



The Damned, detail of the Last Judgment scene, from the south porch, Chartres, France
Photography by Warren J. Wimmer, Jr.

1967 INSTRUCTION — TEN YEARS LATER

Ten years ago the Holy See through the Sacred Congregation of Rites and the Consilium for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Liturgy issued an instruction on sacred music that began with the words, *Musica sacra*. As in other matters treated by the council, instructions were prepared by bodies set up to implement the decrees of the council fathers and bring into practical and specific detail what had been ordered by them in a more general way. Now, ten years later, it is interesting to review the 1967 document on sacred music and assess what effect it has had on liturgical music, especially in the United States.

First, it is apparent that a constant secularization process, leading almost to a denial of the sacral even in worship, has unfortunately been the pattern of the past ten years, despite the very opening words of the instruction — *musica sacra*. With the demise of the sacred we find the strange phenomenon of ecclesiastical institutions and structures searching for their meaning and mission, an occupation not needed when the quest for holiness was recognized as the work of the Church. Herein lies the basic malaise in worship and indeed in the whole life and activity of the Church. Until the debate between the sacred and the secular is resolved, music and liturgy will continue to flounder.

A corollary of the secularization process appears quickly as some begin even to question the very purpose of church music, although the *Constitution on the*

Sacred Liturgy makes it quite clear and the 1967 instruction repeats what the council fathers and the Church for centuries has been saying: "the true purpose of sacred music is the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful."¹ Yet hardly a year after the instruction was published, the music advisory board to the American bishops conference declared in a published statement that the purpose of church music is "to create a truly human experience."² Secularization and its progenitor, secular humanism, have disposed of the sacred and of sacred music.

The 1967 instruction makes it quite clear what is meant by sacred music. It even lists what is to be so considered: "Gregorian chant, sacred polyphony in its various forms both ancient and modern, sacred music for the organ and other approved instruments, and music of the people, be it liturgical or religious."³ There is no reference here to the flood of profane compositions that has been admitted to our churches. At the same time one looks in vain so often in so many churches to find that truly sacred music which the instruction says should be "endowed with sanctity and excellence of form."⁴

The instruction orders that there be choirs, especially in cathedrals and other major churches, in seminaries and religious houses of studies, and they should be carefully fostered. Similar choirs, although small ones, should be organized in small churches. On diocesan, national and international levels, associations for sacred music should be formed. Today, ten years later, choirs and associations for sacred music seem to have dwindled and in some places even to have disappeared altogether.

The instruction repeats the words of the constitution and again insists on the use of Gregorian chant, which should be given "pride of place." It must be taught in seminaries and sung in parish churches, both in Masses celebrated in Latin and in the vernacular, since nothing prohibits that in the same celebration different parts be sung in different languages. How many seminaries today teach Gregorian chant?⁵ When did you last sing a chant in your parish church? What has happened to the Holy Father's direct request that his gift booklet, *Jubilate Deo*, sent to all the bishops of the world, be widely and frequently used?

The instruction orders that the distinction between solemn, sung and read Masses, sanctioned by the instruction of 1958, is to be retained.⁶ But many dioceses have followed the lead given by the American bishops' committee on the liturgy and have ordered such a distinction abolished. A real disintegration of the *Missa cantata Romana* in its thousand year old form has taken place since 1967, despite all efforts through various instructions issued to preserve it. There seems to be little doubt at all that what one witnesses in most parish churches today was not in the wildest imagination of most of the council fathers when they approved the constitution on the liturgy.

It seems almost incredible that only ten years ago the Church was ordering that "in accordance with the norm of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* and the centuries old tradition of the Latin rite, the Latin language is to be retained for clerics in celebrating the divine office in choir."⁷ Indeed, how many even sing the office at all, let alone in the Latin language? And yet the instruction says that the faithful are to be invited to celebrate in common on Sundays and feast days certain parts of the divine office, especially vespers. Where today can one assist at vespers in a parish church?⁸

Of course, the question of Latin remains the most sorely misunderstood point in the constitution and in the instruction. The documents from Rome have continued to insist on Latin, but many American dioceses have rules prohibiting the celebration of the liturgy in Latin.⁹ The confusion deliberately fostered between the Mass in Latin and the Mass celebrated in the old rite continues to come up in the press and even among the clergy. Today the possibility of participating in a Mass celebrated in Latin is most remote. And yet the 1967 instruction very clearly states what the constitution had decreed: "particular laws remaining in force, the use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites." "Pastors of souls should take care that besides the vernacular the faithful also know how to say or sing, in Latin also, those parts of the ordinary of the Mass which pertain to them."¹⁰ The great fear, almost hatred, of Latin seemingly engendered intentionally, especially in seminaries, stands directly contrary to the instruction and other orders of the Holy See. The instruction says that in seminaries "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 cultivation of sacred music."¹¹

