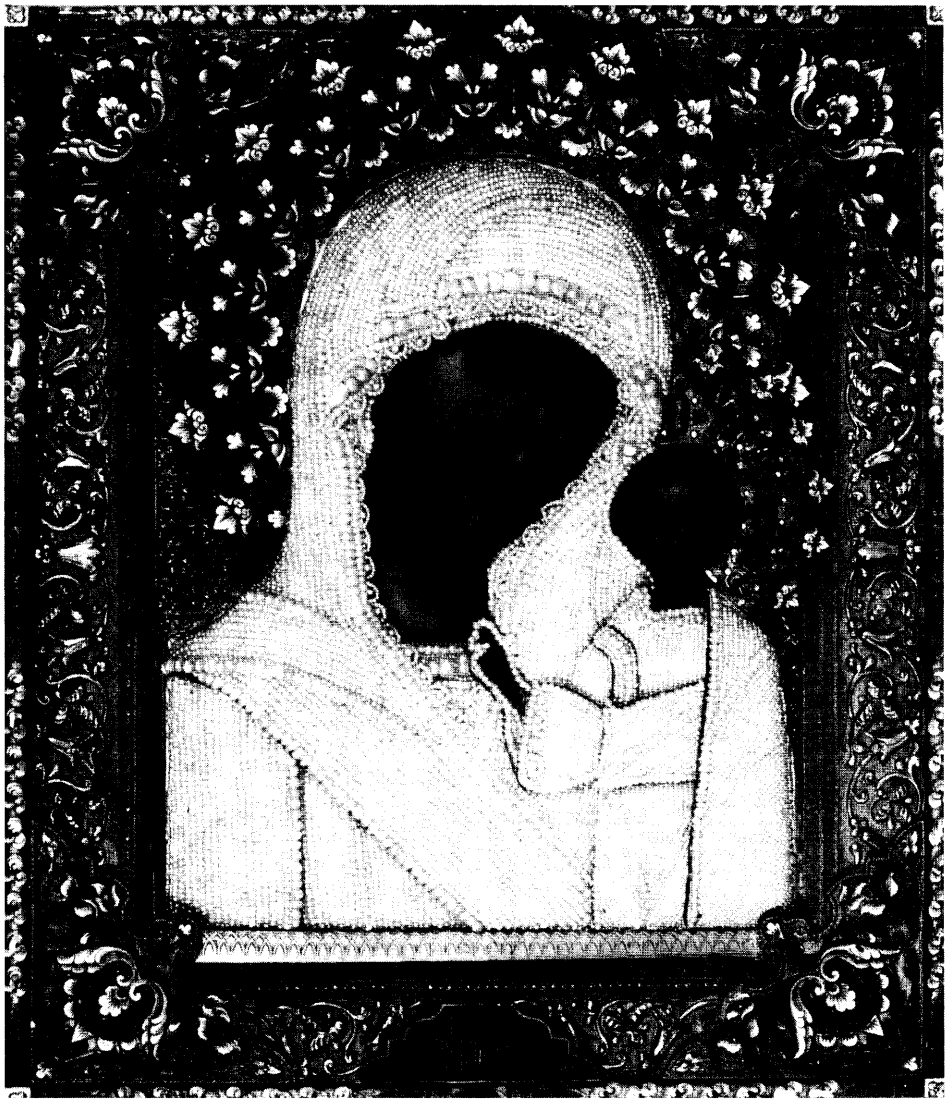

CHURCH MUSIC IN THE CATHEDRAL OF REGENSBURG, 1964-1994
Betwixt and Between the Regensburg Tradition and Postconciliar Reform

(Given on the occasion of the retirement of his brother, Monsignor Georg Ratzinger, as choirmaster at the Regensburg cathedral, this article was translated by Father Robert A. Skeris.)

I. 1. Terrestrial and Celestial Liturgy: the View of the Fathers

In the autumn of 1992, after an unforgettable helicopter flight over the mountains of South Tyrol, I visited the monastery of Mt. St. Mary (Marienberg) in the valley of the Etsch. The monastery was founded in that magnificent natural setting to the praise and glory of God, thus responding in its own way to the invitation expressed in the Canticle of the Three Young Men: "Ye mountains and heights, praise the Lord!" (Dan. 3: 75). The real treasure of this monastery is the crypt (dedicated July 13, 1160) with its glorious frescoes which in recent years have been almost

completely cleared, restored and laid open to view.[1] As is true of all medieval art, these images had no merely aesthetic meaning. They conceive of themselves as worship, as a part of the great liturgy of creation and of the redeemed world in which this monastery was intended to join. Therefore, the pictorial program reflects that common basic understanding of the liturgy which was then still alive and well in the Church universal, eastern and western. On the one hand these images show a strong Byzantine influence while remaining at bottom quite bibllical; on the other hand they are essentially determined by the monastic tradition, concretely: the Rule of Saint Benedict.

And so the real focus of attention is the *majestas Domini*, the risen and glorified Lord in all His majesty—seen also and indeed chiefly as the One Who is to come, Who cometh even now in the Eucharist. In celebrating the divine liturgy, the Church goes forth to meet Him—in truth, liturgy *is* the act of this going forth to meet Him Who cometh. He always anticipates in the liturgy this His promised coming: liturgy is anticipated *parousia* or second coming; it is the entry of the "already" into our "not yet," as John presented it in the story of the wedding at Cana. The hour of the Lord has not yet come, and everything that must happen has not yet been fulfilled. But at the request of Mary—and of the Church!—He nonetheless gives now the new wine, and pours out now in advance, the gift of His "hour."

