset, comparative tendencies in historical and social studies, and the ongoing formation of nation-states, it was inevitable that hierarchical systems of cultural groups based on “western ideals of social progress” would emerge. Some cultural groups were classified as “civilized” while others were not. Spillman notes: “European cultures were placed at the top of a world hierarchy. But [these] explicit claims about the superiority of western cultures gradually dissipated in the twentieth century.” (Although, some may argue, racial and hierarchical programs still exist.)\(^6\)

With the rise of multiculturalism during the 1960s, it is arguable that the theoretical and academic peak of this approach to culture came with the writings of Clifford Geertz. Geertz paved the way toward an interpretive approach to cultural studies that would significantly influence other disciplines in the social sciences. In his seminal work *The Interpretation of Culture*, Geertz defines culture as “an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.”\(^7\)

**The First Approach to Culture and Roman Catholic Liturgical Studies.** Since the Second Vatican Council, official Roman Catholic documents and the work of liturgical theologians have promoted this first approach to culture. From the mid-1970s through to the 1980s, liturgical theologians such as Mary Collins\(^8\), Mark Searle\(^9\), Margaret Mary Kelleher\(^10\), and Kevin Seasoltz\(^11\) (among others) helped articulate dialectical parameters among liturgical theology, historical studies, and the place of the social sciences.

A second stage appeared with the writings of Anscar Chupungco and his work on liturgical inculturation.\(^12\) Mark Francis\(^13\) and Keith Pecklers\(^14\), both of whom studied under Chupungco, may fall within this line of inquiry. More recent analyses of liturgical inculturation include the writings of Peter Phan, particularly his interest in the relationship between liturgy and popu-
lar piety\textsuperscript{15} and postmodernity.\textsuperscript{16} Finally, the field of liturgical ethnography (as exemplified by the work of Mary McGann) continues to influence how scholars describe and record the practices of worshiping communities.\textsuperscript{17}

For the most part, these theologians often view culture as “ethnic identity groups.” Specifically, they take their lead from the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy \textit{Sacrosanctum Concilium}, in which the question of cultural adaptation was placed alongside the missionary activities of the Church. Liturgical theologians engaged in these questions naturally look to the writings of social theorists, cultural anthropologists, and missiologists for starting points.\textsuperscript{18} Other theologians have taken the Constitution’s call for liturgical adaptation as an academic calling card with which to pursue questions of how cultural adaptations may be applied to specific ethnic communities.

If Clifford Geertz ushered in a semiotic approach to cultural analysis (that is, the study of meaning and its modes of communication) at the social science level, then it should come as no surprise that a number of Roman Catholic theologians, who themselves are equally engaged in questions about meaning, symbols, and rituals, would eventually promote a “Geertzian approach” to cultural analysis with respect to the growing ethnic diversity that is becoming apparent in worship contexts.\textsuperscript{19}

\textbf{Second Approach:}
\textbf{Culture as Material Artifacts and Special Social Activities—Culture in the Singular (“Culture”)}

The second approach to culture can also be traced back to nineteenth century Europe. Rather than being grounded in Western nationalism and expansionist motivations, this subgroup of cultural studies emerged from the Industrial Revolution. In this approach to culture, the practices and material artifacts that stem from the Industrial Revolution raise their own academic concerns. This transitional time period “from premodern to modern social organization,” Lyn Spillman notes, accentuated “a new contrast between the mundane, pragmatic, and conflict-ridden realms of economics and politics—the new worlds of capitalism, industry, democracy, and revolution [on the one hand]—and [on the other hand] an ideally purer realm of art and morality expressing higher human capabilities and values than could be seen in modern economic and political life.”\textsuperscript{20} “Culture” through this lens was viewed as material artifacts (“cultural products”) and special social activities that allowed people to escape the cold and industrialized reality of the world, particularly as this phenomenon was occurring in growing urban centers.

Unlike the prior approach to culture which examined “culture in the plural” (cultures/cultural groups) this approach often uses the word “culture” in the singular: e.g., modern culture, pop culture, and the like.\textsuperscript{21} With its origins in the Industrial Revolution, these numerous strands of academic concern have evolved, usually under the interested eyes of sociologists. Two sociological disciplines have emerged that connect social products and practices with cultural interests: sociology of culture and cultural sociology.

\textbf{Sociology of Culture.} The discipline sociology of culture includes interest in the production of social products (e.g., a painting, a CD, fashion accessories) and social practices (consumerism, artistic acquisitions, media
Sociologists of culture today would most likely approach the field of Roman Catholic liturgical music with a set of questions focused on the effects and impact that material music and worship resources have had within and outside Roman Catholic social contexts.

studies). Some would tie these products and practices to the dynamics of social stratification by examining the phenomena known as “high brow” and “low brow” art.\textsuperscript{22} Scholars may become interested in how material cultural artifacts (“cultural products”) come to be produced and distributed (e.g. “pop culture,” mass production, consumerism).\textsuperscript{23} As William Sewell writes, this approach to culture studies how institutional spheres become devoted to the making of meaning: These institutional spheres “are devoted specifically to the production, circulation, and use of meanings . . . the study of activities that take place within these institutionally defined spheres and of the meanings produced in them.”\textsuperscript{24}

Social cultural products and practices are not always made or performed by one particular social cultural group (as in the first approach to culture), but, like the marketing enterprises of cultural products, they are often made and performed across diverse cultural groups. For example, in the texts of Roman Catholic social teaching and moral theology one may find reference to the ills and challenges of “modern culture,” and Pope John Paul II, in his 1993 visit to Denver, Colorado, challenged Americans to foster a “culture of life” rather than a “culture of death.” These cultural phrases would soon make their way into his 1995 encyclical Evangelium Vitae.

**Cultural Sociology.** During the 1970s, peaking in the 1980s, academic interest arose among sociologists and other social scientists to embrace a more semiotic approach to cultural analysis that was emerging in the field of anthropology (recall Geertz’ influential work, *The Interpretation of Culture*). This became known as “the cultural turn.” Before, sociologists of culture generally were not interested in “interpretive approaches” to culture; rather they were more interested in the production and distribution of cultural products and practices. Now, with the cultural turn (i.e., analysis of what these social practices and products mean to people) a new subdiscipline began to emerge: “cultural sociology.” As Jeffrey Alexander writes:

Cultural sociology makes collective emotions and ideas central to its methods and theories precisely because it is such subjective and internal feelings that so often seem to rule the world. Socially constructed subjectivity forms the will of collectivities; shapes the rules of organizations; defines the moral substance of law; and provides the meaning and motivation for technologies, economies, and military machines.\textsuperscript{25}

Cultural sociology is defined as the meaning-making processes (hence, cultural) that occur within and around various societal frameworks; it is the analysis of sociocultural practices and the investigations that demonstrate how such practices come to be interpreted among social actors and institutions. In sum, and with the risk of over-simplification, one may frame these two sociological subdisciplines in the following way: Sociology of culture is focused on the production and stratification of cultural objects and practices (often using quantitative and objective tools), while cultural sociology is focused on the interpretive reasons behind meaning-making processes (more subjective approaches) and how such processes influence everyday life. It should be noted that sociologists and anthropologists today borrow, mix, and combine these approaches and tools that have emerged since the cultural turn. The social science fields have become more interdisciplinary than had been the case before.
The Second Approach to Culture and Roman Catholic Liturgical Music. Sociologists of culture today would most likely approach the field of Roman Catholic liturgical music with a set of questions focused on the effects and impact that material music and worship resources have had within and outside Roman Catholic social contexts. Their interests would perhaps examine both what and how social artists/production institutions create their products of cultural meaning. Cultural sociologists, on the other hand, would probably want to conduct a series of surveys or interviews investigating why people buy these products or what personal, religious, and/or social meanings are attached to social practices that involve liturgical music. Sample questions could include:

From the field of sociology of culture:

- What are the capitalistic dynamics that exist between liturgical music publishers (OCP, GIA, and WLP), and how do these dynamics impact U.S. Sunday worship?
- What liturgical music products are people using today, and what would this data say about Roman Catholic worship life?
- What clothing do people wear during Sunday Eucharistic celebrations?

From the field of cultural sociology:

- How and why do people finding meaning in everyday social activities that involve “liturgical music,” activities that exist beyond the boundaries of liturgical celebrations: e.g., listening to the latest CD of our favorite liturgical composer in the car, downloading a liturgical music podcast, singing our favorite liturgical tunes in the shower? How do such social practices impact our interpretation, understanding, and experience of Sunday Eucharist?
- How does the recollection of a liturgical tune, which can sometimes outlast the memory of a homily, inform one’s actions beyond the temporal boundaries of Sunday worship?

Third Approach: Culture as Practice Ritual and the Dynamics of Power

In 1984, Sherry B. Ortner articulated a new paradigmatic shift in social and cultural analysis that had been increasingly influencing her own field of anthropology: practice theory. “This growing interest in analysis is focused through one or another of a bundle of interrelated terms: practice, praxis, action, interaction, activity, experience, performance. A second, and closely related, bundle of terms focuses on the doer of all that doing: agent, actor, person, self, individual, subject.” While she notes that the roots of this theoretical approach may be traced back to the 1970s (for example, the French publication of Pierre Bourdieu’s Outline of a Theory of Practice in 1972 and its English translation in 1978), she sees this approach as a reaction to the structuralism that developed throughout the 1960s, mostly through the efforts of Claude Lévi-Strauss. Lévi-Strauss “argued that the seemingly
bewildering variety of social and cultural phenomena could be rendered intelligible by demonstrating the shared relationships of those phenomena to a few simple underlying principles."

But while the “enduring contribution of Lévi-Straussian structuralism lies in the perception that luxuriant variety . . . may have a deeper unity and systematicity,” practice theorists during the ’70s and ’80s would soon challenge structural theory. They noted that while structuralist systems, organizations, and institutions may “have very powerful, even ‘determining,’ effect upon human beings” attention must also be paid to how such systems are created in the first place, where such systems come from, “how they are produced and reproduced,” and how social actors (everyday people in everyday life) come to negotiate and appropriate these structural components in their own lives. Ortner writes that “modern practice theory seeks to explain the relationship(s) that obtain between human action, on the one hand, and some global entity which we may call ‘the system,’ on the other.”

