

## **Song Integrated with Liturgy**

### **Has Its Source in Love, Suffering, Death and in Relationship with God**

*The new man sings a new song. Singing is an expression of joy and, if we consider the matter more profoundly, it is **a thing of love.*** (St. Augustine)

*The People of God assembled for the liturgy sings the praises of God. 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... **As an element of the liturgy, song should be well integrated into the overall celebration.** Consequently everything – texts, music, execution – ought to correspond to the meaning of the mystery being celebrated, the structure of the rite and the liturgical seasons (Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 42). Church has never ceased to gather to celebrate the paschal mystery and to read what was written about Jesus in all the scriptures (Lk 24:27) celebrating the Eucharist in which the victory and triumph of His death and resurrection are substantialized, at the same time thanking God for the ineffable gift (2 Cor 9:15) in Christ so as to praise His glory (Eph 1:12) by the power of the Holy Spirit (CCC, 6). The most important work of Church is the **liturgy** with its participants: celebrant, acolytes, lectors, schola or a choir, an organ master and all the congregated faithful. Participation in liturgy is a thing of love towards God and man.*

**Music has its integral part in God's worship.** *For 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* (MS 5). And it is impossible to understand sacred music other than as integrated with liturgical celebrations. Music must somewhat stem from liturgical acts, must become a "beautiful attire" for words, gestures and theological content. The rationale for the existence of a choir or schola is liturgy, whilst an organ master, cantor and choir master along with a liturgy-presiding celebrant co-create it. Thus the moments of liturgical celebrations are not only the time of their active participation but also of their sanctification.

#### **1. Pastorality.**

The crucial thing is the pastoral dimension of liturgical music with its clear message of music as the language of evangelization. Music rises here to the kerygmatic rank. It is through good music that the truths coming from God can and should be revealed. Music which is the language of a prayer, becomes at the same time the moment of deepening and strengthening faith. There is no place for randomness here. The things in which we participate are sacred. And just like we cannot allow ourselves to neglect the

preparation for Sunday preface or Mass dialogues, we cannot allow the admittance of some accidental music bands, cantors or youth scholas. Liturgy is not the time of rehearsals! It is the actual standing before God. That is why music performed during liturgical celebrations cannot be mediocre or low-standard. It must be of a proper level so as to make people see the acting God.

In his letter addressed to church musicians of the Cracow Archdiocese in 2005 the Archbishop Stanisław Dziwisz wrote: ***please, take care of the beauty of liturgical music, do not cut corners and fall into populism in this sphere of the Church life. Sing and play the songs which carry deep meanings of faith... When you suitably select the songs for liturgy ... you discover yourselves and help others discover this great truth that liturgy, and music in it, is giving glory to our Lord and sometimes even sanctifying ourselves***<sup>1</sup>. In the pastoral sense **we can talk of music and of its significance** when we talk of music which **brings up, educates, develops, directs towards the beauty and values from outside this world. In order to communicate the message entrusted to her by Christ, the Church needs art. ... Art has a unique capacity to take one or other facet of the message and translate it into colours, shapes and sounds which nourish the intuition of those who look or listen**<sup>2</sup>. In *Chirografo* (handwritten letter) published on the Centenary of *Motu Proprio* of Pius X on 22 November 2003 Pope John Paul II wrote: ***the role of liturgical music is to contribute to the spiritual growth of both, those who perform it and those who listen to it***<sup>3</sup>. Each participant of liturgy, fulfilling his duty, sanctifies himself, but also assists others in their sanctification. In the Church community each of us is to perform our duties with a view to reaching sanctity. Liturgical spirituality requires that everybody would engage their abilities and talents so as to make a better use of a gift of one's personality<sup>4</sup>.

