

Note for the Musician

Your people already know many of the melodies in this book. Its words, its music, and its supporting publications are all intended to help you pray.

The Words

Good Texts. Overall, the texts of the hymns and Psalms express the theology of the Church's liturgy, now happily being restored. Here's one example: The liturgy is directed to the Father through the Son. Many hymns in this book reflect this theology.

Although some traditional hymns and Christmas carols retain familiar wording, many texts are relatively new—less than 25 years old. So, in your use of the *American Catholic Hymnbook*, you are part of a new tradition, now taking shape. You are already part of the Church of tomorrow.

Songs Your People Need. There are songs for Human Life Month (October), Mother's Day, and "Renew" (or "Christ Renews His Parish"). There are also arrangements that appeal especially to children, for use in the parish school or CCD classes.

There is a special need for songs that celebrate the paschal mystery and songs that celebrate reconciliation as re-integration with the Church. So, this hymnbook provides many hymns and Psalms for Christian initiation and communal penance, as

well as specific suggestions for celebration of these sacraments in stages.

Especially useful is the selection of music for the new funeral rite, including many hymns for the final commendation. The whole rite comes to a climax in this commendation, when the people's singing is most important.

The Music

Songs Your People Can Sing. Most of the hymns that have endured over the centuries have verses in regular meter, with the same number of syllables in each verse. So, this hymnbook includes many settings in regular meter, to facilitate singing. In general, we have avoided folk and contemporary songs with irregular verses.

Psalms in Meter. What is true of hymns is also true of Psalms. People need to have Psalm verses that are easy to sing, with the same number of syllables in each verse. Just as we like our hymns to rhyme, at least at the end of each verse, so too we like our Psalms to rhyme. The Psalms in this book are faithful to the original; they are also in meter and rhyme. Most have a refrain.

Metrical Psalms are especially effective during Communion, because the people can easily join in by singing the refrain. As with the Responsorial Psalm after the First Reading, the leader sings the verses; and the congregation answers.

The notation “from Psalm 25” means that this version is a metrical setting of that Psalm; it may be used after the First Reading at Mass. The notation “after Psalm 76” means that text is no more than a partial rendering of the Psalm; it may not be used after the First Reading.

Lauds and Vespers. Morning and Evening Prayer are now being restored to our tradition. In this book, you have a convenient format that can be used in the home, in school, at meetings, or in church.

Special Groupings of Songs. For some occasions, it is useful to have the songs you need all together, in one section. So, in the back of this book, you have groupings of hymns and Psalms for Eucharistic exposition and benediction, funerals, posadas, Lauds, and Vespers. Within each section, the songs are arranged in the order in which they would be used. For funerals, for example, the entrance Psalm is provided first, then the Sequence, the familiar *Dies Irae*, and so on.

This sequential grouping of songs should foster participation especially among people who are not familiar with the liturgy. Such an ordering does not preclude other choices, and this fact is mentioned in the commentary.

Public Domain Songs. Like most hymnals, this book provides songs that are not copyrighted. Such songs often exist in several versions; we have chosen what seems to be the

most effective. Sometimes, a less familiar text will be more appropriate for the liturgy. In most cases where an original adaptation was made of a text in the public domain, no copyright is claimed.

Other Publications

For Planning. To help you make good use of this hymnbook, the index of Complementary Publications lists other resources that you need. Of them all, the *Liturgy Planning Guide* is the most important; it provides you with extensive indexes and information to facilitate planning the liturgy.

For Participation. Another complementary publication is the *Leaflet Missal* which is also intended for the congregation. If your people are using the *Leaflet Missal*, there will be numerical coordination with this *American Catholic Hymnbook*. For example, the song numbers in the *Leaflet Missal* go up to 99; the numbers in this hymnbook begin at 101. With this coordination, there should be no confusion when song numbers are announced.

For the Psalms. Aside from metrical Psalms, parishes with highly skilled musical leadership can use our *ICEL Lectionary Music*, with through-composed settings of the Psalms. Parishes that need simpler settings can use our *Psalter*, with easy settings in Gregorian Chant Psalm tones. Refrains from both publications are provided in the *Leaflet Missal*.