The risen Lord is not alone in these Mt. St. Mary's frescoes. We see Him in the images which the Apocalypse uses to depict the heavenly liturgy — surrounded by the four creatures and above all by a great throng of singing angels. Their singing is an expression of that joy which no one can take from them, of the dissolution of existence into the rejoicing of freedom fulfilled. From the very beginning, monastic living was understood as a life lived after the manner of the angels, which is simply — adoration. Entering or assuming the lifestyle of the angels means forming one's whole life into an act of adoration, as far as that is possible for human weakness.[2] Celebrating the liturgy is the very heart of monachism, but in that respect monachism simply makes visible to all the deepest reason for Christian — indeed, for human! — existence. As they gazed upon these frescoes, the monks of Mt. St. Mary surely thought of the 19th chapter of the Rule of St. Benedict, which treats the discipline of psalm singing and the manner of saying the divine office. There, the father of western monasticism reminds them, among other things, of the first verse of (Vulgate) Psalm 137: *In conspectu angelorum psallam tibi.* And Benedict goes on: In the sight of the angels I will sing to Thee. Let us then consider how we ought to behave ourselves in the presence of God and His angels, and so sing the psalms that mind and voice may be in harmony: *ut mens nostra concordet voci nostrae.* It is, therefore, not at all the case that man contrives something and then sings it, but rather the song comes to him from the angelic choirs, and he must raise his heart on high so that it can harmonize with the tone which comes to him. But one fact is of fundamental importance: the sacred liturgy is not something which the monks manufacture or produce. It exists before they were there; it is an entering into the heavenly liturgy which was already taking place. Only in and through this fact is earthly liturgy, liturgy at all — that it betakes itself into that greater and grander liturgy which is already being celebrated. And thus, the meaning of these frescoes becomes completely clear. Through them, the genuine reality, the heavenly liturgy, shines through into this space. The frescoes are as it were a window through which the monks peer out into that great choir of which membership is the very heart and center of their own vocation. "In the sight of the angels I will sing to Thee." This standard is constantly present to the gaze of the monks, in their frescoes.

I. 2. A Sidelight on the Postconciliar Dispute over the Liturgy.

Let us descend from Mt. St. Mary and the wondrous panorama which those heights opened to us, and come down to the level of liturgical reality in today's

world. Here, the panorama is much more confused and disordered. A contemporary observer has described the present situation as one of "already and not yet," by which he does not mean the eschatological anticipation of Christ Who is to come in a world still marked by death and its difficulties. This author is simply saying that the "new" which is "already" there, is the reform of the liturgy — but the"old" (namely the "Tridentine" order) is in fact "not yet" overcome.[3] And so the age-old question, "Whither shall I turn?" no longer refers, as it once did, to our search for the countenance of the living God. That question becomes instead a description of the perplexity and embarrassment which typifies the situation of church music which is said to have resulted from the half-hearted realization of the liturgical reform. To put the matter in terms of today's trendy expression: here, a profoundly radical "paradigm shift" has quite obviously taken place. A great abyss divides the history of the Church into two irreconcilable worlds: the pre-conciliar and the post-conciliar world. As a matter of fact, many believe that it is impossible to utter a more fearful verdict over an ecclesiastical decision, a text, a liturgical form or even a person, than to say that it is "pre-conciliar." If that be true, then Catholic Christendom must have been in a truly frightful condition — until 1965.

Now, let us apply that to our practical instance: a cathedral choirmaster who held his post from 1964 until 1994 at the cathedral church in Regensburg was really — if matters are really so — in a rather hopeless situation. When he began his duties, the liturgy constitution of Vatican II had not yet been promulgated. When he took office he very definitely followed the proud standard of the Regensburg tradition, or more precisely — the standard of the *motu proprio, Tra le sollecitudini* on church music, issued by St. Pius X on November 22, 1903.[4] Nowhere was this *motu proprio* received with such rejoicing, and so unreservedly accepted as the norm and standard to be followed, as in the cathedral at Regensburg, which of course with this attitude set an example which was followed by many a cathedral and parish church in Germany as well as in other lands. In this reform of church music, Pius X had put to good use his own liturgical knowledge and experience. At the major seminary he had already conducted a Gregorian chant schola, and as bishop of Mantua and later patriarch of Venice he fought to eliminate the operatic "church" music style which was then dominant in Italy. Insistence upon Gregorian chant as the genuine music of the liturgy was for him but a part of that greater program of reform which was aimed at restoring to liturgical worship its pristine dignity, shaping and forming Catholic cult on the basis of its inner requirements.[5] During the course of these efforts he had come to know the Regensburg tradition which, one might say, was something of a godparent to the *motu proprio* — without implying that the "Regensburg tradition" as such was thereby "canonized" in its entirety. In Germany (but not only there!) Pius X is today often remembered chiefly as the "anti-modernist" pope, but Giampaolo Romanato has clearly shown, in his critical biography, the great extent to which this pontiff was a reforming pope precisely because he was a pastor of souls.[6]

He who reflects upon all of this and spends a little time examining it more closely, will soon notice that the chasm separating "pre-conciliar" and "post-conciliar" has already grown smaller. And the historian will add another insight. The liturgy constitution of the last council indeed laid the foundations for a reform which was then shaped by a post-conciliar committee and in its concrete details cannot without further ado be attributed to the council itself. That sacred synod was an open beginning whose broad parameters permitted a number of concrete realizations. When one duly reflects upon these facts, then one will be disinclined to describe that broad arc of tensions which manifested itself in these decades, In terms like "pre-conciiliar tradition" and "conciliar reform." It would be better to speak of the confrontation or contrast between the reform of St. Pius X and that introduced by the council — in other words, to speak about stages of reform instead of a deep trench between two opposing worlds. And if we broaden our perspective even more, we can say that the history of the liturgy always involves a certain degree of tension

between continuity and renewal. The history of the liturgy is constantly growing into an ever-new Now, and she must also repeatedly prune back a Present which has become the Past, so that what is essential can re-appear with new vigor. The liturgy needs growth and development as well as purgation and refining — and in both cases needs to preserve its identity and that purpose witout which it would lose the very reason for its existence. And if that is really the case, then the alternative between "traditionalists" and "reformers" is woefully inadequate to the situatioin. He who believes that he can only choose between Old and New, has already travelled a good way along a dead-end street. The real question is rather: What is the essential nature of the liturgy? What standard does the liturgy set for itself? Only when this question has been answered, can one proceed to ask: What must remain? What is permanent? What can and perhaps must change?