If practice may be defined broadly as “anything people do,” then cultural practice theorists feel the need to hold up these everyday practices as a credible resource for academic inquiry in order to challenge what constitutes cultural boundaries, albeit from a “particular–political–angle.”

**Culture as Practice and Catherine Bell’s Theory of Ritual Negotiation.**

In order to align this approach of culture closer to the field of liturgical studies, it is worth mentioning the writings of the late Catherine Bell on ritual and power. In *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice,* Bell borrows heavily from postmodern thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci, who highlighted the discursive force of ritual. Foucault, for example, viewed power as being contingent, relational, organizational, imprecise, and local. For Foucault, power is only exercised on free subjects insofar as they remain free. The movement of power is not just from top to bottom but also involves bottom to top. Furthermore, Foucault postulated, it is the social body that becomes the political field in the exercise of power. The body becomes the link between the individual and larger societal frameworks.

For Bell, ritual is a way that this form of power is expressed. Because ritual involves distinguishing and privileging certain actions over other actions on the part of all people involved, the boundaries of power within these rituals remain flexible and fluid. Bell wrote that while those in charge of rituals may objectify their office, create a hierarchy of practices, and use tools for the purposes of traditionalization and legitimization, there are certain limits. People, insofar as they are free, still choose or negotiate whether they agree or disagree with ritual prescriptions. If they subscribe to the hierarchization of religious institutions, for example, they may comply with such rules and laws and come to a disposition and subscription to the worldview that specific institutional/religious leaders promote. If not, they may choose to negotiate around the boundaries of ritual laws and prescriptions.

One example comes to mind. In reference to the Roman Catholic priest speaking the Eucharistic Prayer during the Mass, the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM) states that “while the priest is speaking these texts, there should be no other prayers or singing, and the organ or other musical instruments should be silent” (GIRM, 32). In some African American Catholic communities, however, it is not uncommon to find keyboardists playing underneath the presider’s words during the Eucharistic Prayer (as well as
during many other moments throughout the entire celebration). While those in charge of controlling ritual events may feel empowered to write official documents, at the same time, practitioners, participants, and even local leaders (and I am admittedly bracketing whether these practitioners are even aware of GIRM 32) negotiate various levels of resistance and compliance. In this example, these African Americans communities and their cultural sensibilities toward having instrumental music play underneath the spoken words of a priest negotiate between their cultural expressions, on the one hand, and the collective cultural institution and “traditioning” agenda of the Roman Catholic magisterium.

This approach to culture often challenges the perceived boundaries of cultural identity (in this example, the challenge is to the perception of what style of music making constitutes Roman Catholic identity/culture). It does this by considering the practices that occur along the boundaries of perceived established norms, the practices that occur in-between the dominant social structures. In doing this, it tries to legitimize these “other sites of cultural actions” in order to complement—if not critique—the perceived status quo.

**Summarizing the Three Approaches**

Obviously, this list of “approaches to culture” is not exhaustive. However, the approaches described here do represent the dominant approaches to culture which exist in academic discourse today. Before we move into the second part of this essay, allow me to demonstrate how all three approaches to culture outlined here usually flow in and out and overlap with one another. The gospel music tradition of African American Roman Catholics (culture in the first sense) becomes promoted through the recent publication of *Psalms from the Soul*, volumes one and two (culture in the second sense and the concern of sociologists of culture). For some predominantly African American parishes, these products are a godsend and represent their own “treasury of sacred music” (culture in the first sense). These products are greatly valued in many communities because the musical styles promoted by these CDs and songbooks represent a cultural emancipation envisioned by the civil rights movement (culture in the second sense through the prism of cultural sociology). And yet, some of the African American parishioners in a Catholic parish in Oakland, California—a parish community where I am presently engaged in ethnographic field research—have shared with me that they do not prefer this style of music in their own Eucharistic celebrations but would rather sing selections from more traditional western hymnody. Thus, while they see African American brothers and sisters physically moving and shouting out “Amen!” in other services, they have negotiated their own cultural worship style of participation against what is perceived to be the more popular black gospel tradition and have chosen to celebrate their Sunday Eucharist in a predominantly white community (culture in the third sense through the prism of ritual practice, power, and negotiation).

**Part Two: Sing to the Lord and Culture**

It is now time to consider the USCCB statement *Sing to the Lord* and use the three approaches to culture outlined in the first part of this essay as the
Examining some numbers may provide a context. Within the text of STL (not counting titles or headings) and in its various combinations and forms (e.g., “culture,” “cultures,” “multicultural,” “intercultural,” and so on), the word “culture” appears thirty-four times. In contrast, instances of and combinations of “culture” appear five times in Music in Catholic Worship; nine times in Liturgical Music Today; fifty-eight times in The Milwaukee Symposia for Church Composers; and just once in The Snowbird Statement on Catholic Liturgical Music.

**Sing to the Lord and the First Approach to Culture**

It is obvious that the predominant approach to and understanding of culture as found throughout the text of STL reflects the initial approach to culture outlined in the first section of this paper: culture in the plural (e.g., cultural groups) representing bounded social identities. I categorize this first approach to culture in STL under five themes: 1) cultural diversity awareness; 2) a Church marked by immigration; 3) appreciation of and respect for cultural musical styles; 4) consideration of intercultural dynamics; and 5) the relationship between the music of culturally bounded groups and Gregorian chant.

1. **Cultural Diversity Awareness.** The opening section of STL, entitled “Why We Sing,” makes explicit the awareness of cultural diversity: “The choir may draw on the treasury of sacred music, singing compositions by composers of various periods and in various musical styles, as well as music that expresses the faith of the various cultures that enrich the Church” (STL, 30). But it is most telling that STL devotes an *entire* section to this approach to culture: “Section II. The Church At Prayer; H. Diverse Cultures and Languages.” Within this section, cultural groups are viewed as having some relationship with other cultural groups.

2. **A Church Marked by Immigration.** Closely connected to the cultural diversity awareness theme is the ongoing activity of immigration that is changing the social ecclesial landscape of the Catholic Church in the United States. Official statements by the U.S. bishops that preceded STL articulated this reality, and it is seen in STL’s reference to one of those documents: *Welcoming the Stranger: Unity in Diversity* (2000). In this area, STL has done a tremendous service to the pastoral life of the U.S. Church, namely, pointing out that attention must be paid to the liturgical/musical needs of our immigrant sisters and brothers.

3. **Appreciation of and Respect for Cultural Musical Styles.** In light of this awareness of cultural diversity, STL logically takes the next step and acknowledges the genuine appreciation and respect that should be demonstrated toward the musical styles of all cultures: “The choir may draw on the treasury of sacred music, singing compositions by composers of various periods and in various musical styles, as well as music that expresses the faith of the various cultures that enrich the Church” (STL, 30). In this passage, “sacred music” includes music from past historical periods, various musical styles and idioms, and music from various cultures. And quoting *Welcoming the Stranger*, STL speaks of the “cultural gifts of the new immigrants” (STL, 57, emphasis mine), thus extending beyond musical gifts in order to include
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4. Consideration of Intercultural Dynamics. STL breaks new ground in its consideration of intercultural relationships that exist in worship contexts. This is the first time that this term (“intercultural”) appears in an official Roman Catholic liturgy document. Its use in this statement is linked to another term—“multicultural”—in order to move beyond the numerical designation of the presence of many cultures (multiculturalism) and highlight the more dynamic interactions that exists between cultural groups before, during, and after worship events.

5. The Relationship between the Music of Culturally Bounded Groups and Gregorian Chant. Quoting the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (SC, 116), STL 72 notes the appropriateness of celebrating the liturgy using Gregorian chant and, to some extent, the Latin texts set to chant (see also STL, 74–76): “The Church recognizes Gregorian chant as being specially suited to the Roman Liturgy. Therefore, other things being equal, it should be given pride of place in liturgical services.” STL continues: “Gregorian chant is uniquely the Church’s own music,” and it may serve as “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.” The bishops are very specific in directing that “each worshiping community in the United States, including all age groups and all ethnic groups,” learn certain chant settings of parts of the Order of Mass (STL, 75).

Speaking specifically about the use of Latin texts as a unifying factor (STL, 61–66), the bishops are somewhat tentative in encouraging its use (see STL, 64), though they promote it for “international and multicultural gatherings” along with “selections of Gregorian chant” (STL, 62). As a composer of a few liturgical songs that are completely in Latin (though not, of course, in Gregorian chant), I can testify to the unifying power of the Latin language, particularly in a multicultural context. At the same time, let us not forget that other musical styles and other languages may also serve as unifying agents. For example, if the majority of worshipers understand English, then popularly sung Eucharistic Mass settings may serve as a unifying thread throughout the Mass. At the same time, in some U.S. dioceses, the use of languages such as Spanish help promote unity.

Thus, STL 73 states that while Gregorian chant was given a pride of place by the Second Vatican Council, “these ‘other things’ are the important liturgical and pastoral concerns facing every bishop, pastor, and liturgical musician.” STL concludes this section by stating that sensitivity needs to be exercised when considering the “cultural and spiritual milieu” of worshiping communities: “In considering the use of the treasures of chant, pastors and liturgical musicians should take care that the congregation is able to participate in the Liturgy with song. They should be sensitive to the cultural and spiritual milieu of their communities, in order to build up the Church in unity and peace.”

Sing to the Lord and the Second Approach to Culture

The second approach to culture, which includes the production of cultural products and activities (sociology of culture) and the meaning-making processes inherent in social activities (cultural sociology), can mostly be found in
STL’s consideration of the work of music publishers (social institutions that produce cultural products). Only once does it refer to culture as encapsulating everyday social activities, though I will focus first on this latter usage.

1. **Culture as Counter-Cultural.** The first time the term “culture” appears in STL is in the first section, which postulates “Why We Sing”: “In a culture which neither favors nor fosters meditative quiet, the art of interior listening is learned only with difficulty. Here we see how the liturgy, though it must always be properly inculturated, must also be counter-cultural” (STL, 12). This is a direct quote from John Paul II’s 1998 address to the bishops of the United States. In this quote, John Paul II continues to use an approach to culture (culture in the singular) in which specific mindsets and social practices (in this case, the busyness of modern culture) are contrasted with other (more desirable) social activities that promote prayerful activities such as meditation and interior listening.

