

THE EDITORS

Cardinal Sarah Turns 75, Remains Head of Vatican Liturgy Department

By

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2020 Ordination Class Study Provides Hope for State of Vocations in the Church

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EDITOR'S NOTE: WE CONTINUE IN THIS BULLETIN A REPRINT OF EXCERPTS FROM *Musicam Sacram*, the Holy See's 1967 Instruction on Sacred Music, which Pope Francis recently called "highly relevant," especially as it leads the faithful to a fuller participation in the sacred liturgy. The Preface and Part I were published in the March Bulletin and can be found [here](#).

II. The Singing of the Divine Office

37. The sung celebration of the Divine Office is the form which best accords with the nature of this prayer. It expresses its solemnity in a fuller way and expresses a deeper union of hearts in performing the praises of God. That is why, in accordance with the wish of the Constitution on the Liturgy,¹ this sung form is strongly recommended to those who celebrate the Office in choir or in common.

For it is desirable that at least some part of the Divine Office, especially the principal Hours, namely Lauds and Vespers, should be performed in sung form by these people, at least on Sundays and feast days.

Other clerics also, who live in common for the purpose of studies, or who meet for retreats or other purposes, will sanctify their meetings in a very fitting way if they celebrate some parts of the Divine Office in sung form.

38. When the Divine Office is to be celebrated in sung form, a principle of “progressive” solemnity can be used, inasmuch as those parts which lend themselves more directly to a sung form, e.g., dialogues, hymns, verses and canticles, may be sung, and the rest recited. This does not change the rules at present in force for those obliged to choir, nor does it change particular indulgences.

39. One will invite the faithful, ensuring that they receive the requisite instruction, to celebrate in common on Sundays and feast days certain parts of the Divine Office, especially Vespers, or, according to the customs of the particular area and assembly, other Hours. In general, the faithful, particularly the more educated, should be led by suitable teaching, to understand the psalms in a Christian sense and use them in their own prayers, so that they may gradually acquire a stronger taste for the use of the public prayer of the Church.

40. The members of Institutes professing the evangelical virtues should be given special instruction of this type, so that they may draw from it more abundant riches for the development of their spiritual life. It is desirable also that they should participate more fully in the public prayer of the Church by performing the principal Hours of the Office in sung form, as far as possible.

41. In accordance with the norm of the Constitution on the Liturgy and the centuries-old tradition of the Latin rite, the Latin language is to be retained for clerics celebrating the Divine Office in choir.² Since however the same Liturgy Constitution³ concedes the use of the vernacular in the Divine Office both by the faithful and by nuns and other members of Institutes professing the evangelical virtues, who are not clerics, due care should be taken that melodies are prepared which may be used in the singing of the Divine Office in the vernacular.

III. Sacred Music in the Celebration of the Sacraments and Sacramentals, in Special Functions of the Liturgical Year, in Celebrations of the Word of God, and in Popular Devotions

42. The Council laid down in principle that whenever a rite, in keeping with its character, allows a celebration in common with the attendance and active participation of the faithful, this is to be preferred to an individual and quasi-private celebration of the rite.⁴ It follows logically from this that singing is of great importance since it more clearly demonstrates the ‘ecclesial’ aspect of the celebration.

43. Certain celebrations of the Sacraments and Sacramentals, which have a special importance in the life of the whole parish community, such as confirmation, sacred

ordinations, matrimony, the consecration of a church or altar, funerals, etc., should be performed in sung form as far as possible, so that even the solemnity of the rite will contribute to its greater pastoral effectiveness. Nevertheless, the introduction into the celebration of anything which is merely secular, or which is hardly compatible with divine worship, under the guise of solemnity should be carefully avoided: this applies particularly to the celebration of marriages.

44. Similarly, celebrations which are singled out by the liturgy in the course of the liturgical year as being of special importance, may be solemnized by singing. In a very special way, the sacred rites of Holy Week should be given due solemnity, since these lead the faithful to the center of the liturgical year and of the liturgy itself through the celebration of the Paschal Mystery.

45. For the liturgy of the Sacraments and Sacramentals, and for other special celebrations of the liturgical year, suitable melodies should be provided, which can encourage a celebration in a more solemn form, even in the vernacular, depending on the capabilities of individual congregations and in accordance with the norms of the competent authority.

In the celebrations of the word of God,⁵ let the Liturgy of the Word in the Mass⁶ be taken as a model. In all popular devotions the psalms will be especially useful, and also works of sacred music drawn from both the old and the more recent heritage of sacred music, popular religious songs, and the playing of the organ, or of other instruments characteristic of a particular people.

Moreover, in these same popular devotions, and especially in celebrations of the word of God, it is excellent to include as well some of those musical works which, although they no longer have a place in the liturgy, can nevertheless foster a religious spirit and encourage meditation on the sacred mystery.⁷

IV. The Language to be Used in Sung Liturgical Celebrations, and on Preserving the Heritage Of Sacred Music

47. According to the Constitution on the Liturgy, “the use of the Latin language, with due respect to particular law, is to be preserved in the Latin rites.”⁸

However, since “the use of the vernacular may frequently be of great advantage to the people”⁹ “it is for the competent territorial ecclesiastical authority to decide whether, and to what extent, the vernacular language is to be used. Its decrees have to be approved, that is, confirmed by the Apostolic See.”¹⁰

In observing these norms exactly, one will therefore employ that form of participation which best matches the capabilities of each congregation.

