

Music in Christian Celebration

A document prepared by
UNIVERSA LAUS

International study group on
singing and instrumental music in the liturgy

* Points of reference *

* Beliefs held in common *

Foreword¹

In 1962 a group of liturgical musicians came together to study and discuss the theory and practice of Christian liturgical music. This group expanded rapidly, and formally constituted itself as "Universa Laus" (universal praise) in 1966. Its membership is worldwide, though firmly based in Europe at present; it is primarily Roman Catholic, but other denominations are represented and welcomed; it has a healthy mixture of clergy and laity. All kinds of people - from learned academic liturgists and musicologists to grass-roots pastors and musicians - are involved in Universa Laus. What unites them is the fact that they have all, to a greater or lesser extent, *thought about* liturgical music. The common desire animating them is to understand ever more clearly and ever more deeply how liturgy works and how music works within liturgy. Today, Universa Laus is an independent body for research into, and reflection on, liturgical music; and it is based on a strong foundation of international friendship, mutual respect, and the free exchange of ideas.

The first period in the existence of the group (1962-68) corresponded to the years when the Roman Catholic Church was creating and developing the liturgical reform that was the fruit of the Second Vatican Council. During this time, Universa Laus carried out a programme of research on singing and instrumental music in Christian worship. This programme included historical, theological, technical and pastoral aspects; and, through individual Universa Laus members well-placed to make a contribution, some of its results bore fruit in the reforms themselves.

¹ This is a modified form of the introduction to the document published in the journal *Music and Liturgy*, Summer 1980, vol. 8, nos. 3/4, pp. 151-2, and is an expansion of the prologue contained in the French original. The original draft of this English-language introduction was the work of Kevin Donovan SJ, at that time one of the three Presidents of Universa Laus. The draft was heavily expanded by Paul Inwood, at that time General Editor of the journal *Music and Liturgy*.

The text of the document itself largely follows the same issue of *Music and Liturgy*, pp. 152-161, but some minor corrections have been introduced. In addition, modifications have been made in the light of progress in the area of inclusive language.

The second period in the life of *Universa Laus* (1969-76) was characterized by two new major influences. The first of these was the fact that, in the wake of the liturgical reforms, worship and culture had now begun to encounter each other; in different language-areas and different cultures this encounter had had widely differing results. The second was cross-fertilization, similar to what was going on in most academic disciplines. In this case, new light was being shed on the study of ritual and music by contributions from other areas of the humanities, such as semiology, linguistics, social psychology and anthropology. During this period, too, *Universa Laus* exerted an unseen but large influence on the implementation of the liturgical reforms and their subsequent development, mainly through the writings and teachings of some of its more prominent members.

By now it was evident that there was a growing divergence of cultural and ecclesial situations in the post-Vatican II world; and *Universa Laus* felt the need to question itself again about the beliefs and convictions of its members. Thus in 1977 was born the idea of a document - a statement which would set down a certain number of basic lines of thought common to the group, growing out of what they had learnt during the previous fifteen years. After four years of discussion and a gradual refining process, *Universa Laus* is proposing the document set out below, which it hopes its members will feel able to subscribe to.

Like any précis, this document tries to synthesize a vast amount of work in a very small space. It is impossible to compress a year or two's work in one area into a single paragraph giving only the bare outline of the conclusion reached; and yet this is what is attempted here. The first part of the document - "Points of Reference" - is a trial presentation, arranged "organically", of the way in which *Universa Laus* views the relationships between music and Christian liturgy in 1980. The second part of the document - "Beliefs held in common" - takes up the points of reference and reworks them in the form of a series of brief statements.

Cultural divergence is mentioned or implied throughout the document, and it should be noted that there is always a difficulty in reproducing "international nuances" in an undertaking of this kind. The basic work was done by French-, German-, Italian- and English-speaking working-groups; and there are often problems in reproducing in one language the exact shade of meaning implicit in a word or phrase in another language. This applies particularly, though not exclusively, to words that have a certain technical meaning. There are some phrases in some languages that are literally untranslatable, and paraphrase has to be resorted to in such instances. In English, an additional complicating factor is the difference in modes of expression on either side of the Atlantic.²

² Two English-language versions of the document were originally published, which had drawn freely upon each other's drafts. In general, the English version (in *Music and Liturgy*, already cited in footnote 1), translated by Paul Inwood, was more satisfactory than the American version (published in booklet form by the National Association of Pastoral Musicians). As stated in footnote 1, the present text is based on the English version.

