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# A Project on Developing Catholic Liturgical Music in Vietnam

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Project Thesis

A PROJECT ON DEVELOPING CATHOLIC  
LITURGICAL MUSIC IN VIETNAM

By

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requirements for the degree of  
Master of Sacred Theology

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A PROJECT ON DEVELOPING CATHOLIC  
LITURGICAL MUSIC IN VIETNAM

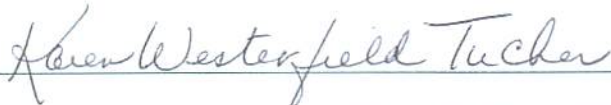
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CL	<i>Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful (Christifideles Laici)</i>
DMS	<i>Instruction on Sacred Music and Sacred Liturgy (De Musica Sacra)</i>
GIRM	<i>General Instruction of the Roman Missal</i>
LA	<i>Liturgiam Authenticam</i>
LFM	<i>Lectionary for Mass</i>
MS	<i>Instruction on Sacred Music in the Liturgy (Musicam Sacram)</i>
MSD	<i>Musicae sacrae disciplina</i>
SC	<i>Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium)</i>
STL	<i>Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship</i>
TLS	<i>Tra le sollecitudini</i>
USCCB	United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
VL	<i>Inculturation and the Roman Liturgy (Varietates Legitimae)</i>

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The Christian faith was seeded in the country of Vietnam from the beginning of the 17th century.<sup>1</sup> After more than four hundred years, the Christian Gospel with its message of the Kingdom of God has had an impact only upon approximately 7% of the total population of Vietnam.<sup>2</sup> During that period, music connected closely with the maturity of the Vietnamese Church through both devotional and liturgical activities.

Catholic liturgical music in Vietnam has grown considerably after the reforms following the Second Vatican Council, which called for wider use of the vernacular language in the Roman Catholic Mass.<sup>3</sup> There have been a great number of choral compositions in a variety of types since the first publication of *Sách Lễ Roma* (Roman Missal) and *Sách Bài Đọc* (Lectionary for Mass) in 1970. Also, numerous parish choirs were established to serve in church services.<sup>4</sup> However, the Vietnamese Church must

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<sup>1</sup> According to an edict of 1663, in the first year of *Nguyễn Hòa* (1533) “there was a Westerner named Inekhu who came to the villages Ninh Cường and Quần Anh of the district of Nam Chân and to the village of Trà Lũ of the district of Giao Thủy to preach secretly the false doctrine of Gia Tô (Christianity).” See Phan Thanh Giản, *Khâm Định Việt Sử Thông Giám Cương Mục* [Text and commentary of the complete mirror of Vietnamese History], vol. 33 (1884), plate 6b. Actually, Christianity began to establish its positions within the local population only after the arrival of Jesuits in the first decades of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. See *Biên Niên Lịch Sử Cổ Trung Đại Việt Nam* [Annals of Old, Medieval and Contemporary Age of Vietnam], (Hanoi, 1987), 307.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 1, *Bảng Tổng Kết Nhân Sự* [Statistics of Vietnamese Catholic Church], Vietnamese Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2008, <http://v3.hdgmvietnam.org/Default.aspx?tabid=96> (accessed February 4, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> The singing of vernacular hymns at low Mass actually became more common after the Sacred Congregation of Rites issued the instruction *De Musica Sacra* (1958).

<sup>4</sup> Pau Văn Chi, *Catholic Choral Music in Vietnam 1945–1975* (Portland: Pastoral Press, 2002), 147.

inevitably continue developing liturgical music with a proper direction in order to reach the goal of the post-conciliar liturgical reform. Recently, two excellent studies of Vietnamese liturgical music have been made by Rev. Paul Văn Chi and Rev. Joseph Nguyễn Xuân Thảo.<sup>5</sup> The first looks at Vietnamese Catholic choral music in terms of history and development; the latter deals with the inculturation of liturgical music and the adoption of Vietnamese musical styles for liturgical music. Both historical and cultural perspectives are very important for an appropriate exercise of sacred music.

According to scholar Edward Foley, “Liturgical music can be defined as that music which weds itself to the liturgical action, serves to reveal the full significance of the rite and, in turn, derives its full meaning from the liturgy.”<sup>6</sup> This definition shows that music functions as an essential component of ritual enactment of the Mystery of Christ and of the Church and draws its theological identity from the liturgical celebration. However, in the past decades, the practice of liturgical music in Vietnam did not change in response to the mandates of Vatican II, principally because of the lack of instruction and poor organization. This reality caused a disordered and undisciplined state in liturgical services at many churches. I think it is necessary to have a project to develop liturgical music in Vietnam. The important questions to be asked are: first, what is the

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<sup>5</sup> Paul Văn Chi’s study titled “Catholic Choral Music in Vietnam 1945-1975” is the thesis for the degree of Master of Art in Music from the California State University (1999). Joseph Nguyễn Xuân Thảo’s study is the doctoral dissertation titled “Music Ministry: The Inculturation of Liturgical Vocal Music in Vietnam” at Catholic Theological Union (2007). There is another Masters thesis titled “Vietnamese Catholic sacred music: faith challenged by socio-political change, 1533-1986” by Anthony Nguyễn from the Graduate Theological Union (2006), but I was not able to obtain a copy of it.

<sup>6</sup> Edward Foley, “Music, Liturgical” in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, ed. Peter Fink (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990), 855.

current state of Vietnamese liturgical music; and second, how should liturgical music develop in the light of Second Vatican Council initiatives and with other contemporary theological developments. My intent in this thesis is to propose an orientation for developing liturgical music in the context of Vietnamese worship. Because of limitations of space, I will concentrate on vocal liturgical music only.

Adhering to Catholic tradition, this thesis will limit itself mostly to Church documents regarding the nature and function of liturgical music, liturgical inculturation, and lay ministry in the Church. The thesis also refers to *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, the newest guidelines on sacred music approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2007. In addition, I have also derived my resource data for this thesis from general sources: books, journals, newspapers, internet sources, and personal interviews with some choirmasters, composers and parishioners in Vietnam.

The reality of facing the future forces one to examine the present for the seeds of developmental possibilities and to look at the past for guidance. The Belgian Roman Catholic theologian Edward Schillebeeckx points out, “Critical remembrances of events in the past have a power to open up the future.”<sup>7</sup> Based upon critical reflections on the actual situation of Vietnamese sacred music, this thesis argues that there is considerable lack of pastoral guidance as well as lack of preparation of those whose ministry involves music. From the church documents concerned with sacred music and contemporary liturgical theology, I then record and explore the role of music in Roman Catholic

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<sup>7</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, *Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 3.

worship and the need to contextualize music in the Vietnamese Church. Next, the thesis presents essential factors for the developmental process and suggests an orientation for the growth of Vietnamese liturgical music, including compositional strategies in response to the need for reform. As a result, I propose a training program for ministers of music in my archdiocese, which would include pastoral, liturgical and musical instruction. In addition, I consider how the local authority and music ministers require more understanding of the changing process in order to sustain ongoing development.

CHAPTER II  
THE CURRENT SITUATION OF LITURGICAL  
MUSIC IN VIETNAM

In regard to the situation of liturgical music in the Catholic dioceses of Vietnam, there have been remarkable advances in recent decades, but there are also many points that need to be realigned with liturgical theology and the Church's teaching on sacred music. I will first comment upon Vietnamese liturgical music in both composition and performance. I then will raise some of the issues facing those who are involved in or responsible for liturgical music as they continue to refine their tasks.

**Compositions of Liturgical Music**

The realm of liturgical music encompasses instrumental as well as vocal genres, but in Roman Catholic understanding vocal music and particularly music sung by the entire assembly is primary. In Vietnam, a body of worthy vernacular liturgical music has developed since the Second Vatican Council. Today, as they continue to serve the Church at prayer, composers are encouraged to concentrate on craftsmanship and artistic excellence in all musical genres.

Masses

The Council desired that the faithful be able to sing parts of the Ordinary of the Mass together.<sup>1</sup> In the years immediately following the liturgical reforms of the Council,

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<sup>1</sup> See *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium)*, no. 54.

Vietnamese composers worked to provide Mass settings in the vernacular using Vietnamese texts based on the official translation approved by the Vatican. There have also been some Mass settings in other indigenous languages, but they are not the official translations. These Masses usually include *Kinh Thương Xót* (Kyrie), *Kinh Vinh Danh* (Gloria), *Kinh Tin Kính* (Credo), *Thánh, Thánh, Thánh* (Sanctus), and *Chiên Thiên Chúa* (Agnus Dei). It is difficult to enumerate exactly how many contemporary Vietnamese settings there are at this point, but I think it is not less than forty. Among existing Masses, the *Bộ Lễ Seraphim* (Mass of Seraphim) by Nguyễn Văn Hòa—the first Mass setting in Vietnamese text—is the most popular in the country.<sup>2</sup> Example 1.1 is the *Kinh Thương Xót* (Kyrie) of this Mass setting.

Ex. 1.1: *Kinh Thương Xót* (Kyrie) from Mass of Seraphim

The musical score consists of three systems, each with two parts (A and B) on a single staff. The notes are in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are written below the notes.

System 1:  
 A: Xin Chúa thương xót chúng con. Lord\_\_\_\_, have mer - cy.  
 B: Xin Chúa thương xót chúng con. Lord\_\_\_\_, have mer - cy.

System 2:  
 A: Xin Chúa Ki - tô thương xót chúng con. Christ Je - sus, have mer - cy.  
 B: Xin Chúa Ki - tô thương xót chúng con. Christ Je - sus, have mer - cy.

System 3:  
 A: Xin Chúa thương xót chúng con. Lord\_\_\_\_, have mer - cy.  
 B: Xin Chúa thương xót chúng con. Lord\_\_\_\_, have mer - cy.

This setting was influenced by plainchant and is based on church mode I (Dorian). The

<sup>2</sup> Văn Chi, *Catholic Choral Music*, 120.

choice of church mode was an effort to practice the principle that “the more closely a composition for church approaches in its movement, inspiration and savor the Gregorian form, the more sacred and liturgical it becomes.”<sup>3</sup> Its monophonic texture is appropriate for unison singing of the entire assembly or for singing alternatively between the choir and the congregation.

Another Mass, the *Bộ Lễ Ca Lên Đì 2* (The Second Let-Us-Sing Mass) by Kim Long, is also very popular. The following example 1.2 is the *Chiên Thiên Chúa* (Agnus Dei) of the Mass.

Ex. 1.2: *Chiên Thiên Chúa* (Agnus Dei) from the Second Let-Us-Sing Mass

Lạy Chiên Thiên Chúa, Đấng xóa tội trần gian. Xin thương xót chúng  
*Lamb of God, you take a-way the sins of the world: have mer - cy on*

con. Lạy Chiên Thiên Chúa, Đấng xóa tội trần gian. Xin thương  
*us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sins of the world: have mer -*

xót, xin thương xót chúng con. Lạy Chiên Thiên Chúa, Đấng xóa  
*cy, have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the*

tội trần gian. Xin ban bình an cho chúng con.  
*sins of the world grant us peace, grant us peace.*

This Mass was based on the F major tonal center and was sung in responsorial singing

<sup>3</sup> Pope Pius X, *Tra le Sollecitudini*, no. 3.

style. It was written in a combination of monophonic and homophonic textures.<sup>4</sup>

Of the few Requiem Mass set in Vietnamese, the *Thánh Lễ Cầu Hồn* (Mass for the Dead) by Mỹ Sơn is the most frequently performed setting in most of the Vietnamese Catholic communities. It is based on the G minor scale and was set in monophonic texture and the meter 2/4. In addition to the Ordinary movements, this Mass includes *Ca Nhập Lễ* (Introit), *Đáp Ca* (Responsorial Psalm), Alleluia, and *Ca Hiệp Lễ* (Communion).<sup>5</sup>

### Psalms

The Responsorial Psalm in the Liturgy of the Word of the Mass “holds great liturgical and pastoral importance, because it fosters meditation on the word of God.”<sup>6</sup> It should be sung or recited responsorially by the cantor or the choir and the whole congregation.<sup>7</sup> Some composers have made every effort to meet that direction. Actually, many pieces were written in this form with a refrain and some verses that paraphrase the psalm text to fit the same melody. Therefore, they are psalm paraphrases written to be used in place of the Responsorial Psalm. There are currently several collections of the Psalms and antiphons such as the *Thánh Vịnh Đáp Ca* (Responsorial Psalms) by Kim Long and the *Hát Thánh Vịnh* (Singing the Psalms) by Xuân Thảo. These two collections are very popular because they meet the requirements for the Responsorial Psalms. The former is simple and singable for every congregation. The latter attempts to create

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<sup>4</sup> Văn Chi, *Catholic Choral Music*, 121.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>6</sup> *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 61.

<sup>7</sup> *Lectionary for Mass*, no. 20.

different melodies to be wedded to the original text of psalm verses. These verses therefore need to be sung by the trained cantors.

### Hymns

The Catholic hymn heritage is plentiful and diverse for both choirs and congregation. Because of the characteristics of the Vietnamese language, one has to create a new tune for a given text instead of choosing an existing tune for it. Thus, when we talk about a hymn or a song we mean both the composition of the melody and the Vietnamese text. Based on the current collections, and according to some musicians, the total number of hymns now is approximately 100,000.<sup>8</sup> Most hymns are based on the strophic form, Western tonal harmony, and a simple melody.<sup>9</sup> They usually include three or four *phiên khúc* (verses) set in monophonic texture and one *điệp khúc* (refrain or chorus) set in homophonic texture.<sup>10</sup> In Vietnamese hymns or songs the pitch of notes must match the proper relationship of tone for the word in order to avoid a different meaning. Therefore, voices moving together in parallel motion must be given attention in homophonic harmony. In some cases counter melodies are used rather than homophonic harmony because the contrary motion may distort the meaning of the text.

Vietnamese Catholic music in general was influenced by several other sacred music sources, including Gregorian chant, classic Western polyphony, French religious

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<sup>8</sup> Committee on Sacred Music, “Tình Hình Thánh Nhạc Hiện Nay,” *Hát Lên Mừng Chúa* 39 [Sing to the Lord] (2002): 4.

<sup>9</sup> Văn Chi, *Catholic Choral Music*, 96.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

music, and American music.<sup>11</sup> The melodies of many songs were based on Gregorian chant or classic tunes.<sup>12</sup> Some composers followed French techniques in their compositions.<sup>13</sup> Thus, numerous vocal works were influenced by French choral music in strophic form, melody, harmony, and rhythm. Other typical church music, influenced by American popular music and music of worship in the 1970s, was named the *Nhạc Vào Đời* (Sacred Music into Life) or *Thánh Ca Nhạc Trẻ* (Sacred Music for Youth).<sup>14</sup> This music typically developed rapidly throughout the country. The songs of this style are still sung in liturgical services of the Catholic and Protestant communities. Currently, several composers are exploring songs that are in a more Asian style, incorporating pentatonic folk song scales in their melodies.<sup>15</sup> According to a survey in the project named “Music Ministry: The Inculturation of Liturgical Vocal Music in Vietnam,” conducted by Nguyễn Xuân Thảo, ten of the top twenty liturgical songs make use of the pentatonic scale in their melody in some way.<sup>16</sup> I will discuss this approach in more detail in chapter V which deals with the topic of composition based on Vietnamese folksongs.

It has been recently found that many songs are closely connected with the liturgical action and accord with the structure of the liturgy. A majority of the new

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<sup>11</sup> Văn Chi, 127.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>13</sup> Hải Linh, “Nhạc Đa Điệu Việt Nam” [Vietnamese Polyphonic Music], *Thời Điểm Công Giáo* 34-35 (1993): 57.

<sup>14</sup> Văn Chi, 126.

<sup>15</sup> Nguyễn Duy, *Thánh Ca trong Phụng Vụ* [Sacred Songs in Liturgy] (Saigon, 2000), 329.

<sup>16</sup> Nguyễn Xuân Thảo, “The Inculturation of Liturgical Vocal Music in Vietnam” (D. min. diss, Catholic Theological Union, 2007), 42.

compositions have the Word of God in their text. However, there are also several songs which do not fit the criteria of liturgical music. These compositions focus principally upon an emotional response to the musical form and are not concerned with theology and liturgy. In addition, a few songs borrowed styles of secular music that did not match the solemnity and holiness of the liturgical ceremony. This reflects the fact that many people do not distinguish between liturgical music and religious music. Some songs are suitable for other religious activities such as catechesis or retreat, but not for the liturgy.

### **The Practice of Liturgical Music**

To date, there has not been any official research on the state of liturgical music in the average Vietnamese parish. The most substantial information was published in some articles in *Hương Trầm* (Holy Melody) and *Hát Lên Mừng Chúa* (Sing to the Lord).<sup>17</sup> Some was also reported at annual national conferences on sacred music or workshops conducted by diocesan commissions for sacred music.

The Eucharist is a celebration of salvation; singing is natural at celebrations. Among the parts to be sung, preference should be given “especially to those to be sung by the priest or the deacon or the lector, with the people responding, or by the priest and people together.”<sup>18</sup> The dialogues of the liturgy are fundamental because they “are not simply outward signs of communal celebration but foster and bring about communion

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<sup>17</sup> *Hương Trầm* is issued quarterly by Vietnamese Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Sacred Music; *Hát Lên Mừng Chúa* is the monthly magazine by the Liturgical Music Commission of the Archdiocese of Saigon.

<sup>18</sup> See GIRM, no. 40; MS, nos. 7 and 16.

between priest and people.”<sup>19</sup> In fact, not many celebrants sing their parts in the opening dialogue and the Preface, the invitation to the Memorial Acclamation, and the concluding Doxology. The Eucharistic Prayer is the central action of the entire celebration, but it is rarely sung on Sundays and even more rarely on solemn occasions.

The singing of the Ordinary of the Mass (i.e., Kyrie or Gloria, Sanctus, Benedictus and Agnus Dei) is common at most Saturday evening and Sunday Masses. The Responsorial Psalm is also sung or at least the response alone may be sung, while the cantor chants the verses of the Psalm. The singing of hymns at Mass became common after the liturgical reform of the Second Vatican Council. It is from this that the pattern of singing four hymns arose. These hymns replace the Missal texts of the Introit, Offertory, and Communion, and a fourth hymn is sung as a Recessional.

The choir is an integral part of the liturgical congregations in many Vietnamese churches. Usually there is a choir at all Sunday Masses, though the size of the choir depends on the demographics of the parish. Choirs tend to be grouped by age: adult choirs, young adult choirs and children’s choirs. Thus, there are often several choirs in a parish. These choirs usually consist of between twenty and forty members, and serve at Masses designed for their respective age groups.<sup>20</sup>

Congregational singing in the Mass has been desired, and practiced successfully at a few churches. Bishop Tri Bửu Thiên, however, observes that “in the special

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<sup>19</sup> GIRM, no. 34.

<sup>20</sup> In Vietnam, for social and pastoral reason, Sunday masses usually divided by age: elder, youth and children.

ceremonies, the choirs often perform choral singing and forget the congregational character of the liturgical celebration.”<sup>21</sup> Indeed, the choirs focus on performance so much that they weaken the participation of the congregation though the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium)* requires that “whenever the sacred action is to be celebrated with song” the entire assembly “be able to contribute that active participation which is rightly theirs.”<sup>22</sup> In many Masses, the processional hymns—often the strongest place for congregational singing—become anthems sung by the choir.

Electronic organ and piano are the most common instruments used during services, but occasionally guitars or obbligato instruments will be found. On major feast days such as *Tết Nguyên Đán* (Lunar New Year), or the Feast of Vietnamese Martyrs, a ceremonial drum and gong will be used. The newest development in Vietnamese liturgical music is the incorporation of traditional Vietnamese instruments in the liturgy. Some of those instruments are the *sáo* (transverse flutes), *độc huyền cầm* (monochord), *đàn tranh* (sixteen-stringed zither), and *mỹ* (wooden tam-tam). They are especially appropriate to accompany songs based on folk music.

In some parishes, the pastors were interested in guiding the lay ministers, choir members and parishioners about liturgy and sacred music as the Council required: “Composers and singers must also be given a genuine liturgical training.”<sup>23</sup> In addition, many churches have been fully aware of the need to select hymns with texts excerpted, or

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<sup>21</sup> Tri Bửu Thiên, “Một Số Nhận Định và Đề Nghị về Thánh Nhạc” [Some Evaluations and Propositions about Liturgical Music] (Cần Thơ, 2004).

<sup>22</sup> SC, no. 114.

<sup>23</sup> SC, no. 115.

at least inspired, from Scripture. The Church's ideal of a sung liturgy with full and active congregational participation appears most often to be realized in those parishes which provide hymnals and make a careful selection of the music to be sung, and which judiciously deploy the music between choir and congregation.

### **Present Concerns**

An important question arises from the information presented above: "What should the Catholic Church in Vietnam do?" It is clear that education forms a large part of the answer. I think that at least two major needs can be identified for the Vietnamese Church: education and management.

#### Education

There is a need to build a program of training for clergy and musicians. "Great importance is to be attached to the teaching and practice of music in seminaries, in the novitiates and houses of study of religious of both sexes, and also in other Catholic institutions and schools."<sup>24</sup> Traditionally, liturgical music leadership in Vietnamese parish life would have been the responsibility of volunteer choir directors. These volunteer leaders normally were primarily responsible for choosing the repertoire and rehearsing with and directing the parish choir for the Sunday Mass. They may or may not have had formal musical training, but they could read standard notation; they may or may not have had formal liturgical training, but could decipher the *ordo* to determine

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

which texts would be appropriate for a given celebration. Generally, they did not fully meet the requirements as required by Vatican II that “composers and singers must be given a genuine liturgical training.”<sup>25</sup> Each diocese therefore should have a training program for those who have the ability to serve especially in music ministry. New musicians and composers must be trained in special and useful music courses to improve their composing and conducting techniques. It remains a painful truth that the best art music composers are conspicuously absent in contemporary liturgical repertoires in Vietnam.

An issue facing contemporary composers is what variety of language is appropriate for liturgical song. Once venturing beyond the officially approved liturgical texts and direct biblical settings, they really need the association and assistance of lyricists. For that reason, there is also a need for composers who are trained to a high level of expertise in both musicianship and theology. The training programs and supporting plans for professionals would help them, as Catholic composers, to continue to respond to the mandate of the Second Vatican Council by producing increasingly sophisticated and practical ritual music. At the same time, there is an equally urgent need to educate clergy and others with pastoral responsibility to understand that music is the main medium by which the faithful participate in the Church’s corporate worship. Education must be one of the highest priorities for the liturgy, deservedly a major beneficiary of the Church’s financial and personnel resources.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

## Management

There is concern about the current lack of official leadership in the area of liturgical music. This problem exists at national, regional and diocesan levels. As a result, there is a lack of material and guidance for those who work in the area of sacred music. Actually, the Conference of Vietnamese Bishops' Committee on Sacred Music issued three notices about liturgical music in 1994.<sup>26</sup> The first one is a general guide for the practice of sacred music. The second discusses the censoring or approval of new compositions. The last one is a guide for composing and using songs in the Mass. These notices came too late since the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* of the Second Vatican Council and the *Instruction on Sacred Music in the Liturgy* by the Sacred Congregation of Rites in 1967. After a period of fifteen years, these notices now need to be updated and adjusted to the present circumstance of liturgical celebration. This could be made in an official document explaining clearly and meticulously the instructions on sacred music from the Catholic Church's documents. It would certainly be a task for the Committee on Sacred Music that would then be approved by the Vietnam Conference of Catholic Bishops.

If the Conference of Bishops does not issue general rules, the bishops of the dioceses have an obligation to instruct clearly about sacred music.<sup>27</sup> In order to do that, every diocese should have a commission for sacred music.<sup>28</sup> This commission should

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<sup>26</sup> See Appendix 2.

<sup>27</sup> See MS, no. 22.