Looking back over ten years, one can ask many questions about the implementation of the 1967 instruction and the constitution on which it was based. In asking them, one can well assess the state of church music today and contrast it with the decrees of the council and the Holy See. Have the last ten years brought about the renewal envisioned by the council fathers and specified in the 1967 instruction?

A few years ago the Consociatio Internationalis Musicae Sacrae drew up a questionnaire that was circulated widely around the world. The series of questions is still valid today, perhaps even more so because a great perspective exists now. The questions are presented here, preceded by the proper statement from the council and the 1967 instruction. When honestly answered, the picture drawn does not usually portray a renewal nor does it match very closely the blue print set up by either the council fathers or the writers of the instruction.

1. *Actuosa participatio*

The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* speaks of *actuosa participatio* frequently (Articles 11, 14, 19, 21, 27, 30, 41, 48, 50, 113, 114, 121, 124). It has been defined in a precise and complete manner in the *Instruction on Sacred Music* (Article 15): "The faithful fulfill their liturgical role by full, conscious and active participation which is demanded by the nature of the liturgy itself and which is, by reason of baptism, the right and duty of the Christian people."

This participation must first of all be interior in the sense that by means of it the faithful unite their souls to what they pronounce or hear and by so doing cooperate with God's grace.

This participation must also be exterior, *i.e.*, the interior participation is expressed by gestures and bodily attitudes, acclamations, responses and songs. The faithful must be taught to unite themselves interiorly with the singing of the ministers and the choir in order to elevate their souls to God by listening to them.

Questions:

a) Do you think that interior participation by the faithful has improved since the council?

b) Do you think that exterior participation by the faithful has improved since the council?

c) Have the faithful been taught sufficiently well to unite themselves interiorly with the ministers and the choir?

2. Liturgical language

Article 36, 1, of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* says: "Particular law remaining in force, the use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites."

Article 36, 2, of the same constitution says: "Since the use of the mother tongue . . . frequently may be of great advantage to the people, the limits of its employment may be extended. This will apply in the first place to the readings and directives, and to some of the prayers and chants, according to the regulations on this matter to be laid down separately in subsequent chapters." Those chapters are:

Article 54, 1: "In Masses which are celebrated with the people a suitable place may be allotted to their mother tongue. This is to apply in the first place to the readings and the 'common prayer,' but also, as local conditions may warrant, to those parts which pertain to the people, according to the norm laid down in Article 36 of this constitution."

Article 54, 2: "Steps should be taken so that the faithful may also be able to say or to sing together in Latin those parts of the ordinary of the Mass which pertain to them." But if in some place a more extensive use of the vernacular in the Mass seems expedient, one should consult the directives of Article 40. (Article 40, which will be examined later, limits jurisdiction in these matters without treating the basic question itself. It says that the more extensive use of the vernacular is intended especially for mission countries.)

Article 101, 1: "In accordance with the centuries old tradition of the Latin rite, the Latin language is to be retained by clerics in the divine office. But in individual cases the ordinary has the power of granting the use of a vernacular translation to those clerics for whom the use of Latin constitutes a grave obstacle to their praying the office properly."

These prescriptions are reiterated and confirmed in the *Instruction on Sacred Music*, Articles 47–49, which suggest among other things that the ordinaries of places, where the vernacular is used in the celebration of Mass, should see to it that in one or several Masses Latin be used in certain churches where there is a large enough number of faithful who speak diverse languages. They are to be the judges of the advisability of such action.

Questions:

a) Are the rules concerning the use of Latin observed?

b) Are the rules prescribed in Article 36, 2, observed?

c) Are the directives prescribed in Article 101, 1, observed?

d) Are the directives prescribed in Article 47–49 of the *Instruction on Sacred Music* observed?

3. The role of the hierarchy

Articles 22, 40 and 44 of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* define the rights and powers of the Holy See and the bishops.

Article 22, 3, stipulates expressly that no one, even if he be a priest, has the right to add, suppress or change anything whatsoever in the liturgy.