A Familiar Repertory

In the “Music for Mass” section, this hymnbook provides an ample choice. As the late Ralph Keifer pointed out, it is more important to use a few, familiar Mass settings than to have much variety. For most parishes, participation will be strong when the *Kyrie*, *Sanctus*, and other acclamations are so familiar that they are readily sung from memory by the whole congregation. The liturgical ideal, then, is to choose a limited number of such songs and to use them so often that they are known by everyone.

Contemporary Songs

In some parishes where the emphasis is on contemporary music, older hymns may be few in number and marked by archaic language. In some communities, there is an ongoing desire for fresh material; new songs continually are coming into use, replacing the old.

This *American Catholic Hymnbook* makes a better approach possible. For several reasons, it is suggested that older tunes, in regular meter, should predominate in the liturgy. Contemporary songs should be chosen that are of good quality, that can be sung readily, that can endure for the next generation. Here’s why.

The Ministry of Music

The musician, above all, must see the texts as the primary basis for the choice of songs. The most important criteria will be liturgical and theological. Secondary criteria will

be poetic and literary. The competent musician will reject devotional and archaic language, as well as poor rhymes, awkward metaphors, and irregular meters.

Many traditional hymns in other hymnals use language that does not make for good prayer: “anthem,” “divine,” “heav’n” (rather than “heaven”), “undefiled,” “wretch,” and so on. Accents are placed on the wrong syllables: “AND took their flight,” “ComforTER,” “JeSUS the name,” “reign in majesTY,” “TriniTY,” and “when TO their longing eyes.” Also, in these books, rhyming adjectives are often placed after the noun they modify: “king benign,” “love divine,” “victim blest.” Rhymes can be trite (“love/above”), false (“vain/again”) (“rise/sacrifice”) (“abroad/Lord”) (“Word/Lord”), or simply forced (“so fine/divine”). Even with some newer British hymns, the idiom is strange to Americans: “about” for “around,” “dumb” for “speech-impaired,” “Hail thee, festival,” “O gladsome light,” and so on. All these expressions are an impediment to worship, to prayer in spirit and in truth.

The competent musician knows we should not introduce archaic texts from old Anglican and Protestant hymnals, especially now that all denominations are updating their texts. Why should Catholics be given texts that other Churches themselves are now correcting? The language of our hymns must be the language of today; it must be effective prayer for the present generation.

Traditional Anglican and Protestant tunes, however, have proved their effectiveness over centuries, with many new and translated texts.

By the use of familiar tunes, with verses in regular meter, texts can be chosen that match the day's theme. A metrical Psalm can be used every Sunday, after the First Reading. Excellent choral settings are readily available, for alternation by choir and congregation. Most important of all, the people's participation can be enhanced and made easier.

So, over the course of time, texts will always have to be updated. But most texts we use should be in regular meter, set to familiar tunes. That has been the basic structure of hymnody since the Reformation. It is an ecumenical tradition, a Protestant insight, a Catholic heritage.

Time Signatures. In this edition, time signatures are omitted, as in many respected hymnals, for example, *The Hymnal 1940*, *The Hymnal 1982*, the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, *Lutheran Worship*, and the *Service Book and Hymnal*. A rationale for this omission is found in the introduction to *The Hymn Book* of the United Church of Canada:

"The rhythm of the words in many hymns tends toward a flexibility that might be curbed by the presence of a time signature. In any event, the accentual pattern of any measure is determined not by the time signature, but by the interaction of melody, harmony and word."

Without time signatures, the page is cleaner and clearer. Usually, the time is obvious.

Guitar Chords. The hymns in this book are set in keys that provide a comfortable singing range for most people. A usual range is from B below middle C to the octave of middle C. In some instances, the key in the melody edition differs from that in the organ accompaniment, usually by a half step. This was done to accommodate the accompanist. Generally, in the melody edition we used keys that are easier for guitarists to play. In the organ accompaniment we used keys that would make the hymn accessible even to beginners. For example, in the melody edition, a hymn in the key of E would probably be set in F or E \flat in the organ edition. Of these two, the editors chose the key that seemed more suitable for the congregation.

Chant. As in most hymnals, Gregorian Chant hymns are usually engraved in eighth notes. In a few such hymns, however, quarter notes are used, as is customary for these songs in some hymnals. As explained in the companion publication, *Singing the Psalms*, "plainchant" (with an equal emphasis on all syllables) is no longer a valid term for Gregorian Chant. In any case, it is a misconception to interpret "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" in some kind of free rhythm. This and some other songs are in no way ancient, Gregorian Chant; they are modern compositions.

