

## A Message from His Holiness, Pope Paul VI, to all the Catholic Bishops of the Latin Rite Along with the gift of a booklet called “Jubilate Deo”

### LETTER OF CARDINAL KNOX

Several times recently the Holy Father has expressed the wish that Catholics of all nationalities should know some Latin chants for the Mass, for example, the *Gloria*, *Credo*, *Sanctus*, *Pater Noster* and *Agnus Dei*. In response to this we have prepared the enclosed booklet, *Jubilate Deo*, which contains a “minimum” repertoire of such chants. I have the honor and the pleasure of sending it to Your Eminence (Your Excellency) as a personal gift from the Holy Father.

I should also like to recommend to your initiative and judgment the effort that this document represents to foster the wishes of the Council: “It should be arranged that Catholics can sing or say together in Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass that belong to them.”

When the faithful gather for prayer they illustrate the variety that is present “from every tribe, language and nation.” They also emphasize a fundamental unity in faith and in the bond of charity. That there is variety is evident. The number of languages used at Mass, the songs and hymns in local vernaculars, all express the same faith but also what is unique in the religious experience of each people. Both of these things find their legitimate expression in the liturgy, in harmony with the culture and traditions of a particular community.

The use of Latin and Gregorian chant, however, will serve to underline the unity of the Christian people in a particular way, and a way that seems quite reasonable. The chant of the Roman Rite has fed and supported both faith and devotion in the liturgy which it accompanies. The artistic worth to which it has attained alone is a good reason for it to be considered an inheritance of immense value to the Church. The Council, moreover, recognizes Gregorian chant as proper to the Roman liturgy.

One of the principal aims of the liturgical reform has been the promotion of congregational singing, to allow the people to express the festal and fraternal character of the liturgy. “The liturgy is a nobler thing altogether when it is sung, with the ministers fully participating, each according to his degree, and with the full participation of the people.” This particular aspect of the reform is important to those who are concerned in it, but its presentation involves certain difficulties. This Congregation therefore renews its appeal to promote and increase congregational singing.

As far as songs and hymns in the vernacular are concerned, the reform is an occasion “to use one’s faculties, inventive spirit and pastoral acumen.” Poets and composers therefore, are encouraged to put their energies at the service of this cause to build up a corpus of popular music worthy to be used in praise of God, in the liturgical action; worthy also of the faith it expresses as well as being of sufficient standard artistically.

This reform has opened up new avenues for Church music and hymnody to explore. “We await a new flowering of religious music today, so that in each nation we can worship in our own tongue without losing the beauty and expressive power of a music that fully belongs to our language.”

At the same time, however, this reform cannot and does not repudiate the past. It tries to “guard carefully.” This means evaluating the contents of our highly cultured and artistic tradition and fostering those elements within it that outwardly express and serve the unity of believers. To have a minimal repertoire of Gregorian chant would be fully in accord with this need and would make it easier for Catholics to associate themselves in worship both with their brethren of today and of past centuries. For this reason then, the encouragement of congregational singing must consider Gregorian chant seriously.

The coming of the Holy Year in 1975 is another reason for this need to be met. During the year many Catholics of different languages, origins and nationalities will be celebrating the presence of their common Lord side by side.

Lastly, particular attention to the balance between vernacular music and chant must be paid by those whose vocation it is to be more closely involved in the life of the Church and to understand it more fully. That is why the Pope recommends that “Gregorian chant be preserved and used in monasteries, religious houses and seminaries as a chosen form of singing and as an element of the utmost cultural and educational value.” Furthermore, the study and practice of the chant “is of great importance as the foundation of an education in Church music, because of its unique qualities.”

In presenting to you this gift of the Holy Father, I am sure that Your Eminence (Your Excellency) will allow me to refer to his often repeated desire that the implementation of the conciliar Constitution on the Liturgy be rendered more and more complete. You will be able to decide after consultation with diocesan and national authorities in liturgy, music, pastoral practice and catechetics, what is the most suitable and effective way to teach the chants contained in *Jubilate Deo* and to encourage the preservation and execution of Gregorian chant in the institutions mentioned above. This will be a further service to the renewal of the liturgy for the good of the Church.

The booklet can be reproduced without charge for copyright. To facilitate understanding of the Latin text a translation may be added.

In conclusion, I should like to take this opportunity of conveying to you my respects and good wishes, assuring you that I am

Yours sincerely in the Lord,  
James Cardinal Knox  
Prefect.

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