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(See: Christus Vincit; The Lord's My Shepherd; Jesu, dulcis memoria; Jesus, My Light; My Jesus, Mercy; Salve, salus mundi; Tu es Christus)

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(See also: Jesus, My Light; The Lord's My Shepherd; Savior, While My Heart is Tender)

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Preface

“HE MUSICAL TRADITION of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 112). “The treasure of sacred music is to be preserved and fostered with great care. Choirs must be diligently promoted, especially in cathedral churches” (SC 114). “Composers, filled with the Christian spirit, should feel that their vocation is to cultivate sacred music and increase its store of treasures. Let them produce compositions which have the qualities proper to genuine sacred music, not confining themselves to works which can be sung only by large choirs, but providing also for the needs of small choirs and for the active participation of the entire assembly of the faithful” (SC 121).

For as long as I have been composing, I have drawn inspiration from the Second Vatican Council’s sublime teaching on sacred music—a teaching that, half a century later, is at last seeing a more systematic implementation in parishes and chapels throughout the world. As a musician, my first and greatest love is the age-old chant of the Latin Rite, of which the Council famously said: “The Church acknowledges Gregorian chant as specially suited to the Roman liturgy: therefore, other things being equal, it should be given chief place in liturgical services” (SC 116). Hence, all of my choral music is intended to supplement the chant proper to the Church’s liturgy, never to replace it. It will come as no surprise that many of my compositions are strongly influenced by the modes and rhythms of chant, but it is my hope that something of the *spirit* of chant has guided my ends and means throughout, even in the pieces that fall into the tradition of classic English hymnody.

Accordingly, when the Council teaches us that “other kinds of sacred music, especially polyphony, are by no means excluded from liturgical celebrations [by chant’s pride of place] so long as they accord with the spirit of the liturgical action” (SC 116), it is saying that the inherent meaning and mystery of the sacred liturgy is paramount in determining *everything* that we sing (and say and do) when we gather to worship Almighty God. Whether it be plainchant or Palestrina, Bruckner or Vaughan Williams, Arvo Pärt or Kevin Allen, the Lord whom we are privileged to adore deserves our best—and we should willingly render it to Him, for *His* glory, with a fervent embrace of the countless gifts of beauty He has bestowed upon us in our rich history of prayer. When this attitude of receptivity is ours, when we work in continuity with the Church’s tradition and magisterium, *then* we will be able to bring forth worthy new compositions, and so fulfill the lofty expectations of the Council for an authentic restoration of sacred music. In this way, and only in this way, will we “add delight to prayer, foster unity of minds, and confer greater solemnity upon the sacred rites” (cf. SC 112).

* * *

This volume gathers together choral compositions from 1990 to the present. The vast majority are from recent years; many have been sung by the Wyoming Catholic College Choir. A large part of this volume consists of “service music,” that is, music prescribed by the liturgy itself. Examples would be the Mass settings, Gospel acclamations, doxologies (which might be linked, on a special occasion, to the chanting of the Entrance or Communion antiphon), the O Salutaris Hostia, the Tantum ergo, Psalm responses for

Palm Sunday and Pentecost, the Mandatum antiphons for Holy Thursday, the Reproaches for Good Friday (of which there are three complete settings), the Vidi Aquam for Paschaltide, and the Requiem Introit. The remaining works are motets and hymns—the motets intended as Offertory or Communion meditations when time permits, the vernacular hymns and carols as pieces that could be sung congregationally or used in the manner of motets. When not directly taken from Scripture or the liturgy, the texts utilized in the motets, hymns, and carols are orthodox in doctrine and traditional in piety.

The motets and hymns fall into two broad categories: those that would be suitable for use at any time during the Church’s year (Motets for General Use, Eucharistic Motets, Marian Motets & Hymns, and a number of other hymns) and those meant for a particular season such as Christmas or a particular day such as Holy Thursday. The scores have, accordingly, been arranged liturgically and thematically, as indicated in the table of contents, although the back cover provides an alphabetical index for quick location of pieces “on the job.”

Most of the compositions assume an SATB choir. There are a few works for equal voices (SSA/SAA or TTB/TBB): the *Missa Brevis*; the first stand-alone setting of the Kyrie; the sixth setting of the Tantum ergo; and the Introit of the Mass for the Dead. The Miserere Refrain and several Lenten acclamations are scored for SAB choir.

Music written to be sung in four parts presupposes a melody line confidently sung by *bona fide* sopranos. The hymns and carols will not, however, suffer harm from being transposed into a lower key for the benefit of a unison choir or a congregation. I would be happy to prepare a score transposed into a lower key; please write to me with that request at the email address provided below. Write to me also if you would like the score of the optional flute part in Silent Night or the arrangement of ‘Twas in the Moon of Wintertime (the Huron Carol) for SATB chorus and flute, clarinet, viola, and violoncello.

This publication is complemented by three full-length CDs containing recordings of nearly every piece, performed by Matthew Curtis. Such recordings make it easier to get acquainted with the pieces and, if chosen for repertoire, to teach them or learn them. Recordings of individual vocal parts are available via Matthew Curtis’s website (choraltracks.com). The CDs of *Sacred Choral Works* may be ordered from the Corpus Christi Watershed website (ccwatershed.org/kwasniewski). At the same address, customers will find information on discounts for bulk purchases of this volume. Although it is common practice nowadays to photocopy music, I can say with all simplicity that those who anticipate using a number of pieces from these pages should make a point of purchasing multiple copies for the choir.

* * *

This volume could never have appeared without the kindness and good services of many. My wife Clarissa deserves immense thanks for her patience with my sometimes lengthy and inconvenient bouts of composition and for her ongoing support of my musical endeavors. I am particularly indebted to Jeffrey Ostrowski, presiding genius of Corpus Christi Watershed, for his unflagging encouragement of my work and his expert advice and assistance in all matters related to publishing. I am also grateful to my colleagues at Wyoming Catholic College for their warm Christian friendship, particularly Jeremy Holmes,

who furnished the lyrics for two works. Wyoming Catholic College itself deserves robust thanks for its commitment to the worthy celebration of the sacred liturgy, which, in turn, guarantees a steady round of demanding and rewarding labors for the College Choir and Schola. Working closely with these ensembles since 2007 has been a major source of inspiration to me as a composer and a source of consolation to me as a Catholic.

The Council teaches that “the purpose of sacred music” is “the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful” (SC 112). It is my earnest desire and prayer that the music contained in this volume indeed give glory to God and help singers and listeners alike to raise their minds and hearts to Him, whom we long to see face to face in the endless bliss of heaven. May our songs here below be not unworthy of the songs of the angels.

Peter A. Kwasniewski
January 6, 2014
The Epiphany of Our Lord

Contact information

To obtain transposed or enlarged scores, request a new arrangement or instrumental parts, inquire about a commission, share a recording of a performance, or for any personal correspondence, please write to:

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Sacred Choral Works on CD

Nearly all of the pieces in this volume have been recorded by Matthew Curtis of Choral Tracks and are available on 3 full-length compact discs. To listen to sample tracks or to place an order, please visit:

ccwatershed.org/kwasniewski