

Masters Corner

Authentic Liturgy, Authentic Chant

by Paul F. Ford

ASKED TO REFLECT ON THE “MISSAL OF POPE BENEDICT XVI” IN LIGHT OF THE “MUSICAL REFORM OF THE MUSICAL REFORM” MOVEMENT, I BEGIN BY QUESTIONING IF THERE IS SUCH A THING AS THE missal of Benedict XVI.

Nothing in the Holy Father’s official teaching¹ ought to be construed as anything other than (1) affirmations of the essential truth and goodness of the postconciliar liturgical reforms and (2) reminders about some dimensions of this reform that need more attention (particularly, sacrality and beauty).

As Father Anthony Ruff, OSB, reminded us in a previous Masters Corner essay [vol. 22, no. 1]:

Pope Benedict’s goal is to put the reformed liturgy in a different light—not as something completely different from the old liturgy, but as something that stands within the entire preceding history of the liturgy. In his mind, he is not simply “going back” to pre-Vatican II practices; rather, he is applying to the reformed liturgy a hermeneutic of continuity.

Even when Pope Benedict, on his own initiative (the meaning of the term *motu proprio*), “grant[ed] any priest the right to use the pre-Vatican II form of the Mass or other sacraments,” Father Ruff says:

In his letter [Pope Benedict] states that “the two Forms of the usage of the Roman Rite can be mutually enriching.” He claims that “the celebration of the Mass according to the Missal of Paul VI will be able to demonstrate, more powerfully than has been the case hitherto, the sacrality which attracts many people to the former usage.”

The ordinary missal of the Roman rite is the missal of Pope Paul VI. The *General Instruction* (GIRM) of this missal has been in force since 1970. The personal preferences of the present Holy Father are just that: personal preferences. He knows well that these preferences are circumscribed by his duty to keep in mind the common spiritual good of the people of God, rather than his own inclinations, so that the use of the wide options might correspond as closely as possible to the needs, spiritual preparation, and culture of those taking part.

111. Among all who are involved with regard to the rites, pastoral aspects, and music there should be harmony and diligence in the effective preparation of each liturgical celebration in accord with the Missal and other liturgical books. This should take place under the direction of the rector of the church and after the consultation with the faithful about things that directly pertain to them. The priest who presides at the celebration, however, always retains the right of arranging those things that are his own responsibility.²

And why should there be harmony and diligence in the preparation of any liturgy? The answer is found in paragraph 352 of the *General Instruction*.

The pastoral effectiveness of a celebration will be greatly increased if the texts of the readings, the prayers, and the liturgical songs correspond as closely as possible to the needs, spiritual preparation, and culture of those taking part. This is achieved by appropriate use of the wide options described below.

The priest, therefore, in planning the celebration of Mass, should have in mind the common spiritual good of the people of God, rather than his own inclinations. He should, moreover, remember that the selection of different parts is to be made in agreement with those who have some role in the celebration, including the faithful, in regard to the parts that more directly pertain to each. (emphasis added)³

There is a liturgical and ministerial spirituality here, and not just for the ordained: Having in mind the common spiritual good of the people of God, rather than one’s own inclinations, so that the use of the wide options might correspond as closely as possible to the needs, spiritual preparation, and culture of those taking part, all of us musicians must abstain from tyrannizing the assembly with our likes and dislikes.

(Revisiting the wide options described in the *General Instruction* can be very instructive.⁴ Those calling for a “musical reform of the musical reform” would find there every

reasonable use of the traditional music of the Roman rite. Many of us are still singing only modifications of the four-hymn sandwich of the late 1950s, singing *at* Mass rather than singing *the* Mass.)

