
The Problem of Hymns

The problems of Catholic hymnody bring us into a highly sensitive area. It may *sound* harmless enough, but in the realm of Church music no subject is more fraught with emotion. Or as a priest once said to me, “When you talk about hymns, you hit ‘em in the pews!” For to say, as I do unequivocally, that most of the hymns most frequently sung in Catholic parishes are execrably bad music and therefore entirely unfit for use in Church is to raise the hackles of a large percentage of the Catholic population. In some cases rational argument on the subject of hymns is absolutely useless and leads to the same kind of frustration that would result from trying to convince Westbrook Pegler that the Democrats aren’t so bad after all.

One of the difficult aspects of the hymn problem is that many people with a real interest in doing something about better Church music do not know what is meant by the unillustrated term “bad hymns.” I remember speaking at a meeting of Catholic broadcasters once, on suitable music for religious radio and TV programs. Much of the general discussion was devoted to hymns, and I went on for twenty minutes bemoaning the bad example set by allowing the worst of our closeted skeletons to escape over the air. But for some reason I never got around to naming specific examples of just what hymns I meant. During the lunch break, a very nice priest who runs a Catholic radio program in the West said to

me, "You certainly are right about those sloppy, sentimental hymns. We've been using 'Panis Angelicus' as our theme music, but I'm thinking of making a change. What would you say to 'In a Monastery Garden'?"

The minute the meeting reconvened I immediately seized the floor—on what point of order I do not recall—and wrested three minutes from the chairman to make an addition to my remarks. To wit: that when I mentioned bad hymns I had this sort of thing in mind—"Mother Dear, O Pray for Me," "Mother at Thy Feet Is Kneeling," "Bring Flowers of the Fairest," "O Mary Conceived without Sin," "To Jesus' Heart All Burning," "Like a Strong and Raging Fire," "Good Night, Sweet Jesus," "'Tis the Month of Our Mother," "Holy Mary, Mother Mild," "O Lord I Am Not Worthy," and that sort of thing.

Why are they bad hymns?

Because they are bad music.

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This is an important but extensive point. Let's come back to it in a minute.

If the so-called "favorite old hymns" have a solid toe hold on your church, then any attempt to improve matters will probably meet with impassioned objections. Whether you are the pastor, the curate, the choir director, or an interested parishioner, you'll have to put up a fight of some sort. Let's examine and assay some of the "arguments" you'll get. Here are examples illustrating each of them, not based on conjecture but taken hot off the grill from the letters that came to me after an article on this subject appeared in *The Sign* and *The Catholic Digest*. (But I should add, for encouragement, that letters of protest numbered only about ten per cent of the total mail.)

1) But how can you say that a hymn is not good, as long

as it makes people feel good to sing it? If they know it and love it and are spiritually uplifted by singing it, then it is good.

2) To say that one piece of music is “good” and one is “bad” is just your opinion against mine. It’s all relative—just a matter of taste.

3) These old hymns are like prayers. You learn them when you’re children and you grow up loving them the same way you love your prayers.

4) If you take away the hymns everybody loves, then you’ll have a Church like a tomb, because people who aren’t musicians can’t learn to sing highfalutin hymns. They wouldn’t understand them and they couldn’t learn to sing them.

5) One reason people love novenas and other non-liturgical services is that they love to sing the old favorite hymns. Just so they aren’t sung during Mass, what’s wrong with them?

Of these arguments, the first is the one you hear most frequently. But those who really believe that any old hymns are acceptable just so long as they make people “feel good” fail to understand the true position of music in the service of the Church. No matter who is singing, choir or congregation, the primary purpose of music in the liturgy is the purpose of the liturgy itself: the honor and glory of God. This is true whether we are concerned with a solemn pontifical Mass or a novena service. The secondary purpose of hymn singing—uplifting the spirits of the congregation—is certainly important, but it *is* secondary. Using the shoddiest, sleaziest material we have for the purpose of glorifying God is not very sound theology or even very good common sense. It treads rather close to the end-justifying-the-means line, and you might just as well argue that Church interior design should

attempt a faithful reproduction of a middle-class American living room, as in a TV interview show, so that people would feel more at home during Mass.

If anyone ever tries this argument on you, incidentally, ask him whether the fact that bad music is a distraction to you doesn't at least cancel out the fact that it makes *him* "feel good."

