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# **Active Participation and the Song of the Assembly**

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the School of Theology of St John's University,  
Collegeville, Minnesota, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts  
in Liturgical Studies.

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
St John's University  
Collegeville, Minnesota

4 June 2007

This paper was written under the direction of

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Signature of Director

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**Dr William Griffiths**

has successfully demonstrated the use of

**German and French**

in this paper

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Signature of Director

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## **Active Participation and the Song of the Assembly**

This paper explores the connections between the Vatican II liturgical norm of “full, conscious and active participation” and the song of the assembly, with particular reference to the strophic hymn. The paper also examines the argument in the literature that the song of the assembly is *theologia prima*.

This paper may be duplicated

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Signature of student writer

4 June 2007

## 1. Introduction

One of the principal outcomes of the liturgical reforms initiated by the Second Vatican Council was the restoration of the pre-eminent role of the liturgical assembly in the eucharist.<sup>1</sup> The call to “full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations”<sup>2</sup> on the part of the faithful was a potent catalyst for change. It fuelled a rapid and almost complete shift of the liturgy to the vernacular by bishops’ conferences around the world.<sup>3</sup> With an emphasis on the baptismal rights and responsibilities of the People of God assembled for the liturgy, there arose a wide-ranging theological and popular debate about the nature of the mass and the function and purpose of the liturgy. These reforms were based in part on twentieth-century recoveries in practice, thanks to the work of the Liturgical Movement, as well as on the scholarly insights from scripture and from the Fathers about the inherently participative meaning and communitarian structure of the eucharist over the more passive eucharistic piety that had been the defining liturgical characteristic of the assembly for centuries.<sup>4</sup> The revival of the primacy of the liturgical assembly also boosted cultural adaptation as a new *modus operandi* in the eucharistic liturgy, not least in terms of music in the liturgy.

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<sup>1</sup> Vatican II, “Sacrosanctum concilium”, in *Vatican Council II*, Vol 1, ed. A. Flannery, (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1998), 1-36. Hereafter SC. The other major reforms instigated by SC were a return to the “noble simplicity” of the Roman Rite SC (par. 34); the comprehensibility of the rites (34 and 50); inculturation of the liturgy, especially in missionary lands (37-40); regrafting the liturgical traditions of the church onto the genuine traditions of the past (23); the introduction of the vernacular (36); and a new respect for the various roles of ministers (28, 29). See R. G. Weakland, *Liturgy and Common Ground*, 1999. <http://americanmagazine.org/articles/weaklandliturgy.htm> (accessed 27 November 2005), 1-2. A. G. Martimort, “Structure and laws of the liturgical celebration”, in *The Church at Prayer*, vol 1. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1987), 91. M. Francis, “The Liturgical Assembly”, in *Fundamental Liturgy, Handbook for Liturgical Studies* Vol 2. ed. A. J. Chupungco, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 129.

<sup>2</sup> SC 14 - see also SC 30, 50, 79, 113 and elsewhere.

<sup>3</sup> J. F. White, *Roman Catholic Worship: Trent to Today*, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2003), 15.

<sup>4</sup> K. F. Pecklers, “The Liturgical Assembly at the Threshold of the Millennium: A North American Perspective”, in *Liturgy for the New Millennium: A Commentary on the Revised Sacramentary*, ed. M. R. Francis and K. F. Pecklers, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 51.

As with other conciliar liturgical reforms, the more active participation of the assembly was not a new concept. It was first actively promoted in the modern era by Pius X<sup>5</sup> and further defined by Pius XII.<sup>6</sup> This reform grew out of a major concern about the “gradual but unrelenting decline in the value of the assembly”,<sup>7</sup> matched by a widely-felt need for the church to adopt a more pastoral approach to questions of liturgy through the more active involvement of the assembly.<sup>8</sup> In the first half of the twentieth century, more active participation meant *inter alia* more frequent reception of communion, and a restoration of traditional liturgical music in the Roman style (to replace the more operatic, performance styles of the late nineteenth century). It also meant experimentation with dialogue masses, the offertory and other processions, the re-ordering of church interiors to reduce the physical separation between the people and the celebrant, and some formal restorations of and changes to the rubrics.<sup>9</sup>

One practical instance of the active participation envisaged by the Council<sup>10</sup> was the increased involvement of the assembly in the song of the reformed eucharistic and other worship rites. Liturgical song, in fact, proved a highly-gearred lever in the post-Vatican II liturgy reforms because it was quite specifically linked to the premier reform principle of full, conscious and active participation. SC 116 defines the norms for the song of the liturgical assembly by reference to SC 30: “acclamations, responses, psalms, antiphons, hymns” are specified as proper to fostering active participation.

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<sup>5</sup> In his *motu proprio Tra le sollecitudini*, 1903.

<sup>6</sup> In his encyclical *Mediator Dei*, 1947.

<sup>7</sup> Vincie, referring to Martimort’s earlier analysis, in C. Vincie, “The Liturgical Assembly: Review and Assessment”. *Worship*, 67, (1993): 125.

<sup>8</sup> A. K-Y. Chan, “Participation in the Liturgy”, in *Fundamental Liturgy, Handbook for Liturgical Studies*, Vol. 2, ed. A. J. Chupungco, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 150.

<sup>9</sup> For example, the Easter Triduum in 1955.

<sup>10</sup> SC 113.

Apart from the emphasis on congregational song, the chapter (SC Chapter VI) on sacred music itself breaks no new practical ground, rehearsing the usual preoccupations of the twentieth-century Roman documents on church music: the guiding principle for music in worship is its liturgical connectedness; the preservation of the treasury, including pride of place for Gregorian chant, polyphony and the pipe organ; the revision and simplification of the chant books; the provision of training at various levels. Composers are exhorted to produce “genuine sacred music”.<sup>11</sup> Some musical liturgical leeway is to be given to mission lands.

SC confirms the pre-eminent role given to music as *the* art form at the service of the liturgy:

The main reason for this pre-eminence is that, as a combination of sacred music and words, it forms a *necessary or integral part* of the solemn liturgy.<sup>12</sup>

Music as a “necessary or integral part” of the liturgy is a formula first enunciated in the modern era in 1903 by Pius X in *Tra le sollecitudini*. It was most recently reiterated by Pope John Paul II in his 2003 chirograph celebrating the centenary of Pius X’s *motu proprio*. Included also in SC 112,<sup>13</sup> this formula is part and parcel of what we understand as the “usual” Roman position on liturgical music. But what does “necessary or integral” actually mean in terms of the new liturgical norm of active participation? The SC 112 formula is given some further definition in

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 112, my emphasis.