Leader's Music. In this melody edition, music is provided for the people's parts. For the leader, usually only the words are provided. In this way, it will be clearer what the congregation should sing and what they should listen to. Both forms of participation are important for the responsorial method of singing; it is not necessary for the people to sing everything. Music for the leader, for the verses of these songs, is provided in the organ accompaniment book.

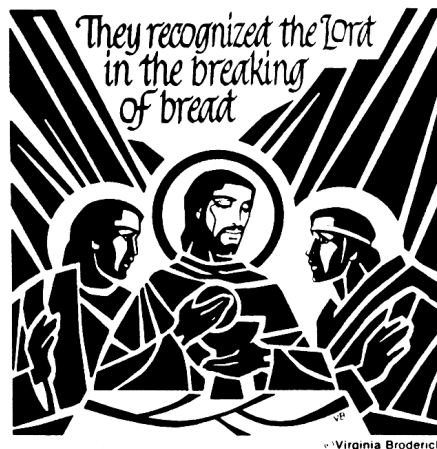
Authentic Translations. The original meaning and context of some songs do not fit the liturgy of today or the way in which people pray today. Therefore, an accurate translation of these songs will respect the nature of the receptor language and the context. The *Stabat Mater* and the *Dies Irae*, for example, should be translated into terms that fit the liturgy today, not the liturgy in which they were used. *At the Cross* is a hymn that prays for God's mercy and orients the singer to turn

to God through Christ. *O What A Wonder* is a confident hymn of anticipation, with Christ acknowledged as our intercessor with God, rather than as a stern judge. Both hymns reflect the idiom of the restored Roman liturgy.

Arrangers. In a music credit, the notation "a." with a name refers to an arrangement; without a name, the notation means an adaptation has been made.

Accent. In most hymns, the natural American accent has been used, especially when the original setting used a French accent. For example, *Immaculate Mary* has the accent on the first syllable of *Ave*, in the refrain. *A Child Is Born* has the accent on the "lu" of *Alleluia*, not the last syllable.

Other hymns use a French accent because it is expected by most people; it is familiar. See, for example, *Magnificat* and the refrain to *You Christians All*.



Introduction

The Second Vatican Council: Doctrine, Bible, and Liturgy

In the Catholic Church, great authority is given to an ecumenical council, a gathering of her bishops from all over the world. The Pope himself presides over such a gathering, either in person or through a representative. Of the various documents such a council might give us, a constitution would be especially important; it would be a statement of principles, a blueprint for renewal. In 1963, such a document was approved by the Second Vatican Council: the Constitution on the Liturgy.

In that document (#121), the Council fathers gave some norms for the texts of hymns used in the liturgy. These texts, they said, should be in conformity with Catholic doctrine and should be drawn primarily from the Bible and from the “sources” of the liturgy, the earliest documented records.

What is the Catholic doctrine of the Church today? “Catholic doctrine” refers not only to official dogmas, carefully defined, but also to teachings that are commonly acknowledged as true. Since 1963, almost all the changes in doctrine are not in terms of orthodoxy or heresy, right or wrong, true or false. By and large, the documents of the Council give us changes in emphasis, in theological method, and in ways of thinking.

Since the texts of hymns are to reflect this Catholic doctrine, these texts will have the same kind of emphasis, the same theological method, and the same ways of thinking. It will be a case, not of condemning the past, but of going to something better. As Pope John XXIII put it, it is an *aggiornamento*, a gradual updating, rather than a revolution. So, by studying theology and the history of Church doctrine, musicians will be able to choose good hymns. Without that knowledge, they will not.

The Council said that the texts of hymns are to be drawn from the Bible. Like Catholic doctrine, the teaching of the Bible is only well understood with the help of theology and history. Bible texts should be interpreted accurately; it is not just a question of quoting verses or phrases. Allowance has to be made for the gradual development of certain Biblical teachings. A given hymn, for example, does not have to express all that needs to be said about a certain belief.

