

SACRED CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP

Letter *Voluntati obsequens* to bishops, accompanying the booklet *Jubilate Deo*, 14 April 1974

Pope Paul VI has expressed often, and even recently, the wish that the faithful of all countries be able to sing at least a few Gregorian chants in Latin (for example, the *Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei*)¹ In compliance, this Congregation has prepared the enclosed booklet *Jubilate Deo*, which provides a short collection of such Gregorian chants.

I have the honour and office of sending you a copy of this booklet as a gift from the Pope himself. I also take this occasion to commend to your own pastoral concerns this new measure intended to ensure the carrying out of the prescription of Vatican Council II: 'Steps should be taken enabling the faithful to say or to sing together in Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass belonging to them.'²

Whenever the faithful pray together as a community, they show at once the complex diversity of a people gathered 'from every tribe, language, and nation' and their unity in faith and charity. The diversity stands out in the many languages lawfully used in the liturgy and in the song settings suited to those languages. The languages and songs convey the religious spirit of each particular people, along with the identical teachings of faith; the different types of music correspond to the culture and traditions of each people. The unity of faith, on the other hand, stands out in a marked manner through the use of Latin and Gregorian chant. This, as we all well know, has through the ages been the accompaniment for the liturgy of the Roman Rite; it has nurtured faith and devotion; it has achieved such perfection that the Church rightly regards it as a special heritage of incomparable excellence; finally, it has been acknowledged by Vatican Council II as 'the chant distinctive of the Roman liturgy.'³

Undoubtedly one of the principal aims of the reform of the liturgy is the promotion of congregational singing, in order to give fuller expression to the festive, communal, and familial character of the liturgy. 'A liturgical service takes on a nobler aspect when the rites are celebrated with singing, the ministers of each rank take their parts in them, and the congregation actively participates.'⁴ The issue is a major concern for those agencies charged with the reform of the liturgy and one that faces its own problems and obstacles. Thus, as it has often done before, the Congregation for Divine Worship appeals for the furtherance and growth of congregational singing.

As to singing in the vernacular: the reform of the liturgy also 'offers to composers an opportunity to test their own abilities, their inventiveness, their pastoral zeal.'⁵ Thus composers of both the music and the words must be inspired and encouraged to put all their energies and abilities at the service of this noble cause. This is the means toward the creation of songs for the people that are truly worthy to become part of the praise of God, the liturgical rites, or popular devo-

1 See Paul VI, Address to a general audience, 22 Aug. 1973; Address to the CIMS, 12 Oct. 1973. Secretariat of State, letter to the Associazione Italiana di Santa Cecilia, 30 Sept. 1973.

2 SC art. 54

3 SC art. 126

4 Instr. MusSacr, 5 March 1967, no. 5

5 See Instr MusSacr no. 54, Paul VI, Addr. to the Associazione Italiani di Santa Cecilia, 24 Sept. 1972

tions, because the songs are expressions of faith and of genuine art. The Council's inauguration of the reform of the liturgy set a new ideal and a new goal for the Church's musical practice arid for sacred song: 'A new flowering is today awaited in the art of religious music because in every country the vernacular has been brought into liturgical worship. The vernacular must not be allowed to lack the beauty and expressiveness that lie within the power of genuinely religious music and singing suited to the texts.'⁶

In its successful progress the reform of the liturgy does not reject nor can it spurn the entire past, but 'is to preserve its heritage with great care.'⁷ The liturgical renewal holds in high esteem whatever good the past contains and whatever advantage it brings to the spheres of religion, culture, and art; at the same time it safeguards all those elements that can be of service in strengthening and making clearer to all the bond between believers. Thus the enclosed short collection of Gregorian chants should meet this need and cause the faithful to draw closer together and to unite themselves in unanimity with all their brothers and sisters in the faith as well as with the living tradition of ages past. Thus the intent to increase singing in large gatherings of the faithful must include concern for Latin Gregorian chants.

That need is all the more pressing in view of the proximity of the Holy Year 1975, a time when the faithful of different languages, nations, and races will gather in large numbers to worship the Lord together.