Argument number two is based on another widespread belief: that there is no such thing as an objective standard in judging music. Or the it's-all-a-matter-of-opinion-anyway stand. This is actually only one subdivision in the attitude which more than any other makes life rough on music critics. In its mildest and most universal form, it takes the highly scorned but actually valid form of I-don't-know-much-about-music-but-I-know-what-I-like. In its more sensitive manifestation, it goes like this: "What you say is just your opinion, and the only difference between your opinion and mine is that you get paid to put yours in the paper! You may not *like* something, but does that mean it's no good?"

Now when this attitude is applied to "favorite old hymns," the atmosphere becomes clouded with really tense emotion. Tread softly when dealing with real emotion. But point out the fallacious nature of the idea that there are no objective standards for judging music, either in composition or in performance. Music is a science, a very exacting discipline, as well as an art. The belief that one becomes an expert in the science because of a love for the art is at the root of much ill-feeling about musical judgment. (The graphic arts, too, share this experience.)

Now within the vast framework of great music, individual tastes have every right to differ widely. One man's Stravinsky is another man's strychnine, and it is every man's privilege

to like or loathe any piece of music he chooses. I would not dream of denying the greatness of Beethoven, for example, but I happen to find the *Ninth Symphony* one of the great, crashing musical bores of all time.

Why, then, can the “individual taste” argument not apply, for example, to “O Mary, Conceived without Sin”? Because there is an irreducible minimum beyond which a piece of music cannot fall and still be taken seriously. If people deny this in relation to hymns, it is because they do not understand it. A trained musician can look at a piece of music on paper, without ever hearing a note of it in performance, and tell you whether it is good, bad, indifferent, or impossible.

“Those old hymns are like prayers”? . . . There are two discrepancies here. The first is the use of the word “old” in relation to our most prominent objectionable hymns. How old is “old”? When you consider that the greatest hymns ever written—the plainchant hymns—are pushing the age of eight hundred and that the noble chorale hymn tunes of Bach date from the early eighteenth century, then what is the significance of the word “old” applied to “Mother at Thy Feet Is Kneeling”?

Most of the old St. Basil hymns date from the Victorian era, particularly the '70's and '80's. This was the era which in the field of secular music saw the flowering of the sentimental ballad. That many of the hymns of those days were directly inspired by the popular songs was so obvious and so unpermissible that some of them disappeared entirely from hymnals and were passed along by ear and hand-copied manuscript until they could be sneaked back into a later edition.

The old (*sic*) hymns are prayers? It is true that some hymns are settings of well-known and very beautiful prayers

. . . “O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee!” . . . This is an indulgenced prayer of enormous significance, summing up the essence of the Blessed Mother’s power and the reciprocal nature of mankind’s relation to her. The beauty of this prayer makes it even more of an unwitting sacrilege to sing it to the familiar waltz-time ditty not once but three times, with the voice rising a half-step at a time.

The *reductio ad nauseam* in the misuse of glorious texts was an “Ave Maris Stella,” one of the noblest of all ancient prayers to the Blessed Mother, set to the tune of “Silver Threads Among the Gold.” It was published with the words “In Accordance with the *Motu Proprio*” emblazoned on the cover.

To sing one’s prayers to shoddy and vulgar music makes even worse sense than the pairing of doggerel verse with mongrel music. How do you like this little charmer from a “popular” old hymnal?

“O Mother, I could weep for mirth, Joy fills my heart so fast.

My soul today is heaven on earth, O could the transport last!

I think of thee and what thou art, thy majesty, thy state!
And I keep singing in my heart ‘Immaculate, Immaculate!’ ”

Ever seen the second verse of “Mother Dear”?

“Mother dear, O pray for me, should pleasure’s siren lay
E’er tempt thy child to wander far, from virtue’s path
away.

When thorns beset life’s devious way and darkling waters flow,

Then, Mary, aid thy weeping child, Thyself a mother show!”

People wouldn't like fancy and highfalutin hymns and couldn't learn to sing them? . . . This is one of the most dangerous attitudes of all because it tends to discourage even those who know better from trying to do anything constructive about the situation. But there is not one particle of the statement that is true. First of all, a good hymn is anything but "fancy" or "highfalutin." One of the strictest criteria of a good hymn is its simplicity, and this includes the ease with which a congregation can sing it. One of the chief objections to the unacceptable hymns under discussion is their own "fancy and highfalutin" pretensions—their flossy chromatic effects, their wide and clumsy intervals, and the fact that it is almost impossible for an untrained group to make them sound presentable. Details on all this presently.