Article 40 (which is referred to above on the question of the use of the vernacular) uses a criterion that "in some places and circumstances an even more radical adaptation of the liturgy is needed." The power of decision is returned to the "competent ecclesiastical authority," specifying that adaptations which are judged useful or necessary should be proposed to the Holy See in order to be introduced with its consent (Article 40, 1, 2).

Article 40, 3, orders that men who are experts in these matters be employed to formulate them and it further says specifically that this article is directed to mission countries. The instruction of 1970 repeats these ideas and closes the period of experimentation.

Questions:

a) Is experimentation, which is not in accord with prescribed norms, still going on at the present time?

b) What is the attitude of the competent authority concerning this kind of experimentation? Does it prohibit it? Is it neutral? Does it encourage it?

4. Commission of experts

Summary of Articles 44, 45 and 46 of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*: Episcopal conferences must establish a liturgical commission which should be assisted by experts in liturgical studies, sacred music and pastoral theology. A liturgical and pastoral institute, composed of experts and on occasion of lay people, may be founded to help the commission.

Such a liturgical commission must be established in each diocese under the authority of the bishop. A commission for sacred music and religious art should also be established in each diocese. These three commissions must work together and unite their efforts.

Questions:

a) Has the national commission asked for the assistance of expert musicians?

b) If so, does the commission listen to their opinion?

c) Are expert musicians represented on diocesan liturgical commissions?

d) If so, are their opinions listened to?

e) Do commissions on sacred music exist in individual dioceses?

5. Divine office

In Article 100 of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, it is stipulated that the canonical hours, especially vespers for Sundays and important feasts, be celebrated in common in the churches.

Questions:

a) Did this practice exist before the council?

b) Has it been introduced, if it did not exist?

c) Has it disappeared, if it previously existed?

6. The choir

Article 114 of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* says: "Choirs must be diligently promoted, especially in cathedral churches; but bishops and other pastors of souls must be at pains to ensure that, whenever the sacred action is to be celebrated with song, the whole body of the faithful may be able to contribute that active participation which is rightly theirs, as laid down in Articles 28 and 30." (N.B. Article 28 specifies that the choir must fulfill its function and not assume other roles. Article 30 says that "the people should

be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons and songs" and at the proper times should be allowed to observe a reverent silence.

This recommendation is developed and made more specific in the *Instruction on Sacred Music*, Articles 19–23, 33, 34.

Article 19: "Because of the liturgical ministry it performs, the choir or the *capella musica*, or *schola cantorum*, deserves particular mention. Its office has been given even greater importance and weight by reason of the norms of the council concerning the liturgical renewal. Its duty is, in effect, to ensure the proper performance of the parts which belong to it, according to the different kinds of music, and to encourage the active participation of the faithful in the singing."

Article 16, c, says explicitly that one may give certain parts assigned to the people to the choir alone, provided that the people are not excluded from other parts that belong to them.

Article 33 states that the proper parts of the Mass may be sung either "while all are seated and listen to it" or as much as possible with the participation of the people.

Article 34 provides that the ordinary parts of the Mass can be sung in part music by the choir "provided that the people are not completely excluded from participation in the singing." It also suggests several forms of alternation between the choir and the people with special rules for the *Credo*, *Sanctus* and *Agnus Dei*.

Questions:

a) Since the council, has the number of choirs increased?

b) Do they actually carry out the two-fold role assigned to them of singing alone and helping the congregation?

7. Musical education

Article 115 of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*: "Great importance is to be attached to the teaching and practice of music in seminaries, in the novitiates and houses of study of religious of both sexes, and also in other Catholic institutions and schools. To impart this instruction, teachers are to be carefully trained. It is desirable also to found higher institutes of sacred music whenever this can be done."

Questions:

a) Is there a regular and well-established program of musical education in the seminaries? In novitiates and houses of study?

b) Is this musical education given by qualified professors?

c) Are the results satisfactory?

d) Do clerics and future priests have an opportunity to put their theoretical instruction to practical use and specifically do they meet regularly as a choir under a qualified director?

e) Do they study the solfeggio, organ, harmony, history of sacred music, etc.?

f) Is there a properly accredited school for the training of choirmasters and organists in your area?

g) Are there one or several schools for higher studies in sacred music?

h) Is sacred music taught in a satisfactory manner in Catholic schools at every level?

8. Gregorian chant

Article 114 of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*: "The treasure of sacred music is to be preserved and fostered with great care."