<sup>13</sup> Pius X spoke of the purpose of music in the liturgy as the “glory of God and the sanctification and edification of the faithful” (Pius X, *Tra le sollecitudini*, 1903, (<http://www.adoremus.org/TraLeSollecitudini.html>). (Retrieved 23 January 2007), 1. SC 112 omits the purpose of “edification”.



*Musicam sacram* (1967), at least in terms of functionality.<sup>14</sup> But the question still remains as to why music (here, the song of the assembly) is so essential to the reformed liturgy.

The purpose of this essay, therefore, is twofold. First, to examine the phenomenon of the song of the assembly in the post-Vatican II liturgical milieu and to investigate how this phenomenon contributes to a developing theological understanding of “full, conscious and active participation” in the liturgy, looking particularly at the post-Vatican II use of strophic hymnody as the song of the eucharistic assembly. Second, to review some of the current literature that examines exactly why the song of the assembly is “necessary or integral” to full, conscious and active participation in the liturgy: singing as constitutive of the human condition, as liturgically formative of the singing assembly; the song of the assembly as *theologia prima*.

## **2. Full, conscious and active participation**

There can be no doubt that to reinstate the full and proper participation of the local assembly in the liturgy of the church was the paramount theological principle in SC.<sup>15</sup> This key principle had implications for the development of a new ecclesiology that gave primacy to the local assembly. For example, the French Catholic Bishops identified the voice of the Christian assembly not just with that of the Body of Christ, but as the sacred incarnation of the voice of Christ.

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<sup>14</sup> See J. M. Joncas, “An Anniversary Song: Pope John Paul II’s 2003 Chirograph for the Centenary of *Tra le sollecitudini*”, in *Music in Christian Worship*, ed. C. Kroeker, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2005), 55-6. Five functions for liturgical music are outlined in *Musicam sacram*: enhancing the sacred texts; differentiating functions within the worshipping assembly; unifying the assembly; a transcendental function; and an eschatological function.

<sup>15</sup> T. M. Winter, *Why Sing? Toward a Theology of Catholic Church Music*, (Washington DC: The Pastoral Press, 1984), 219. “The principle of *actuosa participatio* is so deeply rooted in the decisions of Vatican II that it can be said to be constitutive of all post-Conciliar reform and renewal”.

The voice of the church is the voice of the body of Christ that continues to address its filial prayer to the Father. Because the voice of the Christian assembly incarnates the voice of Christ, it is a holy reality that warrants veneration as such.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Commission épiscopale de liturgie et de pastorale sacramentelle, “Charte des chanteurs liturgiques”. *Célébrer*, 343, (2006): 17. ‘La voix de l’église est la voix du corps du Christ qui...continue d’adresser au Père la prière filiale. Parce que la voix de l’assemblée chrétienne incarne la voix du Christ elle est une réalité sainte qu’il faut vénérer comme telle.’ (My translation).

The liturgical assembly thus has a primary ecclesial identity. It is not an *ad hoc* social group, but a group of people called by God. The assembly has “a shared turning in faith to the Lord”.<sup>17</sup> The assembly is a “kingly and priestly people”,<sup>18</sup> called together by God and united with Christ.<sup>19</sup> The assembly is not simply participating in the liturgy, but rather in the work of the church celebrating the saving presence and action of God in the liturgy.<sup>20</sup> The assembly is the subject of the liturgy.<sup>21</sup> Our theological understanding of the primacy of the liturgical assembly recognises the “turn to the subject” implicit in the SC decrees and norms. In terms of traditional sacramental theology, the eucharist still effects what it signifies, but its efficacy depends more clearly on the internal disposition of the assembly and of the people that constitute the assembly.<sup>22</sup> The attention given to the liturgy by the assembly has therefore to be “religious” in nature.<sup>23</sup>

One final theological and practical issue: what does “full, conscious and active” participation actually mean for the ritual of the reformed Catholic eucharistic liturgy? A range of hortatory views has been expressed. “Full, conscious and active” means participation that is “intelligent”,<sup>24</sup> “fruitful” and “knowledgeable”,<sup>25</sup> occurring “in body and in mind”,<sup>26</sup> inclusive, diverse and

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<sup>17</sup> J. Ratzinger, *Ein neues Lied für den Herrn: Christusglaube und Liturgie in der Gegenwart*, (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1995), 172-173. (My translation). “[E]ine gemeinsame gläubige Hinwendung zum Herrn”.

<sup>18</sup> To use the high ecclesiology of *Lumen gentium* 11, 12, quoted in Martimort, “Structure and Laws”, 93.

<sup>19</sup> See Martimort, “Structure and Laws”, 95; Ratzinger, *Neues Lied*, 173.

<sup>20</sup> E. B. Anderson, “‘O for a Heart to Praise My God’: Hymning the Self before God”, in *Liturgy and the Moral Self*, ed. E. B. Anderson and B. T. Morrill, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 73-74. F. C. Senn, *The People’s Work: A Social History of the Liturgy*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 328. “The location of transcendence is found in the immanence of the human community formed by the Spirit of the Father and the Son, the community in which and to which the Son of God is present in Word and Sacrament.”

<sup>21</sup> Ratzinger, *Neues Lied*, 152.

<sup>22</sup> Winter, *Why Sing?* 55. The reformed eucharistic liturgy is more *ex opere operantis*.

<sup>23</sup> Martimort, “Structure and Laws”, 99.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>25</sup> J. K. Emminghaus, *The Eucharist: Essence, Form, Celebration*, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997), xxiii-xxiv.

<sup>26</sup> US Conference of Catholic Bishops, *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, (Washington DC: US Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2003), 18.

complex.<sup>27</sup> It also includes silence, gestures and posture.<sup>28</sup> In summary, it would be reasonable to say that it is not so much the assembly's actions themselves that define the meaning of "full, conscious and active", but rather the theology that defines and is defined by those actions. The assembly as a whole embodies Christ.<sup>29</sup> As assembly, we need rather to understand the "sign of the assembly" and to enter through our active participation into the symbolism of the liturgical assembly.<sup>30</sup>

### 3. Music in the liturgy since Vatican II

Vatican II took a largely functional approach to the question of music in the liturgy. Music is tied functionally to the norm of active participation in the liturgy, with little or no reference to the aesthetic or ontological justifications for "sacred" music that characterised earlier Roman documents.<sup>31</sup> There is a lack of final definitional clarity in the ten sections on sacred music in SC. What the Vatican Bishops actually gave pre-eminence to in the text of Chapter 6 was not the song of the assembly *per se*, but "the musical tradition of the universal church", something much broader and more open to interpretation. The same section in SC then goes on to mention (without further elucidation) "sacred song" and "sacred music" and later there is reference to "religious singing"<sup>32</sup> – all part of the song of the assembly. Stapling the liturgical music question securely to SC 30 on active participation enabled the Council to avoid some of the usual

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<sup>27</sup> Vincie, "The Liturgical Assembly", 142.