The argument that it's O.K. to sing anything in church, just so you don't sing it during Mass, has apparently been popular for a long time. In 1912, the Cardinal Vicar wrote in the music regulations for the Province of Rome: "We wish to correct the idea current among some people that at non-liturgical functions or extra-liturgical functions, a style of music may be rendered which has been condemned for use at liturgical functions. Music of this character is condemned for use in church for any and every occasion. Nobility and seriousness of style must characterize all music to be performed in holy places, whatever may be the occasion. . . ."

Getting down to cases, what do we mean when we call one hymn "good" and another hymn "bad"? You will have a real problem trying to explain this in an argument, for anyone who does not know by instinct that some hymns are awful will probably not have much background for following a technical discussion of the reason why. Or as Father Ginder pointed out in his reply to an irate monsignor's defense of "Bring Flowers of the Fairest": "Every trained musician in

the country will denounce the Crowning Hymn. Yet when one is challenged he is almost embarrassed at the wealth of explanation required—quite like a theologian asked by an amateur why he rejects the teachings of Molinos. It would involve an exposition of practically the whole tract on grace. But if the theologian fumbles, it is not for lack of reasons but rather because he has so many reasons that he is all but tongue-tied—reasons that presuppose complex study and a trained mind.”

You should, however, be ready with a few simple technical facts, the first being a reminder that music has in it three elements: melody, harmony, and rhythm.

The melody of a hymn tune should be simple. It should lie within the range of the average, untrained voice. It should avoid awkward leaps and clumsy intervals. And, generally speaking, it should go where it's going by diatonic progression, i. e., in whole steps and half-steps according to the major scale. Go play the scale of C and you've got the idea. This does not mean that it must limit itself to the notes immediately surrounding the first note in the melody. It means only that *within the phrase* a certain shapeliness and unity must be observed.

Look over the melody of the great Bach-Hassler hymn, “O Sacred Head.” These are phrases shaped as beautifully as phrases can be shaped. Note how within each one there is little except scale-wise motion. Yet see how effectively the interval between the first two phrases is used.

Another example of perfection in melody is the “Adoro Te Devote.” Yet note the complete freedom with which the melody moves.

Among the principal characteristics of the objectionable hymns are the shortness and choppiness of their phrases, their excessive chromaticism—moving up and down in half-steps—

and their awkward intervals. Have you ever wondered why the very congregations which claim the greatest devotion to the "old favorites" so often drag them along with such hesitancy and at such an unmercifully slow rate of speed? The darned things are hard to sing.

The ear boggles before the wealth of examples. Let's start with the first phrase, using the term loosely, of "Bring Flowers of the Fairest." On "Fair—" we're on the D an octave above middle C. On the second "Bring" we're down an octave and on "Flow'rs," we're on middle C. The leap of a ninth is accomplished within eight notes by plunking downward by means of three ill-used intervals. Sing just these intervals—or the words "fairest, bring flow'rs"—several times over and the innate ugliness of the thing becomes apparent to most ears.

Or meditate for a moment on the melody of "Mother Dear, O Pray for Me." After beginning on the third—always a weak starting place—it skitters down and then up a whole octave within the first two lines of the verse. And the third line opens with a leap of a sixth ("I wan—"), an interval that must be used with great care and discretion in hymns and usually isn't. I always think of this interval as the "Liebes-traum Leap."

For injudicious use of the sixth leaping downward, of course, there is no greater example than the opening of "Mother, At Thy Feet Is Kneeling." *Two* leaps of a sixth in nine notes! See also the last two notes of the phrase, "To Jesus' Heart All Bur-ur-ning." The first two phrases of this item are real textbook examples of rife chromaticism in melody.

Bad hymns are full of the lush, chromatic harmony that is the very essence of the sentimental ballad: the kind that is the peculiar province of the barbershop quartet. Now with all due respect to the Society for the Promotion and Encourage-

ment of Barbershop Quartet Singing in America, Inc., whose conventions I regularly cover for the newspaper, barbershop harmony does not belong in hymns. And chromatic progression is the one device without which barbershop quartets could not exist.

Certain chords, chiefly the dominant seventh and the diminished seventh, characterize this harmony. (In general, when you see a diminished seventh chord in a hymn, run.) And these chords are usually used in bad hymns in precisely the same order in which they occur in "Sweet Adeline." For real, gone chromatic progression, again consider the opening of "To Jesus' Heart All Burning."

Hymn harmony, like hymn melody, should be simple. A wide variety of chords is not in itself a virtue.

The easiest unsavory element to demonstrate is rhythm. What is the common bond between so many bad hymns? Three-quarter time.