Article 116: "The Church acknowledges Gregorian chant as especially suited to the Roman liturgy; therefore, all things being equal, it should be given pride of place in liturgical services."

Article 117: "It is desirable also that an edition be prepared containing simpler melodies, for use in small churches."

Questions:

a) Have these texts been brought to the attention of the faithful without being changed?

b) Is the entire proper of the Mass sung in Gregorian chant?

c) In the teaching given to the clergy, has Gregorian chant been presented as "the chant proper to the Church, having pride of place, all things being equal?"

d) If not, is at least a part of it sung in Gregorian chant?

e) Is the entire ordinary of the Mass sung in Gregorian chant?

f) If not, is at least a part of it sung in Gregorian chant?

g) If Gregorian chant has been abandoned, do you think that this has resulted in the fostering of the meditation and interior participation of the faithful?

h) If Gregorian chant has been abandoned, do you think that this has resulted in the fostering of exterior participation?

i) Are the simplified editions of Gregorian chant recommended and made available in your area?

9. Polyphony and other types of music

Article 116 of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* says: "Other kinds of sacred music, especially polyphony, are by no means excluded from liturgical celebrations, so long as they accord with the spirit of the liturgical action as laid down in Article 30."

Questions:

a) Is the opportunity to sing polyphony in Latin given?

b) Is an opportunity to sing polyphony in the vernacular given?

c) How is the style and musical quality of new compositions?

d) Must new compositions be approved by the competent authority?

e) Does this competent authority seek out qualified opinions for judging?

10. Congregational singing

This is one of the most important ideas in the conciliar texts. Article 113 of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* says: "Liturgical worship is given a more noble form when the divine offices are celebrated solemnly in song, with the assistance of sacred ministers and the active participation of the people."

The extent of this participation is given in the *Instruction on Sacred Music*. This instruction distinguishes between the solemn, sung and read Mass (Article 28), and establishes three degrees of participation by the people (Articles 29–31). This participation is adapted to the ability of the congregation, and may be limited to the minimum of the first degree.

Articles 33 and 34 of the instruction determine the distribution of the parts of the proper and the ordinary of the Mass among the congregation, the ministers and the choir.

Article 118 of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* says: "Religious singing by the people is to be skillfully fostered."

Questions:

- a) Since the council, do the people sing more?
- b) If so, do you judge that this greater participation could also have been achieved while preserving the Latin language and Gregorian chant?
- c) Where does this participation occur? In acclamations and responses? In the ordinary parts of the Mass? In the proper parts of the Mass? In non-liturgical singing?
- d) What language is used in this participation? Latin only? Vernacular only? Latin and the vernacular?
- e) Are the distinctions of the kinds of Masses, established by the instruction, respected?
- f) Is it widely held that these distinctions are outdated by the new *Ordo Missae*?
- g) Does the competent authority hold this opinion?
- h) Is there a strong tradition of worthwhile congregational hymns in your area?
- i) If so, is this repertory still fostered or have new hymns been substituted?
- j) Are conditions and opportunities for preparation of the congregational singing conducive to its success?

11. The organ

Article 120 of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* says: "In the Latin church, the pipe organ is to be held in high esteem, for it is the traditional musical instrument which adds a wonderful splendor to the Church's ceremonies and powerfully lifts up man's mind to God and to higher things."

Article 65 of the *Instruction on Sacred Music* says: "In sung or said Masses, the organ . . . 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 the Mass." (Exception is made for Advent, Lent, the last three days of Holy Week, and in the funeral ceremonies and the Mass for the Dead.)

The use of the organ as a solo instrument is also implicitly encouraged by the admonition of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (Article 30) and the *Instruction on Sacred Music* (Article 17) to preserve a "reverent silence," because it is not forbidden to use an organ piece during these periods of "reverent silence."

Questions:

- a) Can the organist exercise his office according to the above norms?
 - b) Can he play a sufficiently long time to justify his presence?
- #### 12. Other instruments

Article 120 of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* says: "Other instruments may be admitted for use in divine worship with the knowledge and consent of the competent territorial authority. This may be done, however, only on condition that the instruments are suitable, or can be made suitable, for sacred

use, accord with the dignity of the temple, and truly contribute to the edification of the faithful.”

Article 63 of the *Instruction on Sacred Music* says: “In admitting and using musical instruments, the culture and traditions of individual peoples must be taken into account. However, these 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. Any musical instrument admitted into divine worship should be used in such a way that it meets the needs of the liturgical celebration, and promotes the beauty of worship and the edification of the faithful.”