I

POINTS OF REFERENCE

1. Singing in Christian assemblies

- 1.1 When people gather together in the name of Jesus to celebrate the mysteries of their faith, their communal action, the liturgy, is made up of a number of symbolic practices: rites and sacraments. Music has a special place among these practices.
- 1.2 Christian worship consists of:
 - (a) the proclamation of salvation in Jesus Christ;
 - (b) the response by the assembly of believers;
 - (c) the making-real, by action, of the covenant between God and humankind.

Music is integrated into these different components of worship:

- (a) in order to support and reinforce the proclamation of the Gospel in all its forms;
 - (b) in order to give a fuller expression to the professing of one's faith, to prayer (intercession), and to thanksgiving;
 - (c) in order to enhance the sacramental rite in its dual aspect of action and word.
- 1.3 The vocal and instrumental practices integral to Christian liturgies can be called by many names. Common expressions such as "sacred music", "religious music" or "church music" have broad and rather nebulous meanings which do not necessarily relate to the liturgy at all. Even the expression "liturgical music" (in the United States "musical liturgy") may not be precise enough to denote the unique relationship between liturgy and music that we are talking about here. Throughout the remainder of this document, therefore, we shall use the expression "(Christian) ritual music".
- 1.4 We understand "ritual music" to mean any vocal or instrumental practice which, in the context of celebration, diverges from the usual forms of the spoken word on the one hand and ordinary sounds on the other. The domain of sound that we have just defined can go beyond what certain cultural contexts would currently describe as "music" or "singing".

2. Christian ritual music in various cultures

- 2.1 In the same way that the languages and symbols used in Christian worship are or have been borrowed from the cultures in which the Gospel message is or has been proclaimed, so Christian ritual music has developed and continues to develop according to the vocal and instrumental traditions of the groups of people where the liturgy is celebrated.

- 2.2 Although in the course of history different Churches have developed repertoires that they considered as their own property, there is in fact no type of music as such that is specifically for Christian liturgy.
- 2.3 Nevertheless, we can see that Christian assemblies make use of different types of music in ways which are to a greater or lesser extent peculiar to them. Their vocal or instrumental practices are integrated into an action which has as its goal the making-manifest of the ever-new reality of salvation in Jesus Christ. These practices cannot be considered merely as a product of the surrounding culture. Liturgical practice is continually being questioned and challenged by the Gospel experience which is at one and the same time memorial, conversion, and waiting for the coming of the Kingdom. These "evangelical aspects" (past, present, future hope) cannot, however, be isolated from the cultural forms affected by them.
- 2.4 Christian ritual music has two principal characteristics:
 - (i) like liturgy itself, musical practice in liturgy is essentially something communal;
 - (ii) words play a specific part in it.
- 2.5 Dealing with types of music from various groups of human beings, Christian ritual music always works through a process of choices and transformations.
- 2.6 Not all the musical practices of a given culture are equally available to, or usable in, the liturgy. Divergences can be seen, not only with regard to non-religious or non-christian types of music, but also - depending on the time and place of one's viewpoint - with regard to types of Christian "sacred music" belonging to other eras and cultures.
- 2.7 The other side of the coin is that liturgical celebration can welcome or require practices which the surrounding culture has no knowledge of or has allowed to atrophy.
- 2.8 Liturgical celebration is a symbolic whole; and all its elements, musical or not, are interdependent. Ritual music can therefore not be isolated from other areas of culture which also have a bearing on the celebration: building-materials and architecture, places where people gather together, language and poetry, gesture and dance, musical instruments, etc.

3. Singers and musicians

- 3.1 In the liturgy, music, like all other ritual activity, must first of all be thought of in terms of the people who are celebrating.
- 3.2 The liturgical action is the action of an "assembly" of people gathered together at a single time and in a single place. Every word, everything that is sung, all music that is played in the assembly is the concern of each and everyone. Whether a rite is carried out by one individual, or by a few people, or by everyone together, it is always a communal action.
- 3.3 The distribution of vocal and instrumental tasks in Christian assemblies has varied greatly according to era and locality. These variations are due to factors of different

kinds. The division of roles between people and ministers can be partly explained by the way in which the organic and hierarchic nature of the Christian assembly is understood, as well as the sacred character of the liturgical action. But we also find here a reflection of social customs, according to which singing in public could be the job of an individual (whether man or woman), or of a group, or of everyone, depending on just as many different ways of listening and participating. The involvement of soloists, choirs and instrumentalists is the result of evolution in musical techniques and an increase in the size of the available repertoire.