<sup>28</sup> SC 30.

<sup>29</sup> M. E. McGann, *Exploring Music as Worship and Theology: Research in Liturgical Practice*, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2002), 18.

<sup>30</sup> Vincie, "The Liturgical Assembly", 136, quoting Martimort.

<sup>31</sup> E. Foley, *Ritual Music: Studies in Liturgical Musicology*, (Beltsville, MD: The Pastoral Press, 1995), 180.

"...[T]he very decision [in SC] about the sacrality of the music begins with and is contingent upon a functional consideration, that is, to what extent it engages the community and joins itself to the ritual". Helpful overviews of the major twentieth-century Roman Catholic church music documents can be found in J. M. Joncas, *From Sacred Song to Ritual Music: Twentieth-century Understanding of Roman Catholic Worship Music*, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997); and E. Jaschinski, *Musica sacra oder Musik im Gottesdienst?* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1990).

<sup>32</sup> SC 112; 118.

troublesome definitional debates about “Catholic” categories of sacred music,<sup>33</sup> and gave *de facto* practical momentum to hymnody as the “new” song of the assembly.

Perhaps the larger canvas of the debates throughout the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) made it undesirable, even impossible, for the bishops to deal with details such as sacred music. As with many of the Council statements, further official documents have since been published by way of clarification<sup>34</sup> as the liturgical reforms went forward. The overwhelming vote in favour of SC in December 1963 would confirm a conciliar commitment to “both/and” positions forming the basis of the document, incorporating a broader, rather than a narrower definitional range. Many practical issues were thus deliberately left for later expert advice and recommendation, bishops’ conferences to debate and Roman congregations to determine. For example: in the ongoing preservation and enhancement of Gregorian chant, exactly which chants, which school(s) of interpretation, were to be maintained and fostered? Which sections of the treasury of sacred music deserved to be included in the reformed liturgy, and which not? There was some confusion. Church musicians and pastors were encouraged by SC to preserve the inheritance and at the same time to change the way “things were done” in liturgical music.<sup>35</sup> There was no clear theological underpinning provided in SC for parish-level decision making.<sup>36</sup> Church music was

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<sup>33</sup> There is an air of unreality in these twentieth century statements about the primacy of Gregorian chant in the liturgy. Senn, *The People’s Work*, 300, points out that the faithful ignored or were simply unable to comply with repeated papal exhortations to sing chant.

<sup>34</sup> For example, *Musicam sacram*, 1967.

<sup>35</sup> J. M. Joncas, “Welche Aufgaben stellen sich Kirchenmusikern im neuen Jahrtausend?” *Bibel und Liturgie*, 74, (2001b): 6.

<sup>36</sup> Winter maintains that SC actually promotes two radically different sacred music “styles”: chant and the treasury for cathedrals; and active participation (with no guidelines or theological bases) for the parishes. Winter, *Why Sing?* 225, 227. See also T. M. Winter, “Catholic Prophetic Sound after Vatican II”, in *Sacred Sound and Social change: Liturgical Music in Jewish and Christian Experience*, ed. L. A. Hoffman and J. Walton, (University of Notre Dame: UND Press, 1992), 157.

now both *musica sacra* and music for worship. The reform of liturgical music had only just begun, and SC offered a range of possibilities, rather than a single template for implementation.

The juxtaposition, the placing of old and new, tradition and progress, side by side can be discerned as the consistent structural principle of all Council texts, including the Constitution on the Liturgy and especially the chapter on church music...If we get to the bottom of all the basic renewal concerns of the Council, we see one continuing piece of work. The Council has called the church and also the liturgy to be *semper reformanda*.<sup>37</sup>

Many scholars say that music today has no “a priori status” in the liturgy unless it is intrinsic to the liturgy.<sup>38</sup> Its functionality, the extent to which it serves the liturgy and the assembly, determines its sacrality;<sup>39</sup> liturgical music is defined in the post-Vatican II context more by inherent ministerial function.<sup>40</sup> Liturgical music thus becomes *musica sacra* not by any comparison with profane or secular music or by dint of some other external “category” of music, but by the way it incorporates and enhances the spirit of the liturgy.

Church music has to be able to be made holy through liturgical use, by adopting into itself the spirit of the liturgy and by changing to accommodate the spiritual experience.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Jaschinski, *Musica sacra*, 295. “Die Juxtaposition, das Nebeneinander von Altem und Neuem, Tradition und Fortschritt, läßt sich als durchgängiges Strukturprinzip aller Konzilstexte beobachten, so auch der Liturgiekonstitution und besonders des Kirchenmusik Kapitels...Legt man das Kernanliegen der gesamten konziliaren Erneuerung...zugrunde, so ist eine bleibende Aufgabe gestellt. Das Konzil hat die Kirche und damit auch die Liturgie als eine *semper reformanda* erklärt.” (My translation). See also L. Deiss, *Visions of Liturgy and Music for a New Century*, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 237.

<sup>38</sup> K. W. Irwin, *Context and Text: Method in Liturgical Theology*, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 245.

<sup>39</sup> Winter, *Why Sing?* 213. Also *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994), art. 1157. There are three essentially functional criteria for the selection of sacred music – “beauty expressive of prayer, then unanimous participation of the assembly at the designated moments, and the solemn character of the celebration”.

<sup>40</sup> Winter, *Why Sing?* 213. Deiss, *Visions*, 3-7. J. M. Kubicki, *Liturgical Music as Ritual Symbol: A Case Study of Jacques Berthier's Taize Music*, (Tilburg: Peeters, 1999), 190. R. Hurd, “A More Organic Opening: Ritual Music and the New Gathering Rite”. *Worship*, 72, (1998): 304: “Music functions as a midwife to ritual: it brings out what is already there”.

<sup>41</sup> Jaschinski, *Musica sacra*, 261. “Die Kirchenmusik ... muß geheiligt werden können durch die liturgische Verwendung, indem sie den Geist der Liturgie in sich aufnimmt und sich die geistliche Erfahrung anverwandelt...ist.” (My translation).