Pastors of souls should take care that besides the vernacular “the faithful may also be able to say or sing together in Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass which pertain to them.”¹¹

48. Where the vernacular has been introduced into the celebration of Mass, the local Ordinaries will judge whether it may be opportune to preserve one or more Masses celebrated in Latin—especially sung Masses (*Missae in cantu*)—in certain churches, above all in large cities, where many come together with faithful of different languages.

49. As regards the use of Latin or the mother tongue in the sacred celebrations carried out in seminaries, the norms of the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities concerning the liturgical formation of the students should be observed.

The members of Institutes professing the evangelical virtues should observe, in this matter, the norms contained in the Apostolic Letter *Sacrificium Laudis* of 15 August 1966 besides the Instruction on the language to be used by religious in celebrating the Divine Office and conventual or community Mass, given by this Sacred Congregation of Rites on 23 November 1965.

50. In sung liturgical services celebrated in Latin:

(a) Gregorian chant, as proper to the Roman liturgy, should be given pride of place, other things being equal.¹² Its melodies, contained in the “typical” editions, should be used, to the extent that this is possible.

(b) “It is also desirable that an edition be prepared containing simpler melodies, for use in smaller churches.”¹³

(c) Other musical settings, written for one or more voices, be they taken from the traditional heritage or from new works, should be held in honor, encouraged and used as the occasion demands.¹²

51. Pastors of souls, having taken into consideration pastoral usefulness and the character of their own language, should see whether parts of the heritage of sacred music, written in previous centuries for Latin texts, could also be conveniently used, not only in liturgical celebrations in Latin but also in those performed in the

vernacular. There is nothing to prevent different parts in one and the same celebration being sung in different languages.

52. In order to preserve the heritage of sacred music and genuinely promote the new forms of sacred singing, “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 institutes and schools,” especially in those higher institutes intended specially for this. ¹⁴ Above all, the study and practice of Gregorian chant is to be promoted, because, with its special characteristics, it is a basis of great importance for the development of sacred music.

53. New works of sacred music should conform faithfully to the principles and norms set out above. In this way they will have “the qualities proper to genuine sacred music, being within the capacities not merely of large choirs but of smaller choirs, facilitating the participation of all the faithful.”¹⁵

As regards the heritage that has been handed down those parts which correspond to the needs of the renewed liturgy should first be brought to light. Competent experts in this field must then carefully consider whether other parts can be adapted to the same needs. As for those pieces which do not correspond to the nature of the liturgy or cannot be harmonized with the pastoral celebration of the liturgy—they may be profitably transferred to popular devotions, especially to celebrations of the word of God.¹⁶

V. Preparing Melodies for Vernacular Texts

54. In preparing popular versions of those parts which will be set to melodies, and especially of the Psalter, experts should take care that fidelity to the Latin text is suitably harmonized with applicability of the vernacular text to musical settings. The nature and laws of each language must be respected, and the features and special characteristics of each people must be taken into consideration: all this, together with the laws of sacred music, should be carefully considered by musicians in the preparation of the new melodies.

The competent territorial authority will therefore ensure that in the commission entrusted with the composition of versions for the people, there are experts in the subjects already mentioned as well as in Latin and the vernacular; from the outset of the work, they must combine their efforts.

55. It will be for the competent territorial authority to decide whether certain vernacular texts set to music which have been handed down from former times, can in fact be used, even though they may not conform in all details with the legitimately approved versions of the liturgical texts.

56. Among the melodies to be composed for the people's texts, those which belong to the priest and ministers are particularly important, whether they sing them alone, or whether they sing them together with the people, or whether they sing them in "dialogue" with the people. In composing these, musicians will consider whether the traditional melodies of the Latin liturgy, which are used for this purpose, can inspire the melody to be used for the same texts in the vernacular.

57. New melodies to be used by the priests and ministers must be approved by the competent territorial authority.¹⁷

58. Those Episcopal Conferences whom it may concern will ensure that for one and the same language, used in different regions, there will be a single translation. It is also desirable that as far as possible, there should be one or more common melodies for the parts which concern the priest and ministers, and for the responses and acclamations of the people, so that the common participation of those who use the same language may be encouraged.

59. Musicians will enter on this new work with the desire to continue that tradition which has furnished the Church, in her divine worship, with a truly abundant heritage. Let them examine the works of the past, their types and characteristics, but let them also pay careful attention to the new laws and requirements of the liturgy, so that "new forms may in some way grow organically from forms that already exist,"¹⁸ and the new work will form a new part in the musical heritage of the Church, not unworthy of its past.

60. The new melodies for the vernacular texts certainly need to undergo a period of experimentation in order that they may attain a sufficient maturity and perfection. However, anything done in churches, even if only for experimental purposes, which is unbecoming to the holiness of the place, the dignity of the liturgy and the devotion of the faithful, must be avoided.