Now the composer who writes a hymn tune in three-quarter or six-eighth time had better be a very good composer indeed. And the composers of the "old favorites" named above were not good composers. They were dreadful composers. Good men, no doubt, but bad composers. Most of their hymns were written in an era when the popularity of the waltz rhythm was at its peak. The only problem is that although these hymns are actually waltzes, they are not supposed to *sound* like waltzes when sung in church. This leads to one of the real ulcer-producers of the parish organist's life. If he plays the hymn at a reasonable rate of speed, in an optimistic effort to drag the congregation along with him, he will have to give a strong beat to indicate the tempo. Play "Mother Dear, O Pray for Me" with a strong beat on the first note of the measure, and what have you got? An *Oom-pah-pah, Oom-pah-pah* waltz with the beer foam fresh upon it. If the organist

fails to indicate the beat by means of a strong accent, then the congregation lurches along at its own rate of speed. The results are all too familiar.

I can think of nothing more salutary for a congregation which feels strongly on the subject of "old favorites" than for someone to sneak a tape recorder into Church during a performance, say, of "Good-night, Sweet Jesus," one of the draggingest of all hymns. After an immediate playback, any congregation which then wishes to go on sounding this way should be allowed to do so.

All hymns in three-quarter time are not necessarily beyond the pale. "Holy God, We Praise Thy Name" and the Lourdes hymn, "Immaculate Mary," are not without their merits, in spite of their time-signatures. Nor, by the same token, does a four-four signature do anything for "To Jesus' Heart All Burning" or "O Lord I Am Not Worthy."

Dotted rhythm is another dangerous affectation in hymn-writing. It produces that weird effect in the chorus of "Mother Dearest, Mother Fairest." You know. It goes:

"Mother help.
Us help we pray."

The saddest thing about the hymn situation is the fact that it is so unnecessary. There is an abundance of hymns for any occasion, easily available, easily learned, far more easily sung than the corruption now in use. There are hymns which are good, acceptable, useful pieces, and there are hymns which stand secure among the glories of music.

Among the latter are the chant hymns. One could look from here to Thailand and back the other side of the globe without finding melodies as beautiful as the settings of "Adoro Te," "Salve Regina," "O Esca Viatorum," "Pange

Lingua” and the others. These are now available in English translation, in case the language problem is an insuperable barrier.

Among the so-called “familiar” or “traditional” hymns there is material that is definitely not for the discard heap. Armed with nothing but *St. Gregory’s Hymnal*, the discriminating choir director can line up a perfectly respectable list of hymns. But if you still use *St. Gregory’s*, you have to proceed with great care, for there is considerable sub-standard material in it.

Within the last few years, however, it has become less and less necessary to “make do” with anything but the very finest material. The hymn situation has taken a decided turn for the better lately, with the publication of a number of fine new hymnals.

The Pius X Hymnal, edited by the Pius X School of Liturgical Music, is a handsome contribution to the field, and should be in the hands of every choir and every school.

Achille Bragers’ *Monastery Hymnal*, for unison voices, is a useful collection of one hundred and three hymns, with a very small proportion of misses to hits. See this book, by the way, for a very nice tune to the text, “O Lord I Am Not Worthy.” School Sisters, in particular, please look.

A new National Hymnal, to be published by the Gregorian Institute, is now in preparation and will be a valuable addition.

But the work I most admire for the use of the average congregation is the World Library of Sacred Music’s *People’s Hymnal*. This is under the editorial direction of a group at Catholic University’s Theological Seminary. And a tougher group of dedicated and discriminating young men I have yet to meet. To “make” the *People’s Hymnal*, a hymn has to be irreproachable both in text and music. One available format

of the opus is particularly useful. Words and melody are printed on heavy cardboard cards. They are divided according to the liturgical season and to general usage. What a replacement for the awful old dog-eared "Hymn Cards" that continue to turn up in so many pews!

Consideration of the splendid hymn material now on the market leads me to a subject that I feel obliged to mention, although it will probably meet with a cool reception in some quarters.

There are plenty of the awful "old favorites" already in existence. There is no need for writing any "new favorites" cut of the same shoddy cloth. Yet this is what some contemporary hymn composers are doing. They are, of course, "approved." This is unfair to the teachers and choir directors who want to do the best job they can but are not sure of their own judgment. If they see that a respected and admired Catholic music house has published a handy volume of hymns written by a well-known figure in liturgical music circles, then they are justified in thinking that they can't go wrong in using it. Yet one such handy and widely circulated little volume contains some of the worst material I have seen assembled in one place since I first saw *St. Basil's*. It contains gaucheries that no first-year student of composition could get away with. The irritating thing about this is that both composer and publisher must be aware of this. They could not possibly occupy such high places in the world of Church music without having a more inclusive musical training than they display in print. Then why do they do it? In the misguided if kindly notion, perhaps, that if they can give people something like the "old favorites," something almost as bad but not quite, then everybody will be happy? It's a discouraging thought.