<sup>28</sup> MS, no. 46.

seek consultation with competent, practicing church musicians. Besides issuing the instructions and holding training programs, the commission on sacred music is also responsible for compiling a hymnal consisting of traditional hymns as well as new compositions. This collection will serve as an official resource of music for the purpose of devotion and liturgy.

CHAPTER III  
LITURGICAL MUSIC SUBSEQUENT TO VATICAN II

**Music as an Integral Part of Roman Catholic Liturgy**

Catholic liturgy is the public and official worship of Almighty God by the Church, as distinct from personal spiritual practices. Every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of His Body the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others.<sup>1</sup> In liturgy the Church celebrates its faith by symbols and rituals. Practically, liturgical art is used in liturgy as an expression of faith and to inspire faith. Pope Pius XII states in *Musicae sacrae disciplina* that “sacred music enters more intimately into divine worship than many other liberal arts” and that music “has an important place in the actual performance of the sacred ceremonies and rites themselves.”<sup>2</sup> In its 1958 instruction *De musica sacra*, the Sacred Congregation of Rites implied the intrinsic connection between music and liturgy by directing that “instructions on sacred music and sacred liturgy cannot be separated.”<sup>3</sup> The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* of the Second Vatican Council affirms anew that music is to be integral to the liturgy because it helps effect the mystery being celebrated through the liturgical action.<sup>4</sup> Every time we gather for liturgy we are the Church visibly united in communal surrender to the Paschal Mystery which defines our lives. Within and through the rite,

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<sup>1</sup> See SC, no. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Pius XII, *Musicae sacrae disciplina*, no. 30.

<sup>3</sup> Sacred Congregation of Rites, *De musica sacra*, no. 104.

<sup>4</sup> See SC, no. 112.

we surrender as one body to this redemptive mystery, and as one body we undergo transformation to new life. Music has an important role in the liturgy to help us surrender to the Paschal Mystery as it unfolds within the rite.

The Constitution also asserts that the purpose of sacred music is the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful.<sup>5</sup> Clearly, liturgical music has the same purpose as that of liturgy. The liturgy's purpose is declared to be simultaneously God-oriented and humanity-oriented.<sup>6</sup> On the one hand, God is glorified in the liturgy and therefore by liturgical music used in the liturgy. In the liturgy, Christians glorify God by acknowledging faithfully what God is and does, celebrating what God has done and is doing through Christ in the power of the Spirit, and proclaiming to others God's true weight in the scheme of things. On the other hand, liturgy, and therefore music used in the liturgy, transforms the participants in holiness and builds them up in faith. At its core sanctification means the condition or process by which human beings participate in the very holiness of God. Thus the fundamental purpose of Roman Catholic liturgical music is to transform human beings in grace as, Spirit-filled, they acknowledge God's deeds, preeminently in Jesus.<sup>7</sup>

The Council describes "the ministerial function supplied by sacred music in the service of the Lord" in this way: "it adds delight to prayer, fosters unity of spirit, or

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> SC, no. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Jan Michael Jonas, *From Sacred Song to Ritual Music: Twentieth-Century Understandings of Roman Catholic Worship Music* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1997), 33-4.

confers greater solemnity upon the sacred rites.”<sup>8</sup> These functions of liturgical music would help to fulfill its purpose in liturgy. “Conferring greater solemnity upon the sacred rites” corresponds to glorifying God. Truly, our tradition affirms music’s capacity to serve as “a vehicle of God’s self-revelation without localizing or confining God.”<sup>9</sup> The other two functions that correspond to sanctifying the faithful are “adding delight to prayer” and “fostering unity of spirit.” According to Michael Joncas, “adding delight to prayer” is not to be interpreted as providing psychological or emotional uplift by means of entertaining sounds. He writes, “The Latin phrase *orationem suavius exprimens* might be more literally translated ‘expressing prayer more pleasantly.’ The emphasis remains on interior and exterior participation in the liturgical act, engaged in a more gratifying way through liturgical music.”<sup>10</sup> “Fostering unity of spirit” is likewise to be understood as something more than engendering a superficial and passing feeling of fellowship. Liturgical unity stems from the action of God through Christ in the Holy Spirit calling people out to be the Church of God. Liturgical music may help to express and deepen this spiritual union.<sup>11</sup>

One can find in the *Instruction on Music in the Liturgy* from the Sacred Congregation of Rites a clearer explanation of the functions of liturgical music: “Through this form (liturgy celebrated in song), prayer is expressed in a more attractive way, the

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<sup>8</sup> SC, no. 112.

<sup>9</sup> *The Milwaukee Symposia for Church Composers: A Ten-Year Report* (1992), no. 13.

<sup>10</sup> Joncas, *From Sacred Song to Ritual Music*, 39.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

mystery of the liturgy, with its hierarchical and community nature, is more openly shown, the unity of hearts is more profoundly achieved by the union of voices, minds are more easily raised to heavenly things by the beauty of the sacred rites, and the whole celebration more clearly prefigures that heavenly liturgy which is enacted in the holy city of Jerusalem.”<sup>12</sup> Indeed, singing in liturgy reveals our disposition of soul toward participation with the Church in communal surrender to the Paschal Mystery. Because it is such a revelation of presence and of interiority, singing is the most deeply individualized contribution to liturgical worship which we can make.<sup>13</sup>

Most importantly, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* states that music more effectively fulfills its role “the more closely it is joined to the liturgical rite.”<sup>14</sup> Thus the Council establishes that the value of liturgical music is not primarily its aesthetic qualities but its efficacious connection with the rite. The music never serves itself nor functions apart from the rite. The liturgical “text” which music makes more efficacious is not only word but also ritual action. Sacred music both communicates the liturgical mystery to the assembled community and enables them to participate more fully and personally in the mystery. Clearly music used in the rite is functional but this functioning goes beyond mere musical embellishment of verbal texts. The deepest function of the music is a theological one—the music collaborates with the rite to actualize ritual enactment of communal identity as the Body of Christ surrendering to

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<sup>12</sup> MS, no. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Kathleen Harmon, “Liturgical Music as Prayer” in *Liturgy and Music*, eds. Robin A. Leaver and Joyca Ann Zimmerman (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 271.

<sup>14</sup> SC, no. 112.

the Paschal Mystery. It is through surrender to this mystery and its call to self-offering that the gathered Church glorifies God, finds sanctification, and participates with Christ in the salvation of the world.

The Council “acknowledges Gregorian chant as being specially suited to the Roman liturgy,” and said that “other things being equal, it should be given pride of place in liturgical services.” As for other types of music, these, “especially polyphony, are by no means excluded from liturgical celebrations, so long as they accord with the spirit of the liturgical action.”<sup>15</sup> Gregorian chant, Pope Pius X said, “has always been regarded as the supreme model for sacred music.”<sup>16</sup> He also singled out “classic polyphony, especially of the Roman school” (such as the works of Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina) as agreeing “admirably with Gregorian chant.”<sup>17</sup> However, since the vernacular text and chant are not always in accord and “the nature and laws of each language must be respected,” the Sacred Congregation of Rites allowed for the composition of new music for all parts of the Mass.<sup>18</sup>

Of all the sounds of which human beings are capable, voice is the most privileged and fundamental. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, in his book *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, shows that liturgical music is related to the events of God’s saving action to which the Bible bears witness and which the liturgy makes present. Thus “the relation of liturgical music

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<sup>15</sup> SC, no. 116.

<sup>16</sup> Pope Pius X, *Tra le Sollecitudini*, no. 3.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 4.

<sup>18</sup> MS, no. 54.

to *logos* means, first of all, simply its relation to words. That is why singing in the liturgy has priority over instrumental music, though it does not in any way exclude it (instrumental music).”<sup>19</sup> Musical instruments in the liturgy are best understood as an extension of and support to the primary liturgical instrument, which is the human voice. Among all other instruments which are suitable for divine worship, the organ is “accorded pride of place”<sup>20</sup> because of its capacity to sustain the singing of a large gathered assembly due to both its size and its ability to give resonance to the fullness of human sentiments, from joy to sadness, from praise to lamentation. Many other instruments also enrich the celebration of the liturgy “according to longstanding local usage, provided they are truly apt for sacred use or can be rendered apt.”<sup>21</sup> Although instruments are used in Catholic worship primarily to lead and sustain the singing of assembly, choir, psalmist, and cantor, they may also, when appropriate, be played by themselves at appropriate moments. Such instrumental music can assist the gathering assembly in preparing for worship in the form of a prelude. It may also give voice to the sentiments of the human heart through pieces played during the liturgy and postludes after the liturgy.

The liturgical reform is meant to help and dispose the faithful to come closer to God. The means used to reach this goal will be different at different periods of history, but all must have this in common: respect for the holiness, dignity and majesty of God,

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<sup>19</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of Liturgy*, (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000), 149.

<sup>20</sup> See GIRM, no. 393.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

our Father.<sup>22</sup> Music—with and without texts—may be viewed as a language of faith. “The liturgy provides the principal context and a framework for the development of this language.”<sup>23</sup> It is only by uniting that liturgy and sacred music can express the dignity of the divine service: together they can express and promote the liturgical piety of people in a multiplicity of artistic solutions.

### **Active Participation of the Congregation by Singing**

The liturgical reforms promoted by the Second Vatican Council are evaluated by Robert F. Taft as “an overwhelming success, returning the liturgy to the people of God to whom it rightly belongs.”<sup>24</sup> Active participation (*participatio actuosa*) of the faithful was indeed emphasized by the Council Fathers though it was not a concept created by them. Even the very words “*actuosa participatio*” can be found in the writings of other popes over the past one hundred years.<sup>25</sup> Pope Pius X called for it in his instruction on sacred music, *Tra le sollecitudini*, when he said that “the faithful assemble to draw that spirit from its primary and indispensable source, that is from active participation in the sacred mysteries and in the public and solemn prayer of the

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<sup>22</sup> Guilherme Schubert, “The Renewal of Sacred Music” in *Sacred Music and Liturgy Reform after Vatican II*, ed. Johannes Overath (Rome: Consociatio Internationalis Musicae Sacrae, 1969), 188.

<sup>23</sup> Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, “Music as a Language of Faith,” University of Notre Dame, June 2004, <http://liturgy.nd.edu/conference/papers/2004/tucker2004.shtml> (accessed September 12, 2008).

<sup>24</sup> Robert F. Taft, “Return to Our Roots” *America* 198.18 (May 26, 2008): 10. Robert F. Taft is emeritus professor of Oriental liturgy at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome and consultant for liturgy of the Vatican Congregation for the Oriental Churches.

<sup>25</sup> See Pope Pius X in his *Motu proprio* on sacred music *Tra le sollecitudini*, November 22, 1903; Pope Pius XI in *Divini cultus*, December 20, 1928; and Pope Pius XII in two of his major encyclicals: *Mystici corporis*, June 29, 1943 and *Mediator Dei*, November 20, 1947.

Church.”<sup>26</sup> Vatican II introduced no radical alteration in the concept of *participatio actuosa* as fostered by the popes for the past decades. The general principle is contained in Article 14 of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*: “Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people’ (1 Pt 2:9 NRS; cf. 2:4-5) is their right and duty by reason of their Baptism.”<sup>27</sup>

The Church throughout the ages constantly shared the life of Christ with its members in the Mass and the sacraments, the very actions of Christ Himself working through His Church and His priesthood. The *participatio actuosa* required by the Council may be defined as the form of devout involvement in the liturgical action which best promotes the exercise of the common priesthood of the baptized: that is, their power to offer the sacrifice of the Mass with Christ and to receive the sacraments. The word “full” (*plena*) refers to the integrally human fashion in which the baptized faithful take part in the liturgy, i.e., internally and externally.<sup>28</sup> The word “conscious” (*conscia*) demands a knowledge of what one is doing on the part of the faithful, excluding any superstition or false piety. But the word “active” (*actuosa*) requires some greater examination.

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<sup>26</sup> See Foreword to TLS.

<sup>27</sup> SC, no. 14.

<sup>28</sup> Colman E. O’Neill, “The Theological Meaning of *Actuosa Participatio* in the Liturgy,” in *Sacred Music and Liturgy Reform*, 98.

What are those actions that make for true active participation in the liturgy? These must be both internal and external in quality, since a human is a rational creature with body and soul. This participation must primarily be interior (i.e., union with Christ the Priest; offering with and through him). But the participation of those present becomes fuller if internal attention is joined to external participation. The external actions should be intelligent and understandable, and they must be also sincere and pious internally. The Church proposes many human exterior actions such as the position of the body (genuflecting, standing, sitting), ceremonial gestures, or, in particular, the assembly's responses, prayers and singing. Gestures and words manifest and reinforce the community, and in turn become signs of another reality: the place of the mysterious encounter between God and people, which is itself the object of Christian worship.<sup>29</sup> In brief, active participation requires that "the faithful understand the liturgical ceremonial; that they take part in it by bodily movements, standing, kneeling or sitting as the occasion may demand; that they join vocally in the parts which are intended for them. It also requires that they listen to, and understand, the Liturgy of the Word. It requires, too, that there be moments of silence when the import of the whole ceremonial may be absorbed and deeply personalized."<sup>30</sup>

Ecclesiastical legislation has repeatedly urged that the people should participate in the liturgical ceremonies by singing. In the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, we read,

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<sup>29</sup> Claude Duchesneau and Michel Veuthey, *Music and Liturgy: The Universa Laus Document and Commentary*, trans. Paul Inwood (Washington: Pastoral Press, 1992), 34.

<sup>30</sup> O'Neill, "Actuosa Participatio," in *Sacred Music and Liturgy Reform*, 105.

“To promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons and songs, as well as by actions, gestures and bodily attitudes.”<sup>31</sup> And “bishops and other pastors of souls must be at pains to ensure that, whenever the sacred action is to be celebrated with song, the whole body of the faithful may be able to contribute that active participation which is rightly theirs.”<sup>32</sup> The *Instruction on Sacred Music in the Liturgy* supports the integral role of music in liturgy by asserting that nothing is more solemn or pleasing in liturgical celebrations than “the whole assembly’s expressing its faith and devotion in song.”<sup>33</sup> Consequently, the people’s active participation through song is to be “carefully fostered” and their participation in liturgy through singing those parts proper to them is never to be compromised.<sup>34</sup> These articles show very pointedly that the Church desires that the faithful take part in song in the ecclesial ceremonies. Consequently, the most important form of liturgical music is the singing of the assembly. The realm of liturgical music encompasses instrumental as well as vocal genres, but in Roman Catholic understanding vocal music and particularly music sung by the entire assembly is primary. More than any other activity of liturgy, singing manifests the Christian’s presence and disposition to participate with this here-and-now assembled Church in the paschal dying and rising of Christ. “Through singing we announce that we are here and that we are choosing to be

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<sup>31</sup> SC, no. 30.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., no. 114.

<sup>33</sup> MS, no. 16.

<sup>34</sup> See MS, nos. 5, 9, 10, 15, 16.

here in an active, participative, liturgical way: when we sing we become the ecclesial body at prayer.”<sup>35</sup>

It appears inevitable that implementation of the conciliar decrees will restrict the use of the choir. However, the Council’s document cannot be read as a repudiation of the choir’s function in Roman Catholic liturgy. The force of the document is to ensure that the choir never usurps the congregation’s liturgical role, not that the choirs be disbanded. Indeed the Council’s exhortation to composers in article 121 strongly affirms the continued existence of choirs in liturgy, saying, “Let them produce compositions which have the qualities proper to genuine sacred music, not confining themselves to works which 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.”<sup>36</sup> Discussing the choir’s role, the *Instruction on Sacred Music in the Liturgy* states that “its role has become something of yet greater importance and weight by reason of the norms of the Council concerning the liturgical renewal. Its duty is, in effect, to ensure the proper performance of the parts which belong to it, according to the different kinds of music sung, and to encourage the active participation of the faithful in the singing.”<sup>37</sup> Choirs, therefore, are not meant to replace the voice of the people in worship but they do have a particular role. One may, of course, never exclude the congregation totally from participation by singing, but the variety of methods allows for many possibilities for

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<sup>35</sup> Kathleen Harmon, “Liturgical Music as Prayer” in *Liturgy and Music*, 273.

<sup>36</sup> SC, no. 121.

<sup>37</sup> MS, no. 19.

participation by singing or by listening to singing. The possibilities of participation are almost infinite.

The purpose of active participation clearly requires that the people sing those parts of the Mass which pertain to them. “In certain cases, the assembly will be actively involved in the performance of a rite; in other, the assembly is united by a global participation in the rite that is being accomplished by certain ‘actors,’ ministers, soloists, choirs, or instrumentalists.”<sup>38</sup> The liturgy, like the Church, is intended to be hierarchical and polyphonic, respecting the different roles assigned by Christ and allowing all the different voices to blend in one great hymn of praise. Therefore, the congregation is also called to listen to the parts of others. This form of participation calls for listening to the ministers and to the choir. The times of listening are not to be considered an interruption of *participatio actuosa*, but an integral part of it. For music listened to is capable of promoting the attitude and the religious activity which are fundamental in common worship. Alternating with congregational singing, listening can develop certain aspects of the liturgical mystery which might well be overlooked if the faithful were to be constantly busied with personal ritual activity.<sup>39</sup> In short, active participation does not preclude the active passivity of silence, stillness and listening. The faithful are not passive when listening to the readings or the homily, or following the prayers of the celebrant, or the choral singing of the choir. These are experiences of silence and stillness, but they are in their own way profoundly active.

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<sup>38</sup> Duchesneau and Veuthey, *Music and Liturgy*, 60.

<sup>39</sup> O’Neill, “*Actuosa Participatio*,” in *Sacred Music and Liturgy Reform*, 106-7.

Liturgy is the work of God drawing us to union with the divine Self through the person of Christ in the power of the Spirit, and transforming us more perfectly into being the Body of Christ. Our part of the liturgical action is simply to give ourselves over to being transformed. Such surrender is the highest form of worship, for it comes from a heart that offers not empty sacrifice but willing obedience.<sup>40</sup> Singing forms a part of the active participation in the liturgy so that we may enter into the sacred mysteries.

### **Liturgical Music in the Context of Inculturation**

#### Liturgical Inculturation

The term “inculturation” as a neologism is not found in the documents of the Second Vatican Council. Anscar J. Chupungco, however, notes that “forty years ago Vatican II’s *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* formalized what was in reality an existing practice in the Church: liturgical inculturation. The Constitution did not introduce something new; it merely codified what had always been there. Inculturation is as old as the Church of Jesus Christ.”<sup>41</sup> Actually, the term used in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* is the noun “adaptation” as we read in article 40: “In some places and circumstances, however, an even more radical adaptation of the liturgy is needed, and this entails greater difficulties. . . . The competent territorial ecclesiastical authority . . . must carefully and prudently consider which elements from the traditions and culture of individual peoples might appropriately be admitted into divine worship.”

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<sup>40</sup> Kethleen Harmon, *The Ministry of Music* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2004), 1.

<sup>41</sup> Anscar J. Chupungco, “Inculturation of Worship, Forty Years of Progress and Tradition,” Valparaiso University, <http://www.valpo.edu/ils/assets/pdfs/chupungco1.pdf> (accessed March 16, 2008).

It was in the encyclical *Slavorum Apostoli* (1985) that Pope John Paul II gave what has come to be accepted as his definitive definition and summation of his concept of inculturation. Here he defined inculturation as: “the incarnation of the Gospel message (the Good News) in autochthonous cultures, at the same time the introduction of those cultures into the life of the Church.”<sup>42</sup> Later, in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), he writes “inculturation means the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures.”<sup>43</sup> Both definitions are recalled in the Instruction on Inculturation and the Roman Liturgy *Varietates Legitimae* (1994) by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.<sup>44</sup>

According to anthropologist Aylward Shorter, inculturation is “the on-going dialogue between faith and culture or cultures. More fully it is the creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian message and a culture or cultures.”<sup>45</sup> Liturgist Anscar J. Chupungco develops and explores the idea of liturgical inculturation for Christian worship. Liturgical inculturation is the process whereby “the liturgy is inserted into the culture, history, and tradition of the people among whom the Church dwells. It begins to think, speak, and ritualize according to the local cultural pattern.”<sup>46</sup> Theologian Peter C.

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<sup>42</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Slavorum Apostoli* (June 2, 1985), no. 21.

<sup>43</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* (December 7, 1990), no. 52.

<sup>44</sup> See Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Varietates Legitimae* (March 29, 1994), no. 4.

<sup>45</sup> Aylward Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988), 11.

<sup>46</sup> Anscar J. Chupungco, *Liturgical Inculturation: Sacramentals, Religiosity, and Catechesis*

Phan, reflecting on the postmodern theory of culture, presents the globalized concept of culture as “‘a ground of contest in relations’ and as a historically evolving, fragmented, inconsistent, conflicted, constructed, ever-shifting, and porous social reality.”<sup>47</sup> He then states that “inculturation is not an ‘incarnation of a timeless, unchanging, and acultural reality (such as the eternal Logos) into a particular culture, but an intercultural encounter or dialogue between at least two cultures.”<sup>48</sup>

Liturgical inculturation opens a door for dialogue between the Gospel and the local context as well as contributes to the process of liturgical renewal in the post-conciliar period. Theologically, liturgical inculturation draws its inspiration and power from the incarnation of the Word of God who took human flesh in a particular place at a particular time of history, and who was deeply inserted into the culture of his people. The incarnation of the local Church inevitably affects the liturgy, which will likewise implant itself in the traditions and culture of every people. One may contend that the process of the Church’s incarnation will attain completion when the liturgy shall have embodied in its rites and texts the people’s cultural expressions.<sup>49</sup> Incarnation explains why the Church and its liturgy should adapt themselves to the culture and traditions of the people. What took place when God became human and dwelt among us now takes place when the Church and its liturgy embody the riches of the traditions. Furthermore,

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(Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 30.

<sup>47</sup> Peter C. Phan, *Being Religious Interreligiously: Asian Perspectives on Interfaith Dialogue* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004), 220.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

<sup>49</sup> Chupungco, *Liturgical Inculturation*, 17-18.

the whole Mystery of Christ's passion, death and resurrection, has to be applied analogically to the process of inculturation. The work of human salvation was accomplished principally through the Paschal Mystery—the redeeming death of Christ and his resurrection-ascension to glory as Lord. Faced by the challenge of the one who died and rose again, cultures are called upon to “die” to everything that is opposed to the ultimate good of humanity in order to rise to a greater splendor. In this paschal orientation, both the received *ordo* of the Catholic liturgical tradition and the milieu of the local Church have to “die” to their prejudices in respect to each other, and “rise” again in a new and transformed life of mutual enrichment and sharing. The double movement of inculturation is described in *Varietates Legitimae*. On the one hand, the penetration of the Gospel into a given sociocultural milieu “gives inner fruitfulness to the spiritual qualities and gifts proper to each people . . . , strengthens these qualities, perfects them and restores them in Christ.” On the other hand, the Church assimilates these values, when they are compatible with the Gospel, “to deepen understanding of Christ's message and give it more effective expression in the liturgy and in the many different aspects of the life of the community of believers.” This double movement in the work of inculturation thus expresses one of the component elements of the Mystery of Christ.<sup>50</sup>

The use of the vernacular in the sacred liturgy may certainly be considered an important means for presenting more clearly the catechesis regarding the mystery that is inherent in the celebration itself. The Church hopes that “each particular church, especially the young churches, will discover that the diversity of certain elements of

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<sup>50</sup> VL, no. 4.

liturgical celebrations can be a source of enrichment, while respecting the substantial unity of the Roman rite, the unity of the whole Church and the integrity of the faith transmitted to the saints for all time.”<sup>51</sup> Therefore, the liturgy of the local Church has to be truly specific and indigenous while appropriating creatively at the same time the received *ordo* of the Catholic liturgical tradition which is at the root of the local Church’s catholicity and communion with other local Churches throughout the world.