II. The Question of the Liturgy's Essence and of the Standards of the Reform.

Our reflection upon the frescoes at Mt. St. Mary in South Tyrol has been in anticipation giving a preliminary answer to the question about the essence of the liturgy. It is time to examine the question in greater depth. As we begin to do so, we at once encounter another of those alternatives which derive from the dualistic view of history which divides the world into pre- and post-conciliar ages. In this view, the priest alone "did" the liturgy before the council, while now, after the synod, the assembled community "does" liturgy, indeed "causes" it. Hence, some conclude, the celebrating community is the true subject of the liturgy, and determines what occurs in the liturgy.[7] Now, it is of course true that the priest celebrant never had the right to determine by himself what was to be done, or how, in the sacred liturgy. For him, the liturgy was not at all a matter of acting according to his own liking. The liturgy existed before the priest, as rite, as the objective form of the Church's common prayer.

The polemic alternative "priest or congregation, source and support of the liturgy?" is unreasonable because it re-invents instead of promoting a correct understanding of worship, and because it creates that false chasm between "pre-conciliar" and "post-conciliar" which rends asunder the overall continuity of the living history of faith. Such a false alternative is rooted in superficial thinking which does not penetrate to the heart of the matter. On the other hand, when we open the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* we find a masterfully luminous summary of the best insights of the liturgical movement and thus of the permanently valid elements of the great tradition. First of all, we are reminded that liturgy means "service of and for the people."[8] When Christian theology adapted from the Greek Old Testament this word formed in the pagan world, it naturally was thinking of the people of God which the Christians had become through the fact that Christ had broken down the barrier between Jews and heathens in order to unite them all in the peace of the one God. "Service for the people" — Christians thought of the basic truth that this people did not exist of itself, for instance as a community by ancestral descent through blood lines, but rather came into existence through the Paschal service of Jesus Christ — was based, in other words, solely upon the ministry or service of someone else — the Son. "People of God" do not simply exist the way Germans, Frenchmen, Italians, Americans or other peoples "exist." They always come into being only through the ministry or service of the Son and by virtue of the fact that He raises us up to fellowship with God — a level we cannot attain by our own efforts. Accordingly, the *Cathechism* continues:

> In Christian tradition (the word "liturgy") means the participation of the people of God in the work of God (*opus Dei*). Through the liturgy, Christ our Redeemer and High Priest continues the work of our redemption in, with, and through His Church.

The *Catechism* quotes the liturgy constitution of Vatican II, which stresses that every liturgical celebration, "because it is an action of Christ the Priest and of His Body, which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others" (*actio praecellenter sacra*).[9]

And now, matters already look very different. The sociological reduction which can only oppose human actors to each other, has been burst open. As we have seen, the sacred liturgy presupposes that heaven has been flung open, and only when that is the case, can there be any liturgy at all. If heaven has not been opened, then what formerly was liturgy will atrophy into a mere playing of roles, an ultimately sinsignificant search for comunity self-confirmation in which at bottom nothing really transpires. Decisive, in other words, is the primacy of Christology. The liturgy is God's work — *opus Dei* — or it is nothing. The primacy of God and His activity which seeks us in earthly signs, also includes the universality and the universal publicity of all liturgy, which cannot be comprehended in the categories of community or congregation, but only on the basis of categories like "People of God" and "Body of Christ." It is only in this great structural framework that the mutual relationship of priest and congregation can be correctly understood. In the divine liturgy the priest does and says what by himself he cannot say or do -- he acts, as the traditional expression has it, *in persona Christi,* which is to say he acts on the strength of the sacrament which guarantees the presence of the Other — of Christ Himself. The priest does not represent himself, neither is he the delegate of the congregation which has invested him with a special role. No, his position in the sacrament of succession or following of Christ manifests precissely that primacy of Jesus which is the basic and indispensable condition of all liturgy. Because the priest depicts and indeed embodies the truth that "Christ comes first!" his ministry points every assembly above and beyond itself into the larger totality, for Christ is one and undivided, and insofar as He opens the heavens He is also the One Who breaks down all earthly boundaries.