- 3.4 However, in the liturgy, being of service to others is never simply a matter of technical competence or social status. The participants' faith rests on the reality that every action, whether by one or several people, is taken as a sign of the action of the Holy Spirit in the group. So, in terms of the diaconal (or "service") role and the charisms (or "gifts of the Spirit") mentioned in the New Testament, liturgical roles are also considered as "ministries" - whether their ministers have the role by virtue of ordination, or permanent institution, or occasional assignment.
- 3.5 The distribution of musical roles in the liturgy has had many variations in the past and will doubtless have many more in the future. Without prejudging any of these or wishing to be exhaustive in any way, we can nevertheless identify the following: the role of the people gathered together to worship; the roles of the individual ministers (presider, deacon or animator, psalmist, cantor, etc); the role of specialized groups (unison choir, schola, larger choir); and the role of instrumentalists. The roles of composers and planners/organizers of a celebration should also be added.
- 3.6 Singing by the people gathered together is highest in importance and can never be dispensed with. Even in the absence of singing ministers and groups of singers, it is first and foremost the task of the assembly to profess its faith, in response to the proclaimed word of God, through "hymns, psalms and spiritual songs" (Col 3:16). The musical role of others who might contribute will depend on the ability of the celebrating group to provide itself with such performers, as well as on the style of celebration required by the group.

4. Music for everyone

- 4.1 The music performed in an assembly is offered to that assembly as a symbolic sign of what the assembly is celebrating. But as a rite in itself, music is also a task to be accomplished. In order fully to carry out its role, this music should be accessible to the whole body of the participants, both those who are performing it and those who are listening to it.
- 4.2 The ritual music currently in use most often belongs to the "common practice" of the surrounding society, in the sense that it does not require special musical skills and is thus accessible to the whole body of participants. This is normally the case whenever the entire assembly sings. But it is also true when ministers other than those in charge of the music - such as the priest, deacon, reader, or animator - are required to sing on their own during a celebration.

- 4.3 A celebration can nevertheless be enriched by various more or less "specialized" musical practices if the necessary resources (soloists, choirs, instrumentalists) are available and if the overall plan of the celebration warrants them. This sort of music is for listening to by the other participants. The way in which those other participants are affected will depend on whether the music has words or not, whether the music has been programmed to be listened to (without anything else going on at the same time) or to provide an environment of sound for the rites, and whether it is close to or distant from the musical competence of the listeners. Whatever the case may be, it is to be expected that the music should make a contribution that is seen to be positive by the assembly. This is still possible even when the music deviates from what the listeners are used to hearing.
- 4.4 In societies that enjoy a thriving traditional musical culture, it is appropriate to make use of this in ritual practice, whether communal or specialized. On the other hand, a certain pluralism often seems necessary today in situations where the culture is mixed or fragmented; otherwise we risk favouring certain social milieux or categories of people at the expense of others.

5. Word and singing

- 5.1 As in Jewish liturgy, which proclaims the wonders of God and gives God thanks for them, Christian liturgy has consisted of praise since the very beginning. Singing is in its very bones as a medium for the Good News of salvation and the praise of a redeemed people. Bonded to the biblical and sacramental word, singing is the primary point of departure for Christian ritual music.
- 5.2 The word "singing" is used here in a broad sense to indicate many different kinds of vocal expressions. Its span ranges from practices like recitative to melismatic singing, including "song" in the usual sense of the word.
- 5.3 Liturgical celebration calls for a wide variety of vocal acts and verbo-musical genres because different functions of language are brought into play. Depending on the literary genre of the texts used, and above all on the relationship that it establishes between the participants, celebration sometimes emphasizes the transmission of a message, sometimes the savouring or assimilation of recited words, sometimes the act of singing "with one voice", sometimes pure praise for its own sake. Each of these types of language corresponds to a different relationship between text and music. In each case the group has its own special way of making the word its own.
- 5.4 Because the word of revelation is essential to Christian worship, the liturgy has emphasized the function of verbal communication (of messages destined for the intelligence) from its very beginnings (1 Cor 14:15). Safeguarding this priority in no way excludes other functions of language (such as relational function, function of awaking the heart, poetic function, etc). It is often in these other functions of language that music has its most specific role.
- 5.5 Singing is not the result of bringing together music and text; nor is it the occasional encounter between pure music and pure poetry. It is an original human action in which words and sounds become a new, single unity. In singing, a text can take on meanings

suggested by the music that goes with it, while the music can endlessly enlarge on the meaning of the words. Thanks to language, music can articulate the name of the God of Jesus Christ; through music, the human voice can attempt to utter the unutterable.

