

Excerpts Regarding Hymns from Relevant Church Documents

Pius XII - *Mediator Dei* (Encyclical, 1947)

- **105.** Therefore, they are to be praised who, with the idea of getting the Christian people to take part more easily and more fruitfully in the Mass, strive to make them familiar with the "Roman Missal," so that the faithful, united with the priest, may pray together in the very words and sentiments of the Church. They also are to be commended who strive to make the liturgy even in an external way a sacred act in which all who are present may share. This can be done in more than one way, when, for instance, the whole congregation, in accordance with the rules of the liturgy, either answer the priest in an orderly and fitting manner or sing hymns (*cantus*) suitable to the different parts of the Mass, or do both, or finally in high Masses when they answer the prayers of the minister of Jesus Christ and also sing the liturgical chant.
- **108.** Many of the faithful are unable to use the Roman missal even though it is written in the vernacular; nor are all capable of understanding correctly the liturgical rites and formulas. So varied and diverse are men's talents and characters that it is impossible for all to be moved and attracted to the same extent by community prayers, hymns and liturgical services (*canticis sacrisque actionibus*). Moreover, the needs and inclinations of all are not the same, nor are they always constant in the same individual. Who, then, would say, on account of such a prejudice, that all these Christians cannot participate in the Mass nor share its fruits? On the contrary, they can adopt some other method which proves easier for certain people; for instance, they can lovingly meditate on the mysteries of Jesus Christ or perform other exercises of piety or recite prayers which, though they differ from the sacred rites, are still essentially in harmony with them.

Pius XII - *Musicae sacræ disciplina* (Encyclical, 1955)

- **36.** We must also hold in honor that music which is not primarily a part of the sacred liturgy, but which by its power and purpose greatly aids religion. This music is therefore rightly called religious music (*musica religiosa*). The Church has possessed such music (*musica popolare*) from the beginning, and it has developed happily under the Church's auspices. As experience shows, it can exercise great and salutary force and power on the souls of the faithful, both when it is used in churches during non-liturgical services and ceremonies, or when it is used outside churches at various solemnities and celebrations.
- **37.** The tunes of these hymns (*cantum*), which are often sung in the language of the people, are memorized with almost no effort or labor. The mind grasps the words and the music. They are frequently repeated and completely understood. Hence even boys and girls, learning these sacred hymns (*sacros cantus*) at a tender age, are greatly

helped by them to know, appreciate, and memorize the truths of the faith. Therefore, they also serve as a sort of catechism. These religious hymns (*carmina illa religiosa*) bring pure and chaste joy to young people and adults during times of recreation. They give a kind of religious grandeur to their more solemn assemblies and gatherings. They bring pious joy, sweet consolation and spiritual progress to Christian families themselves. Hence these popular religious hymns (*religiosi concentus populares*) are of great help to the Catholic apostolate and should be carefully cultivated and promoted.

- **47.** Where, according to old or immemorial custom, some popular hymns (*popularia vulgaris sermonis cantica*) are sung in the language of the people after the sacred words of the liturgy have been sung in Latin during the solemn Eucharistic sacrifice, local Ordinaries can allow this to be done "if, in the light of the circumstances of the locality and the people, they believe that (custom) cannot prudently be removed." [21] The law by which it is forbidden to sing the liturgical words themselves in the language of the people remains in force, according to what has been said.
- **62.** As We have said before, besides those things that are intimately associated with the Church's sacred liturgy, there are also popular religious hymns (*cantus religiosi populares*) which derive their origin from the liturgical chant itself. Most of these are written in the language of the people. Since these are closely related to the mentality and temperament of individual national groups, they differ considerably among themselves according to the character of different races and localities.
- **63.** If hymns (*cantica religiosa*) of this sort are to bring spiritual fruit and advantage to the Christian people, they must be in full conformity with the doctrine of the Catholic faith. They must also express and explain that doctrine accurately. Likewise, they must use plain language and simple melody and must be free from violent and vain excess of words. Despite the fact that they are short and easy, they should manifest a religious dignity and seriousness. When they are fashioned in this way these sacred canticles, born as they are from the most profound depths of the people's soul, deeply move the emotions and spirit and stir up pious sentiments. When they are sung at religious rites by a great crowd of people singing as with one voice, they are powerful in raising the minds of the faithful to higher things.
- **64.** As we have written above, such hymns (*cantatis*) cannot be used in Solemn High Masses without the express permission of the Holy See. Nevertheless, at Masses that are not sung solemnly these hymns can be a powerful aid in keeping the faithful from attending the Holy Sacrifice like dumb and idle spectators. They can help to make the faithful accompany the sacred services both mentally and vocally and to join their own piety to the prayers of the priest. This happens when these hymns (*cantus*) are properly adapted to the individual parts of the Mass, as We rejoice to know is being done in many parts of the Catholic world.
- **65.** In rites that are not completely liturgical, religious hymns (*cantica religiosa*) of this kind -- when, as We have said, they are endowed with the right qualities -- can be of great help in the salutary work of attracting the Christian people and enlightening them, in imbuing them with sincere piety and filling them with holy joy. They can produce these effects not only within churches, but outside of them also, especially on the occasion of pious processions and pilgrimages to shrines and at the time of national or international congresses. They can be especially useful, as experience has shown, in