When you are campaigning for better hymns, you might meet with one more argument. It's a defeatist attitude that

runs like this: "It may be true that some hymns are no good, but you'll never get people to stop singing them. You can't *do* anything about it, so why not just relax and forget it?"

This is a dim proposition but not a valid one. There are some people, to be sure, who will go to their graves singing "All Hail to St. Patrick" and loving every note of it. But they are not too much of a threat, even though there are pastors among them. The most important duty, of clergy and laity alike, is to see to it that the next generation of hymn singers is not brought up in the same ghastly tradition of hymnody as the present generation. This is up to the schools (see Chapter 8). Most of us, of course, don't want to wait until our children are grown up before we stop hearing "We Love the Family Ro-sa-ry" at Fatima devotions. The problem of the immediate "now" is also important. And the problem it poses is not so insoluble as it may seem. Knotty, yes. Hopeless, no.

Mere selection of a few good and unaccustomed hymns is about one-tenth of the battle. If the organist opens Rosary devotions by launching into "Mary the Dawn" when for twelve years these devotions have been opened with "Mother Dear O Pray for Me," a profound and uneasy silence will fill the church. Congregations cannot absorb new hymns by osmosis. They have to learn them. In the teaching process, no one is more valuable than one of the parish clergy. Since the nucleus of the congregation at extra services is usually pretty much the same, the work of one week will not be lost on the next. See to it that plenty of copies of the new hymn, words and melody, are distributed. Then take five minutes at the beginning of the service and announce that something new has been added. Since most people can pick up new music by ear if they hear it sung, it is important to have a good "demonstration" of the new hymn. Have the congregation listen to the choir or some other well-prepared group run through the hymn first, then

have a try at it themselves. In Chapter 5 on Congregational Singing of the Mass, there are some ideas that will also apply to hymn singing. Be sure that the first hymn chosen for this project is both simple and stirring. I can think of no better hymn to make the "official" parish favorite than the noble "God, Father, Praise and Glory." (Found in *The People's Hymnal* and in the *Pius X Hymnal*, and probably in others.)

I have been urged by some priests who have been through all this in their own parishes to put in a specific word of warning right here. There is no such thing as a gradual approach. Once it has definitely been decided to clean up the music situation in a parish, the rectory windows should rattle from the force and vigor with which the pastor puts down his foot. From then on, no matter how much ruckus is raised, he must be inflexible. Experiments in "tapering off"—let's sing "Good Night, Sweet Jesus" every other week and then every third week, and then every fourth week, etc.—have been about as successful as similar methods of cutting out smoking.

Another menace in the hymn department for which the pastor must be on guard is the visiting clergy: mission and novena preachers. (For more on this touchy subject, see Chapter 8.)

When the *Mediator Dei* was issued in 1948, I seized the occasion to slip an article on Catholic liturgical music into the *Washington Post*. The piece was reprinted in a journal of the liturgy, but was prefaced by the information and/or warning to the reader that my over-emphasis on congregational hymn singing was caused by a Protestant background. This surprised me because I had supposed that my concern with hymns was the fact that so many people sing them—in church, too!

My Protestant background, however, does supply certain data on hymnody which I feel conscience-bound to pass

along. I have noticed among my lifetime-Catholic family and friends traces of a genuine inferiority complex on the subject of Catholic hymns. They seem to have the notion that this is a problem exclusively ours, that except in its drum-beating revivalist forms, the entire Protestant world goes about constantly raising its voice in the chorales of J. S. Bach. This is absolutely untrue, as one who played the organ in Protestant churches for twelve years is prepared to testify.

You may have been suffering acutely for years at hearing “Good Night, Sweet Jesus” and “Like a Strong and Raging Fire” sung at Holy Hour on the First Friday. But are you familiar with “Jesus Calls Us O’er the Tumult”? Do you know “In a Garden”? It recently won hands down in the poll conducted in a Maryland suburb to determine the favorite Protestant hymn of the area. My wife’s teeth still chatter when she recalls singing the Catholic Mission Crusade song, “An Army of Youth Flying the Standards of Truth,” every day for four years in high school assembly. I maintain that it was an equally traumatic experience for me to play the organ while four years of Hi-Y Christian Youth rallies sang, “To the Knights in the Days of Old Keeping Watch on the Mountain Top.” So don’t let your Protestant friends smile *too* politely when the subject of Catholic hymnody comes up. To each his own skeletons!