According to Chupungco, in the area of liturgy the process of inculturation starts from two opposite points. These are the “typical editions” of the liturgical books and the people’s cultural patterns. The process of liturgical inculturation seeks to make them meet and interact, so that from their union a new liturgy for the local Church may be brought into existence.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, inculturation normally starts from the typical editions of the liturgical books published by the Vatican. Then dialogue with the religions and cultures would enable the local Church to shape its own *ordo* of liturgical worship in conversation with its dialogue partners. The Second Vatican Council states that “within the limits set by the typical editions of the liturgical books, it shall be for the competent, territorial ecclesiastical authority to specify adaptations, especially in the case of the administration of the sacraments, the sacramentals, processions, liturgical language, sacred music, and the arts.”<sup>53</sup> Necessarily, inculturation does not create new liturgical rites apart from the Roman rite. What inculturation aims to achieve is to

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., no. 70.

<sup>52</sup> Chupungco, *Liturgical Inculturation*, 32.

<sup>53</sup> SC, no. 39.

translate the Roman liturgy into the culture of local Churches. Concerning the Roman liturgy, the Council asserts that “a careful investigation is always to be made into each part of the liturgy to be revised.”<sup>54</sup> The investigation should be theological and historical, in order to determine liturgical tradition. It should be cultural, ethnological, and pastoral, in order to open the door to inculturation.

The Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences remarks: “For many Asian Catholics, the official liturgy is often experienced as alien and does not touch their hearts. This points to the need for inculturating the liturgy in such a way that the liturgy becomes more meaningful and nourishing for people in the setting of their own cultures.”<sup>55</sup> Hence the Federation urges a renewal of all aspects of the Church’s prayer life. It believes that “true liturgical inculturation of the Christian community cannot be done from without and introduced through an external and artificial process; it should spontaneously spring forth from the life of the faith lived fully in the context of the culture and the life-realities of the people.”<sup>56</sup> According to the Asian bishops, there are two very useful guidelines for authentic liturgical inculturation. First, liturgical inculturation must be undertaken always in conjunction with and as an intrinsic component of interreligious dialogue and the work for human liberation. The second concerns popular religion considered primarily as the religion

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<sup>54</sup> SC, no. 23.

<sup>55</sup> Asian Bishops, “Proposition 43: Inculturation,” in *The Asian Synod: Texts and Commentaries*, ed. Peter C. Phan (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002), 159.

<sup>56</sup> Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences, *Theses on the Local Church: A theological Reflection in the Asian Context*, Thesis 8, article 8.03 (Hong Kong: FABC, 1991), 27.

of the Asian poor.<sup>57</sup>

Liturgical inculturation aims to provide a form of liturgical celebration that is culturally appropriate to the local Church, in such a way that it can be considered indigenous. This should lead to the ultimate goal of inculturation—the active and full participation of all faithful in the worshipping congregation—for, as stated by the Council, active participation is “called for by the very nature of the liturgy” and such participation by Christian people “is their right and duty by reason of their Baptism.”<sup>58</sup> Therefore, before any discussion or decision on inculturation is made, it is necessary to keep in mind the nature and the goal of the liturgy: it “is in fact the privileged place where Christians meet God and the one whom he has sent, Jesus Christ” (cf. Jn 17:3),<sup>59</sup> “it is not gathered together by a human decision, but is called by God in the Holy Spirit and responds in faith to his gratuitous call;”<sup>60</sup> and “the liturgy is always the celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ, the glorification of God the Father and the sanctification of mankind by the power of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>61</sup>

#### Inculturation of Liturgical Music and Practical Considerations

Music is one of the key areas of liturgical inculturation since “music and singing,

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<sup>57</sup> See Phan, *Being Religious Interreligiously*, 240-44.

<sup>58</sup> SC, no. 14.

<sup>59</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Vicesimus Quintus Annus* (December, 1988), no. 7.

<sup>60</sup> VL, no. 22.

<sup>61</sup> SC, no. 7.

which express the soul of people, have pride of place in the liturgy.”<sup>62</sup> Since the Second Vatican Council, all kinds of truly artistic music that are sacred and useful have a place in the liturgy. While giving its own Gregorian chant a primacy of place in the celebration of the liturgy, the Church welcomes the styles of the many schools and traditions. “In some parts of the world, especially mission lands, there are people who have their own musical traditions, and these play a great part in their religious and social life. Due importance is to be attached to their music and a suitable place given to it, not only in forming their attitude toward religion, but also in adapting worship to their native genius.”<sup>63</sup>

When the Gospel is brought to a people with a distinct culture it will be shaped by its values and patterns in order to express the meanings and purposes of the Gospel. The Gospel thus undergoes cultural intonation; it becomes culturally tuned as do the variety of responses to it. The inculturated Gospel gives birth to culturally-tuned liturgical music. “Musical forms, melodies and musical instruments could be used in divine worship as long as they are suitable, or can be made suitable, for sacred use, and provided they are in accord with the dignity of the place of worship and truly contribute to the uplifting of the faithful.”<sup>64</sup> In other words, what the Church seeks and demands is that music be true art and sacred. A primary norm for the inculturation of liturgical music is that it should be suitable for sacred use and not simply a performance.

The worship community uses music for prayers. In singing or in hearing music,

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<sup>62</sup> VL, no. 40.

<sup>63</sup> SC, no. 119.

<sup>64</sup> VL, no. 40.

many people experience a momentary uplifting of the soul to heavenly heights where the beauty and peace of God eternally reign. This transcendence of self is one of the aims of the sacred liturgy, and music is certainly meant to aid us in raising our souls to God, or better, allowing Him to raise us. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger notes that “music was no longer developing out of prayer, but, with the new demand for artistic autonomy, was now heading away from the liturgy; it was becoming an end in itself, opening the door to new, very different ways of feeling and of experiencing the world. Music was alienating the liturgy from its true nature.”<sup>65</sup> This should be a reference point for every attempt at approaching inculturation of liturgical music. Because the Church allows for a wide freedom in the music used for liturgical worship, many may think that to permit all styles means permission to employ all music in the liturgy. In fact, despite people’s diverse preferences and tastes, not every kind of music is suitable for Christian worship.

The following guidance on evangelization is still appropriate for the inculturation of liturgical music: “This should be done however with the respect due to the different paths of different people and with sensitivity to the diversity of cultures in which the Christian message must be planted, in such a way that the particular values of each people will not be rejected but purified and brought to their fullness.”<sup>66</sup> It is not to suggest that Catholic values be purified in order to adapt to our changing culture. The inculturation of liturgical music is a delicate process because there may be elements of the local or traditional music which need purification and transformation before they can

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<sup>65</sup> Ratzinger, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 145-46.

<sup>66</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (January, 2001), no. 40.

serve the Eucharistic Mystery. Not every kind of music can have a place in Christian worship. Fidelity to traditional usages must be accompanied by purification and, if necessary, a break with the past. We have to acknowledge the fact that much of our liturgical music, in many contexts, has carried “secular” music over into the liturgy and has made it “sacred.” But, by ignoring this principle, one may use unworthy music to create “the cult of the banal” or “a form of worship opposed to Christian worship.”<sup>67</sup> In brief, the local or traditional music must be adapted to the liturgy by taking off their “sandals” for the “place” they are approaching is holy (see Ex 3:5).

Moreover, musical inculturation must respond to the necessary involvement of the entire assembly in the celebration in order to “foster and promote the people’s piety and intimate union with Christ.”<sup>68</sup> Music used in sacred liturgy has to aim at not only the performance by, but also the understanding of the congregation. Thus, the “elitist forms of ‘inculturation’ which introduce into the liturgy ancient or contemporary compositions of possible artistic value, but that indulge in a language that is incomprehensible to the majority, should be avoided.”<sup>69</sup> It is important to understand that liturgical music is not something added to prayer. Rather, it is the way we pray in church when we assemble together as God’s people. Most people are not against inculturation per se, so much as they are against the adding of elements that detract from the substantial unity of the Roman Rite which the Church says must not be compromised.

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<sup>67</sup> Ratzinger, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 148.

<sup>68</sup> Pope Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*, no. 106.

<sup>69</sup> John Paul II, *Chirograph for the Centenary of the Motu Proprio ‘Tra Le Sollecitudini’*, no. 6.

The use of culturally-appropriate instruments is another issue of legitimate inculturation. Many traditional instruments may be used to enrich the celebration of the liturgy “according to longstanding local usage, provided they are truly apt for sacred use or can be rendered apt.”<sup>70</sup> Each of these instruments, born of the culture and the traditions of a particular people, has given voice to a wide variety of forms and styles through which Christ’s faithful continue to join their voices to his perfect song of praise upon the Cross. It is very much about the appropriateness of particular instruments. For example, some outright say that guitars are not “liturgically appropriate,” or are not “sacred.” These instruments may not be appropriate all of the time in the liturgy, but sometimes they can “truly contribute to the edification of the faithful.”<sup>71</sup> Those instruments which are, by common opinion and use, associated with non-Christian worship, may be admitted in the Church’s liturgy. “In permitting and using musical instruments, the culture and traditions of individual peoples must be taken into account.”<sup>72</sup> It is difficult to say whether an instrument is intrinsically holy or secular. Therefore, these instruments may be admitted for use in divine worship, with the knowledge and consent of the competent territorial authority.<sup>73</sup> The distinction could possibly be made in regard to the person playing the instrument and what he or she chooses to do with that instrument. “Any musical instrument permitted in divine worship

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<sup>70</sup> GIRM, no. 393.

<sup>71</sup> SC, no. 120.

<sup>72</sup> MS, no. 63.

<sup>73</sup> MS, no. 62.

should be used in such a way that it meets the needs of the liturgical celebration, and is in the interests both of the beauty of worship and the edification of the faithful.”<sup>74</sup>

True and lasting inculturation demands lengthy study and discussions among experts in interdisciplinary platforms. The danger is that some people seem to think that inculturation in the liturgy encourages free and uncontrolled creativity. Pope John Paul writes that “it must be lamented that, especially in the years following the post-conciliar liturgical reform, as a result of a misguided sense of creativity and adaptation, there have been a number of abuses which have been a source of suffering for many.”<sup>75</sup> In the planning and execution of the inculturation of the Roman rite, the following points should be kept in mind: 1) the goal of inculturation; 2) the substantial unity of the Roman rite; and 3) the competent authority.<sup>76</sup> In fact, inculturation of liturgical music depends upon the cooperation of many people. There is a desperate need for pastors, musicians, and those who will lead or perform liturgical music to understand that music is the main medium by which the faithful participate in the Church’s corporate worship and to be well informed about liturgical theology in order to fulfill their responsibilities.

In conclusion, the Second Vatican Council clearly affirmed the important place of sacred music in the Roman Catholic liturgy. It ordered the preservation and fostering of the great treasury of church music, beginning with Gregorian chant up to the most modern compositions. The Council did, indeed, order the singing of the congregation in

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<sup>74</sup> MS, no. 63.

<sup>75</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, no. 52

<sup>76</sup> VL, no. 34.

all those parts of the liturgy that truly belong to the competency of all the people. Both the singing of the choir and the singing of the congregation have their proper places in solemn liturgy. The new emphasis on congregational singing created a demand for suitable material that is still far from being filled, while the movement toward inculturation has been the path to make the typical music for the local Churches.

CHAPTER IV  
DEVELOPMENTAL ORIENTATION FOR  
VIETNAMESE LITURGICAL MUSIC

In “Challenge and Response,” from *A Study of History*, Arnold Toynbee offers a basic principle to understand the development of human history. He asserts that civilizations arise by the response of creative individuals to challenges presented by situations of special difficulty.<sup>1</sup> This theory can easily be applied to today’s societies at different levels—and still maintain all its value for the life and activities of the Church. I think the development of Vietnamese liturgical music depends on how we respond to challenges emerging in the current situation.

**A Triple Dialogue on Liturgical Music in the Vietnamese Context**

There is a Vietnamese proverb that lists the requirements for success, saying, “*Thiên thời, Địa lợi, Nhân hòa*” (clement weather, favorable terrain, and united people). I think the result of developing liturgical music in Vietnam also depends on these elements: “weather” (worship), “terrain” (music), and people. That means it must be carried out in dialogue between Catholic liturgy, musicology, and the Vietnamese congregations.

The nature and goal of the liturgy, “the celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ, the glorification of God the Father and the sanctification of mankind by the power

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<sup>1</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History: Abridgement of Volumes I-VI* by D.C. Somervell (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 60-79.

of the Holy Spirit,<sup>2</sup> must be the main subject of this triple dialogue. Liturgical scholars speak of liturgy as a living encounter, a fresh experience of the God of the Christian faith—the triune God manifest in the person of Jesus Christ, now given over to the world and the Church as Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> Thus every practice or adaption applied to the liturgy must be governed by the following liturgical principles outlined by Anscar J. Chupungco: (1) liturgy is the worship of God; (2) it is centered on Christ; (3) in it God’s written word is primary; (4) it must include active participation by the people; and (5) it is composed of unchangeable and changeable elements.<sup>4</sup>

One point of emphasis in the current understanding of Christian worship is the role of the whole assembly as the subject of the liturgical action.<sup>5</sup> In the event of public worship, a community participates actively in the relationships that identify it spiritually and ecclesially: relationships among members of the community, relationships with the rest of the human family, relationship with the Divine Mystery. Members of a liturgical community are capacitated by the Holy Spirit in Baptism to speak to and about God. This capacity is honed and developed over time through faithful practice, through exposure to the mystery of saving relationships.

I agree with John Francis Baldovin that liturgy is not “an abstract set of prayers

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<sup>2</sup> SC, no. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Kevin W. Irwin, *Context and Text: Method in Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994), 46-50.

<sup>4</sup> Anscar J. Chupungco, *Cultural Adaptation of the Liturgy* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1982), 63-70; also see GIRM, nos. 16-26.

<sup>5</sup> Joyce Ann Zimmerman, “Liturgical Assembly: Who Is the Subject of the Liturgy?” in *Liturgy and Music: Lifetime Learning*, ed. Robin A. Leaver and Joyce Ann Zimmerman (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 38-59.

and rubrics which is eternally valid for all times and places, but rather the manner in which people in specific historical, social and cultural circumstances express their faith through symbolic ritual.”<sup>6</sup> God acts in specific times and places, and through the idioms, perceptions, and insights of the people’s culture. A community’s response is mediated through cultural realizations and aesthetic expressions: modes of speech, dress, thought, and action. Music and the expressive arts can be extremely important in shaping the whole continuum of liturgical action. From the perspective of liturgical theory, they are not embellishments but constitutive of what takes place in liturgy, affecting how all other elements are experienced and participating in the creation of meaning that takes place.<sup>7</sup>

Music is a form of communication that is inseparable from the people who make it and from their cultural context. In this time of globalization, musical systems are often juxtaposed and mutually influential. But even these processes of musical change need to be understood from within each musical system and its cultural context.

Ethnomusicologist Anthony Seeger speaks of music as “a system of communication involving structured sounds produced by members of a community to communicate with other members.”<sup>8</sup> Through the processes of communication that take place in musical performance, certain types of social relationships are brought into being and expressed—relationships among those making sound by singing or performing instrumentally, relationships between performers and those who listen or who participate actively

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<sup>6</sup> John Francis Baldwin, *Liturgy in Ancient Jerusalem*, (Bramcote: Grove Books, 1989), 5.

<sup>7</sup> Irwin, *Context and Text*, 220.

<sup>8</sup> Anthony Seeger, “Ethnography of Music,” in *Ethnomusicology: An Introduction*, ed. Helen Myers (New York: Norton, 1992), 89.

through other forms of behavior such as clapping or bodily movement. Through music, human communities discover their situation in the world and express in unique ways the social, cultural, emotional, and spiritual condition of being human.

Vietnamese liturgical music has to develop against the background of Vietnamese culture. Thus it cannot be separate from traditional Vietnamese vocal expressions including narrative songs (*ca trù, hát ả đào*, and others), lyrical songs (*hát chèo, hát tuồng, vọng cổ*, and other theatrical forms), declamatory songs (*quan họ* and other folk forms), love song (*tình ca, nhạc trữ tình*, and other romantic songs), and a large variety of ethnic minority and other rural songs. Through songs and singing, the people of Vietnam entertain, celebrate, and define themselves as independent and proud, sensitive and modern, loving and romantic.<sup>9</sup> There have been special folk-songs connected with the ritual celebrations. In this case, music is an essential element of the ceremony. Ritual folksongs with beautiful and harmonious melodies help people to lift up their emotion, desire, and petitions to gods or ancestors.<sup>10</sup> The following *Hầu văn Thánh Mẫu thượng ngàn* (incantation ritual chant of Goddess from above) is an example:

Nền linh hiển ngàn xưa chung tú  
 Riêng một tòa động phủ thiên nhiên  
 Vốn xưa chúa ở cung tiên  
 Giáng trần độ thế về miền non xanh.<sup>11</sup>

Divine foundation was the Absolute from the beginning

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<sup>9</sup> Dale A. Olsen, *Popular Music of Vietnam: The Politics of Remembering, the Economics of Forgetting* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 129.

<sup>10</sup> Lê Văn Chương, *Dân Ca Việt Nam: Những Thành Tố của Chính Thể Nguyên Hợp* [Vietnamese folk Songs: Constituent Elements of the Perfect Whole] (Hà Nội: NXB Khoa Học Xã Hội, 2004), 56.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

A special residence of the nature  
 You were originally in a fairy palace  
 Descended on earth to save and lead us to heaven.<sup>12</sup>

To access music in ritual contexts, we need to begin with the act of music itself, in all its complexity. Anthropologist Alan Merriam proposes that music involves not only sound and the evaluation of sound, but also the broad range of human behavior involved in making music and the conceptualizations people have about their music.<sup>13</sup> All aspects of music—sound, behavior, and understanding—are important for the interpretation of music in ritual events. The particular ways participants engage in music making, the bodily ways they give it expression, interact with all other aspects of their ritual behavior. The musical sound they cultivate intersects other modes of communication that are operative, and people’s understandings of music affect and interact with how they imagine the goal of the ritual action. In ritual, song texts are inseparable from all other aspects of the social, cultural, and religious communication that takes place musically, and from the interactive human strategies that are at work musically and ritually.

In religious ritual, music making may evoke a sense of the “presence” of supernatural beings—of God, of Christ, of the Spirit, or of gods and ancestors—or it may communicate intimations of “godliness,” “holiness,” or the action of the Spirit. The musical performance of a worship assembly is “an act of faith, by which the delight of hearts and minds is given an acoustical form.”<sup>14</sup> There is a comment concerning

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<sup>12</sup> Translated into English by myself.

<sup>13</sup> Alan Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 32.

<sup>14</sup> Tucker, “Music as a Language of Faith.”

Vietnamese Catholics, saying, “for the Vietnamese, music is often a vehicle for expressing interior feelings . . . so Vietnamese Catholics express their intense religious feelings through their church music.”<sup>15</sup> The musical action may be understood as a means of interacting with these beings, offering praise, thanksgiving, intercession, or as a way of listening to their communication through word or action; of receiving power, love, or nourishment. In fact, the boundaries of sacred and secular are not clear. Thus both sacred and secular idioms are called to authenticity and to a correct relationship. After all, function and beauty are needed in whichever form the compositions take.

The music used in liturgy always has a relationship with the people who make up the assembly, whether they perform this music themselves or are associated with it in a different way. In the twenty-first century, many of the young people of Vietnam have been greatly affected by economic changes as the country embraces the current world market economy and experiences globalization in its many forms.<sup>16</sup> In order to promote the life of Church through liturgy, one should not neglect this contemporary social issue—popular culture or globalization. Professor Keith Negus insightfully describes the concept with regard to popular culture:

The appearance of the same cultural forms around the world is not due to the activities of imperial powers (whether nations or corporations) but is a consequence of processes of “globalization” in which various patterns of difference and the convergence of cultural practices and social activities are making it difficult to identify any power that might be directing such movements. The globalization argument, in its various forms, tends not to

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<sup>15</sup> Rufino Zaragoza and Nguyễn Xuân Thảo, “Vietnamese Catholic Church Music Expresses Inner Feelings,” *Pastoral Music* 27:4 (April-May 2003): 28.

<sup>16</sup> Olsen, *Popular Music of Vietnam*, 1.

identify any forms of overt exploitation or imposition, but is employed to emphasize processes of “transculturation” whereby various forms of musical expression are continually interacting with one another, in the process generating a variety of musical styles that might be leading to a “transnational music” or a converging “nationless culture.”<sup>17</sup>

Dale A. Olsen observes that “globalization affects much of the popular music in Vietnam.”<sup>18</sup> This movement somehow influences the development of Vietnamese liturgical music as well.

By emphasizing the need to evangelize through a dialogical encounter with the three-fold Vietnamese reality of diverse cultures, religious traditions and the multitude of the poor, I want to show the Church in Vietnam must never forget that it has the duty to announce the Good News in the cultural conditions of the people; that therefore its primordial task is to dialogue continuously, humbly, and lovingly with the cultures and traditions of the people.

By emphasizing the need to have a dialogue between Roman Catholic worship and Vietnamese reality, I want to show that any effort to develop liturgical music in Vietnam must be based on the cultural and social conditions of the people. It would be successful only by dialoguing continuously and lovingly with the cultures and traditions of the people. Liturgy as a principal public expression of the Vietnamese Church then reveals its own ecclesiological orientation.

Looking back at the history of the Catholic Church in Vietnam, we recognize that

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<sup>17</sup> Keith Negus, *Popular Music in Theory* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1996), 176-177, quoted in Olsen, *Popular Music of Vietnam*, 24.

<sup>18</sup> Olsen, *Popular Music of Vietnam*, 24.

the “triple dialogue” has been practiced for a long time. Jesuit Fr. Alexander de Rhodes (1591-1660), considered the founder of Vietnamese Christianity, composed in Vietnamese the mysteries of the Passion in fifteen *ngắm* (meditations) to enable the Catholics to participate in the liturgy of Holy Week. Each of the meditations is declaimed with the accompaniment of drum and gong.<sup>19</sup> This popular liturgy, which resembles the classical Vietnamese theater (*chèo, tuồng*), is still celebrated in many parts of Vietnam on every Good Friday evening.

During the early period of the Vietnamese Church, on Sunday the faithful gathered together in churches and prayed in different traditional tunes.<sup>20</sup> The traditional tune in prayers of the early times was divided into two kinds of cantillation tunes: a joyful tune (A, C, D) and a sorrowful tune (E, A, C). They are transcribed into modern musical notation as follows.

Ex. III.1: *Cung vui* (joyful tune): *Kinh Nữ Vương Thiên Đàng* (Regina Coeli)

Lạy Nữ Vương Thiên Đàng hãy vui mừng. Al - lê - lu - ia.

Vì Đấng Mẹ đã đáng cửu mang trong lòng. Al - lê - lu - ia.

Người đã sống lại như lời đã phán hứa. Al - lê - lu - ia...

<sup>19</sup> Peter C. Phan, *Mission and Cathchesis: Alexandre de Rhodes and Inculturation in Seventeenth-Century Vietnam* (Maryknoll: Orbis Book, 1998), 97.

<sup>20</sup> Nguyễn Khắc Xuyên, *Tiến Trình Thánh Nhạc Việt Nam* [The Process of Vietnamese Sacred Music], (Houston: Zieleks, 1991), 21-24.

Ex. III.2: *Cung thương* (sorrowful tune): *Kinh Vực Sâu* (Prayer from Hell)

Lạy Chúa, con ở dưới vực sâu kêu lên Chúa.

Xin Chúa hãy thương nhận lời con kêu van, ...