the work of instructing boys and girls in Catholic truth, in societies for youth and in meetings of pious associations.

- **66.** Hence We can do no less than urge you, venerable brethren, to foster and promote diligently popular religious singing of this kind in the dioceses entrusted to you. There is among you no lack of experts in this field to gather hymns (*cantica*) of this sort into one collection, where this has not already been done, so that all of the faithful can learn them more easily, memorize them and sing them correctly.
- **68.** May it thus come about that the Christian people begin even on this earth to sing that song of praise it will sing forever in heaven: "To Him who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb, blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever." (Apocalypse 5: 13)
- **Sacred Congregation of Rites, *Musica sacra et sacra liturgia* (aka 1958 Instruction)**
 - **9.** Hymns (*Cantus popularis religiosus*) are songs (*cantus*) which spontaneously arise from the religious impulses with which mankind has been endowed by its Creator. Thus, they are universally sung among all peoples.
 - This music had a fine effect on the lives of the faithful, imbuing both their private, and social lives with a true Christian spirit (cf. Eph 5:18-20; Col 3:16). It was encouraged from the earliest times, and in our day it is still to be recommended for fostering the piety of the faithful, and enhancing their private devotions. Even such music can, at times, be admitted to liturgical ceremonies (This music had a fine effect on the lives of the faithful, imbuing both their private, and social lives with a true Christian spirit (cf. Eph 5:18-20; Col 3:16). It was encouraged from the earliest times, and in our day it is still to be recommended for fostering the piety of the faithful, and enhancing their private devotions. Even such music can, at times, be admitted to liturgical ceremonies (*Musicae sacrae disciplina*, Dec. 25, 1955; AAS 48 [1956] 13-14)., Dec. 25, 1955; AAS 48 [1956] 13-14).
 - **14. a)** In sung Masses only Latin is to be used. This applies not only to the celebrant, and his ministers, but also to the choir or congregation.
 - "However, popular vernacular hymns (*popularia vulgaris sermonis cantica inserantur*) may be sung at the solemn Eucharistic Sacrifice (sung Masses), after the liturgical texts have been sung in Latin, in those places where such a centenary or immemorial custom has obtained. Local ordinaries may permit the continuation of this custom 'if they judge that it cannot prudently be discontinued because of the circumstances of the locality or the people' (cf. canon 5)" (*Musicae sacrae disciplina*: AAS 48 [1956] 16-17).
 - **14 b)** At low Mass the faithful who participate directly in the liturgical ceremonies with the celebrant by reciting aloud the parts of the Mass which belong to them must, along with the priest and his server, use Latin exclusively.
 - But if, in addition to this direct participation in the liturgy, the faithful wish to add some prayers or popular hymns (*cantus populares*), according to local custom, these may be recited or sung in the vernacular.