Emphasizing the common spiritual good of the people of God represents the seismic shifts in sacramental theology that began in 1903 along three (happy-)fault lines: the active participation of all the priestly people of God, the primacy of the word of God, and liturgy as the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Active Participation of All the Priestly People of God

Gordon Truitt underscored the first of these in his Masters Corner essay, “The Rolling Revolution” [vol. 21, no. 4]. It bears repeating that Pope Saint Pius X balanced the church’s previous stress on the *fact* of sacraments with a new awareness of the *fruitfulness* of sacraments—while the *fact* of the sacrament depends on the proper matter, form, and intention, the *fruitfulness* of the sacrament depends on the enlivened dispositions of the recipient.⁵ Pius X reintroduces the factor of dispositions into our calculus, a theme taken up by Pius XI, Pius XII, Paul VI and the Second Vatican Council, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI. This emphasis on enlivened dispositions is found in the very first words of the *General Instruction*:

When he was about to celebrate with his disciples the Passover meal in which he instituted the sacrifice of his Body and Blood, Christ the Lord gave instructions that a large, furnished upper room should be prepared (Lk 22:12). The Church has always regarded this command as applying also to herself when she gives directions about the preparation of *people's hearts and minds* and of the places, rites, and texts for the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist. [emphasis added]

The words in italics—St. Pius X’s

theme of fruitful-participation-by-enlivened-dispositions—are echoed over 120 times in the *General Instruction*.⁶ Remove them and we are in the world of the Extraordinary Form, the missal of Pope Saint Pius V, the “*Rubricae Generales Missalis Romani*,” and the “*Ritus Servandus in Celebration Missae*” (“the general rubrics of the Roman missal” and “the rites to be observed in the celebration of Mass”).

The *entire* Extraordinary Form missal mentions the assembly/congregation/faithful/people some thirty times (only thrice in the Order of Mass) but only to orient the gestures and postures of the celebrant, to mention that a homily may be preached to them, that a special Lenten prayer be prayed over them, or that they should receive ashes, palms, candles, and be allowed to venerate the cross on Good Friday.

By contrast, the *General Instruction* to the Ordinary Form—all by itself—mentions the assembly/congregation/faithful/people over 500 times! The Order of Mass mentions them almost eighty times! And these are differences not just in degree but in kind.

How the Ordinary Form can be enriched by the Extraordinary Form in the matter of ecclesiology escapes me.

The Primacy of the Word

Arguably even more important is the recovery of the primacy of the word of God in all sacraments and sacramentals. Key to understanding this theme is the *Lectionary for Mass: Introduction* (1981), especially articles 3 and 4.

3. The many riches contained in the one word of God are admirably brought out in the different kinds of liturgical celebration and in the different gatherings of the faithful who take part in those celebrations. . . . For then the liturgical celebration, founded primarily on the word of God and sustained by it, becomes a new event and enriches the word itself with new meaning and power. Thus in the Liturgy the

Church faithfully adheres to the way Christ himself read and explained the Sacred Scriptures, beginning with the “today” of his coming forward in the synagogue and urging all to search the Scriptures.

4. In the celebration of the Liturgy the word of God is not announced in only one way nor does it always stir the hearts of the hearers with the same efficacy. Always, however, Christ is present in his word, as he carries out the mystery of salvation, he sanctifies humanity and offers the Father perfect worship.

Moreover, the word of God unceasingly calls to mind and extends the economy of salvation, which achieves its fullest expression in the Liturgy. The liturgical celebration becomes therefore the continuing, complete, and effective presentation of God’s word.

The word of God constantly proclaimed in the Liturgy is always, then, a living and effective word through the power of the Holy Spirit. It expresses the Father’s love that never fails in its effectiveness toward us.

Nothing like this document exists in the Extraordinary Form.⁷ How many Catholics still behave as if all they have to be present for at Mass is the offertory, the consecration, and the priest’s communion (*Baltimore Catechism No. 3*, question 932)?

Possible musical consequence of this theology of the word may be that users of the *Graduale Romanum* may keep the introit in Latin as a call to worship. But they ought to consider surrendering all the graduals, alleluias, tracts, offertories (except when the assembly is well prepared to appreciate them), and the communions of Ordinary Time that evidence no connection to the gospel or any of the readings proclaimed. They might sing the litanies in Greek and Latin now and again: the *Kyries* and the *Agnus*

Deis—few Catholics need to be taught their meaning. Yes, let the choir sing a Latin *Gloria* now and again (but the Creed must be in the vernacular). And what of the *Sanctus*? If it were the only eucharistic acclamation, it could have been sung in Latin by all now and again; but now that it has been joined by three memorial acclamations that ought to be sung in the vernacular, I can think of few pastoral reasons why the *Sanctus* should not regularly be sung in the vernacular.