How has this theory worked in practice? Has Catholic liturgical music been able to step up to its new ritual responsibilities? In the English-speaking liturgical world, the church moved almost overnight from a modest use of English in the liturgy to the whole liturgy in English. All of a sudden, the assembly could see, hear and understand the presider.<sup>42</sup> Participation was possible in a new way. Liturgical music was seen as a vehicle in English-speaking countries to carry the implementation of the new “active participation in the liturgy” norm,<sup>43</sup> although the ride was far from smooth, and the path far from clearly signposted. Some European countries had a history of vernacular liturgical (as opposed to devotional) hymnody (notably Poland and Germany). This was not the tradition in most English-speaking countries, despite some innovation in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>44</sup> Existing hymnody resources in fact struggled to sustain the new full, conscious and active participation norm. Parishes also needed to find new English-language resources to enable the assembly to sing their parts of the ordinary of the mass.

In the forty years since the implementation of SC, the liturgical/musical/cultural norms for liturgical music have been the subject of much disputation. They have been discussed in many official and unofficial forums, and are even today most accurately describable only at the local or regional level. One must also be careful when making comparisons with what went before, whether as a “golden age” or even as an assumed norm. While governed by rites and rubrics, the

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<sup>42</sup> P. Harnoncourt, “The Anthropological and Liturgical-theological Foundations of Music in Worship”. *Studia Liturgica*, 28, 1, (1998): 19.

<sup>43</sup> White, *Roman Catholic Worship*, 146.

<sup>44</sup> Some US parishes felt reform-weary. G. Devine, *Liturgical Renewal: An Agonising Reappraisal*, (New York: Alba House, 1973), 56. Music had always, throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century debates on the Roman liturgy, been something of an easy target for reformers. Some speculate that this was so because more contentious issues (for example, priestly celibacy; artificial contraception; the use of the vernacular) were off the agenda, thus leaving liturgical music as the only area where change was possible (Devine, 43). Others argue, similarly, that church music was the only area of the liturgy that was not circumscribed by unassailable rubricism, and was thus an easier mark (see B. Botte, *From Silence to Participation*. [Washington: The Pastoral Press, 1988], 23).

Roman eucharistic liturgy is ultimately what happens in the local assembly on the day. There are virtually no summative data on liturgical music practices over time at the parish level for any period in history that could be assumed to be normative or paradigmatic for a diocese or province of the church, let alone a country. One thing is clearly agreed: “the reform that flowed from Vatican II ... profoundly disrupted relations between sacred music [that is, the treasury and chant repertoires] and Catholic worship”.<sup>45</sup> But it is far from clear to what extent the sacred treasury was known and regularly utilised as part of the liturgy in suburban and rural communities before Vatican II.

At the level of musical taste it is clear that, in many places in the English-speaking liturgical world, there has been a self-conscious and significant post-Vatican II departure from objective and earlier “standards of order, restraint and self-effacement”.<sup>46</sup> This has in part been conditioned by the rapid and influential rise of pop music culture at the same time as the implementation of the Vatican II liturgical music reforms and the pop industry’s consequent banishment of the earlier participative *Volksmusik* style of family and community singing.<sup>47</sup>

While most theorists would now agree that liturgical sacrality is not a purely musical category, and that holiness is not restricted to any one musical style,<sup>48</sup> many would also agree that it was common for parish music practitioners to be captives in the early days of the Vatican II reforms of the pragmatic “whatever works, works” school of thought.<sup>49</sup> The fact is that pastoral and

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<sup>45</sup> As Martimort, “Structure and Laws”, 170, rather baldly puts it.

<sup>46</sup> F. B. Brown, *Good Taste, Bad Taste and Christian Taste*, (Oxford: OUP, 2000), 41

<sup>47</sup> J. Ratzinger, “Music and Liturgy”, in *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 148. Pop music is “an industry producing banality”. Harnoncourt, “Anthropological and Liturgical-theological Foundations”, 22. Music in general has become part of the consumer culture. See also J. Gelineau, *Liturgical Assembly, Liturgical Song*. (Portland: Pastoral Press, 2000), 63.

<sup>48</sup> The Milwaukee Symposia, quoted by Brown, *Taste*, 184.

<sup>49</sup> Brown, *Taste*, 233, 235, quotes megachurch musician William Easum: music is only the medium, not the message. As Luther said (he says), any music that brings people closer to God is good music.



aesthetic judgments are both essential, as we know that the medium is the message: what we sing as assembly, and the way we sing it, contributes to both the definition and the development of personal faith. Matters of Catholic taste and other non-functional judgments are legitimate parts of the discernment process. Of course, changes in community standards generally with regard to community singing and song will affect our perceptions of the song of the liturgical assembly. People generally sing less in their daily lives today than a generation ago.<sup>50</sup> This practical decline in school, community and family singing activity could spell trouble for the song of the liturgical assembly in the longer term.<sup>51</sup>

#### **4. Catholic eucharistic liturgy and the strophic hymn**

If reformed liturgical music in general was the “form” of the implementation of the Vatican II norm of full, conscious and active participation, then congregational hymnody was the principal “matter”. The implementation of the Vatican II liturgical music reforms encouraged a proliferation of new music for the celebration of the eucharist: settings of the ordinary of the mass, psalm settings, and a new Catholic hymnody. The use of corporate worship song in the form of the strophic hymn is primarily the inheritance of the reformed churches whose founders<sup>52</sup> saw theological and pastoral value in the vernacular catechesis and ecclesial identity that these hymns and metrical psalms provided. The Tridentine Fathers distanced the Catholic church from this and many other reformation practices by insisting on the prevailing medieval

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<sup>50</sup> Prof Axel Theimer, speaking at a public concert at St John’s Abbey on 5 March 2007, said that a generation ago ordinary Americans knew over two hundred songs by heart.

<sup>51</sup> See K. W. B. Tucker, “Liturgical Perspectives on Changes in North American Hymnody in the Past Twenty-five Years”. *The Hymn* 52, 3, (2001): 27. Also J. Gelineau, *The Liturgy Today and Tomorrow*. (New York: The Paulist Press, 1978), 86.

<sup>52</sup> Ulrich Zwingli in Zürich excepted.

standards: the discipline of Latin as the formal language of the liturgy, and the strict hierarchical structure of the assembly's song, chant and cantillation.