2. **Culture as the Production of Cultural Products.** I categorize the way that STL addresses the ministry and duties of music publishers in four sub-topics.

   2.1. **Publishers Addressing the Needs of the Church.** STL 57 encourages music publishers to continue producing resources that address the growing diversity of the U.S. Church: “The cultural gifts of the new immigrants” are “taking their place alongside those of older generations of immigrants,” and this calls for interaction and collaboration between peoples who speak various languages and celebrate their faith in the songs and musical styles of their cultural, ethnic, and racial roots. In order to support this collaboration, music publishers need to be encouraged to offer multilingual options for use which would be more expressive of our unity amid such great diversity.

   2.2. **Publishers and Composers.** The section of the document on the role of the liturgical composer acknowledges the work of both composers and publishers in the production of “new repertoire” in light of the liturgical reforms of Vatican II and the need for music in indigenous languages:

   In the years immediately following the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council, especially because of the introduction of vernacular language, composers and publishers worked to provide a new repertoire of music for indigenous language(s). In subsequent decades, this effort has matured, and a body of worthy vernacular liturgical music continues to develop, even though much of the early music has fallen into disuse. Today, as they continue to serve the Church at prayer, composers are encouraged to concentrate on craftsmanship and artistic excellence in all musical genres (STL, 84).

   2.3. **Publishers and the Production of Recorded Music.** When addressing the use (or misuse) of recorded music, STL (93–94) retrieves almost verbatim the directive that was found in *Liturgical Music Today* (LMT, 60–62).

   93. Recorded music lacks the authenticity provided by a living liturgical assembly gathered for the Sacred Liturgy. While recorded music might be used advantageously outside the Liturgy as an aid in the teaching of new music, it should not, as a general norm, be used within the Liturgy.

   94. Some exceptions to this principle should be noted. Recorded music may be used to accompany the community’s song during a procession outside and, when used carefully, in Masses with children. Occasionally, it might be used
as an aid to prayer, for example, during long periods of silence in a communal celebration of reconciliation. However, recorded music should never become a substitute for the community’s singing.

2.4. Publishers, Copyrights, and the Production of Participation Aids. STL (105–108) also retrieves copyright concerns that were addressed in Liturgical Music Today (LMT, 71–72), but the newer document describes the protection of published works as a “legal and moral obligation” of the Church and other institutions: “Many published works are protected by national and international copyright laws, which are intended to ensure that composers, text writers, publishers, and their employees receive a fair return for their work. Churches and other institutions have a legal and moral obligation to seek proper permissions and to pay for reprinting of published works when required, even if copies are intended only for the use of the congregation” (STL, 105).

STL notes that publishers “provide licenses and other convenient ways for obtaining permission for reprinting texts and music for the use of a liturgical assembly” making it even easier for “pastors, directors of music ministries, and other pastoral musicians . . . [to] act with a sense of justice” (STL, 106).

Lastly, STL (107–108) articulates the relationship between liturgy publishers and the USCCB, including the production of participation aids:

107. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has delegated to the Committee on Divine Worship the responsibility of overseeing the publication of liturgical books that describe and guide the reformed rites developed in the years since the Second Vatican Council. In light of this responsibility, Guidelines for the Publication of Participation Aids has been developed for publishers of popular participation materials.

108. Hymns, songs, and acclamations written for the liturgical assembly are approved for use in the Liturgy by the bishop of the diocese wherein they are published, in order to ensure that these texts truly express the faith of the Church with theological accuracy and are appropriate to the liturgical context.

Sing to the Lord and the Third Approach to Culture

Passages that address how worshipers engage in “practice negotiations” between institutional ritual prescriptions and their own cultural sensibilities are absent from the official text. Still, the intent of this presentation is not to confine my investigation of STL and culture to an analysis of the written text (the “ink-on-paper” approach) but also to assert that how worshipers negotiate its prescriptions may be an additional resource for understanding this document’s approach to cultural concerns. Academic consideration should advance the human agency processes that are involved in the preparation and appropriation of official documents. (That is, what happened or is happening behind the scenes from a cultural perspective that led to the writing and promulgation of STL?)

The Dynamics of Power in the Formation of Sing to the Lord. As an example, I suggest a consultation meeting that occurred on October 9, 2006. Sixty men and women gathered in Chicago to participate in a consultation on the revision of the 1972 document Music In Catholic Worship that would eventually lead to the writing of STL. The task of writing this revised docu-
The process of listening and consultation that had been initiated was already in question due to the absence of Hispanic/Latino representatives.

Within the four minute timeframe allotted to me, I presented demographic statistics of the Catholic Church in the United States. My sociological data, taken from previous U.S. bishops' statements, projected that the Hispanic/Latino population will comprise the majority (around fifty-two percent) of the entire U.S. Roman Catholic population within the next twenty years. After presenting this projection, I requested all sixty participants look around the room: There was not one participant with Hispanic/Latino heritage to be found among us. I added that my observation was not a questioning of democracy as far as equal voting power was concerned (after all, it was the nine members of the subcommittee who were to write this document, with final approval reserved to the U.S. Catholic bishops). My point was that the process of listening and consultation that had been initiated was already in question due to the absence of Hispanic/Latino representatives. Given the fact that Hispanic/Latino Catholics would soon constitute the majority social demographic group for whom this document was to be written, something was gravely wrong. Since the October 2006 consultation, I have been told that at least three people of Hispanic ethnicity were eventually consulted—after the general meetings and at some point during the process of writing the document. However, my point remains that the absence of representative groups during this pivotal meeting was a clear oversight. The very fact that these representatives were consulted only after this meeting remains a concern.

While the dynamics of power were apparent during the preparation phase of STL, it will be interesting to monitor how the various socio-cultural groups within the U.S. Catholic Church will appropriate the meaning of the text, how bishops will enforce its limited legislative power (the document is described as a set of guidelines), and how the various multicultural communities will negotiate the weight of its authority in light of their own cultural sensibilities. Have such sociological-ecclesial studies been done with regard to the appropriation of previous statements such as *Music in Catholic Worship* and *Liturgical Music Today*? This may be worth pursuing at some point in the near future.

**Part Three: Looking Beyond the Boundaries of Ethnic Cultural Identities**

Previous liturgical studies have approached the intersection between worship and culture through the disciplinary tools of anthropology and cultural studies. These approaches to liturgy and culture often emphasized the worldviews and practices of specific ethnic-cultural groups. As a result, these approaches fortified the seeming boundedness of such groups which, in turn, led to better articulations of how ethnic identity comes to be expressed
through worship practices: e.g., Hispanic/Latina/Latino processions, folk religiosity in the Philippines, African American gospel music, to name just a few. And yet, social experiences and practices of religious cultural identity—from social behaviors and mores, to religious rituals developed within and around domestic and workplace locations, to more transient phenomena such as the usages of the internet and the impact of globalization—are not necessarily bounded within or exclusively expressed through the traditions of existing ethnic-cultural communities. In fact, most people exhibit multiple social identities, including economic, gender, and generational markers. These “transboundering identities” exist in tension and in congruence with religious institutional structures and are often practiced beyond physical worship sites and around wider sociological frameworks. How might these cultural social dynamics influence our understanding and experience of liturgical music?

As I noted before, implications that arise out of the reality of immigration in the United States and in the Catholic Church in this country are prevalent throughout Section II.H. (“Diverse Cultures and Languages”) of STL. Attention to these implications, while very much needed, accent the notion of “culture as bounded groups”—even more specifically of “culture as ethnic bounded groups”—to the detriment of an approach that would highlight the needs of other cultural groups that may not necessarily share ethnic identity: e.g., youth and young adults (generational), cultural groups that center around socio-political issues such as feminists and sexual orientation cultural groups, and groups identified by economic cultural considerations. To this end, STL at times makes distinctions between ethnic cultural groups and culturally bounded groups: i.e., “the rich cultural and ethnic heritage of the many peoples” (STL, 57, emphasis mine); “cultural, ethnic, and racial roots” (STL, 57); “multicultural and multigenerational assembly” (STL, 58).

Once we move out of this section, there is an instance in which ethnic cultural groups are treated on equal footing with other cultural groups. This is when STL explains the kinds of music that need to be considered within a cultural context: “The cultural context refers to the setting in which the ritual and spiritual dimensions come into play. Factors such as the age, spiritual heritage, and cultural and ethnic background of a given liturgical assembly must be considered” (STL, 70).

Thus, STL moves us forward by expanding our concept of culture as bounded ethnic groups to include other culturally bounded groups, but more could still be done. While generational subgroups are mentioned, their consideration does not carry the same weight as the ethnic cultural concerns that dominate STL’s treatment of culture. Thus, a future direction to be explored is found in the “transboundering dynamics” of cultural social groups in order that we better engage ourselves with the actual lived experiences and socio-cultural practices of liturgical music that extend beyond the boundaries of Sunday worship.

**Looking Beyond the Cultural Boundaries of Sunday Worship.** A further aspect of this point is an invitation for the Roman Catholic Church to move beyond the boundaries of Sunday worship when investigating the relationship between liturgy and culture. My thoughts on this subject will also serve as a closing to this essay.

While STL is primarily focused on Sunday Eucharistic celebration (and
rightfully so), the next frontier of “worship and culture” lies in the relationship between the disciplines of cultural sociology and liturgical studies. I provided a sampling of questions around this relationship earlier in this paper. I continue to feel intrigued by questions concerning social networking processes such as globalization, the internet, and other modern and postmodern phenomena. Specifically, I am intrigued by how these processes come to influence meaning in peoples’ lives. True, because culture is human-made — whether one examines culture in the first, second, or third approaches outlined here — not everything in culture is compatible with the Gospel message. But perhaps we also need to remind ourselves that not everything in “modern culture” is necessarily bad or incompatible with Catholic faith. In my own ethnic Asian cultural sensibilities, things are always both/and.