Why such sacrifices? Because any texts sung must be grounded in the word. The word comes first. And since today's lectionary is a vernacular lectionary, today's music between the readings must be almost always in the vernacular. Indeed, the very meaning of the Incarnation *is* the vernacular: He pitched his tent among us (John 1:14).

How the Ordinary Form can be enriched by the Extraordinary Form in the matter of a theology of the word escapes me. Is anyone seriously proposing exchanging a lectionary that contains 57.8% of the gospels, 25.4% of the rest of the New Testament, and 3.7% of the Old Testament for a lectionary that contains 22.4% of the gospels, 11% of the rest of the New Testament, and 0.39% of the Old Testament?⁸

The Work of the Holy Spirit

“The Lord be with you”—“And also with you” is more than a nice greeting. Cardinal Yves Congar, OP, tells us that this greeting is actually a prayer that means “The Lord who is the Spirit be with you, the baptized and confirmed, as you pray”—“And may the Spirit be also with you as you lead us in prayer.”⁹ This prayer was considered so sacred that it was used only once during the Mass, at the beginning of the eucharistic prayer, when the presider asked the assembly to pray that he be inspired to improvise well the eucharistic prayer.

Why it is so sacred is because it is a prayer to the Holy Spirit poised, so to speak, between the presider and the assembly for the rekindling of the gift given all in baptism/confirmation and

the gift given the presider in ordination in order that what was about to be done could be done and could be fruitful. After all, liturgy works *because* “The Father *always* hears the prayer of his Son's Church which, in the epiclesis of each sacrament, expresses her faith in the power of the Spirit” (*Catechism*, 1127 [emphasis added]).¹⁰

How the Ordinary Form can be enriched by the Extraordinary Form in the matter of pneumatology escapes me. Is anyone seriously proposing exchanging a Missal that has fourteen eucharistic prayers, thirteen of which with explicit epicleses for consecration and communion, for a Missal that has only one eucharistic prayer with only an implicit epiclesis?

In Light of the Musical Reform of the Musical Reform

Leaders in the Church Music Association of America have published their vision of how “the two Forms of the usage of the Roman Rite can be mutually enriching” in the Winter 2010 issue of *Sacred Music*, generously available at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/50962638/Sacred-Music-Winter-2010>.

There, in “Practical Sacrality,” an editorial by William Mahrt, “The Relationship between the Ordinary and Extraordinary Forms of the Liturgy,” an article by Dcn. Edward Schaefer, and “A Plan for Mutual Enrichment,” a commentary by Fr. Christopher Smith, you can read thoughtful proposals for the musical reform of the musical reform.

William Mahrt and I agree about singing the dialogues, chant ordinaries, and propers (*mutatis mutandis*). “Even better would be to sing a good adaptation of the full Gregorian melody to English,” says Mahrt. Not quite so, say I: The music is not primary, the words are; if English words, then English stresses and English syntax. English is not a Romance language; it can be married well to syllabic and neumatic melodies but hold the melismas.

Mahrt says, “Gregorian propers in Latin are more beautiful, a greater good.” A qualified yes to the first assertion, a qualified no to the second. If

“good for the needs, spiritual preparation, and culture of those taking part,” then yes.

There is no further space here to take issue with Dcn. Edward Schaefer's six “Lessons the Novus Ordo Can Learn from the Tridentine Mass,” or Fr. Christopher Smith's “Plan for Mutual Enrichment.” The enrichment they suggest is almost all one way.