It is not certain that the Vatican II bishops were necessarily arguing strongly in favour of Catholic hymnody as the main liturgical music vehicle for full, conscious and active participation. SC 30 puts "hymns" fifth out of five possible ways for active participation to be encouraged through liturgical song. *Musicam sacram* (1967), which deals with the implementation of the Vatican II liturgical music reforms, does not promote congregational hymnody to any great extent.<sup>53</sup> Congregations in the English-speaking world transferred (with few if any qualms) favorite sacramental, devotional hymns to the liturgy.<sup>54</sup> Rather than adopt well-known or existing hymns in any quantity from the reformed churches, many Catholic parishes chose from the proliferation of new "Catholic" hymns, many of unproven musical, liturgical or pastoral value.<sup>55</sup>

This essay is not the place to review or evaluate these trends in Catholic hymnody, or to enter directly into the debate about how to set "standards" appropriate to Catholic hymnody as a contemporary liturgical genre.<sup>56</sup> There is, however, a related but separate argument that has surfaced in the literature in recent years that should be raised here, in the context of our review of the song of the assembly and its contribution to the norm of full, active and conscious participation in the liturgy. The argument usually has two-fold expression: does the standard

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<sup>53</sup> M.J. Molloy, "Liturgical Music as Corporate Song", in *Liturgy and Music: Lifetime Learning*, ed. R. A. Leaver and J. A. Zimmerman, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 331.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 331.

<sup>55</sup> Gelineau, *Liturgical Assembly*, 63.

<sup>56</sup> There is a helpful analysis of Catholic hymnals in the USA over the first three to four decades after Vatican II in D. Boccardi, *The History of American Catholic Hymnals Since Vatican II*, (Chicago: GIA, 2001).

strophic hymn support or inhibit Catholic eucharistic liturgy? And are these hymns the most appropriate form of assembly participation in song?

Mainstream protestant hymnodists are keenly aware both of the power and the propensity that some hymns possess to tie liturgy to unhelpful emotional experience and nostalgia<sup>57</sup> and also of the ascendancy of the banal in so much contemporary hymn writing.<sup>58</sup> What concerns a range of Catholic scholars is the relative liturgical “autonomy” of hymns,<sup>59</sup> an autonomy that encourages devotional privatisation and appropriation, where the assembly does not so much sing the liturgy, but rather sings *at* the liturgy,<sup>60</sup> “comments” on the liturgy rather than accompanies it,<sup>61</sup> sings “at the edge of the ritual” rather than sings the ritual itself.<sup>62</sup>

The argument is made that hymn singing thus has the capacity to reduce the theological nuance of the Roman liturgy and even to narrow the participatory focus of the assembly. One example: the replacement of the entrance and communion antiphons by hymns simply removes the particular theological and scriptural emphases these propers explicitly contain.<sup>63</sup> The use of hymns in the Catholic eucharistic liturgy can thus become an easy “convention”. They do not, in fact, constitute an intrinsic tradition.<sup>64</sup> As well as the questions raised here about the theological nuances of the Roman Rite, some scholars also see strophic hymns as a structural problem in the

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<sup>57</sup> A concern that goes back even to Ambrose of Milan in the fourth century.

<sup>58</sup> See P. Westermeyer, *Let Justice Sing: Hymnody and Justice*, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 88, 91, 99. Wren says that a principal characteristic of a good hymn text is its emotional frugality. (B. Wren, *Praying Twice: The Music and Words of Congregational Song*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 175-88).

<sup>59</sup> Deiss, *Visions of Liturgy*, 203.

<sup>60</sup> White, *Roman Catholic Worship*, 147,

<sup>61</sup> M. Daly-Denton, “Psalmody as ‘Word of Christ’”, in *Finding Voice to Give God Praise: Essays in the Many Languages of the Liturgy*, ed. K. Hughes (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 80.

<sup>62</sup> Hurd, “A More Organic Opening” 299.

<sup>63</sup> Irwin, *Context and Text*, 241.

<sup>64</sup> E. B. Anderson, “The Measure of Our Song: Liturgical Music and *lex orandi, lex credendi*”. *Liturgical Ministry*, 11, (2002): 78 (quoting Irwin).

reformed eucharistic liturgy. Congregational hymns can subvert the flow and pace of the liturgy. Hymns can act as blockages to the liturgy: the liturgy “stops” while the hymn is sung. Hymns can actually subvert or unbalance the dialectical tension in what is in essence a liturgy of procession and of dialogue between presider and people.<sup>65</sup>

The Catholic hymnody issue might in fact be best understood as a question of liturgical power or control. Vatican II marked a definitive end to the legislative approach to Catholic church music, if ever this approach had been widely effective. With the relative declericalisation of the liturgy to focus on the primacy of the assembly in worship, the song of the assembly becomes *ipso facto* more important. The question of who controls the song of the assembly gained momentum.<sup>66</sup> The sacrality of Catholic liturgical music, the burgeoning new Catholic hymnody included, is now defined more by local practice, or functionality, than official theory. The continuity of the church’s liturgical music tradition is now more clearly in the hands of the assembly.

So, on the one hand, there is clear practical and pastoral evidence that the assembly sees hymns (perhaps *their* hymns) as important to their active participation in the reformed liturgy. It is also now widely evident in practice that hymns are “at home” in the renewed Roman Catholic eucharistic liturgy: hymn singing is proper to all Christian worshipping assemblies, across denominational, language and national boundaries. On the other hand, some writers express concerns (leaving aside the question of hymns *prima facie* in poor taste or expressing poor theology) that hymnody does not adequately represent the Catholic liturgical tradition. Hymnody

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<sup>65</sup> K. Harmon, K. “Liturgical Music and a Spirituality of Living the Paschal Mystery”. *Liturgical Ministry*, 11, (2002): 108.

<sup>66</sup> Winter, “Catholic Prophetic Sound”, 171. “Once the people began to sing, the church could not designate the song”. See also 158; 167-9.

may even work to undermine the particular liturgical and theological nuances in the reformed rite, and may thus be unable to carry the total responsibility for the “full, conscious and active participation” norm.

### **5. The song of the assembly: Faith mediated by the body**

The operative paradigm of the reformed Catholic eucharistic liturgy is participation. The assembly at the eucharist now relates directly to the visible and audible actions of the participants – the presider, the ministers of the word, themselves as assembly – rather than adopts an attitude of personal devotion to objects – the altar, the sacred species at the *elevatio*, the tabernacle, the vestments. The new participation norm emphasises the “bodyliness” of the assembly.<sup>67</sup> The song of the assembly is of its very nature a bodily activity, and scholarly investigations over the last decade or so into this aspect of liturgical music (rather than into its functionality, or its ontological purpose) enable a case to be made today for the song of the assembly as *theologia prima*.<sup>68</sup> It is to this theoretical work that we now turn our attention to gain a fuller understanding of the theological impact of the song of the assembly as full, conscious and active participation.

What follows is a summary (of necessity short and descriptive rather than lengthy and analytical) of four themes that can be distilled from the contemporary literature to support the notion of the song of the assembly as *theologia prima*.