- **19.** Hymns (*Cantus popularis religiosus*) may be freely used in private devotions. But in liturgical ceremonies the principles laid down in paragraphs 13-15 should be strictly observed.
- **22.b)** The participation of the congregation becomes more complete, however, when, in addition to this interior disposition, exterior participation is manifested by external acts, such as bodily position (kneeling, standing, sitting), ceremonial signs, and especially responses, prayers, and singing. The Supreme Pontiff Pius XII, in his encyclical on the sacred liturgy, *Mediator Dei*, recommended this form of participation: "Those who are working for the exterior participation of the congregation in the sacred ceremonies are to be warmly commended. This can be accomplished in more than one way. The congregation may answer the words of the priest, as prescribed by the rubrics, or sing hymns (*cantus*), appropriate to the different parts of the Mass, or do both. Also, at solemn ceremonies, they may alternate in singing the liturgical chant (AAS 39 [1947] 560)". When the papal documents treat of "active participation" they are speaking of this general participation (*Mediator Dei*: AAS 39 [1947] 530-537), of which the outstanding example is the priest, and his ministers who serve at the altar with the proper interior dispositions, and carefully observe the rubrics, and ceremonies.
- **30.** The faithful can participate another way at the Eucharistic Sacrifice by saying prayers together or by singing hymns (*cantus*). The prayers and hymns (*cantus*) must be chosen appropriately for the respective parts of the Mass, and as indicated in paragraph 14c.
- **33.** The faithful may sing hymns (*cantus populares religiosi*) during low Mass, if they are appropriate to the various parts of the mass.
- **C. Popular Religious Song**
- **51.** Hymns (*cantus popularis religiosus*) ought to be highly encouraged, and fostered, for this form of music does much to imbue the Christian with a deep religious spirit, and to raise the thoughts of the faithful to the truths of our faith. Hymns (*cantus popularis religiosus*) have their own part to play in all the festive solemnities of Christian life, whether public or of a more personal nature; they also find their part in the daily labors of the Christian. But they attain their ideal usefulness in all private devotions, whether conducted outside or inside the church. At times their use is even permitted during liturgical functions, in accord with the directions given above in paragraphs 13-15.
- **52.** If hymns (*religiosa cantica popularia*) are to attain their purpose, their texts "must conform to the doctrine of the Catholic Church, plainly stating, and explaining it. The vocabulary should be simple, and free of dramatic, and meaningless verbiage. Their tunes, however brief, and easy, should evince a religious dignity and propriety" (*Musicae sacrae disciplina* (AAS 48 [1956] 20). Local Ordinaries should carefully see that these ideals are observed.

- **53.** All who have the training should be encouraged to compile serviceable collections of these hymns (*cantiones populares religiosas*) which have been handed down either orally or in writing, even the most ancient, and to publish them for the use of the faithful, with the approval of the local Ordinary.
- **A. Training of the clergy, and people.**
- **104.** Sacred music, and the liturgy are intimately bound together; sacred chant forms an integral part of the liturgy (no. 21), while hymns (*cantus denique religiosus popularis*) are used to a great extent in private devotions, and at times even during liturgical functions themselves (no. 19). For that reason, instruction in both sacred music, and sacred liturgy cannot be separated from each other: both belong to the life of the Christian, though in varying degree, depending upon one's own of life, and rank among the clergy, and faithful.
- Hence, every Christian should have some instruction in the sacred liturgy, and sacred music, in accordance with his station in life.

Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963)

24. Sacred Scripture is of the greatest importance in the celebration of the Liturgy. For it is from Scripture that lessons are read and explained in the homily, and Psalms are sung; the prayers, collects, and liturgical songs (*carmina*) are scriptural in their inspiration and their force, and it is from the Scriptures that actions and signs derive their meaning. Thus to achieve the restoration, progress, and adaptation of the Sacred Liturgy, it is essential to promote that warm and living love for Scripture to which the venerable tradition of both Eastern and Western rites gives testimony.

30. To promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs (*cantica*), as well as by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes. And at the proper times all should observe a reverent silence.

33. Although the Sacred Liturgy is above all things the worship of the Divine Majesty, it likewise contains much instruction for the faithful.

34. For in the Liturgy God speaks to His people and Christ is still proclaiming His Gospel. And the people reply to God both by song (*cantibus*) and prayer.

112. 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 pre-eminence is that, as sacred song (*cantus*) united to the words, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn Liturgy.

Holy Scripture, indeed, has bestowed praise upon sacred song (*concentus*)⁴², and the same may be said of the fathers of the Church and of the Roman pontiffs who in recent times, led by Saint Pius X, have explained more precisely the ministerial function supplied by sacred music in the service of the Lord.