Thus, does every document addressing modern culture need to place it in a negative light? How may the meaning-making processes and experiences that exist beyond the boundaries of ethnic identity and Sunday worship develop legitimate access into Roman Catholic magisterial statements while still upholding the kernels of the Gospel message? While the ongoing question of “who prays” has been addressed in STL, particularly as it applies to ethnic cultural identity, challenges remain when one considers the full spectrum and fluidity of “Catholic identities.” This often involves the boundless social activities and negotiations by people who, in their day-to-day lives, come to claim their own level of Catholicity. Such questions may appear to be more ecclesial in focus, but our liturgical gatherings and the music we sing are still capable of providing us some answers.

Notes


2. See Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt, eds., *Beyond the Cultural Turn* (Berkeley, California: University of California, 1999).


4. Here I borrow heavily from Lyn Spillman and her work in cultural sociology. See her “Introduction: Culture and Cultural Sociology,” in *Cultural Sociology*.


6. I addressed this social phenomenon briefly in my plenary address at the 2007 NPM Convention by noting the rise of the Civil Rights Movement and the rise of multiculturalism during the 1960s. See my “One Church, Many Cultures: It’s More Than the Songs” *Pastoral Music* 32:1 (October-November 2007), 35–41.


18. These may include Clifford J. Geertz, Victor W. Turner, Louis J. Luzbetak, Gerald A. Arbuckle, and Aylward Shorter, to name a few.

19. A good example of this is Mark R. Francis’s Liturgy in a Multicultural Community (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 11. Francis’s beginning cultural framework is taken from Clifford Geertz.


21. More recently, the deaths of Farah Fawcett Majors and Michael Jackson on June 25, 2009, would be referred to as the “deaths of cultural icons” by news broadcasters. What contributed to their canonization as cultural icons had more to do with the popularlity that they achieved as performing artists. References such as these refer to culture in this second usage.


26. Reflecting on past approaches of a “sociology-of approach,” Jeffrey Alexander writes that this approach to sociology “sought to explain what created meanings; it aimed to expose how the ideal structures of culture are formed by other structures—of a more material, less ephemeral kind.” See The Meanings of Social Life, 5.


28. Ibid., 144.

29. Ibid., 135.

30. Ibid., 146.

31. Ibid., 148.

32. Ibid., 149.

33. Ibid., 149.

34. Bell received the North American Academy of Liturgy’s 2006 Godfrey Diekmann


36. As a further breakdown: “cultural”: 12; “culture”: 7; “cultures”: 5; “multicultural”: 5; “intercultural”: 2; “counter-cultural”: 1; “bicultural”: 1; “inculturated”: 1.


38. It should also be noted that footnote 57 of The Milwaukee Symposia for Church Composers addresses the “interlinking of subcultures” within “apparently homogeneous parishes”: “Cultivating the cross-cultural dimension of the Christian life in worship does not mean simply borrowing ideas from some distant culture or language. The previously cited text from Fulfilled in Your Hearing is a reminder that even the apparently homogeneous parish is a network of interlinking subcultures. Thinking cross culturally about worship and its music must begin at the local level. The task here is to respect the variety of worldviews and relationships that define the various subcultures within the worship of the local church. Such attentiveness should affect profoundly the manner in which worship is prepared and celebrated” (emphasis mine).

39. In so doing, I hope to illustrate that liturgy is not, in the end, “ink-on-paper,” but involves, as Lawrence Hoffman wrote, the academic effort to move “beyond the text” in order for us, in his quoting of Mark Searle, to see “the formal object of . . . liturgical studies . . . as the actual worship life of the living offering praying Church.” See Mark Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods: The Emergence of Pastoral Liturgical Studies,” Worship 57 (1983), 306, quoted in Lawrence A. Hoffman, Beyond the Text: A Holistic Approach to Liturgy (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1987), 2.


41. Other participants included representatives from archdiocesan offices of worship (i.e., Chicago, Seattle, Philadelphia, and others); universities and theological institutions (e.g., University of Notre Dame, Chicago Theological Union, Ave Maria University), liturgical organizations (Adoremus, Latin Liturgy Association, We Believe); and publishing companies (e.g., Liturgical Press, GIA Publications, World Library Publications).


43. One must also note that this tendency of viewing “cultural groups” as specifically “ethnic cultural groups” is consistent with the 2007 formation of the USCCB’s Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in which five previously independent ethnic subcommittees (African American; Asian and Pacific Island; Hispanic; Native American; and Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees, and Travelers) were placed together in a newly formed secretariat. Should not the proper name of this secretariat be “Secretariat of Ethnic Cultural Diversity in the Church”?

How are the needs of other social-cultural groups to be considered?

Rev. Ricky Manalo, CSP, is a liturgical composer and doctoral candidate in liturgical studies, cultural studies, and sociology at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California.
Earlier presentations in this series of Hovda Lectures explore the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ recent document *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship* (hereafter STL)¹ from a variety of perspectives. My friend (and fellow Minnesotan), chant scholar and factotum for the National Catholic Youth Choir, Benedictine Father Anthony Ruff, provides a fine overview of the document, noting the advances it makes on the earlier documents *Music in Catholic Worship* and *Liturgical Music Today* as well as the challenges it offers to contemporary practices. (As a member of the committee charged with developing the document, his perspective is especially valuable; see pages one through eleven.) Sister Kathleen Harmon, long-time collaborator with Sister Joyce Zimmerman in programs of liturgical catechesis, the journal *Liturgical Ministry*, and the development of the sung prayer of the hours, explores STL as it cautions and encourages the Church’s ministry and its liturgical ministers in connection with *Co-Workers in the Vineyard* (see pages thirteen through twenty-two). Kevin Vogt, outstanding organist and accomplished composer of liturgical music, highlights one of the dialectical tensions in the document: maintaining the so-called “treasury of sacred music” (*thesaurus musicae sacrae*) while fostering a new repertoire responsive to the ritual demands of the reformed rites (see pages twenty-three through thirty-eight). He calls our attention to the document’s attempt to find common ground between (for want of better terms) progressive functionalists and conservative aesthetes, a dichotomy recognized in STL 68 and 69, where the ritual and spiritual dimensions of sacred music are placed side by side. How appropriate, then, that Paulist Father Ricky Manalo’s presentation unpacks STL 70, where both the ritual and spiritual dimensions of liturgical music are placed in cultural context (see pages thirty-nine through fifty-three)! As one who has credentials in

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¹ STL, which was adopted at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Spring Assemblies in 1999 and 2000, is a document that guides the Church in the selection and use of music in the worship of the Church. It builds on the earlier documents *Music in Catholic Worship* (1971) and *Liturgical Music Today* (1975).
Debates on the definition, purview, and method of theology have marked every era of this discipline’s life, and those debates continue to be quite lively today. Here I will simply cite three acknowledged masters in this field to gain some insight into each of these areas.

St. Anselm of Canterbury (c. 1033–April 21, 1109) is the source of a commonly cited definition of theology. He termed it “fides quaerens intellectum” (faith seeking understanding). Each word of that definition is important. By placing the discipline of theology within the realm of faith, Anselm clearly situates the would-be theologian in the community of faith; theology is thus faith speaking to faith. Theologians do not approach their task by assuming an Olympian “objectivity” by which they can neutrally assess the religious claims of various peoples and institutions in a grand comparative scheme (at least as traditionally understood; those who claim to do this are not theologians but practitioners of religious studies).

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Theologians also do not approach their task by simply reporting on their own religious experience (at least as traditionally understood, those who do so are not so much theologians as witnesses, evangelizers, and catechists—all of whom, it must be said, employ theology if they are to be effective). Rather, theologians, situated within a religious faith, attempt to explicate that religion’s values and loyalties, its assertions and claims, its history and cultural artifacts both for fellow believers and for other interested humans. The American theologian and Catholic priest David Tracy speaks of theologians addressing three distinct publics: the church, the world, and the academy. I’ve conceived of this talk primarily as addressing the church (presuming that you and I share a common religious faith – Christianity – although we may have denominational differences). I would have crafted it in a very different way if I were addressing people whom I presumed did not share my Christian faith (i.e., “the world”) and even more differently if I were addressing colleagues at a secular university, carrying on this discussion there according to commonly accepted standards of academic discourse.
By placing the discipline of theology as “faith seeking,” Anselm of Canterbury clearly recognized the conversational and progressive character of this discipline. Theology is not the same thing as exegesis of the Scriptures, although it employs scriptural study as part of its toolbox. Theology is not the same thing as personal meditation, although theology well-conceived and presented can certainly be spiritually enriching and lead one to new depths of prayer. Rather, theology recognizes that it can never have the final word about faith, since faith deals with realities that cannot be comprehended in a definitive way. If faith arises from the encounter with God, we finite and contingent humans with our finite and contingent understandings of our own world of space and time are even more limited in thinking about and expressing the world of the supra-cosmic and the eternal. If we humans remain mysteries to ourselves, discovering that there is always more to discover about ourselves, how much more is there to discover about the Transcendent Mystery that subsumes all others!

Finally, by placing the discipline of theology as “faith seeking understanding,” Anselm highlights the explicitly intellectual character of this discipline. To use a limping comparison, one might distinguish between conservatory and graduate school education in music. At conservatories vocal and instrumental music students apprentice themselves to other human beings who have had long-standing engagements with music pedagogy in order to gain some of the same love for and delight in the experience that the teachers have, to learn whatever techniques the teachers can impart, and to receive constructive criticism on their developing skills. The goal of such mentoring is not primarily theoretical insight but practical knowledge: a set of skills that assist the students to perform music well. In contrast, graduate studies in musicology at universities are less oriented toward practical skills in music making and more toward mastering a body of theoretically informed knowledge about music: its history (musicology), its impact in human life (sociology and anthropology of music), its function as a sign system (psychology and semiotics of music), its being and evaluation (philosophy of music and aesthetics). Similarly, initiation into and ongoing development in the life of faith through, e.g., retreats, days of recollection, spiritual direction, spiritual reading, spiritual exercises, and similar practices corresponds to conservatory studies; theology corresponds to graduate school university studies. Notice, of course, that without the actual existence and performance of music, one would have nothing to study at a theoretical level. Similarly, without the existence of God and the practice of faith, there could be no theology. But theology is not the same as faith, as our second thinker makes abundantly clear.