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<sup>67</sup> Chauvet (L. M. Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*, [Collegeville MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001], xii) reminds us that “faith cannot be lived in any other way...than *in the mediation of the body*” (his emphasis).

<sup>68</sup> *Theologia prima*: understood here in a general sense as theology done by the liturgical community.

(a) *Participation in life in and through music is intrinsic to the human condition.*

Music is an essential part of nature and of human existence, providing both conscious and unconscious modes of expression and links to the natural and supernatural worlds.<sup>69</sup> Human speech and action combine in singing to form “the highest form of human expression”.<sup>70</sup> “Music is the perceptible and learnable harmony inherent in all existence”.<sup>71</sup>

(b) *Singing and listening to singing is a work of the human physical body.*

Singing is intentional human utterance, combining the basic physiology of sound production with a mental (in the case of the liturgy, spiritual) disposition surpassing ordinary speech.<sup>72</sup> In a communal setting, singing brings people’s bodies together through shared breathing patterns, acoustic vibrations and pulse.<sup>73</sup> In a liturgical sense, singing is a “proper” way for the Body of Christ to act in worship to mediate the real presence of God.<sup>74</sup> It is tied to the primal human sense of hearing, a sense available to humans *in utero*. Hearing is developed in humans alone to a level of active listening. Listening is a whole body consciousness activity, a process of recognition.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Harnoncourt, “Te deum laudamus”, 97; 100.

<sup>70</sup> Tucker, “Liturgical Perspectives on Changes in North American Hymnody”, 22, quoting Karl Barth.

<sup>71</sup> Harnoncourt, “The Anthropological and Liturgical-theological Foundations”, 15.

<sup>72</sup> S.T Morrill, “Liturgical Music: Bodies Proclaiming and Responding to the Word of God”. *Worship*, 74, (2000): 25. Ratzinger, “Music and Liturgy”, 140.

<sup>73</sup> Morrill, “Liturgical Music”, 26. “The transformative impact of proclamation and response upon the faithful occurs not only on the cognitive level of the ideas conveyed, but down to the very cellular level of vibrations in the body”; also 33. See also J. M. Kubicki, “Using J. L. Austin’s Performative Language Theory to Interpret Ritual Music-making”. *Worship*, 73, (1999): 328. There is a shared “illocutionary effect” in the song of the assembly.

<sup>74</sup> L. M. Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*, (Collegeville MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 38.

<sup>75</sup> R. Schweizer, “Musik als Sprache des Glaubens“. *Bibel und Liturgie*, 71, (1998): 225. Morrill, “Liturgical Music”, 29, quoting Tomatis.

Hearing consists of recognition, understanding and response. Recognition of time and space is basic to hearing, there is a strong correlation between hearing, seeing and feeling.<sup>76</sup>

Hearing is the most important human sense: the ear functions as a *Supergedächtnis*.<sup>77</sup>

(c) *Singing both expresses faith and forms faith.*

The eucharist is a complex of symbols with which the assembly, collectively and individually, engages. This process of engagement mediates the presence of God in the liturgy through, *inter alia*, the work of the song of the assembly. The song of the assembly has a bivalent ministerial functionality; it both “expresses and forms patterns of belief”.<sup>78</sup> The liturgical music and the ritual interact so that the one “theologises” the other.<sup>79</sup> Liturgical song is at the same time both annunciative and supplicative of God.<sup>80</sup> The song of the assembly is thus both formative and expressive of Christian identity: “Church music means first and foremost that the People of God expresses its identity in song.”<sup>81</sup>

(d) *The song of the assembly can operate liturgically beyond rational speech.*

The meaning of music is indeterminate. It “lacks the conceptual precision of verbal language”.<sup>82</sup>

The song of the assembly expresses not just the cognitive content of the text, but also existential

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<sup>76</sup> V. de Larminat, “Vom musikalischem Hören zum geistlichen Hören in der Liturgie“. *Bibel und Liturgie*, 74, (2001): 19-20, also drawing on Tomatis. “Hören betseht in Erkennung, Verstehen, Antworten...Für das Hören ist Vernehmen von Zeit und Raum wesentlich, es ergeben sich starke Korrespondenzen zwischen Hören, Sehen und Spüren.” (My translation).

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 20. “Super-memory”. Bringing to mind, of course, the first sentence of the Rule of Benedict. De Larminat says, furthermore “Chauvet hat die Formel geprägt. Das Grundgesetz der Liturgie ist nicht zu sagen, was man tut, sondern zu tun, was man sagt.” (21). “Chauvet has established the formula. The basic law of liturgy is not to say what one is doing, but to do what one says.” (My translation).

<sup>78</sup> Anderson, ‘O for a Heart’, 78.

<sup>79</sup> McGann, *Exploring Music*, 35.

<sup>80</sup> Schweizer, “Musik als Sprache des Glaubens“, 217.

<sup>81</sup> Ratzinger, *Neues Lied*, 148. “Kirchenmusik bedeutet demgemäß in erster Linie dies, daß das Volk Gottes seine Identität singend darstellt.” (My translation).

<sup>82</sup> Brown, *Taste*, 185.

realities such as the affectivity of shared faith.<sup>83</sup> Liturgical music is thus capable of carrying powerful emotions and memories of association.<sup>84</sup> Because of this, liturgical song can help accomplish the “non-articulated goals” in liturgy.<sup>85</sup> Music, as part of the heightened speech of the liturgy, can open the assembly to the inexpressible work of the Spirit.<sup>86</sup> Singing is the only response possible before the Paschal mystery: it is one of the Spirit-inspired glossolalia.<sup>87</sup> It forms the “gestalt” of the prayer of the worshipping community.<sup>88</sup> Liturgical music, including the song of the assembly, has a strong eschatological dimension. Liturgical song helps the assembly develop a form of “participative knowing” that brings the assembly into contact with past, present and future.<sup>89</sup>

This quick overview of the literature indicates that there is a developing body of scholarly opinion that would support the view that the song of the assembly has more than function value, and that its purpose in the “sanctification of the faithful” has as much an immediate theological focus as the traditional aesthetic and ontological foci. The song of the assembly thus “theologises” the assembly. It enables and encourages a heightened expression of eschatological and anamnestic faith that transcends and enriches full, conscious and active participation at the cognitive, intellectual or rational level. While expressing faith, it forms faith. This could be one

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<sup>83</sup> Harmoncourt, “Te deum laudamus”, 102.

<sup>84</sup> D. E. Saliers, *Worship as Theology: A Foretaste of Glory Divine*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 160-2.

<sup>85</sup> McGann, *Exploring Music*, 35.