113. Liturgical worship is given a more noble form when the Divine Offices are celebrated solemnly in song (*cantu*), with the assistance of sacred ministers and the active participation of the people.

114. The treasure of sacred music is to be preserved and fostered with great care. Choirs must be diligently promoted, especially in cathedral churches; but bishops and other pastors of souls must be at pains to ensure that, whenever the sacred action is to be celebrated with song (*cantu*), the whole body of the faithful may be able to contribute that active participation, which is rightly theirs, as laid down in Art. 28 and 30.

Vatican II, *Musicam sacram* (1967)

28. The distinction between solemn, sung and read Mass, sanctioned by the Instruction of 1958 (n. 3), is retained, according to the traditional liturgical laws at present in force. However, for the sung Mass (*Missa cantata*), different degrees of participation are put forward here for reasons of pastoral usefulness, so that it may become easier to make the celebration of Mass more beautiful by singing, according to the capabilities of each congregation.

...

31. The following belong to the third degree:

- (a) the songs (*cantus*) at the Entrance and Communion processions;
- (b) the songs (*cantus*) after the Lesson or Epistle;
- (c) the *Alleluia* before the Gospel;
- (d) the song (*cantus*) at the Offertory;
- (e) the readings of Sacred Scripture unless it seems more suitable to proclaim them without singing.

32. The custom legitimately in use in certain places and widely confirmed by indults, of substituting other songs (*cantus*) for the songs (*cantibus*) given in the *Graduale* for the Entrance, Offertory and Communion, can be retained according to the judgment of the competent territorial authority, as long as songs of this sort are in keeping with the parts of the Mass, with the feast or with the liturgical season. It is for the same territorial authority to approve the texts of these songs.

33. It is desirable that the assembly of the faithful should participate in the songs (*cantus*) of the Proper as much as possible, especially through simple responses and other suitable settings.

The song (*cantus*) after the lessons, be it in the form of gradual or responsorial psalm, has a special importance among the songs (*cantus*) of the Proper. By its very nature, it forms part of the Liturgy, of the Word. It should be performed with all seated and listening to it -- and, what is more, participating in it as far as possible.

Hymn Lyrics

“Veni Redemptor gentium”

Latin Lyrics by St Ambrose

1. Veni, Redemptor gentium;
Ostende partum virginis;
Miretur omne saeculum.
Talis decet partus Deo.

2. Non ex virili semine,
Sed mystico spiramine
Verbum Dei factum est caro,
Fructusque ventris floruit.

3. Alvus tumescit virginis.
Clastrum pudoris permanet;
Vexilla virtutum micant,
Versatur in templo Deus.

4. Procedat e thalamo suo,
Pudoris aula regia,
Geminae gigans substantiae
Alacris occurrat viam.

5. Aequalis aeterno Patri,
Carnis tropaeo accingere,
Infirma nostri corporis
Virtute firmans perpeti.

6. Praesepe iam fulget tuum,
Lumenque nox spirat novum,
Quad nulla nox interpolet
Fideque iugi luceat.

7. Sit Christi rex piissime
tibi Patrique gloria
cum Spiritu Paraclito
in sempiternae saecula. Amen.

Translation by J.M. Neale

Come, thou Redeemer of the earth,
And manifest thy virgin-birth:
Let every age adoring fall,
Such birth befits the God of all.

Begotten of no human will,
But of the Spirit, thou art still
The Word of God, in flesh arrayed,
The Saviour, now to man displayed.

The virgin womb that burden gained
With virgin honour all unstained,
The banners there of virtue glow,
God in his temple dwells below.

Forth from that chamber goeth he,
That royal home of purity,
A giant in twofold substance one,
Rejoicing now his course to run.

O equal to thy Father, thou!
Gird on thy fleshly mantle now,
The weakness of our mortal state
With deathless might invigorate.

Thy cradle here shall glitter bright,
And darkness glow with new-born light,
No more shall night extinguish day,
Where love's bright beams their power display.

O Jesu, Virgin-born, to thee
Eternal praise and glory be,
Whom with the Father we adore
And Holy Spirit, evermore. Amen.

“Faith of Our Fathers”
Lyrics by Fr. Frederick W. Faber

Faith of our Fathers! living still
In spite of dungeon, fire, and sword:
Oh, how our hearts beat high with joy
Whene'er we hear that glorious word.