During his audiences with the choirs of the International Federation of Pueri Cantores in Rome, first in 1993, Pope John Paul II addressed them: *may your praise of God transcend borders! You know that the word "angels" means "sent ones." You are, in your own way, "sent" to spread the joy of God and to show, through your song, that faith is stronger than doubt, that hope is stronger than despair, that love is stronger than death,* and in 1999 the Pope added: ***You are also messengers of faith, for it is not enough that the quality of your singing should lead those who hear you to prayer and recollection. Sacred music and song are an integral part of the Church's liturgy and your singing helps the faithful to turn to God, especially during the celebration of the Eucharist. Perhaps in this consists the kerygmatic dimension of sacred music, that through sacred music we proclaim the Good News.*** And if so, the music is also an instrument pleased by God to transform man's heart. If someone really encountered mysteries of faith proclaimed by sounds, they cannot be indifferent to this very moment of God's Grace. It is surely the way of evangelization, of deepening faith. In his Apostolic Exhortation *SC* Pope Benedict XVI emphasized very strongly participation *actuosa*: *the active participation called for by the Council must be understood in more substantial terms, on the basis of a greater awareness*

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<sup>1</sup> Dziwisz, S. *List do muzyków kościelnych Archidiecezji krakowskiej* [Letter to Church Musicians], Kraków 2005.

<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, *List do artystów* [Letter to Artists], Rome 1999, no. 12.

<sup>3</sup> John Paul II, *Chirografo z okazji 100-lecia Motu proprio Tra le Sollecitudini muzyce świętej* [Chirograph on the Centenary of *Motu proprio Tra le Sollecitudini Sacred Music*], Rome 2003, 15.

<sup>4</sup> Kopeć, J.J. *Liturgia źródłem formacji życia chrześcijańskiego według ks. Wojciecha Danielskiego* [Liturgy as the Source of Formation for Christian Life according to Fr. Wojciech Danielski], RBL 5 (1986), p. 407.

of the mystery being celebrated (...) <sup>5</sup>. It is so important in the context of the pastoral signification of liturgical music. Therefore, whenever a choir, a schola or a music youth band sings, or when we hear organ music or the one played by the liturgically acceptable instruments, we can talk of a prayer run by others yet in which all people gathered at the celebration intrinsically participate.

## 2. Beauty.

Paul de Clerk used to ask **what to say of music?** *If we removed from the Middle Ages and Baroque heritage all the sacred works, what would remain? Was it not liturgy of every Sunday that inspired Bach's cantatas?* <sup>6</sup> **So how truly important is the sense of beauty in liturgy.** Music must be beautiful. The experience of this beauty may stay permanently in human minds. Everything which is not beautiful is not God worthy. Benedict XVI focuses on this beauty in his exhortation: *The beauty of the liturgy is part of this mystery; it is a sublime expression of God's glory and, in a certain sense, a glimpse of heaven on earth. (...) Beauty, then, is not mere decoration, but rather an essential element of the liturgical action, since it is an attribute of God himself and his revelation. These considerations should make us realize the care which is needed, if the liturgical action is to reflect its innate splendour.* <sup>7</sup>

In view of the above, we cannot accept popularist songs whose melodies lead rather to trans than encourage prayers. Beauty will defend itself. Ugliness, despite being superficially decorated with “baubles” or “trinkets” will always remain just ugliness. Rather radical, yet very telling and straightforward is in this respect the critique presented by Cardinal J. Ratzinger who said: *Pop music ... wants to be popular music – “folk music” – in contrast to elitist art music. ... Mass culture is thus geared to quantity, production and success. ... it is the reflection of what this society is, the musical embodiment of kitsch. ... Popular music is written and produced primarily to make money and satisfy fans. ... Music does not become alienated from its own purpose when it praises God. ... Trivializing faith is not a new inculturation, but the denial of its culture and prostitution with nonculture.* <sup>8</sup>

In its very nature popular music does not tally with the spirit and dignity of liturgy, it certainly does not conduce to reflexive and meditative character of sacred rites. Therefore, **music pieces of secular nature must not be performed during liturgy** (IEp I, 10). The Episcopate Instruction on sacred music clearly extinguishes two genres of secular music, namely: *jazz, big-beat*. This kind of music does not agree with the spirit and dignity of liturgy. It does not aid in experiencing the liturgy, and what is more, during its performances the faithful are excluded from singing (cf. IEp II, 20). It was fortunate that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Plenary Polish Synod which started in 1991 reminded of *the alarming decline of music culture in Polish churches. What is often practised during liturgy (especially by youth music bands) is noisy instruments, unaccepted by Church regulations and Polish Episcopate. And the repertoire of songs performed during liturgy is in absolute turmoil. There is visible*

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<sup>5</sup> Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum caritatis*, 38; 52; 55

<sup>6</sup> P. de Clerk, *Zrozumieć liturgię* [Understanding Liturgy], Kielce 1997, p. 119.