Certainly, however, it is good for hymns to use the idiom of Scripture as Catholics know it. In hymns, for example, it is a help to prayer to see God as “Father,” rather than “Yahweh.” It is good to recognize phrases from the Psalms, again and again. It is good to see Christ as our mediator with the Father, as the one through whom we pray.

Finally, the Council said that hymn texts should primarily be derived from the sources of the liturgy. Like the Bible, these sources are well understood only through study. Musicians, reviewers, parish priests, and all involved in choosing hymns need to be familiar with such sources as the *Apostolic Constitutions*, the *Didaché*, the *Didascalia*, the writings of St. Justin, and the early sacramentaries, as well as their history and theology. It is not sufficient merely to cite these sources; **one has to understand them and use them rightly.** Every pastoral musician who chooses hymn texts needs to know why and how the sources of the liturgy affect the choice of hymns.

What is most important in hymn texts?

Many principles affect hymn texts; there are all kinds of legitimate concerns. Some people want texts that include both men and women. Some people want texts that are familiar. Some people want texts that are poetic and beautiful. Some want texts that are clear and contemporary. Some want to avoid archaic language. (They want the kind of English found in the Lectionary and the Sacramentary, **not the idiom of 18th and 19th century England.**) Such needs have been taken into consideration in this hymnbook. Each parish has available to it the choice that is necessary.

But for Catholics, the important principles affecting hymns are the needs of the faith, the principles of the liturgical renewal. The main ideas that influence our texts are those that come from the Church herself, not the wider culture. Renewal of hymnody is a question of discovering our own roots, our own origins in faith, our most essential and central beliefs.

Here, then, are some of the principles that form the basis for the new hymn texts in this book. There are five important areas in which major shifts have occurred in liturgical theology: the Trinity, the role of Christ in prayer, the role of the Spirit, the understanding of the Church, and the theology of the Eucharist.

The Trinity: A Dynamic Relationship

With regard to the Trinity, the documents of the Vatican Council regularly use the idiom of Scripture and early tradition: we pray to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit. As the great 20th-century theologian, Karl Rahner, pointed out, the Trinity in the work of salvation and the Trinity who dwells in our hearts are the same reality, the same God. So, we need to see ourselves as sons and daughters in the Son, united in the Spirit. In the liturgy, the Trinity is not an external reality but something immanent, present in our hearts by grace. God himself dwells within us in the person of his Spirit.

Wrong! the Trinity IS a reality.

Many Christians need a richer understanding of their faith in the Trinity. Some think of God as three separate, individual beings, more or less a divine “committee.” Some see God simply as one, without differentiation. People need to celebrate in the liturgy the fullness of their faith.

This theology is important not only in our prayer, especially our hymns, but also in the very way in which we experience God’s grace. God’s love is made known to us through the Son, through the mediation of a Word that itself is a personal experience for us of divinity and transcendence. That love is also made known in the Spirit, in the community of the Church, the gathered congregation. Implicitly and experientially, we share the life of God within the family, within the household of the faith, within the unity of the Spirit.

There are three significant ways in which the theology of the Trinity affects the liturgy: in the reform of the Mass, in the wording of the doxology (*Glory to the Father . . .*), and in the wording of our hymn texts.

In the 1969 Order of Mass, two prayers to the Trinity were omitted: *Accept, Holy Trinity*, during the preparation of the gifts, and *May it please you, Holy Trinity*, at the end of Mass. In this reform, the traditional orientation of prayer to the Father was restored. We do not pray to the Trinity as such but to God, through the Son, in the Spirit. This perspective was always present in the Roman Canon and its prefaces, as well as almost all the public prayers of the priest.

The ancient form of the doxology was worded in exactly this way: through the Son, in the Spirit. A change was needed in the fourth century, because of the violent, prolonged struggle against the Arian heretics, who denied the divinity of Christ. At that time, people began to use another form of doxology: to the Son and to the Spirit.

Through exhaustive study, the liturgical scholar Joseph Jungmann showed that the liturgy was substantially distorted, in its reaction to heresy. Now that the danger is long past, he says, the Church can return to the original perspective of the sources of the liturgy.

Especially in the liturgy of the hours, in morning and evening prayer, the ancient tradition should be restored. As in the Eucharistic Prayer at Mass, we give God glory through the Son, in the Spirit.