The new *Cathechism* presents its theology of the liturgy according to a Trinitarian scheme. It is, I think, very important that the community or the assembly appears in the chapter on the Holy Ghost, in these words:

> In the liturgy of the New Covenant every liturgical action, especially the celebration of the Eucharist and the sacraments, is an encounter between Christ and the Church. The liturgical assembly derives its unity from the "community of the Holy Spirit" Who gathers the children of God into the one Body of Christ. This assembly transcends racial, cultural, social — indeed, all human affinities...The assembly should prepare itself to encounter its Lord and to become "a people well-disposed."[10]

Here we must recall that the word "congregation" (which originates in the tradition of the so-called Reformation) cannot be translated in most languages. In the Romance tongues, for instance, the equivalent expression is *assemblée* or gathering, which already imparts a slightly different nuance or accent. Both expressions (congregation, assembly) indisputably manifest two important facts: first, that the participants in a liturgical celebration are not mere individuals totally unrelated to each other, but are joined together through the liturgical event to constitute a concrete representation of God's people; and secondly, that these participants as the people of God gathered here are genuine actors in the liturgical celebration, by the Lord's will. But we must firmly oppose the "hypostasizing" of the congregation which is so widely bandied about today. As the *Cathechism* quite rightly says, those assembled become a unity only on the strength of the communion of the Holy Ghost: or themselves, as a sociologically closed group, they are not a unity. And when they are united in a fellowship which comes from the Spirit, then that is always an open-ended unity whose transcending of national, cultural and

social boundaries expresses itself in concrete openness for those who do not belong to its core group. To a large extent, contemporary talk about "community" presupposes a homogeneous group which is able to plan common activities and jointly carry them out. And then, of course, this community may perhaps be asked to "tolerate" none but a priest with whom it is mutually acquainted. All of that, of course, has nothing to do with theology. For instance, when at a solemn service in a cathedral church a group of men gather who form a sociological point of view do not form a unitied congregation and who find it very difficult to join in congregational singing, for example, — do they constitute a "community" or not? Indeed they do, because in common they turn toward the Lord, and He approaches them interiorly in a way which draws them together much more intimately than any mere social togetherness could ever do.

We can summarize these thoughts by saying that neither the priest alone, nor the congregation alone, "does" the liturgy. Rather, the divine liturgy is celebrated by the whole Christ, Head and members: the priest, the congregation, the individuals insofar as they are united with Christ and to the extent that they represent the total Christ in the communion of Head and Body. The whole Church, heaven and earth, God and man take part in every liturgical celebration — and that not just in theory, but in actual fact. The meaning of liturgy is realized all the more concretely, the more each celebration is nourished by this awareness and this experience.

These reflections appear to have taken us far away from the subject of Regensburg tradition and post-conciliar reform — but that only *seems* to be the case. It was necessary to describe the great overall context which constitutes the standard by which any reform is measured. And only in terms of that standard can we appropriately describe the inner location and the correct type of church music. Now we can briefly depict the essential tendency of the reform chosen by the council In opposition to modern individualiism and the moralism which is connected with it, the dimension of the *mysterium* was to appear once more, that is, the cosmic character of the liturgy which encompasses heaven and earth. In its sharing in the Paschal Mystery of Christ, the liturgy transcends the boundaries of places and times in order to gather all into the hour of Christ which is anticipated in the liturgy and thus opens up history to its final goal.[11]

The conciliar constitution on the liturgy adds two other important aspects. First, in Christian faith the concept of the *mysterium* is inseparable from the concept of the Logos. In contrast to many heathen mystery cults, the Christian mysteries are Logos-mysteries. They reach beyond the limits of human reason, but they do not lead into the formlessness of frenzy or the dissolution of rationality in a cosmos understood as irrational. Rather, the Christian mysteries lead to the Logos, that is, to creative reason, in which the meaning of all things is finally grounded. And that is the source and origin of the ultimate sobriety, the thorough-going rationality, and the verbal character of the liturgy.

With this there is connected a second fact: the Word became flesh in history. Hence for the Christian to be oriented toward the Logos always means also being oriented toward the historical origins of the faith, toward the word of Scripture and its authoritative development and explanation in the Church of the fathers. As a result of contemplating the *mysterium* of a cosmic liturgy (which is a Logos-liturgy) it becomes necessary to describe in a visible and concrete way, the community aspect of worship, the fact that it is an action to be performed, its formulation in words. This is the key to understanding all the individual directives about the revision of the liturgical books and rites. When one keeps this in mind, it becomes clear that in spite of the outward differences, both the Regensburg tradition and the *motu proprio* of St. Pius X intend the same goal and point in the same direction. The de-emphasizing of orchestral accompaniment, which above all in Italy had developed opera-like qualities, was meant to put church music once again at the service of the liturgical text, and of adoration. Church music was no longer to be a performance on the

occasion of a liturgical service, but rather the liturgy itself, i.e., joining in with the choir of angels and saints. Thus it was to be made clear that liturgical music was to lead the faithful into the glorification of God, into the sober intoxication of the faith. The emphasis upon Gregorian chant and classical polyphony was therefore ordered at once to the "mystery" aspect of the liturgy and its Logos-like character as well as its link to the word in history. That emphasis was, one might say, supposed to stress anew the authoritative nature of the patristic standard for liturgical music, which some had occasionally conceived in a manner too exclusively historical. Such an authoritative standard, correctly understood, does not mean exclusion of anything new, but rather means pointing out the direction which leads into open spaces. Here, progress into new territory is made possible precisely because the right path has been found. Only when one appreciates the essential elements of intention and tendency which are common to the reforms of both St. Pius X and Vatican II, can one correctly evaluate the differences in their practical suggestions. And from that position we can turn the proposition around, and assert that any view of the liturgy which loses sight of its character as "mystery," and its cosmic dimension, must result in the deformation of worship instead of its reform.