<sup>7</sup> Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum caritatis*, 35

<sup>8</sup>Cf. Ratzinger, J. *Nowa Pieśń dla Pana* [A New Song for the Lord], Kraków 1999, pp. 170-173.

*lack of control over texts and music of various songs and compositions which are indiscriminately introduced into sacred rituals<sup>9</sup>.*

### 3. Forms.

In post-conciliar liturgy we can find various forms of the Church prayer to which music belongs. **Amongst them those which have a pastoral impact upon the faithful**, like for example: **solo singing by a celebrant** (MS 27-29) who presides over liturgical assembly – **be the most important singing during liturgy** – next, **religious songs**(SC 118, MS 16; 32; 36) sung by the people gathered at celebrations, **Gregorian chant** as the first song of the Church (SC 116, MS 50), be the singing especially highlighted by Benedict XVI in his exhortation (42; 62), **responsorial psalms** (MS 16) performed solo by a cantor and responded by all congregation, **acclamations and responses during the Mass** (MS 7; 15) in which active, conscious and full participation of all the faithful in the liturgy is realised. This variety of the forms of liturgical music also comprises **singing of a choir or schola cantorum** (SC 114, MS 19; 22) which assists all the faithful in a prayer through performing polyphonic, old or modern music. **Participatio actuosa** (MS 15) also needs to be mentioned here as the participation which consists in listening to prayers performed by singers. Liturgical music embraces as well **playing the pipe organ or any other instrument admitted to liturgy** (SC 120, MS 60-67), for this kind of music lifts minds of the faithful to God (SC 120). Although all the genres of sacred music presented in Church documents largely vary, the common denominator of its wealth and multitude is its aim to ***worship God and sanctify the people*** (SC 112).

Therefore, as the liturgy is to glorify the present God through the community of the Church, during which all the faithful and assembled in a temple are sanctified, liturgical music ought to be authentic, that is, flow from hearts and be performed live. It is not acceptable to replace instruments playing with re-playing the music by a record player, CD player, radio or any other means of modern media communication. It is stated in the Instruction of the Polish Episcopate: ***music performed during liturgical rites ought to be performed "live", thus singing of the faithful or instruments playing cannot be re-played by means of the devices such as record players, phonographs, radio, etc.*** (IEp, 30), as it is confirmed by 2<sup>nd</sup> Plenary Polish Synod (II Synod Plenarny, Liturgia, 136).

### 4. Criteria.

Music performed during liturgy should undergo several criteria (we can draw such conclusions upon thorough examination of Church documents). **These conclusions reveal even more the pastoral signification of liturgical music.** The very first criterion of **functionality**, that is, the affinity with the nature of liturgical events or in other words correspondence with liturgical year, form, sacrament. Next is the criterion of **sobriety** as an essential element of liturgy is substantialization of salvation, thus music cannot be "hallucinogenic" and instead of assisting in prayers – makes the faithful fall into trance. Further on, there is the criterion of **communicativeness**. Music piece should belong to the participants of liturgy, so it must be comprehensible and accepted as the language of a prayer raised up to God. Another is the principle of **objectivism**. Music must return to

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<sup>9</sup>Cf. *II Synod Plenarny, teksty robocze* [2<sup>nd</sup>PlenaryPolish Synod, Working Papers], Poznań 1991, part 40, p. 83.

its prime essence; it must be objectively liturgical. Finally, there is the rule of **openness to the word**. The word may underpin the cultic character of music, for liturgical music proclaims the Good News<sup>10</sup>.