From the late 19<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, new musical elements of Western music, brought into Vietnam by numerous Western missionaries and businesspeople, influenced Vietnamese music very much. When modern popular music was founded, some Vietnamese Christian choral songs were composed by Catholic composers.<sup>21</sup> Since then the liturgical music of Vietnam has developed unceasingly, not only with characteristics of the traditional music but also through several other music sources. Today, in order to promote more and more the singing of the assembly, I think the Church in a multi-nationality country with over fifty-four ethnic groups needs to refer to the guidelines for liturgical music in the United States as defined by the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy: "Liturgical music today must be as diverse and multi-cultural as the members of the assembly."<sup>22</sup>

### Orientation in Composing

Article 121 of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* provides an exhortation to composers:

<sup>21</sup> Nguyễn Khắc Xuyên, *Tiến Trình Thánh Nhạc Việt Nam*, 47.

<sup>22</sup> Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, *Liturgical Music Today* (Washington DC: USCCB Publications, 1982), no. 55.

Composers, filled with the Christian spirit, should feel that their vocation is to develop sacred music and to increase its store of treasures. 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. The texts intended to be sung must always be consistent with Catholic teaching: indeed they should be drawn chiefly from holy Scripture and from liturgical sources.<sup>23</sup>

Liturgical needs and modern musical sentiment in Vietnam impose new tasks on the composers of liturgical music. They must provide compositions in many forms to be used for the celebration of the Eucharist as well as for liturgical and para-liturgical ceremonies.

#### Criteria of Liturgical Music

In his Chirograph for the Centenary of the *Motu Proprio* “*Tra Le Sollecitudini*” on Sacred Music, Pope John Paul II writes “it is important that the musical compositions used for liturgical celebrations correspond to the criteria appropriately set down by St. Pius X and wisely developed by both the Second Vatican Council and the subsequent Magisterium of the Church.”<sup>24</sup> Indeed, these criteria were listed by Pope Pius as holiness, beauty, and universality.<sup>25</sup>

#### *The sacred character of liturgical music*

A sacred character is the basic quality required for music that accompanies the

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<sup>23</sup> SC, no. 121.

<sup>24</sup> John Paul II, *Chirograph for the Centenary of the Motu Proprio “Tra Le Sollecitudini”*, no. 13.

<sup>25</sup> See TLS, no. 2.

Holy Mysteries. It is because this eminently essential quality has been poorly understood or ignored that music has sometimes fallen into mediocrity or illogicality. This character requires the realization of an absolutely necessary harmony between sacred texts and music. John Paul II approves the “general rule” that Pius X formulated in these words: “the more closely a composition for church approaches in its movement, inspiration and savor the Gregorian melodic form, the more sacred and liturgical it becomes; and the more out of harmony it is with that supreme model, the less worthy it is of the temple.”<sup>26</sup> He, however, explained that this statement does not require “imitating Gregorian chant;” rather it seeks to ensure “that new compositions are imbued with the same spirit that inspired and little by little came to shape it. Only an artist who is profoundly steeped in the *sensus Ecclesiae* can attempt to perceive and express in melody the truth of the mystery that is celebrated in the liturgy.”<sup>27</sup> Indeed, throughout the centuries the Church has always been vigilant on this point and encouraged an art suitable for expressing the Mysteries of Christ, since it was convinced that the movement of the soul suggested by the music must be a sort of symbol of spiritual worship. In brief, liturgical music should create an atmosphere favorable to the full accomplishment of the liturgical action. It must be appropriate for helping people to pray. Music with a purely human resonance risks entertaining the faithful rather than being an incitement to pray or to be united with the acts of Christ.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., no. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., no. 12.

*Liturgical music must be true art*

This quality focuses on the value of the musical elements. It means that church music must first of all be good music, inspired and well-constructed, in other words that it exists first and foremost simply as music. Pius X said on the subject: “It must be true art, for otherwise it will be impossible for it to exercise on the minds of those who listen to it that efficacy which the Church aims at obtaining in admitting into her liturgy the art of musical sounds.”<sup>28</sup> John Paul II adds: “this quality alone does not suffice. Indeed, liturgical music must meet the specific prerequisites of the liturgy: full adherence to the text it presents, synchronization with the time and moment in the liturgy for which it is intended, appropriately reflecting the gestures proposed by the rite.”<sup>29</sup> The United States Bishops assert that “only artistically sound music will be effective and endure over time. To admit to the liturgy the cheap, the trite, or the musical cliché often found in secular popular songs is to cheapen the liturgy, to expose it to ridicule, and to invite failure.”<sup>30</sup> Opinions on the beauty of music are always diverse and relative. They depend on cultural habits and even on the community itself. In fact, the Church has consistently recognized and freely welcomed the use of various styles of music as an aid to liturgical worship. In order to meet this artistic character, music must bring to the performers themselves as well as to the listeners the interior uplifting, the aesthetic joy expected from an authentic work of art.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., no. 2.

<sup>29</sup> John Paul II, *Chirograph for the Centenary*, no. 5.

<sup>30</sup> USCCB, *Sing to the Lord*, no. 135.

*Universality of liturgical music*

The universal criterion of liturgical music aims to make this music able to be accepted and understood by people all over the world. Pope Pius X indicates that “these forms must be subordinated in such a manner to the general characteristics of sacred music that nobody of any nation may receive an impression other than good on hearing them.”<sup>31</sup> *Musicae sacrae disciplina* associates universality with group identity.<sup>32</sup> This document does not claim that there is a universal impetus among humans to associate their encounter with the divine with music making. Rather, it simply notes that a common liturgical music repertoire will help Roman Catholics “feel at home” wherever they may be worshipping. Regarding liturgical inculturation, John Paul II warns that “those elitist forms of ‘inculturation’ which introduce into the liturgy ancient or contemporary compositions of possible artistic value, but that indulge in a language that is incomprehensible to the majority, should be avoided.”<sup>33</sup>

The *Instruction on Music in the Liturgy*, in articles 9, 10 and 11, articulates five qualities necessary in Catholic liturgical music in addition to holiness, beauty, and universality. Liturgical music must (1) “correspond to the spirit of the liturgical celebration;” (2) fulfill the ritual requirements of the “individual parts” of the liturgy; (3) “not hinder the active participation of the people;” (4) “be varied as much as possible,

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<sup>31</sup> TLS, no. 2.

<sup>32</sup> See *Musicae sacrae disciplina*, no. 45.

<sup>33</sup> John Paul II, *Chirograph for the Centenary*, no. 6.

according to the solemnity of the day and the nature of the congregation present;” and (5) respect “the integrity of the liturgical celebration.”<sup>34</sup>

I agree with Karl Gustav Fellerer that “true liturgical and artistic expression must be created in sublime forms as well as in the most simple.”<sup>35</sup> This is the special task of the new worship music. Pastoral musicians must be aware that liturgical music should connect with the liturgical action and express the shape of the rite. Liturgical music has its own merit and its own form which flows from the liturgy. This value and form not only demand the carrying out of the external liturgical requirements, but also demand the most perfect musical composition possible, born of the spirit of the liturgy and adapted to the dignity of divine worship.

A hymn or song suitable for liturgy has a style and a text which fits its particular function. Composers find their inspiration in sacred Scripture, and especially in the texts of the sacred liturgy, so that their works flow from the liturgy itself. The Catholic bishops of the United States insist that “to be suitable for use in the liturgy, a sung text must not only be doctrinally correct, but must in itself be an expression of the Catholic faith.”<sup>36</sup> Moreover, these texts should focus on ecclesial identity rather than on individual personal experience because the latter is best suited for devotional prayer situations such as faith-sharing groups, renewal experiences, or youth ministry retreats, rather than for liturgy. Although spiritually uplifting and prayerful, devotional songs are not appropriate

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<sup>34</sup> MS, nos. 9-11.

<sup>35</sup> Karl Gustav Fellerer, “Liturgy and Music,” in *Sacred Music and Liturgy Reform*, 87.

<sup>36</sup> STL, no. 83.

for liturgy because they cannot support the kind of prayer which the liturgy requires, that is, prayer which expresses surrender as the Body of Christ to the ritual enactment of the Paschal Mystery. On the contrary, liturgical songs pull us beyond our individual feelings and concerns into our ecclesial identity.

Singing by the gathered assembly and ministers is important at all celebrations. The Council requires liturgical composers to contend with a new element in producing their works: the “active participation of the entire assembly of the faithful.” The musical setting must allow the rite to unfold with the proper participation of the assembly and its ministers. To combine artistic unity with congregational singing demands forms which inspire new compositions and new methods of creation, but which are based on rich, artistic models. Karl Gustav Fellerer suggests three norms for creating congregational liturgical song in the vernacular: “a) to proceed from the structure of the worship service; b) to proceed from an artistic impulse found within that framework which considers the function of musical types and forms, of language and the action itself; c) and thus to provide for the dignified adoration of God as well as the task of promoting liturgical piety.”<sup>37</sup>

Actually, writing effective music for a congregation is one of the great challenges facing a choral composer. Music for an assembly must be simple to perform but at the same time easy to understand and accept. It must first of all fit comfortably within the vocal range and musical ability of the average congregation. The effective vocal range of the average congregation is middle C to D, a ninth above. According to Paul S. Jones,

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<sup>37</sup> Fellerer, 86.

melodies for a congregation should be singable and memorable without being monotonous or overly predictable.<sup>38</sup> Chromatic movement, augmented fourths, leaps of a seventh should be avoided. The members of the congregation also need to feel the texts in their souls and relate emotionally to what they are singing. This is the foundation of a successful hymn. Thomas Day, in his book *Why Catholics Can't Sing*, notes that people may “not know much about theology or the subtleties of liturgical symbolism, but they can instinctively detect ‘poor or altogether inappropriate selections of prayers, readings, and especially music,’ which they might protest by not singing.”<sup>39</sup>

Thomas Day also makes a very interesting analysis of why Catholics have become silent during the Mass in the American context. He notes that the new music emphasizes too much individual experience and individual singing rather than the glory of God. He wisely shows not only the effects of poor quality music but also the theological deficiencies of the text and the tendency of worship that is totally centered on “ego.” Indeed, many songs have texts focusing on the “I” rather than the “we.”<sup>40</sup> For me, what determines suitability is not the absence of “I” language but the ability of the songs to lead us into communal liturgical prayer as mentioned above. Day also presents a scathing conception of the “voice of God” song because of this theological reason.<sup>41</sup> A lot of people argue that this is inappropriate, since the congregation traditionally sings to

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<sup>38</sup> Paul S. Jones, *Singing and Making Music: Issues in Church Music Today* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2006), 278.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas Day, *Why Catholics Can't Sing*, (New York: Crossroad, 2005), 82.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 60-62.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 64-66.

God rather than in the place of God. In fact, in order for the settings to directly paraphrase Scripture it is necessary for them to be in first person. Moreover, in the official chant book of the Roman Catholic Church *Graduale Romanum*, there are a number of examples of texts in the first person. None of these pieces, of course, were intended to be sung by the assembly, but rather to be sung by a *schola*, choir, or even individual cantor.

In brief, the responsibility of a composer of liturgical music has never been greater than now with the liturgical reforms of Vatican II. It is a task which needs an authentically creative talent gained only through professional study, and one which demands a deep understanding of Catholic liturgy and theology.

### Strategies of Composition

As mentioned in chapter II, Vietnamese liturgical music in general is influenced by several other sources, including Gregorian chant, classic polyphony, French music and American music. Based on the past decades of liturgical composition and the needs of liturgical reform, I think the future development of Vietnamese liturgical music should continue to follow four directions of compositional strategies: plainchant, traditional, contemporary, and folk-based.

The first strategy, dependent on official Roman Catholic liturgical music documents, recognizes a transcultural “universal” liturgical music in Gregorian chant. The claim here is that new compositions for the Roman Rite should arise organically from Gregorian chant, which remains the proper music for that rite. The example below,

excerpted from the song *Đây Nhiệm Tích* (Come Adore) by Kim Long, is not exactly derived from a Gregorian tune but is based on church Dorian modal scale (mode I). The melody uses the eighth note as basic unit and moves largely by step (with the occasional use of a third).

Ex. III.3: Excerpt from *Đây Nhiệm Tích* (Come Adore) by Kim Long

Đây nhiệm tích vô cùng cao quý.  
Come a - dore this won - drous pre - ence,

Nào chúng ta phục bái tôn thờ.  
Bow to Christ the source of grace,

The incorporation of plainchant, however, requires an understanding of church modes as well as knowledge about the treasury of church music. Gregorian chant always creates solemn melodies appropriate for Catholic liturgy, but it would be a challenge for composers to set it to a monosyllabic and tonal language as Vietnamese.

The second strategy seeks inspiration from the variety of Western Christian traditions in particular the French songs and music of the Cecilian Movement. Musicians try to apply some techniques of melodic, harmonic, and textual treatments to create their vocal works. Some succeed in the use of Western musical elements, in association with Vietnamese texts, for polyphonic choral music.<sup>42</sup> The song *Đây Lòng Chúa* (In God's Heart) by Nguyễn Bang Hanh is the best exemplification of this. The

<sup>42</sup> Hải Linh, "Nhạc Đa Điệu Việt Nam" [Vietnamese Polyphonic Music], *Thời Điểm Công Giáo* 34-35 (1993): 63-80.

melody uses only quarter and half notes in F major and is calm and smooth. The refrain is harmonious with two voices moving parallel to each other at the interval of a third or a sixth.

Ex. III.4: Excerpt from *Đây Lòng Chúa* (In God's Heart) by Nguyễn Bang Hanh

Con xin kính tin sắp mình thờ lạy Chúa.  
Praise be to God! Yes, we do be - lieve.

Và dâng tiến lên niềm yêu mến chân thành.  
We lift our hearts and our souls to God.

This traditional approach has been adopted by the majority of the Catholic composers operating in Vietnam. They can create sacred pieces in such a way that satisfy the faithful of every age. These compositions have been enriching Vietnamese Catholic worship for some years now. For many people, this is a better way to incorporate the mandate of the Second Vatican Council that all the assembly should participate fully, consciously, and actively in the liturgy, especially in song.

The third strategy claims that since the Council refused to prescribe one genre or style of liturgical music as normative, “oneness of spirit” can best be fostered by expressing the richness of music as a gift from God. This contemporary approach is influenced by the musical elements of popular music and praise-and-worship music from the United States. Representative of this kind is the song *Bài Ca Hiệp Nhất* (Gather Us Together) by Thành Tâm. It is in C major with a typical swing rhythm of dotted eighth/sixteenth pairs.

Ex. III.5: Excerpt from *Bài Ca Hiệp Nhất* (Gather Us Together) by Thành Tâm

Xin hiệp nhất chúng con nên một trong tình yêu  
 Ga - ther us to - gether, O Lord, in Your

Chúa. Xin hiệp nhất chúng con như Ngài liên kết với Cha.  
 love. Ga - ther us as You are one with the Fa - ther.

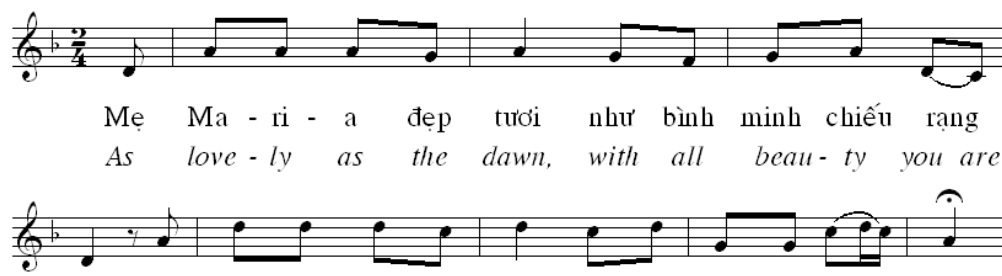
In spite of strong criticisms of “*Thánh Ca Nhạc Trẻ*” (Sacred Music for Young), this type of music spread rapidly and was sung in church services, especially those aimed at young people, throughout the country. Indeed, multiple styles can coexist within one parish’s repertoire. What really matters is accurate theology and accessibility that allows the congregation to participate fully in the celebration.

The fourth strategy, taking seriously the inculturation of liturgical music, tries to apply Vietnamese pentatonic scales or traditional tunes in combination with Western harmonic treatments to present a new musical idiom in Vietnamese Catholic liturgical music.<sup>43</sup> The song *Mẹ Đẹp Tuổi* (Our Lovely Lady) by Kim Long is one of many songs composed in this way. It is not derived from a folk melody but was written in the pentatonic minor scale (D-F-G-A-C), a scale which is used commonly in Vietnamese folksongs.

Ex. III.6: Excerpt from *Mẹ Đẹp Tuổi* (Our Lovely Lady) by Kim Long

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<sup>43</sup> Văn Chi, 164.



Mẹ Ma - ri - a đẹp tươi như bình minh chiếu rạng  
 As love - ly as the dawn, with all beau - ty you are  
 ngồi. Vầng trăng lung linh trời đêm so với Mẹ còn kém xa.  
 blest. More ra - diant than the moon, night de - parts with your ca - ress.

The claim here is that folk-based composing is the best way to make Vietnam’s liturgical music sound Vietnamese because it is Vietnamese. The pioneers of this “inculturated” compositional strategy were Hải Linh and Hùng Lân; then Viết Chung, Phanxicô, Ân Đức, Ngọc Linh, and others have also espoused this stance. They have contributed to the distinct sound of Vietnamese Catholic liturgical music.<sup>44</sup>

These four approaches to composing will produce new liturgical music ranging from the simple yet artistic forms which are suitable for the parish Mass to the elaborate setting of solemn celebrations. Those concerned about the quality of liturgy with that music should refer to Pope Benedict XVI’s remark: “In the course of her two-thousand-year history, the Church has created, and still creates, music and songs which represent a rich patrimony of faith and love. This heritage must not be lost. Certainly as far as the liturgy is concerned, we cannot say that one song is as good as another. Generic improvisation or the introduction of musical genres which fail to respect the meaning of the liturgy should be avoided.”<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Nguyễn Duy, *Thánh Ca trong Phụng Vụ*, 329.

<sup>45</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis* (2007), no. 42.

### **Singing the Liturgy in the Vietnamese Assembly**

The Council ordered a greater participation of the people, not only in the prayers but also in the singing. Hence, the most important form of liturgical music is the singing of the assembly. This mandate in fact has not worked out in numerous churches in Vietnam. There are many reasons for the bad state of congregational singing. I think three reasons are the lack of understanding of liturgy among the people, the lack of leadership regarding the role of music, and the lack guidance regarding proper music.

For many Vietnamese people, singing the liturgy is a task of the choir. They forget that singing makes them part of a communal prayer. The function of communal singing is to signify communion in unity for the assembly—a communion desired by the Lord who calls together the assembly.<sup>46</sup> When we sing together we pray even more strongly. Ecclesiastical congregational singing fails if the people do not sing with conviction. They must know why participation by singing is demanded of them. They must embrace the idea themselves that the Mass is a communal sacrifice; otherwise they will not change their liturgical practices.

When celebrating liturgy, ministers and worshipers have to know that liturgical music is both structural and personal. Certain chants are reserved for ordained ministers, other chants may be led by a cantor; others may be executed by a choir, while still others are in the purview of the entire assembly. Michael Joncas asserts that “refusing to respect these personnel distinctions is to distort the liturgical expression of the structuring of the Church. But distortion can also occur when elements intended to be sung are recited or

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<sup>46</sup> Vauthey, *Music and Liturgy*, 59.

when the genres of the various elements of worship music are not respected.”<sup>47</sup>

According to the *Instruction on Sacred Music in the Liturgy*, the sung dialogues and acclamations are first in importance, the prayers in litany form, as well as the antiphons and psalms, are in the second category, and hymns and canticles are last.<sup>48</sup> Thus, in order of consideration, the most important communal music is for the elements through which the assembly enacts the rite. The dialogues of the liturgy are fundamental because they “are not simply outward signs of communal celebration but foster and bring about communion between priest and people.”<sup>49</sup> This dialogue symbolizes the covenant between God and humanity. The acclamations of the Eucharistic liturgy and other rites arise from the whole gathered assembly as assents to God’s Word and action. The Eucharistic acclamations include the Gospel Acclamation, the Sanctus, the Memorial Acclamation, and the great Amen.

Second in importance is communal singing which undergirds the rite in a significant way, that is, sung elements which support the assembly’s active participation in the rite’s unfolding movement. The order of Mass considers it normative that the Responsorial Psalm be sung.<sup>50</sup> The reason is threefold: the genre of the Psalms as lyrical compositions calls for singing; the Psalm is a response to the spoken word and ritual structure does not customarily respond to speech with more speech; this is the only time

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<sup>47</sup> Joncas, *From Sacred Song to Ritual Music*, 41.

<sup>48</sup> MS, nos. 7, 16; see also STL, no. 116.

<sup>49</sup> GIRM, no. 34.

<sup>50</sup> GIRM, no. 61; also STL, no. 115.b.

in the liturgy when a Psalm is used for its own sake and not to accompany a ritual action. In singing the psalm responses, we are drawn into the experience of the joy, the suffering and the glory of the mystery celebrated in the Eucharist. The liturgy also has texts of a litanic character that may be sung when appropriate. These include the Kyrie and Agnus Dei of the Mass, the response to the Prayers of the Faithful, and the Litany of the Saints in various rites.

Third in importance is music which supports the liturgy in a more general fashion by enabling the assembly to maintain a presence to and involvement in the ritual action, for example, the hymns or songs which accompany the entrance and communion processions, and music during the presentation of the gifts. The singing of hymns should not be allowed to take priority over the singing of the liturgy itself. Yet it does have great value, so that any efforts to promote and improve it would be highly beneficial. With such an understanding, one must know how to participate actively in the liturgical celebration and he or she should not continue keeping silent. The pastor may preach about this conviction for several Sundays to the benefit of the community. Even better, one can have a series of conferences to tell the people about the concept and the living of the Mass, about the relationship between the chants of the priest, the choir, and the people's singing.

The role of musical leadership is very important in singing the liturgy. A well-trained choir adds beauty and solemnity to the liturgy and also assists and encourages the singing of the congregation. In Mass and at other liturgies, various alternatives are possible: the choir and congregation can sing together, or they can alternate in such a way

that now one, now the other, takes the greater role. Everything depends on the director of music. He or she must be sensitive, flexible, and capable of making a responsible choice from the quantity and variety of the repertoire available. The continued participation of the people will be threatened if the director offers them a continuously changing repertoire. Some may find it monotonous to always to listen to the same songs, but almost all of the faithful themselves judge otherwise. They are attached to their repertoire which they may have mastered with much difficulty. The director must also possess tact, patience and moderation and must know how to deal with people. The cantor is another one who plays a role of musical leadership. Although a cantor cannot enhance the service of worship in the same way as a choirmaster, a trained and competent cantor can perform an important ministry by leading the congregation in common sacred song and in responsorial singing. The cantor will present some simpler musical settings with the participants and can lead and support the faithful as far as is needed. “The presence of such a singer is desirable even in churches which have a choir, for those celebrations in which the choir cannot take part but which may fittingly be performed with some solemnity and therefore with singing.”<sup>51</sup> Actually, the role of the cantor is not utilized enough in Vietnam. For me, this is an important point that a training program of music ministers should not neglect.

At first, one means of leading the assembly to fuller participation in singing is a hymnal or booklet. In reality, many churches do not have any of these means, thus a temporary resolution is to print the texts in the bulletin each week. When the congregation becomes familiar with a song, the booklets or leaflets may be superfluous.

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<sup>51</sup> MS, no. 21.

Only then will songs begin to live and really to support the people in worship. Another factor which affects the quality and quantity of the singing is the internal attention. The Anglican/Methodist John Wesley advises, “Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing him more than yourself, or any other creature. In order to do this attend strictly to the sense of what you sing, and see that your heart is not carried away with the sound, but offered to God continually; so shall your singing be such as the Lord will approve here, and reward you when he cometh in the clouds of heaven.”<sup>52</sup>

An issue causing many debates is what kind of music is proper for liturgy. Some new songs do not emphasize the praise and glory of God. Some songs may be of questionable value not only because of the poor quality of the music, but also because of the theological deficiencies of the text. This is a challenge for pastors and ministers of music in choosing music for celebrating liturgy. They need to make distinctions among the genres of religious music, to understand their varying purposes, and to use them appropriately. Liturgical music is an art placed at the service of communal prayer. Thus it must be a prayer, immediately grasped and appreciated, used for one purpose, the adoration of God at that very moment. The texts must “always be in conformity with Catholic doctrine; indeed they should be drawn chiefly from Holy Scripture and from liturgical sources.”<sup>53</sup> Ministers of music should avoid attempting to entertain the congregation. “The narrative of the golden calf is a warning about any kind of self-

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<sup>52</sup> From John Wesley’s *Select Hymns*, 1761; quoted in The Hymnal Revision Committee, *The United Methodist Hymnal*, vol. 1 (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), vii.