Authentically Authentic Liturgy

William Mahrt's premise is characteristic of the proponents of the musical reform of the musical reform: “Music must be the vehicle of maintaining the sacredness of the liturgy, at least when it is music that is unambiguously sacred.” My premise is that the essence of the *musical* reform of the Second Vatican Council is contained in the following passage from the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*:

112. . . . 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.¹¹

Many have remarked that this is a more functional definition; but it can be better thought of as a ministerial definition. The holiness of liturgical music is heard in the way that it abets the liturgical action. If that action is praying, sung praying delights/stirs/sobers us; if that action is unifying, “sung unifying” unifies us better than any other effort to unify; if the action is solemnifying, sung solemnifying solemnizes better than any other kind of solemnizing.

“Abets the liturgical action” of whom? Not of God, precisely, nor of the angels. Of the saints, perhaps. Of the church, yes, indeed: hierarchically arranged from the person in the pew down to the bishop, who an early third century text says must give up his chair if there is no other place for a poor person to sit.¹² That's ministerial!

Back to paragraph 352 of the *Gen-*

eral Instruction:

The pastoral effectiveness of a celebration will be greatly increased if the texts of the readings, the prayers, and the liturgical songs correspond as closely as possible to the needs, spiritual preparation, and culture of those taking part.

Depending on the needs, spiritual preparation, and culture of those taking part, this coming liturgical year may be the *very* year to introduce at

the very least the sung dialogues according to the new ICEL melodies. Cantillating these dialogues gives their texts new prominence and signals to the assembly that a new response is being asked for. The assembly's singing them at more or less the same pitch and the same rate fosters unity.

But depending on the needs, spiritual preparation, and culture of those taking part, this coming liturgical year may be the *worst* year to make any but the necessary changes, hewing to the familiar melodies wherever possible.

All depends on the needs, spiritual

preparation, and culture of those taking part! ♦

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Notes

- 1 His first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est* (25 December 2005), his apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (22 February 2007), and his *motu proprio*, *Summorum Pontificum* (7 July 2007).
- 2 GIRM, 2002. The last sentence is new to this edition. *Sing to the Lord* cites GIRM 111 three times between paragraph 119 and paragraph 122.
- 3 This passage is echoed in the last paragraph of the GIRM that pertains to parishes:

385. In the arranging and choosing of the variable parts of the Mass for the Dead, especially the Funeral Mass (e.g., orations, readings, Prayer of the Faithful), pastoral considerations bearing upon the deceased, the family, and those attending should rightly be taken into account. *Pastors should, moreover, take into special account those who are present at a liturgical celebration or who hear the Gospel on the occasion of the funeral and who may be non-Catholics or Catholics who never or rarely participate in the Eucharist or who seem even to have lost the faith. For priests are ministers of Christ's Gospel for all.* [my emphasis]

These last two sentences are an instance of the greatest principle in Canon Law: *Salus animarum suprema lex*, found in the last canon of the Code, c. 1752: "... and the salvation of souls, which must always be the supreme law in the Church, is to be kept before one's eyes."

As the *Directory for Masses with Children* says:

44. In the choice of readings the criterion to be followed is the quality rather than the quantity of the texts from the Scriptures. A shorter reading is not as such always more suited to children than a lengthy reading. *Everything depends on the spiritual advantage that the reading can bring to the children.*" [my emphasis]

For more of the wisdom contained on these matters in the *Directory for Masses with Children*, see paragraphs 22 and 23, and 38 through 55 of that document.

- 4 See my *Where Two or Three Are Gathered: The Participation of the People and the Role of Music in the New General Instruction of the Roman Missal / Donde Dos o Tres Se Reúnen: La Participación del Pueblo y el Papel de la Música en la Nueva Instrucción General del Misal Romano* (self-published, January 2011).