Faith of our Fathers! Holy Faith!
We will be true to thee till death.

Our Fathers, chained in prisons dark,
Were still in heart and conscience free:
How sweet would be their children's fate,
If they, like them, could die for thee!

Faith of our Fathers! Holy Faith!
We will be true to thee till death.

Faith of our Fathers! Mary's prayers
Shall win our country back to thee:
And through the truth that comes from God
England [Our land] shall then indeed be free.

Faith of our Fathers! Holy Faith!
We will be true to thee till death.

Faith of our Fathers! we will love
Both friend and foe in all our strife:
And preach thee too, as love knows how
By kindly words and virtuous life:

Faith of our Fathers! Holy Faith!
We will be true to thee till death.

“Ashes,” by Tom Conry

We rise again from ashes,
from the good we've failed to do.
We rise again from ashes,
to create ourselves anew.
If all our world is ashes,
then must our lives be true,
An offering of ashes,
An offering to You.

We offer You our failures,
we offer You attempts;
The gifts not fully given,
the dreams not fully dreamt.
Give our stumblings direction,
give our visions wider view,
An offering of ashes,
An offering to You.

Then rise again from ashes,
let healing come to pain;
Though spring has turned to winter,
and sunshine turned to rain.
The rain we'll use for growing,
and create the world anew,
From an offering of ashes,
An offering to You.

... Thanks be to the Father,
who made us like Himself.
... Thanks be to His Son,
who saved us by His death.
... Thanks be to the Spirit,
who creates the world anew,
From an offering of ashes,
An offering to You.

“Amazing Grace,” by John Newton (Stanzas 1-4)

Amazing grace
How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now I'm found
Was blind, but now I see

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed

“Adoro te, devote,” Lyrics by St Thomas Aquinas, OP

Latin Lyrics by St Thomas Aquinas

Adoro te devote, latens deitas,
Quæ sub his figuris vere latitas;
Tibi se cor meum totum subjicit,
Quia te contemplans totum deficit.

Visus, tactus, gustus in te fallitur,
Sed auditu solo tuto creditur.
Credo quidquid dixit Dei Filius;
Nil hoc verbo Veritatis verius.

In Cruce latebat sola Deitas,
At hic latet simul et Humanitas,
Ambo tamen credens atque confitens,
Peto quod petivit latro pœnitens.

Plagas, sicut Thomas, non intueor:
Deum tamen meum te confiteor.
Fac me tibi semper magis credere,
In te spem habere, te diligere.

O memoriale mortis Domini,
Panis vivus, vitam præstans homini,
Præsta meæ menti de te vivere,
Et te illi semper dulce sapere.

Pie Pelicane, Jesu Domine,
Me immundum munda tuo Sanguine :
Cujus una stilla salvum facere
Totum mundum quit ab omni scelere.

Jesu, quem velatum nunc aspicio,
Oro, fiat illud quod tam sitio:
Ut te revelata cernens facie,
Visu sim beátus tuæ gloriæ. Amen.

Translation by Gerard Manly Hopkins, SJ

Godhead here in hiding, Whom I do adore,
Masked by these bare shadows, shape & nothing more,
See, Lord, at thy service low lies here a heart
Lost, all lost in wonder at the God thou art.

Seeing, touching, tasting are in Thee deceived:
How says trusty hearing? That shall be believed;
What God's Son has told me, take for truth I do;
Truth Himself speaks truly or there's nothing true.

On the cross Thy Godhead made no sign to men;
Here Thy very manhood steals from human ken:
Both are my confession, both are my belief,
And I pray the prayer of the dying thief.

I am not like Thomas, wounds I cannot see,
But can plainly call Thee Lord and God as he;
This faith each day deeper be my holding of,
Daily make me harder hope and dearer love.

O Thou, our reminder of the Crucified,
Living Bread, the life of us for whom he died,
Lend this life to me, then: feed and feast my mind,
There be Thou the sweetness man was meant to find.

Like what tender tales tell of the Pelican,
Bathe me, Jesus Lord, in what thy bosom ran
Blood but that one drop has the pow'r to win
All the world forgiveness of its world of sin.

Jesus, whom I look at shrouded here below,
I beseech thee send me what I thirst for so,
Some day to gaze on Thee face to face in light
And be blest forever with Thy glory's sight.