<sup>53</sup> SC, no. 121.

initiated and self-seeking worship.”<sup>54</sup>

Music for liturgy, according to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, is to be judged worthy based on a “threefold judgment.”<sup>55</sup> First is the liturgical judgment that considers how the music respects the structures, texts, and various ministerial roles in worship. The words, the form, and the style of the song have to reflect who we are as the people of God and suit the relative festivity of the liturgical day and season.<sup>56</sup> Second is the pastoral judgment which asks whether music in the celebration enables these people to express their faith and pray, in this place, in this age, in this culture.<sup>57</sup> Finally, the musical judgment examines, “Can the musicians and the singers do justice to this song?” “Is this composition technically, aesthetically, and expressively worthy?”<sup>58</sup> I think that threefold judgment must be applied in the Vietnamese context as well.

Singing the parts of the Mass that are most important helps Vietnamese Catholics achieve active participation in the entire liturgy, and enables us to experience the presence of God among us. Just as the first followers of Jesus gathered to sing psalms and hymns, we too unite our voices in songs of praise to our God. “I will sing praise with the spirit, but I will sing praise with the mind also” (1 Cor 14:15b). Professor Karen B.

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<sup>54</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 23.

<sup>55</sup> STL, no. 126.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 127.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 130-132.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 134.

Weaterfield Tucker explains that “it is only ‘with the Spirit,’ here meaning the Holy Spirit, that human beings are able to make and offer the gift of sound to God. Our worship is by the Spirit of God (Phil 3:3), for by the Spirit we are able to confess that Jesus is Lord (1 Cor 12:3) and have access through Christ to the Father (Eph 2:18).”<sup>59</sup> Throughout the long history of the Church, Christian music has unceasingly developed and added a deeper dimension of participation to worship. In our modern era, I believe that the Spirit of God is inspiring a great outburst of new songs and that the Church, at her best, is able to integrate the best of the new songs with the best of the historic ones.

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<sup>59</sup> Tucker, “Music as a Language of Faith.”

CHAPTER V  
COMPOSING BASED ON VIETNAMESE FOLKSONGS

Inculturation of liturgical music in Vietnam could be used to bring appropriate elements of Vietnamese traditional music into the liturgical celebration, while preserving and promoting the true values of the musical heritage of the Catholic tradition. Thus the primary task is to find out the essential elements of Vietnamese folk songs, combine them with those from other traditions, and to create new harmonious compositions.

According to historian Donald Boccardi, a hymn is a religious poem set to music.<sup>1</sup> This definition implies that for a hymn to be judged good depends on the integrity of its theology, poetry, and music as well as how cohesive these elements are when put together. The Vietnamese folksong constitutes three elements: text, melody, and performance.<sup>2</sup> With regards to composing a hymn with elements of Vietnamese folksong, the text and melody should be respected in order to make the new composition Vietnamese.

**Literary Language of Folksongs**

In order to examine the texts of Vietnamese folk songs, we need at first to have a concise look at the Vietnamese verbal language. Vietnamese is a monosyllabic and tonal language. The language comprises in itself musicality because the system of different

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<sup>1</sup> Donald Boccardi, *The History of American Catholic Hymnals since Vatican II* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2001), xi.

<sup>2</sup> Lê Văn Chương, *Vietnamese Folksongs*, 20-23.

tones or accent marks has a particular relationship with music.<sup>3</sup> Each morpheme may have six different meanings depending on its tone. This characteristic of the Vietnamese language is shown in the following table.

Name (Description)	Diacritic	Example
Thanh ngang (plain tone)	a (not marked)	ma (ghost, phantom)
Thanh huyền (falling tone)	à (grave accent)	mà (but, that)
Thanh sắc (rising tone)	á (acute accent)	má (mother or cheek)
Thanh hỏi (dipping tone)	ả (hook)	mả (grave, tomb)
Thanh ngã (glottal rising tone)	ã (tilde)	mã (horse or appearance)
Thanh nặng (glottal falling tone)	ạ (dot below)	mạ (young rice plant)

The musical notations of different accents are recorded by Trần Văn Khê as follows:<sup>4</sup>



Hence music has a close connection with the daily life of Vietnamese people since our language is already highly melodic. Due to the diversity of word intonations, there are in Vietnam a variety of degrees in speaking and singing, such as *giọng ngâm thơ* (poetry declamation), *giọng nói lối* (theatrical recitation), *giọng tụng kinh* (Buddhist cantillation), *giọng đọc kinh* (Catholic cantillation), *giọng ngắm* (Catholic vocal meditation), *giọng hò*

<sup>3</sup> Lê Văn Lý, *Le Parler Vietnamien. Sa structure phonologique et morphologique fonctionnelle. Esquisse d'une grammaire Vietnamienne* (Paris: Hương Sơn Publisher, 1948), 106.

<sup>4</sup> Trần Văn Khê, *La Musique Vietnamienne Traditionnelle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), 279.

(chantey, responsorial song), *giọng hát* (song with different genres).<sup>5</sup>

Phạm Duy states that Vietnamese folk songs were poems set to music according to dialect and local accent.<sup>6</sup> Traditional poetry employs two basic meters: *lục bát* (6-8 morpheme) meter and *song thất lục bát* (7-7-6-8 morpheme) meter. Almost all of the folksongs' texts are in 6-8 meter, some in 7-7-6-8 meter, or in a variation of them.<sup>7</sup>

The *lục bát* meter consists of at least a line of six morphemes (syllables) followed by a line of eight morphemes. It is the same as a combination of iambic trimeter and iambic tetrameter in English poetry.<sup>8</sup> The last syllable of line 6 rhymes with the sixth morpheme of line 8. If there are other couplets, line 8 of the former and line 6 of the latter will rhyme.<sup>9</sup> A *Hát xoan* (spring festival song) in Phú Thọ is an example.<sup>10</sup>

Đến đây lạ cả bạn *trai*  
 Lạ cả bạn gái biết *ai* mà *chào*  
 Bây giờ biết nói làm *sao*  
 Biết ai quen thuộc mà *vào* trình thưa?

I don't know any boys here  
 Or girls either, I don't know whom I should greet  
 I don't know what to do now  
 Who is it that I know and greet?<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Nguyễn Xuân Thảo, 68.

<sup>6</sup> Phạm Duy, *Music of Vietnam*, ed. Dale R. Whiteside (Carbondale: South Illinois University Press, 1975), 19.

<sup>7</sup> Lê Văn Chương, *Vietnamese Folksongs*, 159.

<sup>8</sup> See University of Pennsylvania, "Rhythm and Meter in English Poetry," <http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88/meter.html> (accessed February 18, 2009).

<sup>9</sup> Lê Văn Chương, *Vietnamese Folksongs*, 160-1.

<sup>10</sup> Phạm Duy, 62.

<sup>11</sup> Some folksongs from Phạm Duy's book used in this thesis were translated into English by the

The *song thất lục bát* meter is made up of a seven morpheme couplet followed by a *lục bát* meter couplet to form a kind of quatrain: 7-7-6-8. The 7 lines are a mixture of one three-syllable foot (iambic) and two two-syllable feet (anapestic). The last syllable of the first line rhymes with the fifth morpheme of second line; and the second line then rhymes with the following 6 line of the *lục bát* couplet. We can find this structure in the following *chầu vãn* (incantatory ritual) chant.<sup>12</sup>

Các quan vui trên ngàn dưới ***địa***  
 Vui đền thờ quý ***địa*** danh ***lam***  
 Quần thần vẫn võ bá ***quan***  
 Công đồng yển ẩm thạch ***bàn*** còn ghi...

The deities enjoy their time in the sky and on earth  
 They enjoy seeing precious memorials on beautiful land.  
 All of them sat on stone tables to enjoy their meals and wine  
 Evidence of which is still engraved on the stone today...

The varied 6-8 and 7-7-6-8 meters or the mixed meters are also used in folksongs.<sup>13</sup> In the varied meters, the basic foot structure of each line and the rhyming rules are kept but it is free to add more morphemes to each foot or group. The mixed meter is a combination of all meters with more than 3 morphemes in a line, including end rhyme, middle rhyme, and internal rhyme. The following is a four-foot poem sung in *Lý chuồn chuồn*<sup>14</sup> (rural song of dragonfly):

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book editors.

<sup>12</sup> Phạm Duy, 91.

<sup>13</sup> Lê Văn Chương, 162-69.

<sup>14</sup> Phạm Duy, 56.

Nghĩa non mỏng *nhánh*  
 Như *cánh* chuồn *chuồn*  
 Khi vui nó đậu  
 Khi *buồn* nó bay.

Love and righteousness are as thin as  
 The wings of the dragonfly  
 The dragonfly will come if he likes you  
 He will leave if he does not!

In addition to the poetic formal structure with its tone and rhyme rules, we can recognize some poetic devices used frequently in Vietnamese folk poetry. They are anaphora, synecdoche, symbology, imagery, simile, metaphor, and allegory. Simile—an explicit comparison—and metaphor—an implied comparison—are used very frequently in folk poems, as can be seen in the above examples. As a result of these techniques, John Balaban has observed that the “repository of images, melodic patterns, aspirations, and beliefs is the cultural center of all Vietnamese poetry.”<sup>15</sup>

### **Musical Language of Folksongs**

There are several folk song traditions in Vietnam that express the strongly marked cultural differences among regions of the country. Numerous forms of folksongs have been preserved to form a rich musical treasure. They include *ru* (lullabies), various *hò* (work songs, love songs), *lý* (rural songs), *hát đám* (ceremonial songs), *hát hội* (festival songs), *ca trù* (Northern chamber music), *ca Huế* (Hue chamber music), and *hát châu văn*


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<sup>15</sup> John Balaban, “Translating Vietnamese Poetry,” *Manoa* 11.2 (1999) University of Hawaii Press, <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/manoa/v011/11.2balaban.html> (accessed February 16, 2009).

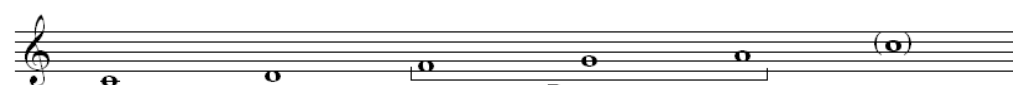
(incantation ritual chant).<sup>16</sup>

The Vietnamese musical language is characterized by the use of certain scales. The most important scales are called regular pentatonic scales since the five tones may be approximately rearranged based on the cycle of the fifths. If the generating tone is F, following the cycle of the fifths, we will have successively C, G, D, A. Reduced within an octave with F at central position, these notes form the basic pentatonic scale in F position (key): C-D-F-G-A-(C). Traditional names for the five degrees in any regular pentatonic scale are *Hò*, *Xự*, *Xang*, *Xê*, *Cống*, (*Líu*).

Cycle of the fifths starting with F



Basic regular pentatonic scale



Hò      Xự      Xang      Pycnon      Xê      Cống      Líu

The three notes F-G-A, with the smallest distance between them, is called *pycnon*. The first note of the pycnon is the key, or position-note, of the scale. Thus it is important to determine the key of a given folksong.

As with diatonic scale, we can also form five different modes with a different tonic or tonal center from five tones.

1) C – D – F – G – A – (C) = Hò or Líu mode

2) D – F – G – A – C – (D) = Xự mode

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<sup>16</sup> See Phạm Duy, 21-93.

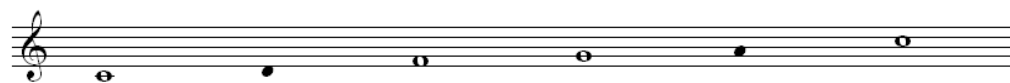
3) F – G – A – C – D – (F) = Xang mode

4) G – A – C – D – F – (G) = Xê mode

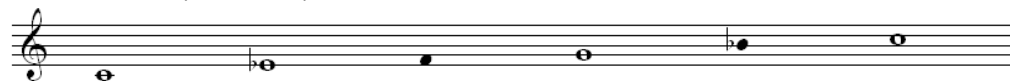
5) A – C – D – F – G – (A) = Cống mode

Many studies show that Vietnamese folksongs are usually sung in four regular pentatonic *điệu thức* (modes): *Hò*, *Xự*, *Xang*, and *Xê*.<sup>17</sup> The *Cống* (A) mode is not common because it, lacking an ascendant fifth—dominant, seems a variation of *Xự* (D) mode. The presence of pivot notes and auxiliary tones are important to identify the mode of a given song or phrase. In the following illustration, the pivot notes are in white head and the auxiliary notes are in black. Transposing these modes to the same beginning pitch C (parallel), we easily realize the differences among them.

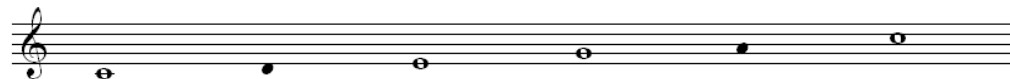
Liu mode (điệu Bắc)



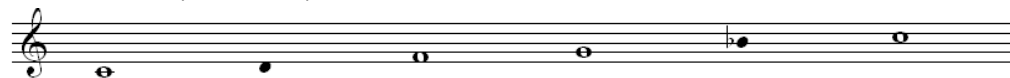
Xự mode (điệu Nam)



Xang mode



Xê mode (điệu Xuân)



In addition to regular scales, there are some irregular pentatonic modes in which

<sup>17</sup> See Lư Nhật Vũ and Lê Giang, *Tìm Hiểu Dân Ca Nam Bộ* [Exploring Southern Vietnam Folksongs] (Saigon: Nhà Xuất Bản Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh, 1983), 166; also see Phạm Duy, *Music of Vietnam*, 22, 30.

some constituent notes are not generated from the cycle of the fifths. *Điệu thức Oán* (Oán modes), used commonly in *Lý miền Nam* (Southern rural chants), is the most typical mode due to the presence of the tritone Eb-A.<sup>18</sup> From the irregular *Oán* scale (Oán 1 mode), there may be found five different formations used in South Vietnamese folksongs.<sup>19</sup> *Tây Nguyên* mode is another irregular pentatonic scale, found in the folksongs of certain ethnic minority groups living in *Tây Nguyên* (Western Highlands) in South Vietnam.<sup>20</sup> *Oán* modes and *Tây Nguyên* mode are illustrated as the following notations.

The image displays six musical staves, each representing a different mode. The first five staves are labeled 'Oán 1' through 'Oán 5', and the sixth is labeled 'Tây Nguyên mode'. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The notes are as follows:

- Oán 1:** G4, Ab4, Bb4, C5, D5
- Oán 2:** G4, Ab4, Bb4, C5, D5
- Oán 3:** G4, Ab4, Bb4, C5, D5
- Oán 4:** G4, Ab4, Bb4, C5, D5
- Oán 5:** G4, Ab4, Bb4, C5, D5
- Tây Nguyên mode:** G4, Ab4, Bb4, C5, D5

In brief, Vietnamese folksongs have made use of the regular pentatonic scale in *Xang*, *Xự*, *Xê*, and *Liu* modes and of irregular scales in *Oán* and *Tây Nguyên* modes. Most folksongs have a temporary or short *chuyển điệu* (change of mode) and a return to the initial mode. Others show a more complex change of both mode and position

<sup>18</sup> Lư Nhất Vũ, *Dân Ca Nam Bộ*, 166.

<sup>19</sup> Nguyễn Xuân Thảo, 126.

<sup>20</sup> Phạm Duy, 3.

(key).<sup>21</sup> Generally, the change of mode (*chuyển điệu*) and metabole (*chuyển cung*), like modulation in Western music, and the usage of borrowed and ornamental tones, may make folk songs' melodies more varied and expressive.

### **Incorporating Positive Elements in New Composition**

As considered above, two fundamental traits of Vietnamese musical culture are 1) the importance of the tonal nature of the Vietnamese language as it applies to vocal music, and 2) the modal nature of the Vietnamese musical system. Together, these characteristics produce a music that is highly melismatic and ornamented. If we apply these keys to composing, we can create music in a Vietnamese style.

The texts of new compositions should not only use correct Vietnamese syntax but also be written in a noble style with dignity and beauty and in a style suitable for proclamation and singing. The *Instruction on Sacred Music in the Liturgy* suggests that “the nature and laws of each language must be respected, and the features and special characteristics of each people must be taken into consideration.”<sup>22</sup> As Nguyễn Xuân Thảo has noted, “texts should employ some kind of poetic meter, together with other poetic devices such as metaphor, simile, allegory, synecdoche, anaphora, imagery, symbolism.”<sup>23</sup> In fact, the texts of many songs are not strictly in the form of traditional poetry—*lục bát* (6-8 morphemes) meter or *song thất lục bát* (7-7-6-8 morphemes)

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<sup>21</sup> Phạm Duy, 54-55.

<sup>22</sup> MS, no. 54.

<sup>23</sup> Nguyễn Xuân Thảo, 257.

meter—but rather “they are expressed in forms of free poetry or in ordinary language that contains poetic characteristics such as rhyme scheme.”<sup>24</sup> For example, the song *Cát Biển Sao Trời* (Sands of the Sea, Star of the Sky) by Phanxicô has some degree of rhyme structure.

Hãy đếm tinh tú trên *trời*  
 Mà biết ơn Người cho *đời*  
 Và xem cát biển để hiểu *Người* thương *ta*.  
 Người thương ta muôn ngàn năm rất *xa*  
 Thuở muôn loài chưa thành trong cõi *đời*.  
 Chính Người mở cho ta đất trời biển bao *la*.

God’s blessings in our lives are countless like the star.  
 Endless as sands is God’s love for us.  
 God loved us from the beginning, before He created this world.  
 It is God who made land, sky and water.<sup>25</sup>

The melodies or main themes of songs should make use of pentatonic scales or “pentatonized” heptatonic scales with pentatonic modulation techniques and melodic idioms so that they will present a Vietnamese “flavor.” Once again, one may think *Cát Biển Sao Trời* is in A minor heptatonic scale and changes to the parallel major scale at some measures. But the author actually combines the regular pentatonic scales and the irregular *Oán* modes.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>25</sup> Translated into English by Mary Minh Hằng; cited from Nguyễn Xuân Thảo, 318.

## Ex. IV.1: Cát Biển Sao Trời by Phanxicô

Xự mode Oán 3

1. Hãy đếm tinh tú trên đời mà biết ơn Người cho  
*1. God's bless-ings in our lives are count-less like the*

Oán 2

đời, và xem cát biển để hiểu Người thương ta. Người thương  
*star. End-less as sands is God's love for us. God loved*

Xự mode

ta muôn ngàn năm rất xa. Thuở muôn loài chưa thành trong cõi  
*us from the be-gin-ning, be-fore He cre-at-ed this*

Oán 2 Tây Nguyên mode

đời. Chính Người mở cho ta đất trời biển bao la  
*world. It is God who made land, sky and wa-ter.*

Xự mode Liu mode

ĐK: Người thương ta thắm năm qua tình vẫn bao la đến muôn  
*Ref: Through the years, God's love for us still re-mains. For-ev-*

Xang mode Oán 2

đời tình chẳng phai nhòa. Người thương ta như mùa xuân mãi ươm hoa.  
*er, it nev-er fades. God loves us and nur-tures us al-ways*

Xự mode Liu mode

Nguyện dâng Cha trái tim con tình nghĩa phơi pha, muốn đáp  
*We give thanks and praise God with all our heart. What could*

Xang mode Xự mode

đền mà lấy chi đền thì xin theo muôn lối mở tình yêu.  
*we do in re- turn? We'll love and spread God's love on earth.*

Composers should keep in mind the principle offered by Erik Routley that the

music of hymns is “for unmusical people to sing together.” Of the poetic content, he goes on to write that hymns “are such poetry as unliturgical people can utter together.”<sup>26</sup> All types of musical texture (monophonic, homophonic, or polyphonic) can be used interchangeably. When the homophonic and polyphonic texture is used in some parts, the music of different voices should respect the character of the Vietnamese language by preserving its pitch-tones.<sup>27</sup> Together the melody, the rhythm, even tempo, dynamics, and articulations, should be “appropriate to each liturgical action” and “proper to genuine sacred music.” The Vietnamese Bishops’ Committee on Sacred Music is more explicit, stating that the new melodies for people’s singing should be “simple, flowing, and within an average range.”<sup>28</sup> Finally, performance marks, such as tempo, dynamics, and articulations should be written down to help people perform the music appropriately in liturgical rites.

Finally, success or failure depends on the creativity of each author/composer. Creativity of composers should be emphasized because, as Nguyễn Thị Minh Châu has observed, there have been “songs only using familiar folksong melodies. This makes them look like folksongs with new lyrics.”<sup>29</sup> New liturgical music demands talented and creative artists. Time will tell whether their compositions will be accepted by the people.

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<sup>26</sup> Erik Routley, *Christian Hymns Observed: When in Our Music God Is Glorified* (Princeton: Prestige Publications, 1982), 1.

<sup>27</sup> Nguyễn Xuân Thảo, 258.

<sup>28</sup> Vietnamese Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy, “The Second Notice on Sacred Music” (1994), no. 3.

<sup>29</sup> Nguyễn Thị Minh Châu, “Different Tendencies in Composing Songs Today.” Vietnamese Institute for Musicology, 2003. [http://www.vnmusicology-inst.vnn.vn/english/information/news\\_33.htm](http://www.vnmusicology-inst.vnn.vn/english/information/news_33.htm)

Moreover, pastoral musicians should not please the faithful by trying to make music which resembles their everyday milieu, their homes, their favorites, and so on. When coming into the church, God's temple, as Guilherme Schubert suggests, "they expect to find something else, something special, something which stands above the everyday, something which elevates them, encourages them, comforts and ennobles them."<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, whatever genre is used, the composers should keep the purpose of music in liturgy and worship. Whether composing based on folksongs or not, musicians of liturgical music must put in their compositions what is called *Vietnamization*, which Dale A. Olsen defined as "the process of bringing local musical colors into an otherwise Western-influenced palette. It can also be explained through the concept of 'globalization,' which includes a combination of global and local elements."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Guilherme Schubert, "The Renewal of Sacred Music," in *Sacred Music and Liturgy Reform after Vatican II*, 188.

<sup>31</sup> Olsen, *Popular Music of Vietnam*, 8.

CHAPTER VI  
TRAINING PROGRAM FOR MUSIC MINISTERS

The training of those responsible for the making of music is the basic element for successfully carrying out the wishes of the Council Fathers on every level within the Church. The developmental process for Vietnamese liturgical music should rely on this key principle of success: “responsive organizations need responsive people.”<sup>1</sup> Those who work in or are involved in music ministry need to be trained. *Sing to the Lord* shows that “the whole assembly is actively involved in the music of the liturgy. Some members of the community, however, are recognized for the special gifts they exhibit in leading the musical praise and thanksgiving of Christian assemblies. These are the liturgical musicians . . . and their ministry is especially cherished by the Church.”<sup>2</sup> Just as with candidates for the priesthood, preparation is imperative as the Council’s guidance: “great importance is to be attached to the teaching and practice of music in seminaries, in the novitiates and houses of study of religious of both sexes, and also in other Catholic institutions and schools. . . . It is desirable also to found higher institutes of sacred music whenever this can be done.”<sup>3</sup> This calls not only for the proper musical formation of priests in seminary, but also the musical education of lay ministers, and even of the entire faith community. Liturgical music is really a ministry. Therefore, the Catholic bishops

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Quinn, *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996), 6.