6. Music and instruments

- 6.1 The special place assigned to singing in the liturgy as words bonded to music does not exclude the use of music without words, vocal or instrumental, whether produced by traditional instruments or by electronic synthesizers, or reproduced by mechanical means.
- 6.2 For quite a long period of its history - and still true today in certain Eastern rites - Christian tradition removed musical instruments from the liturgy. The social and religious motives behind this rejection have not entirely disappeared in all places. Nevertheless, instrumental music today constitutes in many societies a human and spiritual value whose contribution to Christian worship is now recognized as being a positive one.
- 6.3 One fact is obvious: in most cultures, the act of singing, individually or collectively, integrates the use of accompaniment or performance instruments. These lend contrast to rhythm, melody, timbre and words. They help the cohesion of the ensemble and influence the meaning that can be transmitted.
- 6.4 In certain cases, a musical act may constitute a rite in itself: e.g. the ringing of bells, or music for meditation. In other cases it may be integral to a rite: e.g. a procession, or an action without singing. Music can make a moment become an event, give a certain quality to the passage of time in celebration, signify a feast, provide an aid to contemplation; and in the end become itself an act of prayer.
- 6.5 Making music together implies that each performer will enter into what the whole group is doing to the best of their ability. It is therefore scarcely conceivable that instrumentalists should bring nothing but technical competence to a celebration without themselves being committed to the celebrating group of believers.

In the same way, composers will be able to place themselves fully at the service of the assemblies for which they write if they participate in the liturgies of those assemblies by listening to the Word and responding to it in such a way that they can discover in themselves the appropriate ways for the group to express its faith.

7. Ritual functions

- 7.1 In liturgy, music fulfills a certain number of anthropological functions relating to both individual and group which are the same as those met with in society as a whole. Some of them are general: the use of music for emotional expression, group solidarity, symbolizing festivity, etc. Others are more specialized: therapeutic, educational, recreational, etc. But inasmuch as music is a part of Christian celebration as such, it plays a specific role and fulfills a certain number of functions that are proper to itself.

- 7.2 These ritual functions fall into two main categories. The first type are defined, in the sense that particular effects, more or less controllable, are intended. The second type are indeterminate and their effects are largely unpredictable.
- 7.3 Defined functions are principally the concern of people responsible for a celebration: composers, planners and organizers, implementers. Indeed, whether a celebration works well or not depends on these functions. In the same way that some kinds of music are good or bad for dancing, relaxation, choral singing, private enjoyment, etc, so in the liturgy there are kinds of music that are good or not so good for various functions of the word - proclaiming, meditating, psalm-singing, praise, acclamation, dialogue, response, etc - and those that are useful or not so useful for different ritual moments: opening, processions, litanic supplication, and so on.

To each function correspond different musical forms, developed or selected in such a way as to make the rite as meaningful and effective as possible.

- 7.4 However, the role of music in the liturgy extends well beyond what one can see of how well it works. Like every symbolic sign, music "refers" one to something beyond itself. It opens the door to the indefinable realm of meanings and reactions. Taken in terms of faith, music for the believer becomes the *sacramentum* and the *mysterion* of the realities being celebrated.
- 7.5 These two categories of ritual function are always implied by each other. Therefore ritual music is never programmed for its own sake (e.g. purely as a game, or simply for aesthetic titillation, or as art for art's sake), nor merely for practical ends (educational, social, recreational, etc), nor even just so that the rite may be accomplished. In the final analysis, ritual music is always aiming at whole human individuals and their free and unfettered encounter in the assembly of believers with the God of Jesus Christ.

8. Repertoires and models

- 8.1 Like the liturgy itself, which is first and foremost an "act", ritual music consists in the first place of "making music" together. Thus each rite is a unique occurrence and each liturgy is a once-only event.
- 8.2 Nevertheless, the rite is also by nature repetition, memorial and social custom. This is why ritual music cannot on a regular basis do without making use of works that already exist. In this way repertoires of Christian ritual music have grown up.
- 8.3 In celebration, different factors motivate the use of existing repertoires. The first level is primarily practical. For example, in order that a dialogue can be established between the presider and the assembly, or in order that the assembly can together sing an antiphon or a *Holy, holy*, words and music must already exist. In the second place there can be aesthetic motivations: the most valuable works, those that are richest in meanings, are like this precisely because of the fact that they exist in a finished form. We expect them to be performed in the form in which they exist. Thirdly, celebration can be enriched by

the emotional and intellectual connotations that certain works have gradually acquired according to the different experiences of various individuals and groups.