These regulations are made more specific in the instruction of 1970 (Article 3, c): “The bishops’ conferences should indicate selections of songs to be used at Masses for special groups, e.g., young people or children; the words, melody and rhythm of these songs, and the instruments used for accompaniment, should correspond to the sacred character of the celebration and the place of worship. The Church does not exclude any kind of sacred music from the liturgy. However, not every type of music, song or instrument is equally capable of stimulating prayer or expressing the mystery of Christ . . . Attention should be given to the choice of musical instruments: these should be few in number, suited to the place and the community, should favor prayer and not be too loud.”

Questions:

- a) Are these regulations known, promulgated and evoked to support the decisions of religious authority?
- b) Are there difficulties in deciding which instruments the *Instruction on Sacred Music* excludes from use in the liturgy?
- c) Is it commonly understood that it is specifically excluding jazz instruments (drums, guitar, electric guitar, saxophone, jazz clarinet, etc.)?
- d) Are such instruments permitted in your church?
- e) What is the opinion of the young people about these instruments: divided opinion? great interest? indifference? rejection?
- f) What is the opinion of the adults?
- g) What is the attitude of the religious authorities: encouragement? tolerance? rejection?
- h) Is recorded music used in the liturgy? What is the attitude of the religious authorities?

13. The new *Ordo Missae*

The new *ordo* in no fundamental way modifies the principles stated above. The *Institutio generalis* permits a choice of either the vernacular or the Latin and even provides for the use of the *Graduale Romanum* in order to promote participation in Gregorian chant (Articles 26, 36, 37, 56, 100, 147, 168, 324). It excludes neither the organ nor polyphony.

Questions:

- a) Is it generally known that the use of the *Graduale Romanum* is still permitted according to the new *ordo*?
- b) Is it known that polyphony is also permitted? Is it still sung?
- c) Are the rules about the use of the organ known? Can the organist still exercise his role in a satisfactory manner?

- d) Have the competent authorities given instruction in these matters?
- e) Since the appearance of the new *ordo*, has the active participation of the people increased? decreased? remained the same?
- f) From a pastoral viewpoint, does it seem that the musical quality of liturgical services has improved? deteriorated? remained the same?
- g) From an artistic viewpoint, does it seem that the musical quality of liturgical services has improved? deteriorated? remained the same?

14. Miscellaneous

Questions:

- a) Are the exact texts of the various decrees known and available?
- b) Have deceptive slogans, such as "the council wants to suppress Gregorian chant," etc. been allowed to spread?
- c) Have these inexactitudes and errors been corrected or refuted by proper authority?

If you have answered these questions, you can come to your own decision on what the condition of church music is in your area, ten years after the 1967 instruction was issued. As with most matters decreed by the Second Vatican Council, when the will of the council fathers is carried out, the renewal and blossoming of the faith will be achieved. But too many things ordered by the council have not as yet had a chance to be implemented, because too many false ideas and practices have been foisted upon the Church by individuals who would have their own way. The Church, through the council and the various instructions that have followed, has shown us the way. It only remains for us to put the decrees into effect.

MONSIGNOR RICHARD J. SCHULER

- 1. *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, Article 112; *Instruction on Sacred Music*, Article 4.
- 2. "The Place of Music in Eucharistic Celebrations," Part III.
- 3. Article 4b.
- 4. Article 4a.
- 5. Cf. Richard J. Schuler, "Preparation of the Diocesan Clergy in Church Music." *Sacred Music*, Vol. 101, No. 3 (Fall 1974), p. 3-8.
- 6. Article 28. An interesting set of letters between the author and the associate director of the bishops' committee on the liturgy, Reverend Thomas A. Krosnicki, S.V.D., on the subject of the distinction between solemn, sung and read Masses was published in *Sacred Music*, Vol. 100, No. 3 (Fall 1973), p. 41-43.
- 7. Article 41.
- 8. One place is the author's parish, the Church of Saint Agnes, Saint Paul, Minnesota, where vespers in the full Gregorian setting have been sung every Sunday for the past three years by a schola of men. Since the new chant books for the office have not as yet appeared, the group still uses the arrangement given in the *Liber Usualis*.
- 9. Recently, however, Cardinal Baum has urged parishes in the Archdiocese of Washington to schedule Mass in Latin.
- 10. Article 47.
- 11. Article 52.

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