<sup>2</sup> STL, no. 48.

<sup>3</sup> SC, no. 115.

of the United States assert that “musicians who serve the Church at prayer are not merely employees or volunteers. They are ministers who share the faith, serve the community, and express the love of God and neighbor through music.”<sup>4</sup> The preparation of music ministers must be placed among the priorities of a diocese and must present the participants with the means of liturgical leadership.<sup>5</sup> As a result, it is necessary to have a program in each Vietnamese diocese to train ministers, especially those who are involved in the ministry of music. In the context of the archdiocese of Saigon, I would like to recommend a Formation Program for Music Ministers which could be held at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Institute.

### **Participants and Requirements**

At the present time in Vietnam, there are often multiple choirs in each parish, including adult choir, youth choir, and children’s choir. The choir members usually are not well trained in music. Each choir is taught and conducted by a choirmaster who typically has a good background in music but often lacks knowledge of liturgy and sacred music. Therefore, the candidates for the training program are first of all those who are already working in liturgical worship through music. This is a chance for them to improve as well as complete their knowledge in both music and liturgy. Liturgical composers also need to be educated to the view that music that fits the requirements of the liturgy is worth composing, which will only be the case if the Church makes the kind of commitment it ought to be making to the quality of its liturgical music. The

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<sup>4</sup> STL, no. 49.

<sup>5</sup> John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici - The Vocation of the Lay Faithful* (1988), no. 57.

seminarians who will be ordained to preside at liturgies need to learn to sing their own parts well, so that the people can learn to sing their acclamations and responses in reply. The program should also welcome ordained and laypeople who intend to minister in the area of music. They should be educated to take their rightful place in the congregation, where their willingness to participate will be a lot more effective.

The following list identifies some requirements for applicants:

- At least hold a high school diploma
- Gifted in musical skills and abilities
- Have quality leadership skills
- Ability to speak confidently before groups
- Ability to teach and train others
- Have a servant's heart and attitude

The required documents for the application process would include: a completed application form, a personal essay, a letter of recommendation from one's pastor or superior, and a copy of one's transcripts.

Due to the conditions in Vietnam, especially in the archdiocese of Saigon where most of the participants may be in full time work or study, the program could be carried out in evening or weekend courses. Students who complete the required courses may receive certification as a liturgical musician.

### **Contents of the Training Program**

Every ministry formation program identifies four areas that need attention: human

formation, spiritual formation, intellectual formation, and pastoral formation.<sup>6</sup> These key aspects could appear in a program in different way. The idea of a threefold judgment in “Sing to the Lord” concerns the role of music to serve the needs of the liturgy; it also provides guidance about the formation of pastoral musicians. “Pastoral musicians should receive appropriate formation that is based on their baptismal call to discipleship; that grounds them in a love for and knowledge of Scripture, Catholic teaching, liturgy, and music; and that equips them with the musical, liturgical, and pastoral skills to serve the Church at prayer.”<sup>7</sup> Whether one is a professional or an amateur pastoral musician, one needs ongoing pastoral, liturgical, and musical formation.

#### The Pastoral Dimension

Ministry means grace and service. Saint Paul writes, “The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ” (Eph 4:11-13 NRS). The character of Christian ministry is to serve, and the image of Christ as servant should be a model for all ministers. The purpose of Christian ministry in all areas is the glory of God. Hence, every ministry formation program must include spiritual formation and ministry development. In Vietnam, this seems more important because all lay ministers

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., nos. 60-61.

<sup>7</sup> STL, no. 50.

serve as volunteers.

The vocation and mission of the music minister finds its foundation in the sacrament of Baptism through which Christians are incorporated into Christ's Mystical Body and participate in the threefold mission of Christ as Priest, Prophet and King. Therefore, a continual emphasis on holiness as the essential basis for the Christian life permeates the Church teachings: "All of Christ's followers are invited and bound to pursue holiness and the perfect fulfillment of their own state of life. . . . It is possible to say that this call to holiness is precisely the basic charge entrusted to all the sons and daughters of the Church by a Council which intended to bring a renewal of Christian life based on the Gospel."<sup>8</sup> Michael Downey asserts that "Christian spirituality is nothing more or less than being conformed to the person of Christ, brought into communion with God and others through the gift of the Spirit."<sup>9</sup> Music ministers need to experience conversion; they need to hear the Gospel and so proclaim the praise of God.<sup>10</sup> They should strive to introduce the lost to Jesus and lead the believer to a more meaningful relationship with God through music, Scripture, prayer, and all other facets of worship. In brief, they serve the community and express the love of God and neighbor through music. They understand that the core of the Paschal Mystery that we as an assembly or as musical leaders celebrate is dying to self, and none of us deliberately seeks this out.

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<sup>8</sup> CL, no. 16.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Downey, "Without a Vision the People Perish: Foundations for a Spirituality of Lay Leadership," in *Called & Chosen: Toward a Spirituality for Lay Leaders*, ed. Zeni Fox and Regina Bechtel (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 17.

<sup>10</sup> STL, no. 49.

Music ministers need to create the space and time where God can become their master and where they can respond freely to God's guidance. The practice of Jesus as seen in the biblical narrative is very important for the ministers to examine. If the minister is a person of prayer, he will not go alone when he works for God. A prayer-filled life keeps the minister rooted in Jesus' teaching about serving one another: "Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mt 20:26-28). Therefore, the training program must focus on spirituality and practice of prayer that root ministers in God's Trinitarian life, grounding and animating all they do in ministry.

"The vocation to holiness is intimately connected to mission and to the responsibility entrusted to the lay faithful in the Church and in the world."<sup>11</sup> Music ministers use their gifts and skills not only for themselves, but always for the good of the community. An understanding of cooperation and shared responsibility which is firmly rooted in the principles of a sound ecclesiology will ensure a genuine and fruitful collaboration between lay ministers and pastors. Indeed, a minister of music does not work alone in developing a music ministry program. It is essential that he or she work closely with the pastor to have the most effective program. The director of music also needs to develop a good working relationship with the accompanist, the cantor and choir members. Human qualities such as love, empathy, confidence, patience, and enthusiasm are critical to forming wholesome relationships and necessary to be apt instruments of

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<sup>11</sup> CL, no. 17.

God's love and compassion. Thus the goal of the training program is also to foster the development of a positive working relationship between the music ministers and the pastor as well as the other ministers and all members of the community for the success of the overall music program. They all should strive for mutual respect of each other and for cooperation in the achievement of their common goals.

In brief, for pastoral formation, some topics should be discussed such as the vocation and spirituality of music ministers, pastoral skills for musicians, developing and sustaining healthy musician and clergy relations, good relationships and skills in working with other volunteers, and developing a music program, etc. There are many lists and examples, but these serve only as a basis for learning and exploring those resources and skills needed for music ministry. Furthermore, *lectio divina*, an ancient Christian method of reading Scripture slowly, repeatedly, and prayerfully, will help the music ministers to develop the habit of daily reflection on the sacred Scriptures and to hear God's communication to them on their journey of vocation. The participants, therefore, will learn to practice *lectio divina* with four moments: *lectio* (reading), *meditatio* (meditation), *oratio* (prayer), and *contemplatio* (contemplation). In addition to the chances for communal prayer, the program will offer opportunities for each person's spiritual development through weekend retreats. Using lectures, creative experiences, silent reflection, prayer, and sharing, the retreats will invite participants to spiritually reflect on their leadership gifts and challenges, developing a plan for future growth in their call to ministerial leadership.

### Training in Liturgy

Music must serve and never dominate the liturgy. It should enhance the liturgical texts, making them more effective, and it unifies the assembly. This value and form not only demand the carrying out of the external liturgical requirements, but also demand the most perfect musical composition possible, born of the spirit of the liturgy and adapted to the dignity of divine worship. In keeping with the nature of liturgy, all pastoral musicians—composer, director or choir member, cantor or instrumentalist—must at the same time foster their musical talents and their understanding of the liturgy.<sup>12</sup> The Church always raises the question of the necessity of an education in the liturgy and sacred music which is based on a theological understanding of artistic creation. The purpose of liturgical training is to impart a thorough understanding of the liturgy of the Church and its various liturgical rites, especially the Mass and the liturgical year. It also provides a comprehensive understanding of the function of music in liturgy, the use of service music, and the importance of congregational singing in order to help ministers of music lead and teach people the importance and value of sacred music so they can more completely and effectively worship God. Karl Gustav Fellerer writes, “On this basis, created by professional knowledge and an experience with liturgical and artistic values, sacred music and the liturgy are joined in a unity which serves both the dignity of divine worship and the edification of the faithful.”<sup>13</sup>

The primary responsibility of the ministers of music will be planning and leading

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<sup>12</sup> See SC, nos. 114-115.

<sup>13</sup> Fellerer, “Liturgy and Music,” in *Sacred Music and Liturgy Reform*, 86.

all music in the liturgical celebrations. Therefore, they should learn where music can be used to augment worship: choral or instrumental responses, solos, as prayer, to introduce readings or sermon. At the same time, they will learn to select hymns that relate to and reflect on the themes and topics chosen for the service. They also need to keep in mind that they are there to lead the people and to encourage them to sing, not to perform for them. Hence, the selected hymns must invite congregational singing, be familiar or easily teachable, and enhance the experience of the service. Finally, they would be familiar with the resources for and the variety of music that can be used in worship and church activities.

For these goals, the liturgical training for pastoral musicians may include some topics such as the role of music in worship, Catholic liturgical rites, the liturgical calendar, and the inculturation of liturgy. Two books in particular would be good texts for this project: *Phụng Vụ Nhập Môn* (Introduction to Liturgy) by Trần Đình Tứ and *Tìm Hiểu Thánh Lễ* (Understanding the Mass) by Nguyễn Thế Thủ. In addition, the instructors could also refer to some books in English such as *Liturgical Assembly* by Joseph Gelineau, and *Liturgical Inculturation: Sacramentals, Religiosity, and Catechesis* by Anscar Chupungco for the issues of liturgical music and inculturation.

### Training in Music

Music has always provided the people of God a natural and satisfying way to express their praises. The ministry of music assists every member of the congregational

family in presenting an offering of praise, and it provides training and fellowship for those who dedicate their time, talents and service as choir members. Thus, the ministers of music must have sufficient music training to fulfill their role. The fact that there are very few departments or schools of music in Vietnam is a challenge for our efforts to train music ministers. The solution to the call for education on an advanced level lies in the establishment of a specific program that includes the offering of music courses. These courses would improve the ability of musicians to produce new compositions for liturgy, to make arrangements for instrumentalists, and to sing or to play the organ or piano as needed. The participants would be also trained how to lead the praise teams, the choirs, and the assembly for liturgical services. They can then encourage high standards of spiritual commitment and musical excellence for those involved in worship through music. Formal musical training will bring the participants into a professional position as composer, director or performer.

#### *Composing music for liturgy*

The Council's exhortation to composers specifies the nature of the vocation of liturgical composers in two ways: they are to "develop sacred music" and they are to "increase its store of treasures."<sup>14</sup> The Council recognized that composers, inspired by the liturgical texts and the ceremonies of Christian worship, have produced past masterpieces of universal human import. One need only think of the Masses, Requiems, anthems and motets of Guillaume de Machaut, Josquin Des Pres, Giovanni Pierluigi da

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<sup>14</sup> See SC, no. 121.

Palestrina, Franz Josef Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig von Beethoven, or Franz Schubert to see what impact Catholic Christian liturgical composition has had on the history of Western art music. Contemporary composers are bid to learn from the study of such masterpieces how best to employ the musical languages of their own day in creating liturgical music of the highest excellence. But they are also directed to “develop” sacred music in their time. Changes in the agents (people, time, culture, etc.), rites and texts of liturgical prayer produce changes in liturgical composition. In an effort to cultivate the development of a “Vietnamese sound,” the program must help the musicians comprehend the positive elements of Vietnamese traditional music by exploring folk songs, pentatonic scales, and melodic idioms. It also presents the participants with a survey of a few basic musical-liturgical forms such as litany, responsory, acclamation, and chorale. Besides, the Council notes that composers must make critical judgments about the texts they set. Rather than being expressions of vague religious sentiment, these texts must be doctrinally correct and drawn chiefly from scriptural and liturgical sources.<sup>15</sup> Since most liturgical composers are not theologians, historians of worship, scripture scholars, or lyricists, this challenge involves them in collaborative efforts to produce liturgical composition.

### *Directing a choir*

Vietnamese parishes usually have no director of music ministry. This role is shared by several choirmasters who foster the active participation of the liturgical

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

assembly in singing, coordinate the preparation of music to be sung at various liturgical celebrations, and promote the ministries of the various musicians that serve the liturgy.<sup>16</sup> The choir directors need to know how to recruit volunteers for choirs or as soloists, what preparation is done before beginning rehearsals with the choir, what style of music and instruments are generally used in services, what favorite hymns are appropriated for congregational singing, and how to introduce and teach new hymns and expand the congregation's repertoire. The participants, therefore, need to learn not only conducting techniques but also the skills and understandings necessary to begin their ministry, such as effective strategies for rehearsal, development of choral tone, diction, the diagnosis of choral problems and correction skill, selection of music, and administration of choral programs.

#### *Vocal leading in the congregation*

The use of cantors is not common practice in Vietnam, but I think the time is appropriate to train and put cantors in their rightful place in the liturgical celebrations. The cantor is both a singer and a leader of congregational song. Besides leading communal prayer, cantors also serve to encourage and support the singing of the assembly. "At times, it may be appropriate to use a modest gesture that invites participation and clearly indicates when the congregation is to begin, but gestures should be used sparingly and only when genuinely needed."<sup>17</sup> The cantors must have the skills

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<sup>16</sup> STL, no. 45.

<sup>17</sup> STL, no. 38.

to introduce and teach new music, and to encourage the assembly. Operation of necessary sound equipment, the structure of the liturgy and gesture for the leading of the assembly should also be included in training.

*The art of accompaniment*

“The primary role of the organist, other instrumentalists, or instrumental ensemble is to lead and sustain the singing of the assembly and of the choir, cantor, and psalmist, without dominating or overpowering them.”<sup>18</sup> The liturgical action may call for improvisation, for example, when a congregational hymn or choral piece concludes before the ritual action is completed. *Sing to the Lord* suggests that “those with the requisite talent and training should be encouraged to continue the musical tradition of improvisation.”<sup>19</sup> The art of improvisation requires its own special talent and training. The training program must help the participants not only to be expert in instrumental technique but also to get inside harmony. There are also times when the organ or other instruments may be played alone, such as a prelude before the Mass, or a postlude following a closing song. Therefore, the organist and other instrumentalists will learn how to accompany sacred songs as well as select the pieces they will play. In particular, some Vietnamese traditional instruments such as *sáo* (transverse flutes), *độc huyền cầm* (monochord), *đàn tranh* (sisteen-stringed zither), and *mõ* (wooden tam-tam) are considered appropriate for worship, but few Vietnamese young people have

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., no. 41.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., no. 43.

mastered these skills.<sup>20</sup> Thus the participants would be also encouraged to learn to play traditional instruments.

All basic knowledge will be offered in courses of music theory, sight singing, harmony, composition, arranging, vocal music, conducting, and instrumental performance. Pastoral musicians, besides being highly trained in their performance medium, also need to be well-informed about current musical scholarship, including the history of music (musicology), the study of musical cultures (ethnomusicology), and the study of the psychology of music (music cognition).

### Three Levels Curriculum

The training curriculum consisting of pastoral, liturgical, and musical formation will be divided into three levels: foundational, intermediate, and advanced.

1) Level one (foundational level) is designed to provide the participant with an entire view of liturgical ministry and the basic skills to serve as music leader in worship. This level is made up of four courses and a retreat:

- Vocation and Mission of the Laity
- Introduction to Liturgy
- Music I (elective)
- Music II (elective)
- Retreat: “Called to Be Disciples in the Holy Spirit”

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<sup>20</sup> For more information about Vietnamese youth and traditional music, see Trần Văn Khê, “Chronic Disease of Vietnam’s Traditional Music,” Vietnam Institute for Musicology, [http://www.vnmusicology-inst.vnn.vn/english/information/bai\\_canbenh\\_ANTT.htm](http://www.vnmusicology-inst.vnn.vn/english/information/bai_canbenh_ANTT.htm) (accessed February 26, 2009).

2) Level two (intermediate level) aims to teach the participants how to develop appropriate type of leaders from within their ministry. The goal of this training is to see the participants fruitfully serving as music ministers. This second level consists of four courses and a retreat as follows:

- Spirituality of Lay Ministers
- Roman Catholic Rite
- Music I (elective)
- Music II (elective)
- Retreat: “Spiritual Exercises for Life”

3) Level three (advanced level) is devoted to help music ministers with pastoral application of the theological and social principals needed to become confident about their ministry. This level consists of four courses and a retreat:

- Conflict Management
- Theology of the Sacraments
- Music I (elective)
- Music II (elective)
- Retreat: “Called to Ministry”

### **Process and Continuing Program**

I am aware that the formation program for music ministers is a long process that begins in pastoral, liturgical and musical training. A continuing program should be instituted to improve and update knowledge for those who have served in a ministry of

liturgical music. Bishops and pastors should encourage liturgical musicians to take part in ministerial formation opportunities offered by seminaries, dioceses, and national ministry associations. Parishes and dioceses should provide the financial support needed to ensure competent liturgical musical leadership.

Choral concerts and seminars on sacred music would be occasions for ministers to share individual experience and learn more for their ministry. With the assistance of the committee on sacred music, Dioceses should organize regularly opportunities for stimulating the development of liturgical music.

While working as a minister of music, one needs to refer to many related resources. I think a general document entitled “Guidelines for the Ministry of Music” would be very useful. The archdiocesan Committee on Sacred Music could be charged with the responsibility to compile such a document. It should include the essential issues such as pastoral music, the order of Mass, the choir and instruments, choosing music, and the relationship with pastors and other ministers.

I hope this structured, proactive program, designed to meet the educational needs of pastoral musicians, would contribute to restoring liturgical music practice as well as lift up liturgical renewal and the development of liturgical music in Vietnam and my archdiocese in particular. The training curriculum and a continuing education program will contribute to forming well-educated and widely knowledgeable musicians of high quality. They will cooperate with the pastor to cultivate the worship life in their church by providing an environment of worship and music which brings glory to God.

CHAPTER VII  
GUIDELINES FOR MUSIC MINISTRY  
AND HYMNAL BOOK

The authorities of the local Church are responsible for the development of liturgical music. The *Instruction on Music in the Liturgy* states that “direction in this matter, within the limits laid down, also belongs to the competent territorial Episcopal Conferences of various kinds, which have been legitimately constituted, and to the individual bishop.”<sup>1</sup> In actuality, this direction may be manifested by the authentic guidelines on liturgical music and official collection of music for liturgy.

**Experience from the Catholic Church in the United States**

Since the promulgation of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* in 1963, and then the *Instruction on Music in the Liturgy* in 1967, a number of instructions and statements concerning music in Catholic worship have been issued in the United States. In 1972 the United States Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy published its statement *Music in Catholic Worship*. In 1982 *Liturgical Music Today* was published by the same committee. The revised edition of *Music in Catholic Worship* was published in 1983. These documents established norms for musicians working in liturgy throughout the United States and helped to provide a growing professionalism for pastoral musicians.

Two other useful national statements but not official resources include *The Milwaukee Symposia for Church Composers: A Ten-Year Report* (1992) and *The*

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<sup>1</sup> MC, no. 12.

*Snowbird Statement on Catholic Liturgical Music* (1995). The former is the fruit of the Symposia for Church Composers, held in 1982, 1985, 1988, 1990, and 1992 in Milwaukee. The document is based on “study, reflection and dialogue concerning the nature and quality of liturgical music in the United States, especially within the Roman Catholic tradition. This report is meant to show church composers how much composing and study, observation and reflection they still need to do.”<sup>2</sup> The latter is the result of a series of consultations and discussions among Catholic liturgists and musicians in the English-speaking world. This statement seeks “to contribute in a constructive and respectful spirit to the ongoing discussion of issues which remain controversial, unresolved or even divisive and to engage the wider ecclesial community in advancing the greater good of the Church’s life in the area of liturgical music.”<sup>3</sup>

The newest document, *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, a revision of *Music in Catholic Worship*, was developed by the Committee on Divine Worship and approved by the Latin Church members of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on November 14, 2007. These guidelines are designed to provide direction to those preparing for the celebration of the sacred liturgy according to the current liturgical books. After a foreword, the document contains the following topics in two hundred fifty nine paragraph sections: “Why We Sing,” “The Church at Prayer,” “The Music of Catholic Worship,” “Preparing Music for Catholic Worship,” and “The Musical Structure

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<sup>2</sup> See Foreword to *The Milwaukee Symposia for Church Composers: A Ten-Year Report*, <http://www.archmil.org/resources/userfiles/TheMilwaukeeStatement.pdf> (accessed February 24, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> See *The Snowbird Statement on Catholic Liturgical Music*, no. 2, <http://www.canticanova.com/articles/liturgy/art9o1.htm> (accessed February 22, 2009).

of Catholic Worship.” It concludes with the words of Saint Augustine reminding us of our pilgrimage: “You should sing as wayfarers do—sing but continue your journey. Do not grow tired, but sing with joy!”<sup>4</sup>

All these documents intend to define Roman Catholic worship music, clarify its purpose and qualities, and remind readers of the Council’s call for full, active, and conscious participation in the liturgy through song. At the same time, they address the practical concerns of pastoral leaders including cultural diversity, instrumentation, formation, acoustics, as well as considerations for preparing and selecting music for worship.<sup>5</sup> By classifying the musical elements of worship such as Acclamations, Antiphons and Responsorial Psalms, Litanies, Ordinary chants, and supplementary songs, *Sing to the Lord* provides composers with a new functional understanding of each element and encourages them to find new ways to sing the love for God each new day.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to issuing statements on liturgical music, the United States Bishops also concerned themselves with an official hymnal for worship. A National Hymnal Study project was conducted by the Federation of Diocesan Liturgy Commissions in 1973. The conclusion was finally reached in Spokane that a national hymnal was not desirable. Arguments favoring the hymnal as “a book of dignity” did not prevail. The Paluch *Monthly Missalette* became the most established source for liturgical

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<sup>4</sup> St. Augustine *Sermo* 256.1.2.3 (PL 38, 1191-1193); quoted in USCCB, *Sing to the Lord*, no. 259.

<sup>5</sup> Joncas, *From Sacred Song to Ritual Music*, 6-8.

<sup>6</sup> STL, no. 83.

participation.<sup>7</sup> That is one reason why the American Catholic Church does not have an official hymnal. A significant number of hymnals has been published since then under the names of the three largest Catholic music publishers in the United States such as *Journeysongs* and *Music Issue* (annual companion to *Breaking Bread* seasonal missalette) by Oregon Catholic Press (OCP); *Gather, Worship, Ritualsong, Lead Me – Guide Me, Hymnal for Catholic Students*, and *The Catholic Community Hymnal* by Gregorian Institute of America (GIA); and *We Celebrate, People’s Mass Book* by World Library Publications (WLP). There are also some common productions from other publishers such as *American Catholic Hymnbook* by American Catholic Press, *Adoremus Hymnal* by Adoremus in cooperation with the Church Music Association of America, and *Collegeville Hymnal* by the Liturgical Press.<sup>8</sup>

In 2006, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops during its annual meeting discussed the issue of hymnals and suggested that “within three years, the Committee on the Liturgy will formulate a Common Repertoire of Liturgical Songs for use in all places where the Roman liturgy is celebrated in the United States of America. While songs outside the core repertoire may also be used in the liturgy, this core repertoire will be included in all worship aids used in the dioceses of the United States of America.”<sup>9</sup> I do not have any update on this at the present time.

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<sup>7</sup> Boccardi, *History of American Catholic Hymnals*, 33.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 80 ff.