When the twentieth century Anglican theologian John Macquarrie (June 27, 1919–May 28, 2007) came to define theology in his monumental work *Principles of Christian Theology*, he declared that it was “the study which, through participation in and reflection upon a religious faith, seeks to express the content of this faith in the clearest and most coherent language possible.” Like Anselm, Macquarrie holds that a theologian must “participate in . . . a religious faith,” reflecting on it as a “member,” an “insider” (although Macquarrie seems to hold open the possibility of a genuine theology being generated by believers outside the Christian faith, e.g., Jewish theology). Macquarrie also aligns with Anselm in holding that theology can
only “seek to express the content of this faith” (emphasis added), since its definitive articulation goes beyond what creation-bound human beings can accomplish. Macquarrie advances on Anselm, however, in declaring that theological “understanding” (intellectum) is to be presented in “the clearest and most coherent language possible.” For Macquarrie, theology is done in human language, honed to communicate as best it can the theological insights achieved and organized so that the variety of theological insights formulated at least do not contradict each other and at best form a fruitful and enriching worldview.

Macquarrie further enriches Anselm’s understanding of theology by citing six “formative factors” whose correlations form his preferred way of doing theology. These formative factors include attention to experience and revelation, Scripture and tradition, faith/belief, and reason/knowledge. Thus a theologian should explore how and in what ways religious experience relates to all other kinds of human experience; how religious experience, grounded in this world of space and time, can be addressed from beyond those confines in an act of revelation; how and in what ways Scripture witnesses to and enshrines experiences of revelation; how and in what ways traditions of interpretation of religious experience and the Scriptures that witness to and enshrine them arise and develop; how and in what ways faith is to be conceptualized; and how and in what ways reason assists in formulating and critiquing all of the above.

Our third theologian, the Canadian Roman Catholic Jesuit priest Bernard Lonergan (December 17, 1904–November 26, 1984), shares Anselm’s and Macquarrie’s fundamental understanding of theology. But due to his more highly developed cognitional theory (as exemplified in his masterwork, Insight), Lonergan also has a more highly developed division of labor in the theological enterprise. For Lonergan, “knowing” is more than simply “taking a look”; it is a complex interweaving of four distinct yet related operations. Thus intellectus, for Lonergan, will involve experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding. Like Macquarrie, Lonergan begins with experience, but Lonergan distinguishes between sensate experience (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching) and cognitive experience (attending to mental images derived from experience, situating them in a cognitive framework, and offering the occasion for simultaneous self-experience) as foundational for this cognitive theory. Interpretation of experience follows, but since interpretations (as Lonergan notes) are “a dime a dozen,” judgment is needed to determine the accuracy of one’s interpretation of experience. Finally, one’s judgment of experience will lead to existential decisions by which such experiences are affirmed, nurtured, and pursued or negated, uprooted, and avoided.

Applying this cognitional theory to the field of theology, Lonergan notes that there are altogether eight functional specialties that operate within the field of theology, much as there are specializations in accounting, marketing, or finance within the field of business.

Four of the eight functional specialties recover and investigate what humans believed in the past. These functional specialties—research, interpretation, history, and dialectic—can, according to Lonergan, be engaged in by those who do not explicitly profess a religious faith. Thus investigators may research a newly discovered piece of first century ce papyrus covered
with hand-written Greek letters. In addition to transcribing the letters as they appear on the papyrus, the investigators will attempt to determine the status of the text (e.g., Is it complete? Is it a version of a previously known text, or a text that has been mentioned in another work but not known to be extant until now, or a completely unknown new text?). What is needed for this specialty is a particular set of skills: knowledge of ancient languages, handwriting, literature, etc.; these skill sets do not demand explicit religious faith in those who exercise them. Accepting the work of these researchers, interpreters will attempt to translate the text, trying to account not only for what it asserts but also how it is to be situated contextually (e.g., What genre does the text represent: private letter, public correspondence, instructional manual, church order, or some other genre?) and what it meant to its original readers. The process of situating particular interpretation of the text leads to a genuine engagement with history, since determining its genre and thought content inevitably raises questions about its impact on the stream of human thought and culture. These researchers not only offer a chronology of events based on the data recoverable from the text and other sources but also assess what was going forward or retreating in the culture at the time the text was generated (something that the author of the text might not have known). Since historians working on the same text may offer a variety of judgments about it (e.g., some might hold that the text represents a purely Jewish worldview, while others may aver it enshrines a purely Greco-Roman pagan worldview, or the worldview of a mystery religion, or the worldview of an ancient philosophical system, or even some version of Christianity in conversation with any or all of the above), the functional specialty dialectic will unmask these varying historical judgments, adjudicating what horizon of meaning they represent (e.g., organic development, contrary or contradictory worldviews, or a genuine eruption of something new).

Up to this point, the personal religious conversion of the investigator is not an issue, but as dialectic lays bare foundational questions about thought and reality, the investigator’s own stance is brought under judgment. (For example, if a historian excludes as a matter of principle the possibility of a text reporting a miracle being true, that historian will not be able to engage a text reporting Jesus’ resurrection as revelatory but only as a witness to what some people a long time ago believed about Jesus’ afterlife.)

Investigators who appropriate their own intellectual, moral, and religious conversion may then objectify their own stance in the functional specialty foundations. Having accounted for their own acceptance of the text under investigation as genuinely revelatory of a divine encounter in foundations, they can then offer to co-believers the content of the revelatory encounter as doctrines (i.e., they explore not only what the text meant to past believers but also what claims it makes and might make on present and future believers). Further investigators will attempt to bring the various doctrines discovered and formulated in the earlier functional specialties into some coherent and fruitful framework in systematics. Finally some will find themselves attempting to communicate the religious worldview generated in systematics to people operating in a variety of thought-worlds (common sense, theory, and metatheory) and with a variety of values (pre-conventional, conventional, post-conventional) by all the cultural means available for communications (art forms, literature, learned journals, ritual performances, and other means).
I hope that this sketch of theology and its tasks illuminates the rest of this presentation. Frail and faltering though it may be, I claim Christian faith within the Roman Catholic communion. I am seeking today to share with you an understanding of what this faith believes about five topics: the Triune God, God’s creation, the Church, the Church’s worship, and music. I have explored each topic in the light of experience and revelation, Scripture and tradition, belief and knowledge. This has involved me in research, interpretation, history, and dialectic applied to a close reading of Sing to the Lord. I am attempting to share with you what I have discovered in an act of communication called a “Hovda Lecture.” Questions relating to foundations, doctrine, and systematics will not be explicitly addressed here, but they may arise in the conversation we will have triggered by my and my colleagues’ presentations in this year’s series.

Theme and Variations: Theological Assumptions and Assertions in Sing to the Lord

Before offering a critique of the theological dimensions of STL, I want to signal my profound appreciation for the attempt that the authors of the document made to frame the practical exhortations of the text in the context of explicitly theological thinking. The lack of sustained theological discourse in both Music in Catholic Worship (1972/1983) and Liturgical Music Today (1982) was a significant omission in both of those documents. While theological assumptions and assertions permeate the text presently under study, Chapter One, entitled “Why We Sing,” is the most explicitly theological section of STL. Here the Latin Church Catholic bishops in the United States offer their most sustained discussion about God, creation, the Church, the Church’s worship, and the music employed in that worship in the document.

The Triune God. Since STL is the product of a national body of Catholic bishops and is addressed to “priests, deacons, liturgists, music directors, composers, cantors, choirs, congregations, and faith communities throughout the United States,” it is not surprising that the document robustly assumes a shared faith in God’s existence and characteristics in its readers. Rather than addressing either the world (as in the USCCB’s earlier documents on war and peace and the economy) or the academy (as in various writings about the role of the episcopal magisterium in relation to Catholic institutions of higher learning), STL addresses Christian believers, and especially those within the Latin Church of the Roman Catholic communion of churches. Since the mysteries of God’s “triunity” and of Christ’s incarnation may be considered the most important of the revealed “hierarchy of truths” that Roman Catholic Christians affirm, it is not surprising that STL grounds its reflections in these mysteries, even though the amount of verbiage spent on them is comparatively slight.

There are only two explicit references to the Triune God in the document. The first asserts that the “inner life of God” (recognizing the faltering character of human language to capture this mystery) is not a juxtaposition of three unrelated monads but a dance of eternal giving and receiving that Eastern theologians have termed perichoresis: “[T]he life of the Blessed Trinity . . . is
itself a communion of love. In a perfect way, the Persons of the Trinity remain themselves even as they share all that they are” (STL, 10). We will see later that this understanding of God as Divine Persons in a communion of love will be cited as a model for the Church as a community of human persons gifted, elevated, and living by the same communion of love through grace. I believe the authors lost a chance to enrich both musicians’ understanding of their ministry and the world of theological discourse by not using a musical illustration of perichoresis, e.g., how in triadic harmony one can distinguish a foundational tone generating a fifth and third (imaging the procession of the Son and Spirit from the Father), that the “same chord” is recognizable in myriads of inversions (imaging infinite perichoresis), and that all three tones are perceived by the hearer as one chord (imaging the differentiation of each Divine Person united in a single Godhead).

The second reference notes that the “hymn of [Christ’s] Paschal Sacrifice [is] for the honor and glory of the Most Blessed Trinity” (STL, 14). We will explore in a later section of this presentation how STL enriches our theological discourse by conceiving Jesus’ passion, death, resurrection, and sending of the Holy Spirit as a hymn. Here I will simply say that the formulation strikes me as a little odd. Normally one would speak of God the Son associating the Church in the power of the Holy Spirit with the honor and glory he gives God the Father. I am not sure how God the Son would both generate (as the subject of Paschal Sacrifice) and receive (as a member of the Most Blessed Trinity) honor and glory.

Taking for granted the theological assertion that when God acts “ad extra,” the Divine Persons act in union with one another (although the particular action may be ascribed by appropriation to a particular Divine Person), most of STL’s theological assertions about the Triune God relate to particular Divine Persons.

God the Father (by appropriation). The Catechism of the Catholic Church associates God the Father especially with creating, sustaining, and bringing to fulfillment the created order under the notion of “blessing.” STL repeatedly asserts that song takes its place among the blessings bestowed by God on God’s people. In its very first article the document states: “God has bestowed upon his people the gift of song” (STL, 1). While I agree with this formulation as far as it goes, I would have preferred the document to state that God blesses what he has created with sound itself, with music, and with song. Because aspects of God’s creation reveal themselves through sound, sound becomes a medium of communication and self-expression; it may even become a means of revelation. Music, as a particularly ordered aspect of sound, enlarges its revelatory possibilities, and song, as music conjoined to human language, is even more equipped for these functions.