Lastly, there must be particular attention to keeping a sound balance between vernacular singing and Gregorian chant, especially on the part of those who, because of their office, are more involved in the Church's life and therefore more keenly aware of that life. Accordingly the Pope urges 'that Gregorian chant be preserved and performed in monasteries, religious houses, and seminaries as a privileged form of sung prayer and as an element of the highest cultural and instructional value.'⁸ Moreover, the study and use of Gregorian chant 'because of its distinctive qualities are an important foundation for a mastery of sacred music.'⁹

In sending you this gift of Pope Paul, I have thought it opportune to restate his frequently expressed mind and intention that the conciliar Constitution on the Liturgy be fully and exactly put into practice. After you have consulted the established diocesan and national agencies responsible for the liturgy, music, pastoral work, and catechetics, you will decide on the most practical method for the faithful to learn and to sing the Latin chants in the booklet *Jubilate Deo*. You will also establish the means for the agencies mentioned to promote the preservation and use of the Gregorian chant. These steps will provide the liturgical reform with new possibilities for contributing to the building up of the whole Church.

The present volume may be published and a vernacular translation added for a better understanding of the Latin text.

6 Paul VI, Address to the CIMS, 12 Oct. 1973

7 SC art. 114

8 Secretariat of State, Letter of Card. I. Villot to the Aesociazione Italiana di Santa Cecilia, 30 Sept.

9 Instr. MusSacr no.52

SACRED CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP

Booklet *Jubilate Deo*, Preface, 11 April 1974

The bond of unity...

In the Constitution on the Liturgy, after urging that the vernacular take a proper place in liturgical celebration, Vatican Council II adds this directive: ‘Nevertheless steps should be taken enabling the faithful to say or to sing together in Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass belonging to them.’¹

With this intention, Pope Paul VI on several recent occasions has expressed the desire that Gregorian chant accompany the eucharistic celebrations of the people of God and lend its strong support to these celebrations with its pleasing music and also that the voice of the faithful be heard in both Gregorian and vernacular singing.²

The present short volume is a response to the Pope’s wishes. It is a collection of the simpler melodies for the faithful to sing together — particularly on the occasion of the Holy Year.

In this way Gregorian chant will continue to be a bond that forms the members of many nations into a single people, gathered together in Christ’s name with one heart, one mind, and one voice. This living unity, symbolized by the union of voices that speak in different languages, accents, and inflections is a striking manifestation of the diversified harmony of the one Church. As St. Ambrose exclaims: ‘How close the bond of unity is when so many people join together in the one chorus. They are like the different strings of the harp that yet produces one melody. The harpist may often make mistakes while playing on just a few strings, but the artist who is the Holy Spirit never makes a mistake while playing on the hearts of a whole people.’³

May God grant that the desire shared by all will be successfully realized, namely, that the heart of the Church at prayer will have a joyful, resounding voice throughout the world in these pleasing and reverent melodies.

1 SC art. 54

2 See Paul VI, Address to a general audience of the CMS, 12 Oct. 1973. See also Secretariat of State, Letter of Card, J. Villot to the meeting of the Associazione Italiana di Santa Cecilia, Genoa, 26–30 Sept. 1963

3 Ambrose, *Explanationes Psalmorum* in Ps. 1:9: PL 14, 925.

Commentary in *Notitiae* 10 (1974) 122:

The Congregation for Divine Worship has seen to the publication of the small, but beautifully made volume, *Jubilate Deo* (Vatican Polyglot Press, 54 pp., 11 x 16 cm., printed in black and red, four illustrations inserted from liturgical codices of the Vatican Library, cover title stamped in gold with the first notes of the melody for *Jubilate*, the offertory antiphon of the Second Sunday after Epiphany and the First Sunday after Easter from the old Roman Gradual; see *Ordo Cantus Missae* nos. 88 and 89). The volume is a collection of the simpler Gregorian chants that the faithful should know, in keeping with the mind of the Constitution on the Liturgy and the desire expressed by Pope Paul VI on numerous occasions. The volume has been sent in the Pope's name to each of the bishops and superiors general of religious, along with a letter of the Congregation for Divine Worship, *Volunta Obsequiens*.

The first section of *Jubilate Deo* bears the title *Cantus Missæ* and supplies all the chants for the Ordinary of the Mass along with the responses incorporated into the new Roman Missal; these are already well known in the vernacular but hardly at all in Latin.

Under the title *Cantus varii*, the second part of the volume contains chants for various celebrations (eucharistic chants, hymns, and canticles, Marian antiphons, the *Te Deum*, etc.).

Although reduced to a minimum, this selection will be extremely useful if the faithful learn the chants contained in the volume, as the Pope and the Congregation for Divine Worship intend.