III. 1. The Reason for Music and its Role in Worship

By itself, the question of the liturgy's essence and the standards of the reform has brought us back to the question of music and its position in the liturgy. And as a matter of fact one cannot speak about worship at all without also speaking of the music of worship. Where the liturgy deteriorates, *musica sacra* degenerates too. And where worship is correctly understood and lived out in practice, there too will good church music grow and thrive. We note earlier that the concept of "congregation" (or "assembly") appears in the new *Cathechism* for the first time at the point where the Holy Ghost is described as the one Who shapes or forms the liturgy, and we had said that it is a precise description of the congregation's inner location. Similarly, it is no accident that in the *Cathechism* we find the word "to sing" for the first time in the section which deals with the cosmic character of the liturgy, in a quotation from the conciliar constitution on the liturgy:

> In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims...With all the warriors of the heavenly army we sing a hymn of glory to the Lord.[12]

A recent author has found a very good way to express that state of affairs by modifying the famous aphorism of Ludwig Wittgenstein, who wrote that "one must remain silent about that which one cannot utter." This now becomes: that which one cannot utter, can and must be expressed in song and music — when silence is not permissible.[13] And the author adds that "Jews and Christians agree in viewing their singing and music-making as referring heavenward or coming from heaven, as eavesdropped from on high..."[14] In these few sentences we find set forth the fundamental principles of liturgical music. Faith comes from hearing God's word. And whenever God's word is translated into human words, there remains something unspoken and unutterable, which calls us to silence — into a stillness which ultimately allows the Unutterable to become song and even calls upon the voices of the cosmos to assist in making audible what had remained unspoken. And that implies that church music, originating in the word and in the silence heard in that word, presupposes a constantly renewed listening to the rich plenitude of the Logos.

While some maintain that in principle, any kind of music can be used in a worship service,[15] others point to the deeper and essential relationships between certain vital activities and forms of musical expression which are fitting and appropriate to them: "I am convinced that there is also a type of music particularly

appropriate (or, as the case may be, inappropriate) ... for man's encounter with the mystery of faith..."[16] And as a matter of fact, music meant to serve the Christian liturgy must be appropriate and fitting for the Logos, which means concretely: such music must be meaningfully related to *the* Word in which the Logos has found utterance. Even in its purely instrumental form, such music cannot disengage itself from the inner direction or orientation of this word which opens up an infinite space — but also draws certain boundaries and establishes criteria of distinction. In its essence, such music must be different from a music which is meant to lead the listener into rhythmic ecstasy, or stupefied torpor, sensual arousal or the dissolution of the Ego in Nirvana — to mention but a few of the attitudes which are possible. St. Cyprian has a fine observation in this connection, in his commentary on the Lord's Prayer:

> But let our speech and petition when we pray be under discipline, observing quietness and modesty. Let us consider that we are standing in God's sight (*sub conspectu Dei*). We must please the divine eyes both with the habit of the body and with the measure of voice. For as it is characteristic of a shameless man to be noisy with his cries, so on the other hand, is it fitting to the modest man to pray with moderated petitions...And when we meet together with the brethren in one place, and celebrate divine sacrifices with God's priest, we ought to be mindful...not to throw abroad our prayers indiscriminately, with unsubdued voices, nor to cast to God with tumultuous wordiness a petition that ought to be commended to God by modesty...for God...need not be clamorously reminded...[17]

It goes without saying that this interior standard of a music appropriate to the Logos must be related to life in this world: it must introduce men into the fellowship of Christ as fellow suppliants at prayer here and now, in this era and in a specific location. It must be accessible to them while at the same time leading them onwards in the direction which the divine liturgy itself formulates with unsurpassable brevity at the beginning of the canon: *sursum corda* —lift up your hearts! lift up the heart meaning the inner man, the totality of the self, to the heights of God Himself, to the sublimity which is God and which in Christ touches the earth, drawing it with and upwards toward itself.

III. 2. Choir and Congregation —the Question of Language

Before I attempt to apply these principles to a few specific problems of church music in the cathedral of Regensburg, something must be said about the subjects of liturgical music and the language of the chants. Wherever an exaggerated concept of "community" predominates, a concept which is (as we have already seen) completely unrealistic precisely in a highly mobile society such as ours, there only the priest and the congregation can be acknowledged as legitimate executors or performers of liturgical song. Today, practically everyone can see through the primitive activism and the insipid pedogogic rationalism of such a position —which is why it is now asserted so seldom. The fact that the schola and the choir can also contribute to the whole picture, is scarcely denied any more, even among those who erroneously interpret the council's phrase about "active participation" as meaning external activism. However, a few exclusions remain, and about them we shall speak presently. They are rooted in an insufficient interpretation of liturgical cooperative action in community, in which the congregation which actually happens to be present can never be the sole subject, but which may only be understood as an assembly open toward and from above, synchronically and diachronically, into the breadth of divine history. A recent author has stressed an important aspect of the question by speaking of highly developed forms which are not lacking in the liturgy as a feast of God, but which cannot be filled out by the congregation as a whole. He reminds us that "the choir, in other words, is not related to a listening congregation

as it is to a concert audience which allows something to be performed for it. Rather the choir is itself part of the congregation and sings *for* it as legitimate deputy or delegate."[18] The concept of deputyship is one of the basic categories of all Christian faith, and it applies to all levels of faith-filled reality, and precisely for this reason is also essential in the liturgical assembly.[19] The insight that we are dealing here with deputyship, in fact resolves the apparent conflict of opposites. The choir acts on behalf of the others and includes them in the purpose of its own action. Through the singing of the choir, everyone can be conducted into the great liturgy of the communion of saints and thus into that interior prayer which pulls our hearts on high and permits us to join with the heavenly Jerusalem in a manner far beyond all earthly expectations.