<sup>9</sup> See “Bishops to Vote on Norms for Hymns at Mass,” Office of Media Relations – USCCB, October 2006, <http://www.usccb.org/comm/archives/2006/06-201.shtml> (accessed February 26, 2009).

### **Authentic Guidelines on Liturgical Music**

Since the liturgical reforms of Vatican II, the Vietnamese Bishops have not made any statement on liturgical music, except three notices in 1994. One of the greatest tasks of the Vietnam Conference of Catholic Bishops at this time is to compile and promulgate an authentic document on music ministry. It will be an official resource and provide basic guidelines for understanding the role and ministry of music in the liturgy. This document would be used to train music ministers, help those working in music ministry understand their role in sung worship, evaluate a parish's current musical repertoire, and better prepare particular sacramental liturgies.

Several composers have produced music undermining the sense of corporate worship. Many choirmasters do not know how to choose a song suitable to liturgical action. The *Instruction on Sacred Music in the Liturgy* addressed the question of musical style and raised vital questions: "No kind of sacred music is prohibited from liturgical actions by the Church as long as it corresponds to the spirit of the liturgical celebration itself and the nature of its individual parts, and does not hinder the active participation of the people."<sup>10</sup> For those who are making liturgical music, this statement raises a number of questions: 1) what is sacred music? 2) how does music correspond to the spirit of a liturgical celebration? 3) how should music respect the individual parts of worship? 4) what is the appropriate active musical participation of the people? Church documents on liturgical music need to be explained and applied accurately to the context of Vietnam. Liturgical music does not exist in a cultural

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<sup>10</sup> MS, no.9.

vacuum, but within specific times and cultures.

Clear guidelines on liturgical music in Vietnam will help control some of the extremes in music. It will help to keep the Catholic message intact and provide a forward-looking guide for establishing criteria for, and the evaluation of, appropriate music in a ritual context. Catholics then need not worry that they will be limited to Gregorian chant or any other particular style. Standing on the Church's teaching and contemporary theology, the document must echo the call to full, active, and conscious participation in the liturgy through its sung elements. It will address the practical concerns of pastoral leaders-appropriate ministers, cultural diversity, instrumentation, and formation. The document must call for music that is participatory. The principal minister of music is the assembly of the people, assisted by the choir, the cantors or soloists, and the instrumentalists. The sung participation of the worshipping community should be the primary focus; liturgical music keeps the assembly as its focus.

“The Commissions for sacred music are of most valuable assistance in promoting sacred music together with pastoral liturgical action in each diocese.”<sup>11</sup> A committee within the national liturgy office consisting of musicians, liturgists, and theologians will be in charge of developing the document. Such a professional group will work together effectively because in fact most theologians and liturgists are unfamiliar with musical scholarship, just as musicologists and performers are usually equally unfamiliar with Catholic theology. The committee also needs to consult experts on Vietnamese culture and traditional music.

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<sup>11</sup> MS, no. 68.

The documents to which the guidelines refer may include *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (2002), *Fourth Instruction: Inculturation and the Roman Liturgy* (1994), *Instruction on Sacred Music in the Liturgy* (1967), *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (1963), and *Tra le sollecitudini* (1903). Also, *Sing to the Lord* (2007) of the Catholic Church in the United States should be considered as a useful reference source. The three notices on liturgical music in 1994 also need to be revised and placed in the new document. Generally, the guidelines should contain the following topics: Nature and Purpose of Liturgy, Liturgical and Musical Structures, Liturgical Preparation, Models of Musical Leadership, Choosing Music for Liturgy, Textual Considerations, and Incultured Music Making.

The guidelines, being drafted by the national committee for liturgical music, once completed, will need to be approved by the bishops and will help worship leaders, priests and liturgy offices in the task of deciding what songs are appropriate to play or sing during Mass as well as in the Daily Offices. It will also assist musicians hoping to compose music for the Mass setting, Psalms, and hymns. Generally speaking, this detailed document would promote the development of liturgical music.

### **Official Collection of Music for Worship**

Roman Catholics, and Vietnamese Catholics in particular, have to learn from the experience of the Reformation approach which produced a burst of hymn writing and congregational singing. Martin Luther is notable not only as a reformer, but as the author of many hymns including “From Heaven Above to Earth I Come” which is sung

today even by Roman Catholics.<sup>12</sup> Charles Wesley's hymns spread Methodist theology, not only within Methodism, but in many Protestant churches. In the United Methodist Church, "hymnals serve as instruments by which the spiritual heritage received from the past is celebrated in the present and transmitted to future generations. Next to the Bible, our hymnals have been our most formative resource."<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the United Church of Christ states that "within the historic Protestant traditions that shape the United Church of Christ, the hymnbook serves as a primary vehicle to nurture the faith of church members."<sup>14</sup>

The Second Vatican Council and the subsequent official documents concerned with implementing the Council's directives have underscored the importance of the active participation of the people in the sung celebration of the liturgy. An official collection of music for worship is one of concrete responses to the call that "actual practice should lead people gradually to more extensive and indeed complete participation in all the parts proper to them."<sup>15</sup> In actuality, there have been several collections by group or individuals. For example: *Cung Thánh Tổng Hợp* (Collection for the Holy Temple), *Tuyển Tập Thánh Ca 1, 2* (Collection of Sacred Songs volumes 1 and 2), *Chung Lời Ngợi Ca 1-5* (Sing Together volumes 1 to 5), *Thánh Ca Cộng Đồng*

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<sup>12</sup> Edward J. McKenna, ed. *The Collegeville Hymnal* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press: 1990), n. 213.

<sup>13</sup> Hymnal Revision Committee, *United Methodist Hymnal*, v.

<sup>14</sup> United Church of Christ, *The New Century Hymnal*, (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1995), ix.

<sup>15</sup> MS, no. 16.

(Sacred Songs for Congregation), *Ca Lên Đi* (Let Us Sing) by Kim Long, *Thánh Ca Vào Đời* (Sacred Music into Life) by Thành Tâm, *Nhạc Khúc Thiên Đường* (Melodies of Heaven) by Nguyễn Duy, *Ca Ngợi Tình Chúa* (Sing to God's Love) by Ngọc Linh, and so on.<sup>16</sup>

Whatever the details of development, Michael Joncas reminds us of the essential reason why we are working at the development of music and liturgy: “We need to be convinced of the great purpose of sacred music in the liturgy: mediating God’s transformation of human beings in holiness as they encounter and acknowledge God’s great deeds of creation and redemption in Christ. We need to choose and promote a repertoire of sacred music that assists the faithful in praying, differentiates roles within the congregation, unifies the assembly, symbolizes the transcendent and unites present worshipers to past, future and heavenly worship.”<sup>17</sup> The authentic collection should be designed to provide congregations with as many top worship songs and hymns as possible so that they can have the flexibility of choosing the ones that best meet their needs in worship planning. It must therefore include songs that have become some of the most used in worship in Vietnam, the songs that church musicians themselves have chosen, the songs that best communicate the message of the Gospel, and, most importantly, the songs that motivate and inspire worshippers to have a fresh encounter with the living God.

The sixty-year tradition of Vietnam church music has resulted in a wide variety of

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<sup>16</sup> Nguyễn Duy, 338.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Joncas, “Re-Reading *Musicam Sacram*: Twenty-five Years of Development in Roman Rite Liturgical Music,” *Worship* 66, no. 3 (May 1992): 230-31.

songs. This collection must aim to preserve many of the best compositions of the past, and of the present, as it leads to the future. To attempt to revise older songs requires some justification in both theology and language. Many churches today use contemporary worship music which includes a range of styles often influenced by popular music. As considered before, the criteria for liturgical music have little to do with genre or style. Multiple styles can coexist within one parish's repertoire. This also leads to the diversity of styles in the collection. A hymnal is defined as "a collection of hymns and service music written by a variety of composers for a variety of occasions meant for congregational singing. The inclusion of service music is important because the needs of Catholic liturgy go beyond the use of hymns."<sup>18</sup> In addition to the Order of Mass and Mass settings, the collection should consist of responsorial Psalms as well as hymns and songs that can subdivide into the seasons of the liturgical year and the following categories: Introit, Offertory, Communion, Recession, Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Holy Trinity, Sacred Heart, Corpus Christi, the Blessed Virgin, the Saints, Church, Unity, Mission, Christian Life, Christian Initiation, Marriage, Funeral, and Vietnamese Traditional Feasts.

The work of the collection of music for worship will begin with the formation of a subcommittee on music consisting of members who are chosen for their technical and sound pastoral knowledge of music. The chief responsibility of the subcommittee will be the selection of songs and the commissioning of new music for the people's parts in the rites. During the time of selection the subcommittee should be assisted in its work by

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<sup>18</sup> Boccardi, *History of American Catholic Hymnals*, xiii.

consultants—especially the competent and practicing musicians—from throughout the nation and even from Vietnamese communities overseas.

The selection process for a hymnal begins with the compiling of a list of hymns or Masses drawn chiefly from existing hymnals. Upon the initial review of this list, the subcommittee sets guidelines for the selection of hymns. Subsequently, each hymn, both text and melody, is reviewed by the subcommittee and by consultants who then recommended the inclusion or exclusion of the text from the collection and note if any changes are needed in the text of the hymn. Meanwhile, the subcommittee on music also needs to commission composers based upon a sample of their published and unpublished works. The composer receiving a commission would be given a specific brief and guidelines for the composition of the work. Upon submission, the setting would be reviewed by the subcommittee and its consultants. Following minor revisions, each work will be approved by the subcommittee.

For both old and new compositions, the hymn texts are chosen if they are liturgically apt, theologically sound, and sufficiently inspirational and intelligible. The subcommittee should recommend that archaisms be removed from the hymn texts. A line or verse may be sometimes rewritten because the theology expressed is judged unsuitable for contemporary worship. Exclusive language is another consideration. Though masculine characterization does not appear in the Vietnamese language, the subcommittee should carefully examine the language from racial, ethnic, and sociocultural perspectives, and reconsider language that could be diminishing to people with physical disabilities. Every effort should be made to ensure that all hymns speak to

and for all God's people equally. Consideration is also given to imagery to assure that it relates to the scientific understandings of a coming generation. A number of different factors must be considered in the choice of tunes. For pastoral reasons, all the melodies have to be within the performance capability of a congregation. In commissioning new service music, the subcommittee must ask the composers to provide settings that are simple and congregational in style.

Lastly, the subcommittee should choose a general editor to oversee the work on the research, indexing, musical accompaniments, engraving, and textual and musical editing of the hymns. The work will need a good introductory section with notes for musicians and some pages of summary ideas on the Second Vatican Council and on the nature of hymns and their place in worship. A simple breakdown of the Mass will precede the main sections. Finally, good indices would be helpful for musicians and ministers. Indices include Scripture Passages Related to Hymns; Hymn of the Day for Sundays of the year and major feasts; Topical index, and index of First and Common Titles. The metrical index is very useful in an English hymnal, but it will not work in Vietnamese.

Once completed, this official collection will contribute significantly to the promotion of congregational participation by singing. The selection also serves as a resource collection from which dioceses, parishes may draw for the purpose of compiling their service books, hymnals, and participation aids.

## CHAPTER VIII

### APPLICATION AND CHALLENGES OF THE PROJECT

This project's aim is the development of liturgical music in Vietnam, but the process will take place in different levels, from the national level to dioceses and then to parishes. The direction must derive from the Vietnam Conference of Catholic Bishops. Its obligation is to promulgate the guidelines on music ministry and issue the collection of music for worship. The formation program will be held in each diocese. This depends on the desire of each bishop. Finally, the parish is the place for celebrating the liturgy with music. Liturgical music, therefore, is promoted in a congregation depending upon the awareness of the pastor.

The primary challenge for this project is in making it accessible to parishes. Many pastors do not have any concern about developing liturgical singing in their congregation. Some have several choirs in their parish but seem not to "lift a finger" to support and promote them. The leadership of the parish clergy is the most influential factor in the liturgical-musical life of the parish. Hence, the formation of the seminarians in Vietnam is of serious importance. The experience provided in seminaries and seminary chapels forms the attitudes and musical values of future priests, often for the remainder of their ministry. Accordingly, for the good of the Church's liturgy, seminarians need to participate in a liturgical music program which is well informed in principle and generative of right liturgical practice. Seminary formation requires a well-developed liturgical-musical curriculum which will allow future pastors to be good

leaders in the worship life of their parishes and communities. Ongoing education for clergy after seminary also needs to be more adequately organized within dioceses. The diocesan liturgy offices would be well spent in more intensive attention to the continuing formation of parish priests in the area of liturgical music.

I am then concerned about the current lack of experts in the area of liturgical music. This problem exists at national as well as diocesan levels. This reality caused the ineffectiveness of most diocesan committees on liturgical music in the past decades. Thus, it is impossible for some dioceses to organize the training program for music ministry because of the lack of competent instructors. I believe this problem can be resolved by the cooperation between dioceses and an extensive consultation process with liturgists and musicians. It is just of course a temporary solution. For future goals, each diocese needs to pay attention to training professionals. The more extensive episcopal leadership we make, the more enormous are the benefits to the church's sung liturgy.

Another challenge may come from those who are the objects of the training program. I suggest that the archdiocese and parishes should offer more adequate resources to improve the musical skills of parish musicians of all levels of competence. The most important skill of the parish musician, apart from adequate understanding of the liturgy, is the actual ability to make music. When this is lacking, the song of the assembly cannot be actualized and the rites cannot be celebrated adequately. However, many parish musicians are not aware of a requirement for liturgy study and improving their musical skills. In fact, finances are really a problem for those who want to attend the program in order to become unpaid ministers. There exists a serious need for moral

and financial support from parishes and dioceses.

Central to the Church's musical education programs is the continued development of the singing congregation as the principal and fundamental musical body.

Congregational singing in Vietnamese Catholic worship has not yet generally achieved a desirable standard. This is a challenge for several parishes to change habits in worship.

While no shortcuts or easy solutions exist, pastors and musicians would do well to reflect together more systematically and regularly on this matter and to choose and promote repertoire in a manner conducive to increased congregational singing.

Regarding the inculturation of liturgy or liturgical music in particular, the practice of seeking the *recognitio* from the Apostolic See for all translations of liturgical book and local documents, for example, the official guidelines on liturgical music, may sometimes impede the development process because of the Vatican's incomplete understanding of the expression of devotion of culturally different people. Jonathan Y. Tan observes that "clinging too much to the substantial unity of the Roman liturgy may end up in rigidity that obstructs proper incarnation of Christian faith."<sup>1</sup> As a result, the Asian bishops' request at the Asian Synod would be a suitable solution: "local Churches need the authority and freedom to inculturate the liturgy by adapting it to the local cultures while recognizing the need for dialogue and communion with the Holy See, the principle of unity in the Church."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Y. Tan, "The Responses of the Indonesian and Japanese Bishops to the Lineamenta" in *The Asian Synod: Texts and Commentaries*, ed. Peter C. Phan (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002), 61.

<sup>2</sup> Asian Bishops, "Proposition 43: Inculturation," in *The Asian Synod: Texts and Commentaries*, ed. Peter C. Phan (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002), 159.

Finally, this project has limits and a shortage of dispassionate research on the state of liturgical music in the average parish. This is only a starting point for the development journey. The project will be supplemented when a comprehensive survey of liturgical music in Catholic parishes is made in the future. The project may be opposed by some people including pastors, musicians, choir members, or laity. They should recognize that the demands of truly sacred music are uniquely challenging: it requires humility and a willingness to go beyond pleasing ourselves and our immediate audience. Sacred music demands sacrifice and loving service to God and the Church.

For those who are involved in leadership, Robert Quinn's advice would be useful: "To bring deep change, people have to 'suffer' the risks. And to bring about deep change in others, people have to reinvent themselves."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, change means taking risks and facing the possibility of failure. For the development of Vietnamese liturgical music, we must courageously journey to a strange place where there are a lot of risks and much is at stake, a place where there are "new problems that require us to think in new ways."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Quinn, *Deep Change*, 11.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

## CONCLUSION

In looking to the future, we must look to the present, to the past, and to our dreams of what might be. Great things have been achieved since the Council in the musical aspects of the Church's liturgical life in Vietnam. However, the positive achievements coexist with much that needs revision and redirection. This project serves as an affirmation, a critique and a proposal. It is offered as part of a necessary conversation about the future of Vietnamese Catholic worship that must continue with intelligence, wisdom and charity.

I would like to conclude this project with a few sentences from the "Afterword" of *The Milwaukee Symposia for Church Composers: A Ten-Year Report*: "In and through its worship, the Christian assembly challenges composers, musicians and all liturgical ministers to grow ever more deeply into the dispositions, capacities and musical forms that make Christian liturgy a vehicle of the transcendent and a supremely humanizing art. Together may we be prepared to receive 'what eye has not yet seen, nor ear heard.'"<sup>1</sup>

I hope that this project will awaken the local authorities to the obligation of promoting liturgical music, encourage musicians to continue their efforts in composing and making available music for the liturgy and that it will help foster the sung participation of the people of God in the celebration of the rites. May the facts of the present be advancing impetus to a continued growth in maturity for music of the liturgy. This would be surely a reflection of the growth in maturity of the Vietnamese Church.

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<sup>1</sup> See Afterword to *The Milwaukee Symposia for Church Composers: A Ten-Year Report*, <http://www.archmil.org/resources/userfiles/TheMilwaukeeStatement.pdf> (accessed February 24, 2009).

The old Latin axiom *lex orandi, lex credendi* (the law of prayer is the law of faith) refers to the relationship between worship and belief, and is considered as an important principle in Catholic theology. In this project the principle might well be rephrased *lex canendi, lex credendi, lex vivendi* (the law of song is the law of faith and the law of life). Liturgical music practice in Vietnam must reveal what we truly believe and how we live our Christian faith and fulfill our Christian mission in the world.

APPENDIX 1

STATISTICS OF THE VIETNAMESE CATHOLIC CHURCH  
By 12-31-2007

	DIocese	SIZE (km <sup>2</sup> )	POPULATION	CATHOLIC	PRIEST	SEMINARIAN	FRIAR	NUN	CATECHIST
1	Hà Nội	4,456.06	6,839,200	332,006	99	57	20	288	1,385
2	Lạng Sơn	16,000	1,584,000	6,320	8	9	1	20	11
3	Hải Phòng	9,079.1	4,804,516	119,783	54	38	3	80	900
4	Bắc Ninh	24,600	7,376,504	127,734	51	38	1	268	1,058
5	Hưng Hoá	54,352	6,881,060	217,030	53	33	-	179	2,098
6	Bùi Chu	1,350	1,428,658	388,013	160	39	-	589	3,255
7	Thái Bình	2,301	3,650,000	119,920	62	32	35	129	952
8	Phát Diệm	1,786.77	980,987	153,131	55	46	-	194	1217
9	Thanh Hoá	11,106	3,520,000	134,994	61	65	-	474	1,011
10	Vinh	30,594.9	5,079,500	481,351	154	90	-	471	7,659
11	Huế	16,003	2,255,000	67,780	109	39	85	689	722
12	Đà Nẵng	11,664	2,281,023	63,848	81	22	1	251	763
13	Quy Nhơn	16,194	3,734,903	68,011	79	36	-	392	950
14	Kontum	25,110	1,584,116	243,751	70	47	10	337	3,112
15	Nha Trang	9,486.25	1,650,000	194,403	169	58	50	582	2,047
16	B. M Thuật	24,462.44	2,650,786	346,064	109	45	25	365	3,544
17	<u>TP. HCM</u>	2,093.7	6,114,871	651,046	576	61	1,027	3,588	5,243
18	Vĩnh Long	6,771.79	4,162,100	188,569	167	49	33	567	749
19	Cần Thơ	13,423.1	4,972,100	187,406	181	72	-	764	1,174
20	Mỹ Tho	9,262	4,252,698	119,555	107	41	-	292	459
21	Đà Lạt	9,764.79	1,190,057	313,086	193	67	111	737	2,124
22	Long Xuyên	10,256	4,213,978	239,132	218	73	39	201	1,977
23	Phú Cường	9,543.35	2,850,347	120,994	134	35	38	382	812
24	Xuân Lộc	5,955	2,386,744	816,342	366	180	229	1,693	8,821
25	Phan Thiết	7,828	1,165,599	155,287	107	55	76	439	1,183
26	Bà Rịa	1,988.65	1,052,892	232,103	97	43	187	491	2,907
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>335,431.9</b>	<b>88,661,639</b>	<b>6,087,659</b>	<b>3,510</b>	<b>1,370</b>	<b>1,971</b>	<b>14,455</b>	<b>56,133</b>

## APPENDIX 2

### NOTICES OF COMMITTEE ON LITURGICAL MUSIC

#### **Thông Cáo Số 1/94 Về Thánh Nhạc**

[1] Được sự ủy nhiệm của Hội Đồng Giám Mục Việt Nam Theo những huấn thị của Tòa Thánh, sau khi đã hội ý với một số chuyên viên. Nay xin thông báo tới Quý Cha, Quý vị phụ trách các Nhà thờ, Nhà nguyện, Quý vị phụ trách Thánh ca trong Phụng vụ, các Ca Nhạc Sĩ Công Giáo... một số quy định về Thánh Nhạc như sau:

#### **I. Các Bài Thánh Ca Được Dùng Khi Cử Hành Phụng Vụ**

[2] Theo luật định, chỉ những bài Thánh ca đã có chuẩn nhận của Giáo quyền địa phương mới được hát khi cử hành phụng vụ. Do đó, để việc ca hát trong phụng vụ được tốt đẹp hơn:

a) Xin Quý Cha, quý vị phụ trách các Nhà thờ, Nhà nguyện chỉ cho phép sử dụng trong phụng vụ những bài hát đã được giáo quyền chuẩn nhận.

b) Các nhạc sĩ đã hoặc sẽ sáng tác những bài hát mới, kể cả những bài đã được phổ biến nhưng chưa được chuẩn nhận, nếu muốn dùng trong phụng vụ, phải gửi về Tòa Giám Mục của Giáo phận mình để xin chuẩn nhận.

Tương cũng lưu ý: trước khi gửi tác phẩm xin chuẩn nhận, các nhạc sĩ nên duyệt lại để bài hát đạt được hai đặc tính cơ bản mà Đức Piô X đã đề ra (Tự Sắc Tra le Solleccitudini) và được Hiến chế Phụng Vụ số 112 cũng như Huấn Thị về Thánh nhạc trong Phụng Vụ số 4 nhắc nhở:

- Thánh thiện, nên phải loại bỏ yếu tố trần tục
- Hình thức hoàn mỹ, có tính nghệ thuật đích thực cao cả về nhạc lẫn lời, đáp ứng những đòi hỏi về chuyên môn và những quy định của Giáo Hội.

“Thiếu đặc tính này, nó không thể đưa tâm hồn người nghe đạt tới công hiệu mà Giáo Hội nhắm tới khi dùng nghệ thuật âm thanh trong phụng vụ” (Đức Piô X).

c) Vị phụ trách Thánh nhạc mỗi Giáo phận, sau khi duyệt và trình Đức Giám Mục chuẩn nhận, sẽ thông báo kết quả lại cho tác giả và giữ lại một bản để lưu trữ.

Nếu có thể, xin gửi một bản sao về Giám Mục phụ trách Thánh nhạc (22, Trần Phú Nha Trang hoặc qua địa chỉ liên lạc: Linh Mục Kim Long, Đại Chủng Viện Thánh Giuse số 6, Tôn Đức Thắng, Quận 1, thành phố HCM) để tiện việc tham khảo cho các Giáo phận khác và để phổ biến sau này.

d) Nếu giáo phận nào chưa cử người phụ trách hoặc không có người đủ khả năng chuyên môn thì Tòa Giám Mục đó có thể gửi về các địa chỉ trên để ủy thác công việc chuẩn nhận này.