I would also have preferred that the text not limit this blessing to “God’s people,” since the gift of sound enriches all beings who have the capacity to decode and employ acoustic signals, while music and song enrich all human beings. In addition, a narrow reading of the assertion in article one suggests that God only bestows the blessing of song on a limited range of human beings, taking “his people” to mean those bound to God by covenant, i.e., Jews and Christians. Fortunately in a parenthetical remark, STL 71 clearly ascribes the divine blessing of music to all humans: “With gratitude to the Creator for giving humanity such a rich diversity of musical styles . . .”. It also sees
diversity of musical styles as a good intended by the Creator, thus placing music in a different category from language, since the biblical story of the building of the Tower of Babel views the diversity of human languages not as an enriching expression of varied cultures but as a divine punishment for human hubris.

A later sentence in STL 1 again acknowledges the Creator God’s blessing by the gift of song: “God, the giver of song, is present whenever his people sing his praises.” Once again this assertion is fine as far as it goes, but it has to be read carefully. To suggest that God is absent unless God’s people sing his praises contradicts the theological doctrine of God’s omnipresence, and to suggest that God’s people singing somehow constrains God’s freedom contradicts the theological doctrine of God’s absolute freedom. It might have been more accurate to write that human communal singing has a particular value for evoking God’s presence among the many modes by which God makes the divine self present to creation (“If you believe and I believe ...”)

Finally, STL 3, quoting the command of Moses in Deuteronomy 31:19, notes that “our ancestors reveled in this gift, sometimes with God’s urging. ‘Write out this song, then, for yourselves,’ God said to Moses. ‘Teach it to the Israelites and have them recite it, so that this song may be a witness for me.’” It should be clear that STL emphasizes the creative and sustaining energies of God, traditionally ascribed in Christian theology to God the Father by appropriation.

Jesus Christ/God the Son (by appropriation). If the Church by appropriation ascribes the blessing, sustaining, and consummating of creation to God the Father, it ascribes by appropriation the salvation and redemption of creation to God the Son. STL treats the ascribed activities of the second Divine Person in two categories: the activities of the earthly Jesus and the power of the heavenly Christ.

STL 8 reports Jesus’ activity close to the beginning of his earthly ministry, when he serves as reader and preacher in a synagogue service, as in some way a model for the ministry of Christians: “The words Jesus chose from the book of Isaiah at the beginning of his ministry become the song of the Body of Christ” (Luke 4:18; see Isaiah 61:1–2; 58:6). STL treats this passage as though it were a simple report of what happened on a particular day in Jesus’ ministry. Such an interpretation would be more characteristic of fundamentalist biblical interpretation than Roman Catholic exegesis. Since we do not have multiple attestations to this incident, historical-critical method would be reluctant to take this narrative as a verbal snapshot of an uncontested event. Rather, bracketing the question of the incident’s historical veracity, we should explore what the sacred author was trying to communicate to his hearers/readers by recounting this story. Making some reference to the presumed custom of cantillating a biblical text in the original Hebrew before offering a vernacular translation and preaching could have made even clearer the connection between Jesus’ practice of liturgical singing and the “song of the Body of Christ.”

STL 4 reports Jesus’ activity close to the end of his earthly ministry, when he and those who shared table fellowship with him for the last time before his execution concluded their time together with song: “Jesus and his apostles sang a hymn before their journey to the Mount of Olives” (see
Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26). As is well known, there is much debate about whether this final meal was a Passover Seder, since the timing of the meal offered by the Synoptics differs from that in the Gospel of John. Nonetheless the so-called “Petrine” Gospel writers (called so by presuming that the Matthean account is a very lightly edited version of the Marcan account and that Peter’s preaching is the apostolic authority underlying Mark’s Gospel) clearly want to present Jesus’ final meal in a Passover context. Therefore the “hymn” that he and his disciples shared in these accounts of the Last Supper would have signaled to the original hearers/readers the biblical chants ending the Passover meal.

Presumably the authors of STL wanted to show Jesus’ engagement with the liturgical music of his Jewish heritage throughout his earthly ministry by offering these citations from the beginning and end of the Gospel accounts of that ministry. It is somewhat disappointing, however, that a more extensive account of Jesus’ own worship and its relation to music making as found in the New Testament texts, as well as the implications of Jesus’ own characteristic worship for the worship of those who claim to follow him, does not appear in STL. (However, as we will see, the scriptural foundations of a theology of music in STL are quite rudimentary.)

The other two references to the second Divine Person in STL do not treat the activities of the earthly Jesus so much as they evoke his role as heavenly Lord. Perhaps reflecting the ad intra and ad extra goals of the Second Vatican Council, as articulated in the opening articles of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, STL 14 notes Christ’s ongoing invitation to the Church at prayer (ad intra): “Christ always invites us . . . to enter into song, to rise above our own preoccupations, and to give our entire selves to the hymn of his Paschal Sacrifice for the honor and glory of the Most Blessed Trinity.” I would certainly concur with this sentiment, but I’m not sure how this Christic invitation is derived: It certainly doesn’t appear explicitly in the spoken texts of the Lord Jesus recounted in the New Testament.

In contrast STL 8, citing the teaching of Vatican II’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes, reminds us that the Christian life is not totally directed toward its own members but reaches out ad extra: “Christ . . . remains with us and leads us through church doors to the whole world, with its joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties.” I hear in this assertion the final sentence of Matthew’s Gospel (“Behold, I remain with you until the end of time”) conjoined to the tradition of Catholic social teaching, made especially articulate in our day from Leo XIII’s Rerum Novarum (1891) through Benedict XVI’s Caritas in Veritate (2009).

God the Holy Spirit (by appropriation). If by appropriation the Church ascribes creation to God the Father and redemption to God the Son, it ascribes the sanctification of creation to the Holy Spirit. I find the only direct reference to the Holy Spirit in STL 1, and even then it is not explicit: “God dwells within each human person, in the place where music takes its source.” What is most interesting about this assertion is that it yokes divine indwelling to the human capacity to make and appreciate music. Such a bald assertion is very suggestive, but it cries out for a much more developed theology of the Holy Spirit in STL.

Since Western Christians display a less robust theology of the Holy Spirit than our Eastern brothers and sisters, it is not surprising that STL would
have an underdeveloped pneumatology, but even slightly more attention to the role of the Holy Spirit would profoundly enrich this document. For example, we will see that STL notes both the unity and the differentiation of roles in the Church, and since the Holy Spirit is the Divine Person who both differentiates and unifies the other two Divine Persons, a similar function can be ascribed to the Holy Spirit’s work in the Church. Corporate singing and music making can serve as a powerful image of such unity-in-differentiation, when choirs create a single choral sound out of the diversity of individual voices, or when a conductor creates a single music out of the diversity of individual instruments.

Another aspect of pneumatology that might be of interest to STL is the Spirit’s vivifying power. Musicians can attest to the mysterious quality of “inspiration” operating in composers, performers, and hearers alike. It might be possible to illustrate the Spirit’s power to transform the reading of the Scriptures from a simple engagement with the literature of a past civilization to a life-transforming encounter with the living God by reference to a parallel encounter with a piece of music, transformed from simple acoustic events to an encounter with a wellspring of human thought and emotion in an “inspired” performance. These two examples should suggest how much the document we are studying could be enriched by more attention to the role of the Holy Spirit in creation, Church, worship, and worship music.

**Creation.** A commonplace of theological reflection among Western Christians is that the Catholic ethos delights in God’s creation as the matrix for sacramental encounter with God, while the Protestant ethos tends to view creation implicated in human sin and so fallen that it impedes one’s encounter with God. STL 123 is a forthright statement of the “symphonic” character of Catholic liturgical worship, reveling as it does in the transformative potential of the gifts of creation:

Each particular liturgical celebration is composed of many variable verbal and non-verbal elements: proper prayers, scriptural readings, the liturgical season, the time of day, processional movement, sacred objects and actions, the socioeconomic context in which the particular community is set, or even particular events impacting the life of the Christian faithful. Every effort should be made to lend such disparate elements a certain unity by the skillful and sensitive selection and preparation of texts, music, homily, movement, vesture, color, environment, and sacred objects and actions. This kind of ritual art requires that those who prepare the Liturgy approach it with artistic sensitivity and pastoral perspective.

Notice that in Catholic Christian liturgical worship what is offered to God is not creation “raw” but creation transformed by human thought and will. Sounds are structured by human culture to produce the language in which proper prayers and scriptural readings are spoken and sung. Solar and lunar cycles are observed by humans and shaped by believers into liturgical seasons through the calendar of fasting and feasting and liturgical days through the liturgy of the hours. Movement of bodies through space becomes a complex choreography of posture, gestures, and actions in the ceremonies of the liturgy. We do not offer wheat and grapes (“nature raw”) as our Eucharistic elements but bread and wine, i.e., wheat and grapes transformed by human ingenuity and intention into culturally marked food, which in turn is taken...
up by divine thought and will as a means by which God genuinely encounters us in sacrament.

This fundamentally positive view of creation with its accompanying potential for sacramental encounter leads to a recognition of the symbolic character of worship. Liturgical celebration employs the significant and the symbolic aspects of creation because human beings are sign making and symbol perceiving kinds of beings. Quoting the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1146 and 1148, STL 6 states this well: “In human life, signs and symbols occupy an important place. As a being at once body and spirit, man expresses and perceives spiritual realities through physical signs and symbols . . .’ [CCC, 1146]. In Liturgy, we use words, gestures, signs, and symbols to proclaim Christ’s presence and to reply with our worship and praise.” And “inasmuch as [signs and symbols] are creatures, these perceptible realities can become means of expressing the action of God who sanctifies men, and the action of men who offer worship to God” [CCC, 1148].