But can one really sing in Latin when the people do not understand it? Since the council, there has arisen in many places a fanaticism for the vernacular which is in fact very difficult to comprehend in a multicultural society, just as in a mobile society it is not very logical to hypostasize the congregation. And for the moment let us pass over the fact that a text translated into the vernacular is not thereby automatically comprehensible to everyone — thus that touches upon an entirely different question of no little importance. A point which is essential for Christian liturgy in general was recently expressed in splendid fashion:

> This celebration is not interrupted whenever a song is sung or an instrumental piece is played..., but it shows by that very fact its nature as "feast" or "celebration." But this requirement does not demand unity of liturgical language nor of style in the various musical parts. The traditional, so-called "Latin Mass" always had parts in Aramaic (*Amen, Alleluia, Hosanna, Maran atha*), Greek (*Kyrie eleison, Trisagion*) and the vernacular (the sermon, as a rule). Real life knows little of stylistic unity and perfection. On the contrary, a thing which is really alive will always exhibit formal and stylistic diversity...; the unity is organic.[20]

It was on the basis of insights such as these that in the three decades of theological and liturgical turmoil during which the retiring choirmaster did his duty, supported by the confidence both of Bishop Graber and of his successor, Bishop Manfred Müller, and the auxiliary bishops Flügel, Guggenberger and Schraml, he steered a course of continuity in development and development in continuity — often in spite of the difficulty caused by powerful contrary currents. Thanks to the profound agreement between the choirmaster and the responsible prelates and their collaborators, he was in a position — unswervingly but at the same time in an open way — to make an essential contribution to the preservation of the dignity and grandeur of liturgical worship in the cathedral of Regensburg, which maintained its transparency towards the cosmic liturgy of the Logos within the unity of the world-wide Church without becoming a museum piece or petrifying into a nostalgic by-way. And now, in conclusion, I should like to discuss briefly two characteristic examples of this struggle to maintain continuity while still developing — even in the face of published opinion. I refer to the question of the *Sanctus* and *Benedictus*, and the question of the meaningful position of the *Agnus Dei.*

III. 3. Particular Questions: *Sanctus, Benedictus, Agnus Dei*

It was my friend and former colleague in Münster, Monsignor Emil Joseph Lengeling, who said that when one understood the *Sanctus* as an authentic part intended for the congregation celebrating the service, "then there result not only compelling conclusions for new compositions, but the exclusion of most Gregorian and all polyphonic settings of the *Sanctus*, because they exclude the congregation from singing and ignore the acclamatory character of the *Sanctus*.[21] With all due respect to the renowned liturgist, that quotation shows that even great experts can err egregiously . First of all, mistrust is always in order when the greater part of

living history must be tossed out into the dustbin of old misunderstandings now happily clarified. That is all the more true of the Christian liturgy, which lives out of the continuity and the inner unity of prayer based on faith. As a matter of fact, the alleged acclamatory character of the *Sanctus*, to which only the congregation could do justice, is totally unfounded. In the entire liturgical tradition of east and west, the preface always concludes with a reference to the heavenly liturgy and invites the assembled congregation to join in the hymn of the heavenly choirs. And it was precisely the conclusion of the preface which had such a decisive influence upon the iconography of the *majestas Domini*, which we mentioned at the beginning of our reflections.[22] Compared with the biblical matrix of Isaias 6, the liturgical text of the *Sanctus* shows three new accents.[23] First, the scene of the action is no longer the Temple at Jerusalem, as in the case of the prophet, but rather it is heaven, which in the *mysterium* opens itself towards the earth. Hence it is no longer merely the seraphs who cry out, but all the legions of the heavenly hosts, in whose cry to us from Christ (Who unites heaven and earth) the entire Church, all of redeemed mankind, can join in chorus. And that, finally, is the reason why the *Sanctus* was transposesd from the "he" to the "thou" form: Heaven and earth are filled with *Thy* glory. The Hosanna, originally a cry for help, thus becomes a song of praise. He who ignores the mystery-character and the cosmic nature of this summons to join in the praise of the heavenly choirs, has already failed to grasp the meaning of the whole. This joining in can take place in different ways, but it always has something to do with deputyship. The congregation gathered in one particular locality opens itself out to the Whole. It also represents those absent; it is united with those far away and those very near. And when in this congregation a choir exists, which can draw the congregation into the cosmic praise and into the wide open space of heaven and earth more strongly than the congregation's own stammering is able to do — then precisely in that moment the deputized, representative function of the choir is especially appropriate and fitting. Through the choir, a greater transparency toward the praise of the angels is rendered possible and therefore a more profound interior participation in the singing, than would be possible in many places through one's own crying and singing.

I suspect, however, that the real reproach cannot consist in the "acclamatory character" and in the demand for tutti-singing. That would seem too banal, I think. In the background there surely lurks the fear that a choral *Sanctus* — even more so when it is made obligatory to follow with the *Benedictus* at once — precisely at the moment of entering into the canon of the Mass, is regarded as a kind of concert piece which produces a break or a pause in the prayer at the point where it is least desirable and thus insupportable. As a matter of fact, if one presupposes that there is no such thing as deputyship or representation and that it is not possible to sing and pray interiorly while remaining outwardly silent — then this reproach is quite justified. If all those not singing during the *Sanctus* simply await its conclusion, or merely listen to a religious concert piece, then the choir's performance is hard to justify, if not intolerable. But does that have to be the case? Have we not forgotten something here, which we urgently need to re-learn? Perhaps it is helpful here to recall that the silent recitation of the canon by the priest did not somehow begin because the singing of the *Sanctus* lasted so long that one had to begin the prayer anyhow, in order to save time. The real succession of events was the exact opposite. Certainly since the Carolingian epoch, but very probably also earlier, the celebrant entered the sanctuary of the canon "silently." The canon is the time of pure silence as "worthy preparation for God's approach."[24] And then for a time an "office of accompanying petitionary prayers, akin to the eastern *ektene*...(was laid) like an outer veil to cover the silent praying of the canon by the celebrant."[25] And later on it was the singing of the choir which (as Jungmann put it) "continues to maintain the old dominant note of the canon, thanksgiving and praise, and unfolds it musically to the ear of the participant over the entire canon."[26] Even though we may not wish to

restore that state of affairs, it can nonetheless give us a useful hint: Would we not do well, before moving on into the center of the *mysterium*, to be gifted with a period of well-filled silence in which the choir recollects us interiorly and leads each individual into silent prayer, and precisely in that way, into a union which can take place only on the interior level? Must we not re-learn precisely this silent interior praying along with each other and with the angels and saints, the living and the dead, with Christ Himself, so that the words of the canon do not become mere tired formulae which we then try in vain to replace by constantly new and different word-montages in which we attempt to conceal the absence of any real inner experience of the liturgy, and of any moving beyond human talk into actual contact with the Eternal?