Like the word read and heard during liturgy, music is also **an instrument of faith proclamation**. A well prepared sermon or a homily; a celebrant who devoted his time and properly learnt to perform liturgical songs, are as important as any good music of the highest standard. It is this music which promulgates the Gospel so it cannot be arbitrary. The fact that music as a means of pastoral activity is important can be visible in the Orthodox Church – where the attitude towards music is quite telling. They did not have catechesis like in the Roman Church. The Orthodox catechesis has been liturgy with beautiful and alluring Tserkov music. Let us appreciate this way of influencing the faithful, teaching them God, it may be an instrument of our pastoral care.

## 5. Integral.

**The integrity of music and liturgy** is an unquestionable criterion when it comes to the position of music in liturgy.<sup>11</sup> Music participates in liturgy, that is, in this work of praising the glory of God, but also of sanctifying the faithful. Music belongs to those holy signs which make the attire that was touched by the woman in the Scriptures (Matt. 9:20-22) who was touching the very healing power of Christ. Liturgical music belongs to the sphere of signs which have been developing throughout the centuries. The signs which open man's heart to acting grace, which teach and kindle us towards joyful worship of God. Music which is this some kind of attire for the ministry of liturgy must be closely linked with liturgy and cannot be detached from it. Music must result from liturgy, its content and meaning. Indeed, *the more the sacred music is linked with liturgical actions, the more holy it becomes, ... the more heartfully does it express a prayer, ... fostering unity of minds, ... conferring greater solemnity upon the sacred rites*. (Cf. SC 112)<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, it is music which opens to acting God's grace, which teaches and incites us to praise God. It assists in a prayer which is the very aim of liturgical assembly.

We may of course recite the whole Mass liturgy which will certainly be a valid liturgy. Yet will the music not become a more vivid sign when a celebrant carries out a **dialogue** with the faithful through uniting singing? This sung prayer becomes at the same time a clear sign of the Church assembled for the Paschal Mystery, this great event in the life of Church community which cannot go quiet, be murmured or just said, **but only sung**. We need the music of the highest artistic standard and such which will concurrently be the language of a prayer. During liturgy we stand before God Himself. We are like Moses

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<sup>10</sup>Cf. Grzybek, S. *Nowa instrukcja o muzyce w liturgii świętej*[New Instruction on Music in SacredLiturgy], RBL 3(1967), 188-189.

<sup>11</sup>Cf. LL, Paris 1965, chapitre VI, *la musiquesacrée*, nr 112n; LfTuK, Wien 1967, nr 112n;F. Blachnicki, *Biuletyn odnowy liturgicznej, z problemów muzyki i sztuki liturgicznej*[Buletyn of LiturgicalRevival, Of the Problems of Music and Liturgical Art.], CT 2(1967), pp. 180-186; Z. Bernat, *Instrukcja o muzyce w liturgii świętej*[The Instruction on Music in SacredLiturgy], CT 3(1967),pp. 137-139; T. Dąbek, *Muzyka sakralna. Komentarz do VI rozdziału KL*[Sacred Music. Commentary to ch.VI of KL] , ED, Kraków, 1993, p. 239n.; S. Czerwik, *Śpiewimuzyka w służbieliturгии po SoborzeWatykańskimII* [Singing and Music in the Service of Liturgy after Vatican Council II] [in], *Muzyka sakralna* [Sacred Music], ed. J. Masłowska, Warszawa 1998, p. 5n.

<sup>12</sup>Cf. S. Grzybek, *Nowa instrukcja o muzyce w liturgii świętej* [New Instruction on Music in SacredLiturgy]RBL 3(1967), p. 185n.