By the same token, hymns about the Trinity should reflect the tradition of the ancient, undivided Church. Hymns that are directed to the Trinity as such or to each person successively should not be used, no matter how familiar they may be; they are not in accord with the spirit of the liturgy. Instead, all Trinitarian hymns should truly accord with the nature of the Eucharist, morning and evening prayer, and the sacraments. See, for example, *Come, God, Our Mighty King*; *Father, Make Us One*; and *Great God, Our Rock*.

Jesus Christ: Our Mediator with God

With regard to Christ, many Catholics still see him one-sidedly in his divinity, as the eternal Son of God. Yet, by and large, the liturgy prescind from his divinity. In fact, both Scripture and early tradition emphasize the humanity of Christ. He is our mediator with the Father precisely in his humanity. This is why we pray in the Mass *through* Christ our Lord. The liturgy is not so much prayer to Christ as it is the prayer of Christ.

This is how Jesus taught us to pray: to his Father, through him. This is how the Bible and the sources of the liturgy teach us to pray. This is how the Church herself has prayed, age after age, in the Eucharistic Prayer.

This way of thinking helps us understand the Resurrection as part of the whole mystery of Easter, the Passover of the man Jesus to glory with the Father. In some hymns in the past, the Resurrection and other miracles were thought of as evidence of the divinity of Christ. Yet the disciples themselves did not have this understanding! Instead, the Bible and the sources of the liturgy teach us that the Resurrection is a victory for Jesus in his humanity and therefore in our humanity. Because he is risen, we too will rise. Because he is Lord, we too will come to glory.

Similarly, we can understand better how Christ is a priest for us. In some hymns, he was described as a sacred person to be worshipped, to be our benefactor, to consecrate the bread and wine, to descend among us. Instead, in the oldest sources of the liturgy, Christ as a priest is primarily a mediator, an intercessor before God. As in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Christ prays on our behalf and helps us to pray; we pray to God through him. See *In Christ the Prince of Peace*; *Great Shepherd, King*; and *See Us, Lord*.

Wait ... didn't they just say Jungmann proved the liturgy was corrupt?

The Spirit as the Source of Unity

In the strongest tradition of the liturgy, the Holy Spirit is understood as a bond of unity, the presence of the Church itself. In many sources of the liturgy, the phrase “in the Holy Spirit” is replaced by the phrase, “in your Holy Church” or something similar. The two expressions denote the same reality: the unity the Spirit gives us. Hymns directly addressed to the Spirit were not in wide use in our Roman Rite until the fifteenth century. Instead, Christians prayed to the Father for the gift of his Spirit, in accord with the teaching of Jesus in Luke 11:13. See *Father, Let Your Spirit Come*; *Lord of All Life*; and *O God of Glory*.

The Church as God's People

The Vatican Council stressed that there is one universal call to holiness. All the baptized are equally called to be holy. So, in our hymns, the Church will be represented primarily as God's people, as one family of faith. The Church is also understood as the Body of Christ, as a servant, as a loving mother, as God's vineyard, and as a sign of the kingdom. For such hymns, see *Father, Most Holy*; *God's Plan*; *High Praise*; *See Us, Lord*; *Shepherd of Life*; *We Are the Vineyard*; and *Your Kingdom Come*.

The Eucharist

The Mass is not primarily a time for silence and adoration of Christ. Instead, it is an act of communion, invocation of the Spirit, memorial, renewal of the covenant, sacrifice, and thanksgiving. Our Eucharistic hymns should reflect these themes.

Here are some examples of the Church's renewed understanding of the Eucharist. *Holy Father* is a good Communion hymn precisely because it is not in adoration of Christ; it fits in with the action of the Eucharist, which is directed through Christ, not to him. *Father, Make Us One* is a Eucharistic hymn for the gift of the Spirit, a theme long fostered in the Christian East. *Do This in Memory of Me* emphasizes the theme of memorial (*anamnesis*) which can provide a basis for reconciliation of Christians in one faith. *This Bond of Blood* sings of our relationship with God in terms of the covenant that he established, in accord with biblical tradition. *Christ Our Lord and Brother* is not a translation of *Adoro te devote* because the right emphasis is on the unity of the Church, which St. Thomas said was the primary effect of the Eucharist. *Give Thanks to God, for God Is Good* is appropriate for Communion not only because it's easy for people to sing just a refrain but also because the Eucharist is an act of thanksgiving; the text corresponds to what the Church is doing.