<sup>86</sup> D. E. Saliers, “Liturgical Music Formation”, in *Liturgy and Music: Lifetime Learning*, ed. R. A. Leaver and J. A. Zimmerman, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, (1998), 391; also 388. “[M]usic heard so deeply that you are the music while then music lasts”, quoting T. S. Eliot.

<sup>87</sup> Ratzinger, “Music and Liturgy”, 140.

<sup>88</sup> Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, 160-162; also Schweitzer, “Musik als Sprache des Glaubens”, 222. The song of the assembly should be the “Gestaltungselement der Gemeinde im Gottesdienst” – the “element that provides the basic shape to the worship of the community”.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 201. Bruggemann quoted in Anderson, “O for a Heart”, 122. “Praise is not a response to a world already fixed and settled, but it is a responsive and obedient participation in a world yet to be decreed and in process of being decreed through this liturgical act.” Also 121.



of the reasons why the Vatican Fathers reiterated that the song of the assembly was “necessary or integral” to the liturgy, the work of the people of God in worship.<sup>90</sup>

## **6. The song of the assembly as *theologia prima*: Three perspectives**

The last section of this essay will examine in more detail the work of three contemporary post-Vatican II theorists (Joseph Gelineau, Edward Foley and Judith Marie Kubicki) to see what conclusions can be drawn from their work to support the general view outlined above from the literature that the song of the assembly (as full, conscious and active participation) is integral to the liturgy and to the people forming the liturgical assembly, and is thus *theologia prima*.

### *Joseph Gelineau.*

Gelineau has been a significant figure in Catholic liturgical music since before the time of the Second Vatican Council. He is thus now in a position to complement his earlier theoretical work with an informed retrospective view on what has been achieved in active liturgical participation through the song of the assembly. As well as being a major contributor to theory, in his own right, and a member and leader of the ecumenical group *Universa Laus*, Gelineau’s living legacy is his psalmody *oeuvre*: psalm tones and responses that have been included in post-Vatican II hymnals in many languages and countries.

Gelineau writes as one committed to the liturgical reforms initiated by Vatican II, particularly the norm of full, conscious and active participation. He realistically accepts the performance

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<sup>90</sup> SC 112. GIRM 40 uses a double negative to state, rather more neutrally, that the absence of singing is to be avoided at mass. See J. M. Joncas, “Music in the *General Instruction 2000*”. *Pastoral Music*, 25, 2, (2001): 22-28. Winter says (*Why Sing?* 207) that the song of the assembly is integral rather to the faith of the assembly than to the rite *per se*.

limitations of assembly-sung prayer<sup>91</sup> but is, at the same time, prepared to make aesthetic as well as liturgical judgments on contemporary trends in ritual music. For Gelineau, music as a mode of prayer is still best evaluated in terms of its style and performance, that is, its affect and effect, than in terms of the actual repertory.<sup>92</sup> His emphasis is on the liturgical/aesthetic judgment of liturgical music, rather than solely on a narrower liturgical functionality approach.

The aesthetic of liturgical music is constituted by its own liturgical role. It is just as impossible that liturgical music has proper functionality without being aesthetic, that it is to be aesthetic without exercising its ritual functions. The beauty of church music consists in its expression of mystery.<sup>93</sup>

Gelineau maintains that the song of the assembly is the primary mode of active participation of the assembly, accepting its role as the subject of the liturgy. Liturgical song he conceptualises as the sung Word of God, or sung prayer; it is no longer simply a servant of the ritual. His criterion for the selection of liturgical music is simply: “is it good for praying with?”<sup>94</sup> His justification for the primacy of assembly song is based on the instinctive intuitive and physiological dimensions of human singing. Liturgical singing has less to do with the words and the notes sung

than with the desire of each person to irrigate both breath and voice, both body and soul, so that the Spirit may seize upon them and make them a river that will flow into the very being of God.<sup>95</sup>

The manifesto-like, epigrammatic style of *Universa Laus I* also supports Gelineau’s view of the integral nature of human song to liturgy. The *Universa Laus* authors say:

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<sup>91</sup> J. Gelineau, *The Liturgy Today and Tomorrow*, (New York: The Paulist Press, 1978), 85. The song of the assembly has to operate within narrow “cultural limits” of only two or three musical scales.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>93</sup> Jaschinski, *Musica sacra*, 262, summarizing Gelineau’s position. “Die Ästhetik der liturgischen Musik besteht in ihrer eigenen liturgischen Rolle. Es ist ebenso unmöglich, daß die liturgische Musik funktionsgerecht ist, ohne ästhetisch zu sein, wie, daß sie ästhetisch ist, ohne ihre rituelle Funktion auszuüben. Die Schönheit der Kirchenmusik besteht darin, daß sie Mysterien ausdrückt” (My translation).

<sup>94</sup> J. Gelineau, *Liturgical Assembly, Liturgical Song*, (Portland: Pastoral Press, 2002), 61.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

Song is embodied as part of it [the liturgy], as bearer of the Good News of salvation and the praise of the saved.<sup>96</sup>

The later *Universa Laus II*, still very much in the Gelineau tradition, re-emphasises the body-ness of corporate liturgical singing as an important liturgical symbol and aesthetic. Participation begins with listening, and listening is a whole-body activity:

To listen engages the totality of the individual body... To listen is the premier form of participation. Thus to participate consciously, piously and actively in the liturgical action goes beyond the simple execution of the prescribed rites. It is by listening that one is led to respond by prayer, song and gesture, which results in sharing, with the others, in the mystery of Christ.<sup>97</sup>

*Universa Laus II* also reinforces the *theologia prima* of self-giving through participating in the song of the assembly, in thus witnessing to the promises of the kingdom now and in the future. It is not the music *per se* that is sacred, but rather the voices of the baptised singing with Christ.<sup>98</sup>

*Edward Foley.*

Foley explores the integral-ness or necessary-ness of music to the reformed liturgy, as claimed by SC 112. In the third chapter of his book,<sup>99</sup> he, too, canvasses the dynamic, physical nature of sound as human activity and experience, drawing out the implications for a “theology” of liturgical song: sound is transitory, insubstantial; it actively invites others to become engaged; its content is ambivalent. He also explores ritual music (as he terms liturgical music) as part of the symbolic structure of the liturgy, where music is wedded to the ritual. As much as the song of the

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<sup>96</sup> C. Duchesneau and M. Veuthey, *Musique et liturgie: Le document Universa Laus*, (Paris: Cerf, 1988), 5.1. “Le chant lui est congénital; comme porteur de la Bonne Nouvelle du salut et de la louange des sauvés.” (My translation).