who heard: *remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.*

## **6. The matter of love, suffering, death and relationship with God.**

May the conclusion and final explication of the discussed topic be the words of Pope Benedict XVI during the ceremony of the conferral of honoris causa doctorate from the Cracow universities on 4 July 2015. In his speech the Pope Emeritus told about three sources of music. He asked: *What is music in reality? From where does it come and what does it tend to? I think that three "places" can be localized from which music flows*<sup>13</sup>. And here comes what we may name a truly prophetic vision of the place of music in today's liturgy. **One of the first sources is the experience of love.** The Pope explained: *when men are seized by love, a new dimension of being opens in them, a new grandeur and breadth of reality, and it also drives one to express oneself in a new way. Poetry, singing and music in general stem from this being struck, by this opening of oneself to a new dimension of life*<sup>14</sup>. **A second origin of music is the experience of sadness, being touched by death, by sorrow and by the abysses of existence.** *Opened also in this case, in an opposite direction, are new dimensions of reality that can no longer find answers in discourses alone*<sup>15</sup>. The Pope most completely scrutinised the third reality: *... here in which the totally other and the totally great is present, which arouses in man new ways of expressing himself. Perhaps, it is possible to affirm that in reality also in the other two ambits – love and death – **the divine mystery touches us and, in this sense, it is the being touched by God that, overall, constitutes the origin of music.** I find it moving to observe how, for instance, in the Psalms singing is no longer enough for men — an appeal is made to all the instruments: reawakened is the hidden music of creation, its mysterious language. With the Psalter, in which the two motives of love and death also operate, we find directly the origin of sacred music of the Church of God. It can be said that the quality of the music depends on the purity and the grandeur of the encounter with the divine, with the experience of love and of pain. The more pure and true this experience is, the more pure and great also is the music that is born and develops from it*<sup>16</sup>.

Finally, during this „lectio magistralis” the Pope Benedict demonstrated his deep wisdom and experience be part of his holiness for he did not only prove what liturgy and music integrated in it is but also showed his authentic apostolate in the subject: *Certainly, Western music goes beyond by far the religious and ecclesial ambit. And yet it finds its most profound origin, in any case, in the liturgy of the encounter with God. In Bach, for whom the glory of God represents ultimately the end of all music, this is altogether evident. The great and pure answer of Western music was developed in the encounter with that God that, in the liturgy, makes himself present to us in Christ Jesus. For me, that music is a demonstration of the truth of Christianity. **Wherever such an answer is developed, there has been an encounter with truth, with the true Creator of the world. Therefore, great sacred***

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<sup>13</sup> Benedict XVI, *Przemówienie papieża-seniora Benedykta XVI po nadaniu tytułu doktoratu honoris causa* [Speech of Pope-Emeritus upon conferral of honoris causa] (*Castel Gandolfo, 4 July 2015*), [in:] *Anamnesis* 83, year XXI (2015), no. 4, pp. 7-8.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> Benedict XVI, *Muzyka i liturgia* [Music and Liturgy], [in:] Benedict XVI, *Co to jest chrześcijaństwo? Testament duchowy* [What is Christianity? Spiritual Testament], Kraków 2023, pp. 63-64.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

**music is a reality of theological rank and of permanent meaning for the faith of the whole of Christianity, even if it is not necessary that it be performed always and everywhere. On the other hand, however, it is also clear that it cannot disappear from the liturgy and that its presence can be an altogether special way of participation in the sacred celebration, in the mystery of the faith<sup>17</sup>. To conclude his speech the Pope referred to John Paul II by rhetorical statement: **We do not know the future of our culture and of sacred music. However, there is something that seems clear to me: where there is really an encounter with the living God who comes to us in Christ, born and growing there again is the answer, whose beauty comes from truth itself<sup>18</sup>**. Love, suffering and death, but above all, being touched by the Divine sparkle and the very contact with God is the answer to what music integrated with liturgy ought to be.**

I guess we do not need to comment on Benedict's words. Everything seems utterly clear.

Thank you for the attention.

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<sup>17</sup> Benedict XVI, *Przemówienie papieża-seniora Benedykta XVI po nadaniu tytułu doktoratu honoris causa (Castel Gandolfo, 4 lipca 2015 roku)* [Speech of Pope-Emeritus upon conferral of honoris causa] (*Castel Gandolfo, 4 July 2015*), [in:] *Anamnesis* 83, year XXI (2015), no. 4, p. 8.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9; Benedict XVI, *Muzyka i liturgia* [Music and Liturgy], [in:] Benedict XVI, *Co to jest chrześcijaństwo? Testament duchowy* [What is Christianity? Spiritual Testament], Kraków 2023, p. 66.