#### **II. Nhạc Cụ Dùng Trong Phụng Vụ**

[3] Từ lâu Giáo Hội vẫn quý trọng và đề cao việc dùng đại phong cầm (cũng gọi là

đàn ống) trong phụng vụ. Âm thanh của loại đàn này làm tăng “vẻ huy hoàng cho các lễ nghi lại có hiệu lực nâng cao tâm trí lên cùng Chúa và những sự trên trời.” Tuy nhiên, trong hoàn cảnh hiện nay, ta vẫn có thể dùng những nhạc cụ khác “tùy theo sự phán đoán và phê chuẩn của thẩm quyền địa phương, miễn là đã hoặc có thể thích hợp để dùng vào việc Thánh, xứng đáng với vẻ tôn nghiêm của Thánh đường và thực sự giúp cảm hóa các tín hữu” (PV số 120).

[4] Trong khi chờ đợi những quy định cụ thể của HĐGM, cần lưu ý và thi hành ngay những điều sau đây:

a) Tiếng hát trong phụng vụ chiếm ưu thế nên luôn phải rõ ràng, các nhạc cụ khác chỉ là đệm theo nên “không bao giờ được lấn át tiếng hát” (Tự sắc Tra le Sollicitudini, số 16). Không được vượt tay trên các phím đàn, nhất là organ và piano.

b) Chúng ta có thể dùng organ điện tử (synthesizer) trong phụng vụ, nhưng:

–những nút “điệu” chỉ nhắm dùng cho sinh hoạt đời. Do đó, không nên dùng trong phụng vụ. Tuy nhiên, có thể dùng lúc luyện tập để quen giữ đúng nhịp.

–phải lựa chọn các nút âm thanh thích hợp với Thánh ca (ví dụ organ, violin...), tránh dùng những âm thanh xa lạ với phụng vụ vì sẽ gây chia trí hơn là giúp cầu nguyện.

–khi sử dụng các nhạc khí như organ điện tử, guitare, đàn trống, đàn kèn, đàn nhạc hoà tấu... không được dùng các điệu Jazz và các điệu phát xuất từ đó để đệm cho người hát khi cử hành phụng vụ 1. Vì các điệu này hầu hết đều có tính cách kích động, huyền ảo... có thể thích hợp với các sinh hoạt khác nhưng bất xứng với nơi thánh.

–các hội kèn đồng (kèn tây) khi dùng trong phụng vụ hoặc trong các cuộc rước có liên quan, không được hoà tấu những bản nhạc đời, nhạc thời trang...

–tránh dùng các nhạc cụ đặt trong nhà thờ để luyện tập các bản đời. Thật không hay gì khi qua một nhà thờ mà từ trong nghe vọng ra những bài Valse, những “lá thư tình,” “dưới ánh trăng,” hay “love story”...

### III. Huấn Luyện Về Thánh Nhạc

[5] Để phát triển và nâng cao ngành Thánh nhạc: “Phải chú trọng đến việc huấn luyện và thực tập âm nhạc trong các chủng viện, các tập viện cũng như các học viện của các Dòng tu nam, nữ” (PV 115). Xin các Giáo phận, tùy hoàn cảnh, cố gắng tổ chức các khóa huấn luyện Thánh nhạc cho ca trưởng, người điều khiển cộng đoàn khi hát, người đánh và đệm đàn, người sáng tác, ca viên... để những người làm công việc cao quý này có khả năng hoàn hảo hơn hầu phục vụ có hiệu quả hơn. Trong chương trình huấn luyện, cần quan tâm đến những quy luật Phụng vụ liên quan đến Thánh nhạc... Nơi nào cần được yểm trợ về tài liệu hoặc nhân sự, xin liên lạc qua những địa chỉ nêu trên.

Giáo phận hay Dòng tu nào có điều kiện nên cử người đi học Thánh nhạc ở nước ngoài, nhất là tại viện Thánh nhạc Rôma.

Những quy định trên đây cần xúc tiến thi hành ngay để tạo sự ổn định và nhất thống cho Thánh Nhạc Việt Nam.

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1. *Epistula concilii ngày 25-1-1966 của Đức Hồng Y Lercaro, in lại trong Enchiridion documentorum instaurationis liturgise, Marietti 1976, số 577, trang 203.*

## **Thông Cáo Số 2/94**

### **Về Việc Chuẩn Nhận Các Bài Thánh Ca Dùng Trong Phụng Vụ**

Hiến chế Phụng Vụ cũng như Huấn thị về Thánh nhạc trong Phụng Vụ đều nhắc lại:

[1]– Mục đích của Thánh nhạc là làm vinh danh Chúa và thánh hóa các tín hữu nên Thánh nhạc phải có những đặc tính căn bản mà Đức Piô X đã đề ra trong Tự sắc Tra le Sollicitudini (số 2) và được khai triển trong Hiến chế Phụng Vụ số 112.

a) Thánh nhạc phải thánh:

Về mặt tích cực: “Thánh nhạc càng liên kết chặt chẽ với hoạt động Phụng Vụ bao nhiêu thì càng thánh hơn bấy nhiêu.”

Về mặt tiêu cực: Phải loại bỏ những gì phạm tục không những trong bản chất mà cả nơi những người thể hiện.

b) Thánh nhạc phải là nghệ thuật đích thực, có giá trị cả về nhạc lẫn lời, như thế Thánh nhạc sẽ dễ dàng đưa tâm hồn con người đạt tới công hiệu mà Giáo Hội nhắm khi dùng nghệ thuật âm thanh trong Phụng Vụ.

[2]– Do đó, khi chuẩn nhận các bài Thánh ca dùng trong Phụng Vụ, xin các người hữu trách quan tâm đến một số gợi ý sau đây:

[3]– Về âm nhạc: xin lưu ý 4 phương diện:

a) Dòng ca: dòng ca các bài hát Phụng Vụ cần:

- Đơn sơ, trôi chảy, âm vực vừa phải, nhất là những bài hát dành cho cộng đoàn.
- Thích hợp và làm tăng ý nghĩa lời ca. Cần lưu ý các dấu bằng, trắc trong tiếng Việt.
- Cùng với tiết tấu, dòng ca phải thích hợp với từng loại hoạt động Phụng Vụ.
- Tránh những nét nhạc lãng mạn, ủy mị (dùng nhiều nửa cung, nhất là nửa cung đồng) hoặc có tính chất kịch trường (dùng nhiều quãng lớn liên tiếp).
- Cấm đặt lời ca vào những bài nhạc đòi rời hát trong Phụng Vụ, kể cả những bài dân ca.
- Có thể dùng cung bình ca như cung gợi ý khi sáng tác bằng ngôn ngữ địa phương trong các cung chủ tế và tá viên (Huấn thị về Thánh nhạc, số 56) (x. thư trả lời của Đc Thụ Ký TB gửi Đc Nguyễn Văn Hòa ngày 8.2.94)
- Khi soạn những cung dành riêng cho chủ tế và các tá viên, “các nhạc sĩ hãy xem các cung nhạc truyền thống Phụng Vụ Latinh đã được sử dụng trong cùng một mục đích có thể gợi ra những giải pháp để đặt nhạc cho những bản văn đó bằng ngôn ngữ hiện đại không?” (Huấn thị âm nhạc trong Phụng Vụ, ngày 5.3.1967, số 56).
- Thích ứng nhạc dân tộc: “Việc thích ứng âm nhạc trong những miền có một truyền thống âm nhạc riêng, nhất là trong các xứ truyền giáo” là điều được Công Đồng Vatican II khuyến khích (PV 119), nhưng nó “đòi hỏi các nhà chuyên môn phải được chuẩn bị cách đặc

biệt” (Huấn thị âm nhạc, số 61).

– Để tránh lầm lẫn cho người sử dụng, khi phát hành, cần xác định rõ là nhạc dùng trong Phụng Vụ hay nhạc dùng cho các sinh hoạt khác. Không được in hai loại trong cùng một sách hay cùng một băng nhạc.

b) Tiết tấu: Như đã nói ở trên, tiết tấu phải thích hợp với Thánh nhạc nói chung và với từng hoạt động Phụng Vụ nói riêng. Ngay khi bày tỏ niềm vui thì Phụng Vụ đã phần nào nghi thức hóa niềm vui đó. Nó không còn niềm vui bộc phát của đời thường, nhưng bình dị hơn, trang nghiêm hơn, thích hợp với cộng đồng hơn. Những bài hát bình ca và choral cho ta một mẫu mực về điểm này. Cũng vì thế mà Giáo Hội cấm sử dụng các điệu nhạc Jazz trong Phụng Vụ.

c) Hòa âm: Đây là một lãnh vực rất phong phú của âm nhạc quốc tế, nhưng riêng đối với tiếng Việt, có 6 âm ở cao độ khác nhau một cách tương đối, thì việc sử dụng hoà âm còn gặp nhiều khó khăn. Tuy nhiên, các nhạc sĩ Việt Nam nói chung và Công Giáo nói riêng đã có nhiều khám phá, nhiều sáng kiến đáng kể. Cùng với việc tuân thủ các qui luật của môn học này, các nhạc sĩ hãy kiên trì tìm tòi, hy vọng sẽ hình thành được một khoa hoà âm độc đáo cho tiếng Việt.

Nhưng trước mắt, chúng ta nên lưu ý:

– Những bài đa âm viết theo nhạc pháp đồng hoà (Omophonie) như các bài choral, phải tránh những nốt nhạc làm cho lời ca thành khác nghĩa, có khi thành lỗ bịch.

– Những bài đa âm viết theo nhạc pháp đối âm thì nên tránh những gì cầu kỳ phức tạp, khiến nghe không rõ bản văn Phụng Vụ.

d) Thể loại bài Thánh ca: Vì có nhiều loại hành động Phụng Vụ khác nhau nên cũng có nhiều thể loại Thánh ca khác nhau: ca nhập lễ, đáp ca, ca dâng lễ, ca hiệp lễ, các câu tung hô, các câu đối đáp giữa chủ tế và cộng đoàn, phần hát dành cho chủ tế và tá viên, bộ lễ (thương xót, vinh danh...). Bài hát dùng cho trường hợp nào thì phải theo thể loại của trường hợp đó.

[4] Về lời ca:

a) Bản văn Phụng Vụ:

Trong Phụng Vụ, nhất là trong Thánh Lễ, một số bản văn có tính cách cố định thì không ai được thay đổi vì bất cứ lý do gì, dù để dễ hát: “trước hết, phải nhắc lại điều này là bản văn Phụng Vụ chi phối âm nhạc chứ không phải âm nhạc chi phối bản văn Phụng Vụ. Trong các bản văn dùng để hát, cần lưu ý đến các bản văn quan trọng của các cử hành Phụng Vụ. Các lời Kinh nguyện của linh mục (Lời nguyện, Kinh nguyện Thánh Thể, lời ban phép lành và truyền phép), lời đối đáp giữa linh mục hay phó tế với cộng đoàn, những lời tung hô của cộng đoàn (ví dụ lúc đọc Phúc Âm, trong các Kinh nguyện Thánh Thể, Kinh Thánh Thánh Thể và lời tung hô tưởng niệm); Một số bản văn Thánh Kinh hoặc Phụng Vụ đã có truyền thống từ lâu đời như Kinh Vinh Danh, Kinh lạy Chiên Thiên Chúa, các bản văn tuyên

xung đức tin trong Giáo Hội như Kinh Tin Kính, Kinh Lạy Cha. Tất cả những bản văn này phải dịch cách trung thực rồi căn cứ vào đó mà sáng tác các cung chú không được sửa đổi. Khi dịch các bản văn khác, ta cũng có thể thích ứng tùy theo nhu cầu tinh thần ngôn ngữ và nhu cầu sáng tác âm nhạc như các bài ca nhập lễ, ca hiệp lễ” (Huấn thị về Thánh nhạc, số 32; 36 Huấn thị Comme le prévoit, số 36) (thư trả lời của Tổng Giám Mục Gérard M. Agnelo, thư ký Thánh bộ Phụng Tự gửi Đức Cha Phaolô Nguyễn Văn Hoà, Giám Mục Nha Trang, phụ trách Thánh nhạc của HĐGMVN ngày 8.2.1994).

Bộ Phụng Tự chỉ cho thích nghi (thay đổi từ ngữ hoặc sắp xếp lại) đối với Ca Nhập Lễ, Đáp Ca, câu xướng trước Tin Mừng, ca Dân lễ và ca Hiệp lễ. Hơn nữa, những bài hát này còn có thể được thay thế bằng các bài chọn trong tuyển tập đã được Hội Đồng Giám Mục chuẩn nhận.

b) Những bài hát thay thế:

Do đó, để chuẩn nhận, lời ca của những bài này cần đáp ứng 2 tiêu chuẩn sau đây: Đúng và Hay.

– Đúng về nội dung:

Đúng với tín lý Công Giáo.

Đây là yếu tố quan trọng cần lưu tâm. Một số bài được phổ biến vẫn gieo rắc những sai lạc như “Chúa ngự trong bánh rượu” (đáng lý phải viết như thế này mới đúng: “Chúa ngự trong hình bánh và rượu”) hay “xin yêu thương dẫn về quê mộng mơ” (đáng lý phải viết: “chôn quê hằng mơ”).

– Đúng về hình thức:

Đúng từ ngữ, văn phạm, hợp với tính cách của hoạt động Phụng Vụ, với khung cảnh lễ nghi, với tâm tình đạo đức của các tín hữu.

– Hay về nội dung:

“Quý nhất là được trích trong Thánh kinh và nguồn Kinh Phụng Vụ” (PV 121) vì từ đó gợi lên những tâm tình đạo đức thâm sâu và đích thực.

– Hay về hình thức:

Có giá trị văn chương, nhất là thi ca để hoà hợp với âm nhạc. Tránh những sáo ngữ, những kiểu nói trần tục như: “như viên đá xanh ngủ yên giấc mộng lành...,” chú ý tới tiết tấu của lời ca, những từ ngữ và hình ảnh đẹp, cách gieo vần...

Trên đây là đôi điều căn bản, mong các vị phụ trách Thánh ca của các Giáo phận đã được Tòa Giám Mục ủy thác công tác chuẩn nhận các bài Thánh ca lưu ý nhằm thống nhất việc chuẩn nhận và nhờ đó, Giáo Hội Việt Nam có được những bài Thánh ca giá trị để tôn vinh Thiên Chúa và giúp thánh hóa các tâm hồn.

**Thông Cáo Số 3/94**  
**Hướng Dẫn Sáng Tác và Sử Dụng các Bài Hát Trong Thánh Lễ**

Cần lưu ý những điều sau đây:

**I. Thẩm quyền chuẩn nhận:**

[1]– Cung dành cho chủ tế và tá viên:

a) Loại này gồm:

- lời chào của chủ tế và lời thưa của dân chúng
- các lời nguyện (nhập lễ, tiến lễ, hiệp lễ)
- cung hát các bài đọc và Tin Mừng
- các lời đối đáp và Kinh tiền tụng
- lời tung hô tưởng niệm, kết Kinh tạ ơn
- Kinh Lạy Cha cùng với lời mở đầu và lời tiếp diễn
- lời chúc bình an
- công thức giải tán

b) Chuẩn nhận: Theo Huấn thị về Thánh nhạc trong Phụng Vụ số 57, tham chiếu Huấn thị Inter ícumenici số 42, thì các cung hát dành cho chủ tế và tá viên phải được thẩm quyền địa phương chuẩn nhận (Competenti auctoritate ecclesiastica territoriali). Nguyệt san Phụng Vụ Notitiae, số 339 ra tháng 2 năm 1966 đã giải thích: thẩm quyền địa phương ở đây là Hội Đồng Giám Mục.

c) Trong kỳ họp thường niên năm 1987, HĐGM Việt Nam đã chấp thuận cho sử dụng các cung hát bằng tiếng Việt dành cho chủ tế và tá viên đang được phổ biến. Tuy nhiên, đây chỉ là giải pháp tạm thời: chấp nhận một sự việc đã rồi và coi như một giai đoạn thử nghiệm. Vậy để tiến tới việc hình thành một số cung hát chung, trình HĐGM chuẩn nhận sau này:

1. Xin quý vị phụ trách Thánh nhạc của mỗi Giáo phận vui lòng thu thập và gửi các bản hát loại này hiện đang được thử nghiệm trong phạm vi trách nhiệm và vui lòng gửi về Giám Mục phụ trách Thánh nhạc kèm theo những ý kiến thẩm định giá trị qua kinh nghiệm sử dụng.

2. Các nhạc sĩ sáng tác những cung hát mới cho các loại kể trên, xin gửi trực tiếp về chúng tôi hoặc qua trung gian Tòa Giám Mục sở tại để tiện việc cứu xét và trình lên HĐGM.

[2]– Các bài hát khác:

Các bài hát khác như ca nhập lễ, ca dâng lễ, ca hiệp lễ, đáp ca... kể cả bộ lễ (Kinh Thương Xót, kinh Vinh Danh, kinh Tin Kính, kinh Thánh Thánh Thánh, kinh Lạy Chiên Thiên Chúa) chỉ cần được Đức Giám Mục Giáo phận chuẩn nhận.

**II. Các bản văn:**

Trước tiên, nên nhớ rằng: trong Phụng Vụ bản văn chi phối âm nhạc, chứ không phải ngược lại. Đó là luật chung.

[3]. Khi sáng tác hoặc sử dụng các bài hát trong thánh lễ, cần phân biệt:

a) Bản văn cố định: Với các bản văn thuộc nghi thức thánh lễ như: các lời cầu nguyện của chủ tế, bộ lễ, các lời tung hô, các lời đối đáp giữa Linh Mục hoặc Phó Tế với cộng đồng, kinh Tiền Tụng, kinh Nguyện Thánh Thể, kinh Lạy Cha... phải theo sát bản văn đã được HĐGM chuẩn nhận và được Tòa Thánh châu phê, in trong sách lễ Rôma: không được thay đổi vì bất cứ lý do gì.

b) Bản văn được thích ứng: Những bản văn khác như: ca nhập lễ, ca dâng lễ, ca hiệp lễ "được thích ứng khi phiên dịch sao cho hợp với tinh thần của ngôn ngữ và đòi hỏi của sáng tác" (thư trả lời của TGM Gérard M. Agnelo, thư ký Thánh Bộ Phụng Tự gửi ĐC Phaolô Nguyễn Văn Hoà, GM Nha Trang, phụ trách Thánh Nhạc HĐGMVN ngày 8.2.94)

Ngoài ra, còn được thay thế các bài hát này bằng các bài hát khác đã được HĐGM chuẩn nhận vào việc này.

[4]. Các bản văn được thích ứng khi phiên dịch:

a) Ca nhập lễ: có thể:

1. Phổ nhạc theo bản văn (được thích nghi) in trong sách lễ Rôma. Nhưng đó mới là điệp khúc. Khi dặt nhạc, phải thêm một số câu Thánh vịnh đã được chỉ định (thường cùng Thánh vịnh với điệp khúc) để dùng như phiên khúc.

2. Chọn bài hát trong các sách đã được Giáo quyền chuẩn nhận (Imprimatur) để thay thế như:

- bài cùng Thánh vịnh với ca nhập lễ, in trong sách lễ.
- bài hợp với mùa Phụng vụ.
- bài hợp với tác động Phụng vụ (thí dụ: tiến lên bàn thờ...)
- bài hợp với ngày lễ (Huấn thị về Thánh nhạc trong Phụng Vụ, số 32)

b) Đáp ca:

Đáp ca có tầm quan trọng đặc biệt. Chiếu theo bản chất, bài hát này thuộc thành phần Phụng Vụ Lời Chúa, vì vậy:

1. Thường nên lấy ở sách bài đọc vì mỗi bản văn Thánh vịnh đều liên quan trực tiếp đọc (Quy chế tổng quát sách lễ Rôma, số 36). Do đó:

- không dùng những bài hát không phải là bản văn Thánh Kinh để thay thế đáp ca.
- khi dặt nhạc, các nhạc sĩ được thay đổi ngôn từ để tạo nét nhạc hoàn mỹ. Cố gắng viết câu đáp đơn sơ, dễ hát vì đây là câu hát của cộng đoàn.

2. Quy chế tổng quát (QCTQ) trong sách lễ Rôma cũng cho phép:

– để dân chúng có thể hát Thánh vịnh đáp ca dễ dàng, một số bản văn đáp ca và Thánh vịnh đã được lựa chọn cho từng mùa trong năm hoặc cho từng loại lễ, để mỗi khi hát đáp ca, có thể dùng các bản văn này thay cho bản văn hợp với bài đọc liên hệ. Sách Lectionarium, cuốn I, trang 861-874 có liệt kê các bản văn và các Thánh Vịnh đó.

3. Cách hát đáp ca có thể dùng một trong ba cách sau đây:

Cách 1: để tạo sự dễ dàng cho cộng đoàn, người hát Thánh vịnh xướng câu đáp ca, cộng đoàn lặp lại đáp ca này, sau đó, người hát tiếp tục hát Thánh vịnh.

Cách 2: Người hát Thánh vịnh hát câu xướng, rồi cộng đoàn đáp lại bằng đáp ca.

Cách 3: Hát trực tiếp: người hát Thánh vịnh hát hoặc đọc Thánh vịnh mà không cần cộng đoàn đáp lại. Hoặc toàn thể cộng đoàn cùng hát Thánh vịnh luôn và không có câu đáp ca.

4. Có thể hát ca tiến cấp (Graduale) thay cho Thánh Vịnh đáp ca. Bài này in trong sách lễ Rôma.

c) Ca dâng lễ: Hát khi rước lễ vật lên bàn thờ. Ca dâng lễ, vì nếu không hát thì bỏ luôn, nên không in trong sách lễ Rôma.

Khi chủ tế dâng bánh và rượu, nên hát đối đáp giữa chủ tế và cộng đoàn theo bản văn qui định.

Tập quán thay ca dâng lễ bằng những bài hát có ý nghĩa “dâng bánh rượu, dâng hồn xác lên Chúa” vẫn có thể duy trì vì đang khi ca đoàn hoặc cộng đoàn hát như thế, chủ tế vẫn đọc trọn bản văn theo quy định. Xin nhớ: chỉ hát những bài đã được Giáo quyền chuẩn nhận cho việc dâng lễ.

d) Ca hiệp lễ: Hát khi linh mục và giáo dân rước Lễ. Cũng như ca nhập lễ, ca hiệp lễ có thể:

1. Theo sách lễ Rôma: bản văn in sẵn dùng làm điệp khúc, viết thêm một số câu Thánh Vịnh đã được chỉ định sẵn (xem *Ordo cantus missae*) để dùng như phiên khúc.

2. Chọn bài khác thay thế (trong sách đã được Giáo quyền chuẩn nhận):

“Bài hát này không những cần có tính cách kính Thánh Thể mà còn phải phù hợp với phần Thánh Lễ, với ngày lễ hay mùa Phụng vụ” (Huấn thị về Thánh nhạc trong Phụng Vụ số 36).

Nên chú ý đến mục đích của ca hiệp lễ là “diễn tả sự đồng tâm hiệp nhất thiêng liêng giữa những người rước lễ khi họ đồng thanh ca hát, đồng thời biểu lộ niềm vui trong tâm hồn và làm cho việc tiến lên rước Mình Thánh Chúa có tính cách huynh đệ hơn” (QCTQ sách lễ Rôma, số 56 i).

3. Luôn có thể hát Thánh vịnh 33 với điệp khúc “hãy ném thử...” thay thế ca hiệp lễ.

Ước mong những hướng dẫn đại cương trên đây giúp các nhạc sĩ khi sáng tác và các ca trưởng khi chọn bài hát sử dụng trong Thánh Lễ đáp ứng đúng mức những đòi hỏi của Giáo Hội.

Nha Trang, ngày 24 tháng 9 năm 1994

(chữ ký và con dấu)

Phaolô Nguyễn Văn Hòa

Giám Mục Giáo Phận Nha Trang

Đặc Trách Thánh Nhạc HĐGM Việt Nam

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