Other Changes in Liturgical Theology

There are other teachings of the Church that go back to the sources of the liturgy. These doctrines are less dogmatic and more practical, but they are not less important.

With regard to Mary, there are several new teachings. The Constitution on the Liturgy and other documents stress one fundamental theme: Mary should be esteemed, as a model of the Church, a symbol of the community. This biblical theme is central. It unifies all the other aspects of Marian piety: her motherhood, her obedience, and her virginity. The role of Mary in our prayer is to represent the Church, to stand as a symbol of all that the Church will be. See *How Great Is God* and *Sing of Mary*.

Pope Paul VI developed this teaching. He made two important points. First of all, Marian devotion should be reformed in the spirit of the liturgy. Mary should not be put in place of Christ; biblical and liturgical piety should replace individual sentiment. Second, Marian devotion should be fostered and promoted, outside of the liturgy. It should not be added to or mixed in with the public prayer of the Church, because it is essentially different. With these two restrictions, Marian devotion should flourish and prosper.

The Church also teaches that the Sunday celebration is the axis of the whole liturgical year. With the addition of a third reading from the Old Testament, with a three-year cycle of Scripture, the biblical themes of the lectionary should be foremost in our life of prayer. Most of our hymns, therefore, will not reflect private piety, devotion to the saints, or other special causes. Instead, the hymns we need will center on the great themes of God's revelation. For such texts, see the index of the Hymn of the Day.

The daily prayer of the Church, the liturgy of the hours, should be the sung prayer of the people, not primarily reading matter for the clergy. This liturgy is Lauds and Vespers, morning prayer and evening prayer.

As much as possible, the sacraments, especially baptism, should be celebrated in common, with singing. They should be celebrations of faith; a more public liturgy is preferable to a private form of the same sacrament. This teaching means that all the public rites of the Church should be celebrated with singing: acclamations, hymns, litanies, Psalms, and refrains. Singing is not something extrinsic to the liturgy; it is part and parcel of a real celebration. This is why this book provides all these forms of song.

Practical Questions

Are your most familiar hymns to be found in this book? Are your favorites among these pages? These are the first questions almost everybody asks. The answer may well be yes, but there are other questions to consider.

Today, the Catholic Church is wonderfully being renewed by the Spirit, through the new teachings found in her liturgical books and her official documents. These new teachings are signs of life and growth and faith.

Are there hymns to match this theology? Are there hymns to complement the three-year cycle of Scripture readings? Are there hymns to correspond to the renewed appreciation of the liturgy itself? These are the questions that have been decisive in the editing of this hymnbook. These are the questions to which this book is an answer. See for example, the index of the Hymn of the Day, which provides a good way to develop your repertory.

Have the words been changed? Where the texts do not conflict with the Church's doctrine, much traditional wording is kept, for example, in Christmas carols. But where the Church's theology has changed, so too must the hymns. The words we sing are an expression of our faith, not mere sounds and not just musical habits.

Many people understand the need to use language in hymnody that is *inclusive*, language that makes both women and men feel at home in the spirit of the text. This need is a reflection of our North American culture, of people who speak English as their first tongue. In this book, the editors have worked to meet this need as far as possible. Although it is not in accord with our liturgical books to alter such expressions as "Father" or "King" for God, it is possible to avoid expressions such as "brotherhood," "man," and "mankind." We can also retain hymns about Mary, with their rich imagery. Finally, we can provide new texts, such as *God, like A Mother*, which highlight some feminine aspects of our own tradition.

There are two other adaptations to our culture. The first is the use of music that is the heritage of most Roman Catholics in this country. This is why we have many tunes from Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Korea, Mexico, the Philippines, Poland, and elsewhere. These tunes are not only part of our heritage; they are also something to pass on to future generations.

A final adaptation is the use of some tunes for more than one text. See, for example, *I Lift My Soul* (Ps 25) for Advent and *Out of the Depths* (Ps 130) for Lent. Most traditions in Europe, Africa, and Latin America have long followed the practice of using the same tune for several texts. This practice can make it easy to learn new hymns, because the melody is already familiar. By using the same tune for several texts, it will also be easier to use texts that fit the day or the season.