The exclusion alleged by Lengeling and repeated by many others after him, is meaningless. Even after Vatican II, the *Sanctus* sung by the choir is perfectly justified. But what about the *Benedictus*? The assertion that it may not, under any circumstance, be separated from the *Sanctus*, has been put forth with such emphasis and seeming competence, that only a few strong souls were able to oppose it. But the assertion cannot be justified, either historically or theologically or liturgically. Of course, it makes good sense to sing both movements together when the composition makes this relationship clear, for it is a very ancient one and very well founded. But here again — what must be rejected is the exclusionary alternative.

Both the *Sanctus* and the *Benedictus* have their own separate points of departure in holy writ, which is why they developed separately at first. Though we already find the *Sanctus* in the First Letter of Clement (34/5 ff.),[27] that is, in the age of the apostles, we first find the *Benedictus* (as far as I can see) in the apostolic constitutions, in other words, in the second half of the fourth century, as a cry or acclamation before the distribution of Holy Communion, in response to the call "Holy things to the holy ones!" Since the sixth century, we find the *Benedictus* again in Gaul. There it had been joined to the *Sanctus*, as also happened in the oriental tradition.[28] While the *Sanctus* developed out of Isaias 6 and then was transferred from the earthly to the heavenly Jerusalem and thus became a song of the Church, the *Benedictus* is based upon a New Testament re-reading of Psalm 117 (118) verse 26. In the Old Testament this verse is a blessing upon the arrival of the festive procession in the Temple; on Palm Sunday it received a new meaning —which admittedly was already prepared for in the development of Jewish prayer. After all, the expression "He who comes" had become a name for the Messias.[29] When on Palm Sunday the young people of Jerusalem shouted out this verse at Jesus, they were greeting Him as the Messias, the King of the end times who entered into the holy city and the Temple in order to take possession of them. The *Sanctus* is directed to the eternal glory of God; the *Benedictus*, on the other hand, refers to the coming of the God made flesh in our midst. Christ, the One Who has come, is always the One Who is coming, as well! His Eucharistic coming, the anticipation of His "hour," makes Promise become Present and brings the Future into our Today. Consequently the *Benedictus* is meaningful both as moving toward the Consecration and as an acclamation to the Lord become present in the Eucharistic species. The great moment of His coming, the prodigy of His Real Presence in the elements of earth, expressly call for due response: the elevation, the genuflection, the ringing of bells are all such stammering attempts to respond.[30] Following a parallel in the Byzantine rite, the liturgy reform has constructed a congregational acclamation: Christ has died...But the question of other possible cries of greeting to the Lord Who is coming and has come, has now been raised. And for me it is plain that there is no more profoundly appropriate and no more truly traditional "acclamation" than this one: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. The separation of *Sanctus* from *Benedictus* is, of course, not necessary, but it is extremely meaningful. When *Sanctus* and *Benedictus* are sung by the choir without a break, then the caesura between preface and canon can in fact become too long, so that it no longer serves to promote that silently participatory entry into the praise of the whole cosmos because the interior tension cannot be

maintained. But when, on the other hand, during a well-filled silence, one once again joins in an interior greeting to the lord after the Consecration has taken place, then that corresponds most profoundly to the inner structure of the event. The pedantically censorious proscription of such a division (which developed organically for good reasons) should be consigned as soon as possible to the scrap heap of mere memories.

And finally, a word about the *Agnus Dei*. At the cathedral of Regensbur it has become customary that after the kiss of peace, the priest and people together recite the threefold *Agnus Dei*. And then it is continued by the choir during the distribution of Holy Communion. It was, of course, objected that the *Agnus Dei* belongs to the rite of the breaking of the bread, the *fractio panis*. From this original function as accompaniment for the time it took for the breaking of the bread, only a completely petrified archaism can conclude that the *Agnus Dei* may only and exclusively be sung at that point. In actual fact, when the old rites of *fractio panis* became superfluous because of the new small hosts coming into use during the ninth and tenth centuries, the *Agnus Dei* indeed became a communion song. No less an expert than the late J. A. Jungmann points our that already in the early middle ages, only *one Agnus Dei* was oftentimes sung after the kiss of peace, while the second and third invocations found their place after communion, thus accompanying the distribution of Holy Commuion (when it took place).[31] And does it not make very good sense to beseech Christ, the Lamb of God, for mercy at the precise moment in which He gives Himself anew as defenseless Lamb into our hands — He Who is the Lamb, sacrificed but also triumphant, the lamb Who bears the key of history (Apoc 5)? And is it not particularly appropriate, at the moment of receiving Holy Communion, to direct our request for peace to Him, the defenseless One Who, as such, was victorious? After all, in the ancient Church "peace" was actually one of the names used to designate the Eucharist, because It flings open the boundaries between heaven and earth, between nations and states, and unites all men in the unity of Christ's Body.