Notice that this robust situating of liturgical worship in the complex sign-systems of human beings acting in this world of space and time challenges a more Platonic understanding of worship which would be suspicious of earthly worship as a mere shadow of the real, unchanging, “heavenly” worship. While I believe that the relation of the Divine Persons is worshipful and that the ranks of the angels worship and adore the living God, I do not believe that this form of worship has any need of sign-systems, since the worshipers are pure spirit. I believe that some of the “culture wars” being fought out in liturgical preferences and operative theologies really stem from a contrast between an Aristotelian-Thomist understanding of worship mediated through causal signs and a Platonic-Augustinian understanding of worship in which earthly signs are to be surmounted in an “ascent” to the heavenly realms. (Thus a contrast between liturgical music chosen for its ability to function appropriately in a complex sign-system activated by music makers and music chosen for its ability to evoke transcendence by drawing auditors first from the world of mundane acoustic events to the “higher” world of musical events until one reaches the goal of silence, where the time-bound succession of tones gives way to an eternity transcending sound. The practical challenge for the music minister is to find a way to mediate between these competing understandings of worship.)

**The Church.** As we have seen, STL does not offer a complete theological treatment of the Triune God or of creation but presents some assertions that both orient the reader and invite deeper thought. The same is true of its treatment of the mystery of the Church. Theological assertions concerning ecclesiology in STL are meager but suggestive.

Wisely, the document notes that the Church arises from and in some sense stays forever connected to Judaism, yet also offers a distinctive proclamation and worldview. The document quotes Benedict XVI (then Joseph Ratzinger) to this point in STL 7: “For Israel, the event of salvation in the Red Sea will always be the main reason for praising God, the basic theme of the song it sings before God. For Christians, the Resurrection of Christ is the true Exodus. . . . The definitively new song has been intoned . . .’” (Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* [Ignatius Press, 2000] 137–138). What Benedict XVI asserts in this quotation is true but problematic. Without careful nuance, one could read the “definitive newness” of the resurrection of Christ
as something repudiating the Exodus from Egypt rather than bringing its trajectory to fulfillment (e.g., liberation from human slavery becoming a type of liberation from death and sin). We will see that STL offers the merest sketch of the music-making traditions of the Jewish people, but it should be clear that a more adequate theology would examine these traditions deeply to discover what about them could be genuinely revelatory for Christians. (For example, both Jews and Christians sing psalms in individual and communal devotions and liturgy, but the contexts and resonances of these sung texts are quite different. In what sense could Christians “see Christ” in the Psalter?)

A second area of ecclesiological concern for STL is the mystery of the Church in its unity and diversity, carefully brought together in article 10. The article begins with the differentiated character of the Church. It is not a mere assemblage of identical elements but an organic corporation of diverse skills and responsibilities: “Holy Mother Church clearly affirms the role within worship of the entire liturgical assembly (bishop, priest, deacon, acolytes, ministers of the Word, music leaders, choir, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, and the congregation).” Although it lists ordained ministers in first place, it makes no assertions about the ontological difference between clergy and laity, a difference that will have both liturgical and musical implications. Notice that the differentiation as conceived in article 10 will serve as the basis for STL Chapter Two on the Church at prayer. The skills and responsibilities of each of these offices and ministries are treated in greater detail there.

But even though ecclesiological differences might be highlighted in STL 10, the unity of the Church’s members is strongly affirmed: “For our part, ‘we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another’ [Romans 12:5–6]. The Church urges all members of the liturgical assembly to receive this divine gift and to participate fully ‘depending on their orders [and] their roles in the liturgical services’ [Second Vatican Council, Sacrosanctum Concilium, 26].” Readers of the document might want to explore how Musicam Sacram 5 emphasizes the role of liturgical music in both unifying (all voices and instruments making one music) and differentiating a liturgical assembly (there are distinct roles for assembly, priest, deacon, cantor, choir, instrumentalists, etc.).

The Church’s Worship. As one might expect, STL’s theological concerns are more developed in the areas of worship and music. Its teaching on the Church’s worship can be considered in three areas: the practice of, the participation in, and the consequences of Catholic Christian worship.

The Practice of Catholic Christian Worship. In broad strokes, STL 5 paints two aspects of Catholic worship: gathering on the Lord’s Day and using song as a key aspect of communal prayer: “Obedient to Christ and to the Church, we gather in liturgical assembly, week after week. As our predecessors did, we find ourselves ‘singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in [our] hearts to God’” (Colossians 3:16). The first has certainly remained an ideal of Catholic Christian worship, indeed, the key expression of the ekklesia—the Body of Christ—at worship, though in practice it has often required legal support as an obligation (see Code of Canon Law, 1246), while it has not as often been celebrated as a right as well as a duty of all the baptized (SC, 14). No matter the form of support, however, gathering as an assembly for
worship on the Lord’s Day has become a *minority practice* among American Catholics, with only about one-third of the Catholic population attending Sunday Mass regularly. The self-absenting of Catholic Christians from the key act of ecclesial worship, therefore, poses a theological challenge that goes beyond the scope of this article. But one might ask: Using Lonergan’s functional theological specialties, how would one unpack the faith experience of a community that does not gather for its key ritual action? The reference to the musical practices of our “predecessors,” is similarly irenic and similarly challenging for a theology of music, particularly since the reference to Colossians quotes an exhortation to sing, within a general invitation to the virtues of Christian community (Colossians 3:12–17), and not a description of the actual practice of the Church at Colossae. And, in fact, through much of Christian history, congregational song at Sunday Mass has been more of an ideal than an actuality. However, given current practice, in which congregational singing is presumed to be part of Sunday Mass (the issue of actual participation in that singing remains a question, as we shall see), this invocation of ideal early Christian worship is actually more supportive of and descriptive of reality today than it may have been of liturgy sixty years ago.

*Participation in Catholic Christian Worship.* Who worships? All of creation worships the Creator, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Since tradition holds that creation reveals God’s glory, then all creation worships God by being just what the Creator intended. The theme of all creation’s praise of God is prominent especially in the psalms (65:12–13; 69:34; 96:11–12; 98:7–8; 103:22; 148; 150:6; cf. Isa 42:10). But such worship is ineffective for transforming creation’s defects, according to traditional theology, because only God can create or transform that which has been created, i.e., only God can bring salvation. In other words, argues the Letter to the Hebrews, only God can truly worship God in a way that is effective for transforming creation (Hebrews 5:9). Through the power of the Holy Spirit, in communion with the exalted Christ, liturgy joins the Church to this act of perfect worship. Liturgy, therefore, is an act of the whole Christ—Christ the Head and we his members (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1136). Therefore “it is the whole community, the Body of Christ united with its head, that celebrates” (*Catechism*, 1140). STL 10 takes up this affirmation of the ecclesial nature of liturgy as the act of the “entire liturgical assembly.” The document focuses on the act of worship as an act of communion: “Through grace, the liturgical assembly partakes in the life of the Blessed Trinity, which is itself a communion of love.” Still it notes the transformative aspect of this communion, for “the Persons of the Trinity remain themselves even as they share all that they are”: It is that sharing which transforms creation.

While acknowledging the key roles of the ordained, STL echoes the focus of the twentieth century liturgical movement on the ecclesial nature of worship and on the role of the congregation within the *ekklesia*: “Within the gathered assembly, the role of the congregation is especially important” (STL, 11). It does not, of course, go into extensive theological analysis of this role, but it does repeat and expand descriptions of congregational participation’s effects and ways to achieve that participation. The key declaration behind most of postconciliar liturgical renewal is quoted in STL 11: “The 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” (Second Vatican Council, Sacrosanctum Concilium, 14). Because we are embodied spirits, all of our actions have at least two parts: the internal intent and its external performance. So it is with participation in the liturgy: “Participation in the Sacred Liturgy must be ‘internal, in the sense that by it the faithful join their mind to what they pronounce or hear, and cooperate with heavenly grace’” (Sacred Congregation for Rites, Musicam sacram, 15, quoted in STL, 12). It “must also be external, so that internal participation can be expressed and reinforced by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes, and by the acclamations, responses, and singing” (STL, 13; see Sacrosanctum Concilium, 30).

**Results and Consequences of Catholic Christian Worship.** Actions have effects; intentions have consequences. The arena in which liturgical participation acts is the arena of faith—faith as a foundational affirmation of our belief in the way things are and as action following upon that foundation (ad intra and ad extra, as previously noted). “Participation in the Sacred Liturgy both expresses and strengthens the faith that is in us” (STL, 13). Without referencing Music in Catholic Worship, STL 5 quotes one of its key affirmations to describe the relationship between faith and liturgical celebration: “Faith grows when it is well expressed in celebration. Good celebrations can foster and nourish faith. Poor celebrations may weaken it.”

Like all true worship, STL 9 affirms, Catholic liturgy is transformative of the participants and of the world through their action in faith. “Particularly inspired by sung participation, the body of the Word Incarnate goes forth to spread the Gospel with full force and compassion. In this way the Church leads men and women ‘to the faith, freedom and peace of Christ by the example of its life and teaching, by the sacraments and other means of grace. Its aim is to open up for all men a free and sure path to full participation in the mystery of Christ’” (quotation from Second Vatican Council, Ad Gentes Divinitus, 5). But the proclamation of the Gospel is not just a matter of proclaiming doctrine, as the late Pope John Paul II taught: “We cannot delude ourselves: by our mutual love and, in particular, by our concern for those in need we will be recognized as true followers of Christ (cf. Jn 13:35; Mt 25:31–46). This will be the criterion by which the authenticity of our Eucharistic celebrations is judged” (Apostolic Letter Mane Nobiscum Domine [October 7, 2004], 28). Or, as STL 9 puts it: “Charity, justice, and evangelization are . . . the normal consequences of liturgical celebration.”

**Music in/for Catholic Christian Worship.** From a theological point of view, STL has the most to say about music itself and its role in worship. Here it will be considered under five headings: the “being” of music, music making in the Scriptures and in the liturgy, the purpose of liturgical music, the functions of liturgical music, and two culturally contextualized dimensions of liturgical music.