It is infinitely regrettable that to many people, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, the term “Catholic hymn” is somehow synonymous with “bad music,” for some of the greatest music ever written is also covered by the term. But it is true that the abuses of hymnody—the kind of attitude represented by the magazine piece quoted in Chapter 1—have caused some Catholic intellectuals, particularly those with a real love for the liturgy, to regard hymnody as a very poor and undesirable relation indeed.

The low estate into which the hymn has fallen is a real tragedy because the singing of hymns is the only personal contact which the great majority of Catholics ever have with the musical life of the Church. Some kind of reaffirmation of the value, and most especially of the *dignity* of the hymn, was urgently needed.

It came with the issuing of the encyclical *Musicae Sacrae Disciplina* by Pope Pius XII. No Pope before him had ever written so explicitly and so extensively on the importance which the Church herself attaches to hymns. I would like to quote much of what he says about hymns (the entire text of the encyclical will be found in the Appendix) and point out the happy fact that the *coup de grace* has now surely been given to the old argument about hymns not having to conform to any standards as long as they're only used in non-liturgical services.

Pope Pius says: "We must also hold in honor that music which is not primarily a part of the sacred liturgy, but which by its power and purpose greatly aids religion. This music is therefore rightly called religious music. The Church has possessed such music from the beginning, and it has developed happily under the Church's auspices. As experience shows, it can exercise great and salutary force and power on the souls of the faithful, both when it is used in churches during non-liturgical services and ceremonies, or when it is used outside churches at various solemnities and celebrations.

"The tunes of these hymns, which are often sung in the language of the people, are memorized with almost no effort or labor. The mind grasps the words and the music. They are frequently repeated and completely understood. Hence even boys and girls, learning these sacred hymns at a tender age, are greatly helped by them to know, appreciate and memorize the truths of the faith. Therefore they also serve as a sort of

catechism. These religious hymns bring pure and chaste joy to young people and adults during time of recreation. They give a kind of religious grandeur to their more solemn assemblies and gatherings. They bring pious joy, sweet consolation and spiritual progress to Christian families themselves. Hence these popular religious hymns are of great help to the Catholic apostolate and should be carefully cultivated and promoted.”

And later in the encyclical: “As we have said before, besides those things that are intimately associated with the Church’s sacred liturgy, there are also popular religious hymns which derive their origin from the liturgical chant itself. Most of these are written in the language of the people. Since these are closely related to the mentality and temperament of individual national groups, they differ considerably among themselves according to the character of different races and localities.

“If hymns of this sort are to bring spiritual fruit and advantage to the Christian people, they must be in full conformity with the doctrine of the Catholic faith. They must also express and explain that doctrine accurately. Likewise they must use *plain language and simple melody* and must be free from violent and vain excess of words. *Despite the fact that they are short and easy, they should manifest a religious dignity and seriousness.* When they are fashioned in this way, these sacred canticles, born as they are from the most profound depths of the people’s soul, deeply move the emotions and spirit and stir up pious sentiments. When they are sung at religious rites by a great crowd of people singing as with one voice, they are powerful in raising the minds of the faithful to higher things.

“As we have written above, such hymns cannot be used in Solemn High Masses without the express permission of the

Holy See. Nevertheless at Masses that are not sung solemnly these hymns can be a powerful aid in keeping the faithful from attending the Holy Sacrifice like dumb and idle spectators. They can help to make the faithful accompany the sacred services both mentally and vocally and to join their own piety to the prayers of the priest. This happens when these hymns are properly adapted to the individual parts of the Mass, as We rejoice to know is being done in many parts of the Catholic world. X

“In rites that are not completely liturgical religious hymns of this kind *when, as we have said, they are endowed with the right qualities, can be of great help* in the salutary work of attracting the Christian people and enlightening them, in imbuing them with sincere piety and filling them with holy joy. . . .” (My italics.)

“Hence we can do no less than urge you, venerable brethren, to foster and promote diligently popular religious singing of this kind in the dioceses entrusted to you. There is among you no lack of experts to gather hymns of this sort into one collection, where this has not already been done, so that all the faithful can learn them more easily, memorize and sing them correctly.”