At first glance, the Regensburg tradition and the reform, conciliar and post-conciliar, may seem like two contrary worlds which clash like diametrical opposites. The man who stood between them for three decades has the scars to prove how difficult were the questions raised. But where this tension can be endured, it gradually becomes clear that all these are but states on one single path. It is only when they are held together and endured, that they are correctly understood, and then there can unfold and develop a true reform in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council — reform which is not synonymous with rupture or breach and destruction, but rather purification, cleansing and growth to new maturity and abundance. Thanks are due the cathedral choirmaster who bore this tension: that was not only a service to Regensburg and its cathedral church, but a service to the whole Church!

JOSEPH CARDINAL RAZINGER

NOTES

[1] On these frescoes, see H. Stampfer-H. Walder, *Die Krypten von Marienberg im Vinschgau* (Bozen 1982).

[2] Important on the subject of *vita angelica* is J. Leclercq, *Wissenschaft und Gottverlangen*(Düsseldorf 1963) 70 and see also Stamper-Walder (note 1) 20.

[3] Harold Schutzeichel, *Wohin soll ich mich wenden? Zur Situation der Kirchenmusik im deutschen Sprachraum: Stdz 209* (1991) 363/74.

[4] Original Italian text in AAS 36 (1904) 329/39; English translation in R. F. Hayburn, *Papal Legislation on Sacred Music* (Collegeville 1979) 223/31.

[5] In the introduction to the *motu proprio* (Hayburn 224) and in section II/3 (Hayburn 225) we find explicit mention of the active participation of the faithful as a fundamental liturgical principle. G. Romanato, *Pio X. La Vita di Papa Sarto* (Milano 1992) 179 ff., 213/4, 247/8, 330 describes the prehistory of the *motu proprio* in Pope Pius' life. He had

conducted the student choir in the seminary at Padua and made notes on that task in a notebook which he still carried with him as patriarch of Venice. As bishop of Mantua, during his reorganization of the seminary he devoted a great deal of time and energy to the *schola di music* (music class). There he also made the acquaintance of Fr. Lorenzo Perosi, who remained closely associated with Sarto. From his years of study in Regensburg, Perosi had received important influences which remained a powerful factor during his long career as a church musician. The connect with Perosi continued when Sarto was promoted to the See of Venice, where in 1895 he published a pastoral letter which was based upon a memorandum he had sent in 1893 to the Congregation of Rites — a document which anticipated almost verbatim the *motu proprio* of 1903. Text in Hayburn 205/31.

[6] Romanato (note 5) 247 also refers to the judgment of church historian Roger Aubert who described Pius X as the greatest reformer of intramural church life since the Council of Trent.

[7] Schützeichel (note 1) 363/6.

[8] CCC 1069.

[9] *Loc. cit.*

[10] CCC 1097/8.

[11] See the liturgy constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 8, as well as the note which follows.

[12] CC 1090 = *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 8. The *Catechism* also notes the fact that the same idea is expressed in the last paragraph of *Lumen gentium,* the dogmatic constitution on the Church, para. 50.

[13] Ph. Harnoncourt, *Gesang und Musik im Gottesdienst* in H. Schützeichel (ed.), *Die Messe. Ein Kirchenmusikalisches Handbuch* (Düsseldorf 1991) 9/25, here 13.

[14] Harnoncourt (note 13) 17.

[15] Schützeichel (note 13) 366.

[16] Harnoncourt (note 13) 23.

[17] Harnoncourt (note 13) 17.

[18] On this, see the thorough work of W. Menke, *Deputyship. Key Concept of Christian Life and Basic Theological Category* (Einsiedeln-Freiburg 1991).

[19] Harnoncourt (note 13) 21.

[20] E.J. Lengeling, *Die neue Ordnung der Eucharistiefeier* (Regensburg 1971) 234 and see also B. Jeggle-Merz/H. Schützeichel, *Eucharistie-feier,* in H. Schützeichel (ed.), *Die Messe* (note 13) 90/151, here 109/10.

[21] On this see K. Onasch, *Kunst und Liturgie der Ostkirche* (Wien 1984) 329.

[22] This is J. A. Jungmann, *Missarum sollemnia II* (Freiburg 1952) 168 ff.; English one-volume ed. 381-2.

[23] Jungmann (note 23) 174. English one volume ed. 384.

[24] *Loc. cit.* 175/6. English one-volume ed. 385.

[25] *Loc. cit.* 172. English one-volume ed. 384.

[26] See K. Onasch (note 22) 329, Jungmann (note 23) 166; English one-volume ed. 381. Already in Clement (Cor 34) we also find the connection of Jeremias 6 with Daniel 7/10 which is presupposed in the shape of the liturgical *Sanctus.* It is exactly the same vision which we found in the frescoes of Mt. St. Mary: "Let us consider the vast multitude of His angels, and see how they stand in readiness..." On the dating of First Clement, see Th. J. Herron, *The dating of the First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians* (Rome 1988), who attempts to show that First Clement dates from around 70 A.D. and not, as is customarily held, around 96 A.D.

[27] Jungmann (note 23) 170/1, English one-volume ed. 383 note 5.

[28] *Loc. cit.* 171 note 42 and see also R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium II* Freiburg 1977) 1984.

[29] On this see Jungmann (note 23) 165, English one-volume ed. 363. In this connection it may be interesting to note that in the 1903 *motu proprio* of St. Pius X (III/8 = Hayburn 226) the pontiff insists that only the prescribed liturgical texts may be sung at Holy Mass, with but one exception: "according to the custom of the Roman Church, to sing a motet in honor of the Blessed Sacrament after the *Benedictus* at High Mass."

[30] Jungmann (note 23) 413/22 English one-volume ed. 485/7.