- 5 *Sacra Tridentina* 8:4:

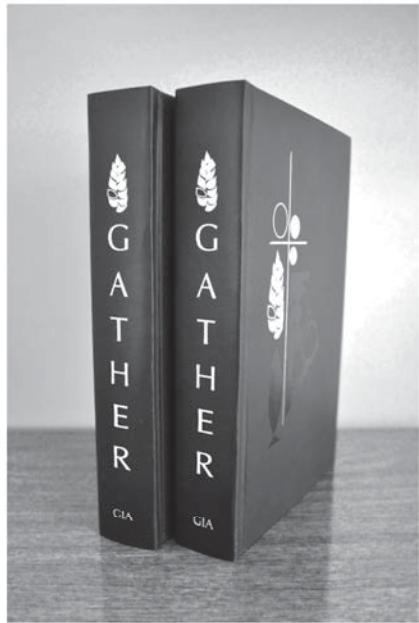
Since, however, the Sacraments of the New Law, though they produce their effect *ex opere operato*, nevertheless, produce a great effect in proportion as the dispositions of the recipient are better, therefore, one should take care that Holy Communion be preceded by careful preparation, and followed by an appropriate thanksgiving, according to each one's strength, circumstances and duties.

- 6 See *Where Two or Three Are Gathered*.

- 7 The theology of the second edition of the *Lectionary for Mass: Introduction* is western and eastern. In the West, Saint Augustine teaches that sacraments are visible words (On John 15:1–3 [*In Evangelium Ioannis Tractatus* 80:3]). As a consequence, the Eucharist is a visible, hearable, tasteable, touchable, smellable, sensible word. In the East, I teach a synthesis of the theologies of Saints Basil and Ephraem, namely, that the Liturgy of the Word, especially the gospel, is the oven in which the Holy Spirit bakes the eucharistic Bread and that the Liturgy of the Word, especially the gospel, is the cask in which the Holy Spirit ferments the eucharistic Wine. See Ephraem, *de Fide*, X, 8, in Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (New York: Crossroads, 1983), *Volume III: The River of Life Flows East and West*—Part Two, "The Holy Spirit and the Sacraments," 262). Together East and West teach the following:

Thus the eucharist is inseparably sacrament and word since in it the incarnate word sanctifies in the Spirit. That is why the entire liturgy and not only the reading of holy scriptures constitutes a proclamation of the word under the form of doxology and prayer. On the other hand, the word proclaimed is the word made flesh and become sacramental. ("The Mystery of the Church and of the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity," Joint International Com-

- mission for Theological Dialogue Between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, August 1, 1982, *Origins* [August 12, 1982 vol. 12, no. 10, 157–160], II:2:¶3. The French original is at <http://tinyurl.com/4vwduff>.)
- 8 See <http://catholic-resources.org/Lecternary/Statistics.htm>.
- 9 Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 236–237. See also his first volume, 36–37.
- 10 For more see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §§683–741, 976–987, and 1113–1134, as well as my essay “Five Principles for a Renewed Sacramental Theology,” *Essays in Honor of Robert W. Hovda, Series III: Sacred Signs: Commitment and Healing* (<http://www.npm.org/assets/HovdaIII.pdf>), 1–19.
- 11 *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (4 December 1963): “Musica sacra tanto sanctior erit quanto arctius cum actione liturgica connectetur, sive orationem suavius exprimens vel una-
- nimitatem fovere, sive ritus sacros maiorem locupletans sollemnitatem.” The last of the “definitions” of music for the Extraordinary Form is in the 25 December 1955 encyclical, *Musicae Sacrae Disciplina*, of Pius XII:
31. The dignity and lofty purpose of sacred music consists in the fact that its lovely melodies and splendor beautify and embellish the voices of the priest who offers Mass and of the Christian people who praise the Sovereign God. Its special power and excellence should lift up to God the minds of the faithful who are present. It should make 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.
32. The power of sacred music increases the honor given to God by the Church in union with Christ, its Head. Sacred music likewise helps to increase the fruits which the faithful, moved by the sacred harmonies, derive from the holy liturgy. These fruits, as daily experience and many ancient and modern literary sources show, manifest themselves in a life and conduct worthy of a Christian.
- 12 “But if a poor man or woman should come . . . , and especially if they are stricken in years, and there be no place for such, do thou, O bishop, with all thy heart provide a place for them, even if thou have to sit upon the ground; that thou be not as one who respects the persons of men, but that thy ministry may be acceptable with God.” (R. Hugh Connolly, trans, *Didascalia Apostolorum* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929], Chapter XII: To Bishops, last paragraph.)



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