On the whole, adapting our hymns to our culture is less important than adapting our culture to our Catholic traditions. The most important influence on hymnody must be our faith, our theology, our liturgy.

What is a hymn?

In addition to Psalms and biblical Canticles, a hymn is a text used for a church service or at home; it is religious poetry that is meant to be sung by a congregation. Unlike secular poetry, the main value of a hymn is not its artistic expression of the author's thought or feeling. Unlike popular song, the music of a hymn is not paramount. In Rock music, for example, the lyrics are less important than the melody, the beat, and the arrangement.

A hymn is not music to which words have been added; it is words that are an integral part of the liturgy, words that are supported and enriched by music. A hymn is valued primarily for the religious meaning of the text itself, for the way in which the words express and foster the faith of the gathered congregation and the faith of the whole Church. The value of individual self-expression and the value of pleasure in the music are both less important than the content.

Like the Psalms, good hymns are centered on God. We think of his love, his power, his works of wonder. In their song, God's people are moved to praise him, to bless him, to thank him.

As St. Paul said, we should pray with understanding, considering the meaning of what we say and what we sing. He said that sound teaching ("prophecy") builds up the Church; it is more needed than speaking in tongues, in sounds that are not understood by everyone. St. Paul would rather utter five words that people can understand than 10,000 words that people cannot understand. His point is that we should pray, not just with our feelings, but with our minds as well, our intelligence, our understanding. (See 1 Corinthians 14.)

No matter how much fun they are to sing, hymns are meant to be prayer. They help us relate to God and to one another. They move us to love the Word of God and to offer praise and thanks. They build up the unity of the Spirit, the Church itself.

People whose principal musical experience is outside of the Church will have to undergo a change of heart to appreciate the place of these songs in the liturgy. It will help to pray the Psalms privately and to sing hymns and Psalms as often as possible, in the home, at church meetings, and at family gatherings. With the help of sound preaching, the meaning of the words will become more and more important.

For Catholics, hymns and Psalms can be a great means of fostering the faith, age after age. May God bring to fulfillment the good work begun in you.

xx

At Sunday Mass

Many hymns and metrical Psalms in this book are five verses or less. If the texts are considered as prayer, a part of the liturgy, and if the melody is attractive, people will be happy to sing all the verses of the song. In this case, the hymn or metrical Psalm is sung for its own sake, not to accompany another action, such as the entrance rite. In songs of five or six verses, it may be effective to alternate verses, for example, between the men and the women or between the choir and the people.

Gathering Song. In some parishes, this song is primarily a means of opening the celebration, fostering a spirit of unity among the people, and directing attention to the meaning of the season or the feast. From this perspective, the song is not primarily intended to accompany the entrance of the clergy; it is not cut short. (*General Instruction*, #25)

Psalm after the First Reading. Although a hymn may not be sung after the Reading, a metrical Psalm may be more attractive to the congregation than an irregular setting. A metrical Psalm with a refrain can be sung in responsorial manner, with a leader singing the verses alone. Or, the Psalm can just be sung straight through. (*General Instruction*, #36)

Sermon Hymn. In many Baptist, Lutheran, and Reformed churches, a hymn or metrical Psalm is sung following the sermon; the song is usually derived from the principal Scriptural theme. In Catholic churches, when the sermon takes the form of a homily, an appropriate song can help celebrate the homily's emphasis. (*Directory for Masses with Children*, #46)

During the Preparation of the Gifts. Instrumental music, a choral motet, or silence are all appropriate. On solemn occasions, especially with a procession of the gifts or a second collection, a hymn may be useful. It need not speak of offering or of bread and wine. (*General Instruction*, #46)

During Communion. If the people are asked to sing the verses, a metrical hymn or Psalm may not be effective during the procession. Instead, the people should ordinarily just sing a refrain that can be easily sung from memory, such as *Alleluia*. A leader should sing the verses of the song. (Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, *Music in Catholic Worship*, #62) The congregation remains standing all during the procession; they do not kneel down. (*General Instruction*, #21)

After Communion. In lieu of silence, a hymn or metrical Psalm can be appropriate. The people remain standing. (*General Instruction*, #56, 21)

Recessional. An instrumental or choral setting is appropriate, especially if a song was used after Communion. Otherwise, the recessional song may be relatively brief.