- 8.4 Despite the use of particular musical compositions that form part of one repertoire or another, there is a constant call in liturgy for the kind of music that it is not easy to reconcile with a completely fixed repertoire. The solo cantillation of a psalm or a preface, even making use of a given tone, allows the performer a certain latitude for improvisation that can benefit the transmission of the text. Again, some types of spontaneous polyphony are not susceptible to being written down on paper. In these and other cases a traditional technique is employed: a more or less regulated use of an "operative musical model".
- 8.5 The use of operative models allows the two aspects of ritual - repetition and newness - to work together. By taking well-known pathways and familiar routes, the use of the model facilitates the acceptance and the practice of a rite in a given cultural context. By allowing certain variations and innovations, the model can contribute to the unique event that each celebration actually is. The model also makes it possible to expand the repertoire without upsetting the participants through an excess of novelty.
- 8.6 The musical organization of a celebration can be inspired by two complementary principles: on the one hand, the use of well-known pieces, familiar and within the grasp of everyone, which are thereby good "tools for prayer"; on the other hand, the insertion at opportune moments of pieces with a more markedly aesthetic character, heard less often, performed by competent executants, which will thereby be found to have acquired a special significance.

9. *Quality and value of forms*

- 9.1 When looking at the history of the Churches - whether in regard to the interventions of authority or the behaviour of the faithful - a constant twofold concern can be seen concerning ritual forms, and especially musical forms. The first aspect is expressed in terms such as "dignity", "beauty", "appropriateness", "good taste", "quality", "art", and so on. The other aspect has to do with the holiness of the action, which has to be "prayerful" and "sacred".
- 9.2 When people demand "beauty" and "holiness" of liturgical forms, it is not so much a question of aesthetic or moral norms as of the "values" that a group of people are aiming at in their symbolic action and of the "anti-values" that the group considers incompatible with the rites. Detecting these values and anti-values, and discovering the tangible expressions through which they are perceived, turns our attention to beliefs, spirituality, the faith of the group, but also to social psychology and to the status of art and religion in society.
- 9.3 Without claiming to have an exhaustive knowledge of the reactions of the faithful (reactions which are generally implicit rather than explicit, and which are usually badly-formulated), musicians who want to place themselves at the service of their assemblies cannot totally ignore these reactions or neglect them. It is useful for musicians, for example, to know which forms their people consider to be archaic or modern, or

unfashionable; which they consider to be popular or élitist or common; which ones are familiar or esoteric; which are good or bad in the view both of the experts and the "consumers"; which ones are sentimental or austere, prayerful or distracting, etc. It is also important to notice how large are the proportions of the assembly involved in these reactions, and also to find out if such reactions are occasioned by the work itself or by the way in which it is performed.

- 9.4 In seeking to understand the effects resulting from the musical forms that they make use of, those in charge of celebrations are not aiming at adjusting to the taste of their public. They are delimiting the parameters within which the signs and rites of Christian faith can unfold. They notice to what extent different meanings are available or not. Then, in company with their fellow-believers, they search for the forms most suited to celebrating in spirit and in truth.
- 9.5 Whatever the functions fulfilled by ritual music, whatever repertoire is exploited and however the pieces are performed, the way in which any particular type of music is perceived will always depend on the sonic "form" through which the music comes across to the members of the assembly. In this context, "form" includes not only the work, written down or improvised, but also its performance, taking into account the ability of the singers, the timbre of the voices, the acoustic of the place, and not least the celebration as a whole, of which the music in question is a part.