The “Being” of Music. This is the most disappointing part of the document. STL needs to engage the insights of philosophers of music, especially those (like Boethius) whose writings were especially influential in the development of Western liturgical chant. At the very least it would have been helpful to distinguish sound, music, and song, as well as what is meant by sacred, religious, ecclesial, liturgical, and devotional music. In STL 2 we have an example of the tension I mentioned earlier between an Aristotelian-Thomist
understanding of worship mediated through causal signs and a Platonic-Augustian understanding of worship in which earthly signs are to be surmounted in an “ascent” to the heavenly realms—a contrast between liturgical music chosen for its ability to function appropriately in a complex sign-system and music chosen for its ability to evoke transcendence. Music is described first in Platonic-Augustian terms as a “cry from deep within our being, . . . a way for God to lead us to the realm of higher things.” This is followed by what I consider an Aristotelian-Thomist understanding: “Music is . . . a sign of God’s love for us and of our love for him. In this sense, it is very personal.”

Woven through these two theologies of music are elements drawn from acoustics (the study of sound and how it operates) and audiation (the study of hearing and comprehending music). Sound is essential to music, at least as it is understood in this document: “But unless music sounds, it is not music, and whenever it sounds, it is accessible to others” (STL, 2). Does this exclude those who cannot hear from the realm of music? No, because sound vibrates a medium—air—and those who are hearing-impaired can also receive these vibrations and even “audiate” them as sound. It is this aspect of music-as-sound—vibration of air—that gives it its initial communal dimension. Those who receive music, either as vibration or as sound, become part of the sonic event, whether they will to do so or not. When they choose to participate in the event, then music takes on a second communal aspect, as other voices join in the song they hear or actively “audiate” the sound as song. This is why STL 2 can affirm: “By its very nature song has both an individual and a communal dimension. Thus, it is no wonder that singing together in church expresses so well the sacramental presence of God to his people.”

Music-Making in the Scriptures and the Liturgy. Since the biblical Scriptures occupy a privileged place in the Christian tradition as witness to and enshrining of divine revelation, much more of this document could have been spent on the role of music in ancient Hebrew/Israelite/Jewish civilization in continuity and contrast with its Mesopotamian and Egyptian neighbors, with an eye toward how music was used in individual, domestic, and Temple worship. This is the religio-musical tradition that shaped Jesus and his earliest followers. Once the contours of this tradition are established it will be easier to see how the Christian movement adopted, adapted, or rejected parts of this formative tradition. Though the psalms are frequently mentioned throughout STL, this collection so closely associated with the Second Temple is only alluded to (through a reference to David), in STL 3, which summarizes the role of music in Israel through three main images: at the Sea, in the time of the judges, and when the Ark of the Covenant entered Jerusalem: “The Chosen People, after they passed through the Red Sea, sang as one to the Lord [Exodus 15:1–18, 21]. Deborah, a judge of Israel, sang to the Lord with Barak after God gave them victory [Judges 4:4–5:31]. David and the Israelites ‘made merry before the Lord with all their strength, with singing and with citharas, harps, tambourines, sistums, and cymbals’ [2 Samuel 6:5].”

Similar limitations mark STL’s treatment of music in the New Testament. To the passing reference to the final song of the Last Supper, previously noted, STL 4 adds three examples of song from the collection of letters: “St. Paul instructed the Ephesians to ‘[address] one another in psalms and hymns and

There is a brief description in STL 7 of the unique content of Christian song, which sets it apart from all other songs in worship, by reference to the key fact of the Paschal Mystery: “The primordial song of the Liturgy is the canticle of victory over sin and death.” And there is a reminder that this song is proleptic, leaping ahead toward completion, though for now it remains unfinished because it will only be completed in the heavenly kingdom, when our liturgical song is brought to completion in union with the “song of the saints” caught up in the “song of the Lamb.” Finally, there is a reminder of the fact that song in the liturgy, like the whole of liturgy itself, is oriented beyond itself to a lived proclamation of the Gospel in all that we do beyond the liturgy: “The Paschal hymn, of course, does not cease when a liturgical celebration ends. Christ, whose praises we have sung, remains with us and leads us through church doors to the whole world . . .” (STL, 8).

The Purpose of Music in/for Catholic Christian Worship. Despite the high praise heaped on music—and especially on singing—in this document (see, e.g., STL, 124), it is clear that music in worship has a servant function, particularly a role in unifying the assembly for its ecclesial liturgical act: “The role of music is to serve the needs of the Liturgy and not to dominate it, seek to entertain, or draw attention to itself or to the musicians . . . . The primary role of music in the Liturgy is to help the members of the gathered assembly to join themselves with the action of Christ and to give voice to the gift of faith” (STL, 125).

The Functions of Music in/for Catholic Christian Worship. STL highlights an aspect of human communication that is drawing more attention now than in previous ages. The tonal or musical aspect of human speech does not simply add beauty to speech or convey feeling; it evokes and communicates meaning. “Music does what words alone cannot do. It is capable of expressing a dimension of meaning and feeling that words alone cannot convey. While this dimension of an individual musical composition is often difficult to describe, its affective power should be carefully considered along with its textual component” (STL, 124). Faith, it is to be noted, is an aspect of human experience that is enriched by the addition of tone, of music: “This common, sung expression of faith within liturgical celebrations strengthens our faith when it grows weak and draws us into the divinely inspired voice of the Church at prayer” (STL, 5). Any theological exploration of music’s role in worship, then, must take account of the “added meaning” that music brings to the language and act of worship.

One example of the importance of this aspect of tonal value in communication—most evident because of its absence—is in e-mail exchanges. Without the tonal qualities of speech, receivers of an e-mail often misunderstand or take offense, and writers are often apologizing and explaining. “Emoticons” help, but their addition to our written communication only serves to indicate the need for tone to communicate meaning as well as feeling. Still, that feeling quality is important not only in our daily speech but also in our worship. This aspect of liturgy was once downplayed as insignificant, but recognition of its importance to human communication has reinforced its
role in worship: “Good music ‘make[s] the liturgical prayers of the Christian community more alive and fervent so that everyone can praise and beseech the Triune God more powerfully, more intently and more effectively’” (STL, 5; internal quote from Musicae sacrae disciplina 31; see 33).

The Dimensions and Context of Music Making in/for Catholic Christian Worship. We end with what I believe to be the greatest contribution that STL makes to our ongoing discussion, a contribution potentially as helpful as the musical, liturgical, and pastoral dimensions of judgment in MCW back in 1972. That is the recognition of three other aspects of music for worship: its ritual and spiritual dimensions that occur within a cultural context. As I mentioned, these aspects of music in worship have been addressed from other perspectives by Kevin Vogt and Ricky Manalo in their essays, so for now I will simply quote the relevant section of Sing to the Lord; this rich statement in paragraphs 67–70 needs much more theological unfolding than is possible in this article:

“Sacred music is to be considered the more holy the more closely connected it is with the liturgical action, whether making prayer more pleasing, promoting unity of minds, or conferring greater solemnity upon the sacred rites” [Second Vatican Council, Sacrosanctum Concilium, 112]. This holiness involves ritual and spiritual dimensions, both of which must be considered within cultural context.

The ritual dimension of sacred music refers to those ways in which it is “connected with the liturgical action” so that it accords with the structure of the Liturgy and expresses the shape of the rite. The musical setting must allow the rite to unfold with the proper participation of the assembly and its ministers, without overshadowing the words and actions of the Liturgy.

The spiritual dimension of sacred music refers to its inner qualities that enable it to add greater depth to prayer, unity to the assembly, or dignity to the ritual. Sacred music is holy when it mediates the holiness of God and forms the Holy People of God more fully into communion with him and with each other in Christ.

The cultural context refers to the setting in which the ritual and spiritual dimensions come into play. Factors such as the age, spiritual heritage, and cultural and ethnic background of a given liturgical assembly must be considered.

Postlude: Music as Portal to the Transcendent

After this lengthy excursion into theological analysis, I feel it is important to end with an expression of theological insight into the role of music in divine and human self-communication from a different perspective. Anne Porter’s “Music,” drawn from her 2006 volume Living Things: Collected Poems, is deceptively simple. The poem begins by evoking the experience many of us have had of being drawn by music in childhood into shattering rapture. Acknowledging the mystery at the heart of music making and music hearing, the author extrapolates from that experience a deeply Christian stance toward our sin-broken yet redeemed and cherished world. The poem ends by reminding us that we finite and contingent humans meet the God who comes to meet us not only in the Temple of Truth and on the Path of Goodness but also in the Abyss of Beauty.
When I was a child
I once sat sobbing on the floor
Beside my mother’s piano
As she played and sang
For there was in her singing
A shy yet solemn glory
My smallness could not hold

And when I was asked
Why I was crying
I had no words for it
I only shook my head
And went on crying

Why is it that music
At its most beautiful
Opens a wound in us
An ache a desolation
Deep as a homesickness
For some far-off
And half-forgotten country

I’ve never understood
Why this is so

But there’s an ancient legend
From the other side of the world
That gives away the secret
Of this mysterious sorrow

For centuries on centuries
We have been wandering
But we were made for Paradise
As deer for the forest

And when music comes to us
With its heavenly beauty
It brings us desolation
For when we hear it
We half remember
That lost native country

We dimly remember the fields
Their fragrant windswept clover
The birdsongs in the orchards
The wild white violets in the moss
By the transparent streams

And shining at the heart of it
Is the longed-for beauty
Of the One who waits for us
Who will always wait for us
In those radiant meadows

Yet also came to live with us
And wanders where we wander.?
Notes

3. Admittedly, MCW proffered “The Theology of Celebration” in a few articles, but these paragraphs did not address the great themes that STL at least advert to.
4. STL, “Foreword,” xi.
5. Dr. Gordon E. Truitt contributed to this section and the following section on music by expanding my working outline into a connected narrative.
6. According to the CARA Catholic Poll, taken every few years by the Center for Applied Research on the Apostolate in Washington, DC, between 2004 and 2009, the percentage of those surveyed who report that they attend Mass once a week or more has hovered between thirty-three (in 2004) and thirty-six (in 2009) percent. See http://cara.georgetown.edu/bulletin/index.htm.

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The problem with the kind of genuine church renewal that we have gotten ourselves into is that problems and questions begin (deceptively) at a fairly superficial and manageable level. At first it looks easy. And then, almost imperceptibly, each of the problems and questions invites us deeper and deeper into the heart of ecclesial faith, where all their roots are intertwined.

Robert W. Hovda
From Strong, Loving, and Wise: Presiding in Liturgy
(The Liturgical Press, 1983)