61. Adapting sacred music for those regions which possess a musical tradition of their own, especially mission areas,¹⁹ will require a very specialized preparation by the experts. It will be a question in fact of how to harmonize the sense of the sacred with the spirit, traditions and characteristic expressions proper to each of these peoples.

Those who work in this field should have a sufficient knowledge both of the liturgy and musical tradition of the Church, and of the language, popular songs and other characteristic expressions of the people for whose benefit they are working.

VI. Sacred Instrumental Music

62. Musical instruments can be very useful in sacred celebrations, whether they accompany the singing or whether they are played as solo instruments.

“The pipe organ is to be held in high esteem in the Latin Church, since it is its traditional instrument, the sound of which can add a wonderful splendor to the Church’s ceremonies and powerfully lift up men’s minds to God and higher things.

“The use of other instruments may also be admitted in divine worship, given the decision and consent of the competent territorial authority, provided that the instruments are suitable for sacred use, or can be adapted to it, that they are in keeping with the dignity of the temple, and truly contribute to the edification of the faithful.”²⁰

63. In permitting and using musical instruments, the culture and traditions of individual peoples must be taken into account. However, those instruments which are, by common opinion and use, suitable for secular music only, are to be altogether prohibited from every liturgical celebration and from popular devotions.²¹

Any musical instrument permitted in divine worship 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.

64. The use of musical instruments to accompany the singing can act as a support to the voices, render participation easier, and achieve a deeper union in the assembly. However, their sound should not so overwhelm the voices that it is difficult to make out the text; and when some part is proclaimed aloud by the priest or a minister by virtue of his role, they should be silent.

65. In sung or said Masses, the organ, or other instrument legitimately admitted, can be used to accompany the singing of the choir and the people; it can also be played solo at the beginning before the priest reaches the altar, at the Offertory, at the Communion, and at the end of Mass.

The same rule, with the necessary adaptations, can be applied to other sacred celebrations.

66. The playing of these same instruments as solos is not permitted in Advent, Lent, during the Sacred Triduum and in the Offices and Masses of the Dead.

67. It is highly desirable that organists and other musicians should not only possess the skill to play properly the instrument entrusted to them: they should also enter into and be thoroughly aware of the spirit of the liturgy, so that even when playing *ex tempore*, they will enrich the sacred celebration according to the true nature of each of its parts, and encourage the participation of the faithful.²²

VII. The Commissions set up for the Promotion of Sacred Music

68. The diocesan Commissions for sacred music are of most valuable assistance in promoting sacred music together with pastoral liturgical action in the diocese.

Therefore they should exist as far as possible in each diocese, and should unite their efforts with those of the liturgical Commission.

It will often be commendable for the two Commissions to be combined into one, and consist of persons who are expert in both subjects. In this way progress will be easier.

It is highly recommended that, where it appears to be more effective, several dioceses of the same region should set up a single Commission, which will establish a common plan of action and gather together their forces more fruitfully.

69. The Liturgical Commission, to be set up by the Episcopal Conference as judged opportune,²³ should also be responsible for sacred music; it should therefore also consist of experts in this field. It is useful, however, for such a Commission to confer not only with the diocesan Commissions, but also with other societies which may be involved in musical matters in the same region. This also applies to the pastoral liturgical Institute mentioned in art. 44 of the Constitution.

In the audience granted on 9 February, 1967 to His Eminence Arcadio M. Cardinal Larraona, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, His Holiness Pope Paul VI approved and confirmed the present Instruction by his authority, ordered it to be published and at the same time established that it should come into force on Pentecost Sunday 14 May, 1967.

Footnotes

1. Cf. Constitution on the Liturgy, Art. 99. 
2. Cf. Constitution on the Liturgy, Art. 101:1. 
3. Cf. Constitution on the Liturgy, Art. 101:2, 3. 
4. Constitution on the Liturgy, Art. 27. 
5. Cf. *Inter Oecumenici*, nn. 37-9. 
6. Cf. *Inter Oecumenici*, n. 37. 
7. Cf. below, n. 53. 
8. Constitution on the Liturgy, Art. 36-1. 
9. Constitution on the Liturgy, Art. 36:2. 
10. Constitution on the Liturgy, Art. 36:3. 
11. Constitution on the Liturgy, Art. 54; *Inter Oecumenici*, 59. 
12. Cf. Constitution on the Liturgy, Art. 116. 
13. Constitution on the Liturgy, Art. 117. 
14. Constitution on the Liturgy, Art. 115. 
15. Constitution on the Liturgy, Art. 121. 
16. Cf. above, n. 46. 
17. Cf. *Inter Oecumenici*, n. 42. 
18. Constitution on the Liturgy, Art. 23. 
19. Cf. Constitution on the Liturgy, Art. 119. 
20. Constitution on the Liturgy, Art. 120. 
21. Instruction of the S.C.R., 3 September 1958, n. 70. 
22. Cf. above, n. 24. 
23. Cf. Constitution on the Liturgy, Art. 44. 