10. Signs of a new humanity

- 10.1 The demands made by Christian ritual music spring from the ultimate goal of this music, which is to make manifest and make real a new humanity in the risen Jesus Christ. Its truth, worth and grace are not only measured by its capacity to arouse active participation, nor by its aesthetic cultural value, nor its long history of acceptance in the Church, nor by its popular success, but because of the fact that it allows believers to cry out the *Kyrie eleisons* of the oppressed, to sing the *alleluias* of those restored to life, to uphold the *Maranatha* of the faithful in the hope of the coming of the Kingdom.
- 10.2 Any kind of music created by human beings can be of service to Christian worship, so long as it does not turn people in on themselves or merely reflect the image of themselves.
- 10.3 For centuries, certain cultures have sung the "new song" referred to in the Psalms and the Apocalypse, using innumerable different forms. Other peoples and continents are called to add their native arts to the service of this same act of praise. But many voices are still missing from the chorus of the 144,000 Elect.³ Some still have no voice with which to sing the new Canticle, not just in places where the Gospel has not yet been proclaimed but in places where it has not yet fully permeated humankind and human culture, and in other places where - though planted many ages ago - it must once again inspire a world in the full flood of being transformed.

³ Cf. Apoc 14:1-3.

Let there be *Universa Laus* - universal praise !

II

BELIEFS HELD IN COMMON

1. Singing and instrumental music are a structural part of Christian liturgy.
2. It is not possible to be concerned with liturgy, either in theory or in practice, without taking music into account.
3. Those concerned with music in the liturgy must have both the rites and the people who celebrate as their point of reference.
4. Singing and instrumental music in the liturgy are at the service of the people gathered together to celebrate.
5. Ritual music is always interacting with the cultural milieu in which it is used.
6. Not all musical practices in a given society lend themselves equally well to Christian celebration.
7. Certain musical practices, perfectly justifiable in a ritual context, may not be recognized by society as being musical art.
8. Christians do not possess a kind of music separate from other people; but they make use of each type of music in their own particular way.
9. No type of music is in itself profane, or sacred, or liturgical, or Christian; but there do exist types of ritual music in Christian worship.
10. In Christian worship, praise is first and foremost the task of all the people gathered together.
11. In celebration, even singing by one individual is the action of everyone.
12. For a particular assembly, there are many different ways of performing and listening to that assembly's ritual music.

13. Ritual music stems principally from musical practices held in common.
14. All musicians with a role in the celebration must acquire competence commensurate with their role.
15. The action of an assembly of believers can be rendered false by musicians who provide only a technical service without also associating themselves with the celebration.
16. The primary form of Christian ritual music is singing.
17. Singing is an original human act and is irreplaceable in celebration.
18. In liturgy, types of singing are just as varied as types of verbal acts.
19. Certain kinds of singing assume the use of musical instruments.
20. Music without words also has its place in liturgy.
21. Music is not indispensable to Christian liturgy, but its contribution is irreplaceable.
22. A celebration is a whole; and all of its elements - musical or non-musical - are interdependent.
23. When music takes place within a rite, it always affects both the form and the signifying power of the rite.
24. Ritual music can be described as "functional art".
25. In liturgy, singing and music fulfil a certain number of more or less defined functions.
26. As a symbolic sign, singing and music play a role above and beyond determined ritual functions.
27. A vocal or musical rite is first of all an event, a unique and singular act.
28. Liturgy is never "fully ripened"; it is always "developing".
29. Insofar as ritual music is a repetitive and collective act, it cannot do without repertoire altogether.
30. A good repertoire alone is not enough to guarantee that music will fulfil its liturgical role.
31. The performance of many musical rites benefits from the technique of the "operative model".
32. Experience is necessary to find out what is right for a particular assembly.

33. For liturgical celebration, good "musical tools" are needed first of all; it is also appropriate that works of musical art should bring enrichment to the signifying power of a celebration.
34. The wealth of meaning of a celebration is not proportionate to the amount of musical resources employed.
35. The use of different musical styles and genres in the same celebration is legitimate as long as it does not interfere with the unity of the ritual action but co-operates with it.
36. Communion between Christians of different assemblies, languages, cultures and denominations can be expressed with the aid of a small number of common signs, among which music has a special place.
37. Everything that reaches the ears passes through the medium of an acoustic "form".
38. The effective functioning of every musical rite assumes the use of an appropriate form.
39. Only to be concerned with the form is idolatry; but to neglect the form is to neglect the rite.
40. There is a communal and constant demand for "beauty" and "holiness" with regard to liturgical forms. This has to do with the "values" that each group considers as essential.
41. Knowing the positive and negative judgments of the faithful on different types of music allows those in charge to make better use of them in the liturgy.
42. Richness of meaning depends on the uniqueness of the signifying power of the form.
43. The goal of all Christian ritual music is to manifest and make real a new humanity in the risen Christ.
44. No musical practice is neutral in relationship to Gospel faith.
45. The "new "Canticle" will not be achieved until people of every race, language and culture have joined their voices to it.