<sup>97</sup> *Universa Laus II, De la musique dans les liturgies Chrétiennes*. <http://voixnouvelles.online.fr/universalaus.html>, (2002). (Retrieved 4 April 2007). ULII 1.1; 1.6. “Ecouter engage la totalité du corps individuel... Ecouter est la première forme de la participation. Participier consciemment, pieusement et activement à l’action liturgique va donc au-delà de la simple exécution des rites prescrits. C’est en écoutant que l’on est conduit à répondre par la prière, le chant et les gestes, afin d’avoir part avec les autres au mystère du Christ.” (My translation).

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.6; 2.10, 2.7.

<sup>99</sup> E. Foley, *Ritual Music: Studies in Liturgical Musicology*, (Beltsville, MD: The Pastoral Press, 1995).

assembly is a thanksgiving from the people to God, so too does the act of singing together reveal something of God *to* the assembly. Music works to serve Christian ritual in a singular and irreplaceable manner.

In the last two chapters of his book, Foley begins to develop a theoretical argument about the role of the song of the assembly as an active agent that causes or creates “ecclesial meaning”.<sup>100</sup> He explores the assumption that music is not merely self-referential, but can refer directly to worlds and states of being beyond the sounds (the notes, the words) and the bodily activity of music. He discusses “ministerial differentiation” in ritual music, using ministry as the incisive criterion for developing a theory of liturgical music.<sup>101</sup>

Foley then outlines “displacement” versus “convergence” models of liturgical music. He argues that the displacement model, linked with the ontological, aesthetic and moral criteria for music in the liturgy so clearly evident, for example, in earlier twentieth-century papal documents such as *Tra le sollecitudini*, prevailed before Vatican II. The Roman Rite, its rituals and particularly its means of executing those rituals (for instance, Gregorian chant) displaced all other means to the same end: the glorification of God and the sanctification of the human person. The convergence model, more evident since Vatican II, is more ministerial than ontological. There is no longer an absolutist view on what constitutes *musica sacra*, but more a beginning theology of what it means to worship God by singing in the assembly.

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 158, similarly Deiss, *Visions of Liturgy*, 3-8. In contrast, Gelineau, *The Liturgy Today*, 89, argues against an over-fragmentation of our understanding of liturgical music through an over-detailed taxonomy of its ministerial function.

*Judith Marie Kubicki.*

Kubicki takes these symbol/ritual/language theoretical explorations from Foley and others further. Kubicki's theories are summarised in her study of the ritual music of Taizé.<sup>102</sup> She concludes from this study that liturgical music is *theologia prima*. It can produce not only an effect, but an intended effect, that is, a specific theological meaning: a shared ecclesial and communal meaning and identity. It is a form of mutual *diakonia*.<sup>103</sup>

Kubicki gives an extended and detailed analysis of the roles of both language and symbols as they act and are enacted through the song of the assembly in the liturgy. In journal articles that preceded the publication of her book, Kubicki gives concise summaries of her developing theoretical and theological views about the role of song as *theologia prima*. She argues that language as action (in the song of the assembly) is more powerful than language as assertion. Language in action is able to accomplish what it is saying. Ritual song therefore situates people within a discourse before God, rather than simply forms that discourse. Liturgical singing is thus an experience that transforms and sanctifies the worshippers,<sup>104</sup> confirming their status as the Body of Christ. Participation in the song of the assembly "can mediate a participatory knowledge"<sup>105</sup> that reveals the saving presence of God within the assembly.

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<sup>102</sup> J. M. Kubicki, *Liturgical Music as Ritual Symbol: A Case Study of Jacques Berthier's Taizé Music*, (Tilburg: Peeters, 1999).

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 156, 159, 177 and 190, respectively.

<sup>104</sup> Kubicki, "Using J. L. Austin's Performative Language Theory", 325.

<sup>105</sup> J. M. Kubicki, "The Role of Music as Ritual Symbol in the Catholic Liturgy". *Worship*, 69, (1995): 441.

## 7. Conclusions

This essay has sketched some of the major practical and theoretical issues regarding the song of the assembly as a primary operational mode within the reformed Catholic eucharistic liturgy. The Second Vatican Council reasserted the primacy of the assembly of the faithful in the liturgy of the church. The major norm for expressing this primacy was the call to full, conscious and active participation in the liturgy of the church. Liturgical music, principally the song of the assembly – hymns, psalms, the ordinary of the mass, responses, acclamations – has been the means by which the large majority of people have been able to participate more actively and collectively, through singing and listening, beyond the gift of worship in the vernacular and their own prayerful disposition towards God and neighbour. This participation through song has helped the assembly both realise and bring to reality the wider implications of the sacramental presence of the risen Lord Jesus at the eucharist: in the eucharistic species, the presider, the Word of God, and also in the people gathered, singing and praying, at the liturgy. To limit the song of the assembly to the strophic hymn, however, or to allow this form of assembly song to dominate, will not necessarily best serve the inherent ritual capacity of the reformed Catholic liturgy, nor will it promote active participation in the fullest sense of the new Vatican II norms.

There is a growing consensus that the song of the assembly, while functioning as the operational mode of the norm of active participation, has a liturgical capacity as *theologia prima* beyond the ministerial or the merely functional.<sup>106</sup> The decision of the bishops at the Second Vatican

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<sup>106</sup> Saliers suggests (D. E. Saliers, “Sounding the Symbols of Faith: Exploring the Nonverbal Languages of Christian Worship”, in *Music in Christian Worship*, ed. C. Kroeker, [Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2005], 23-4) that there are three levels of the assembly’s participation through song. Firstly, at the phenomenological level (the physical act

Council to make active participation the norm *sine qua non* for the eucharistic liturgy has not merely had functional or practical outcomes by succeeding in encouraging participation *per se*. The *theologia prima* value of the song of the assembly (despite the necessary continuing debates about text, language, tune, taste, style, form, genre, placement, performance, instrumentation, etc) indicates that to engage in authentic worship through song is constitutive of our relationship with God and with each other in the thanksgiving and praise that is the eucharistic liturgy.<sup>107</sup>

After all, all we have to offer God in the eucharist is praise and thanksgiving.

Dragons within, dragons without. Evil so pervasive that only the poetry of apocalypse can imagine its defeat. And to do that it takes us to the limits of metaphor, of human sense, the limits of imagining and understanding. It pushes us against all our boundaries and suggests that the end of our control - our ideologies, our plans, our competence, our expertise, our professionalism, and our power - is the beginning of God's reign. It asks us to believe that only the good remains, at the end, and directs us towards carefully tending it here and now. We will sing a new song. Singing and praise will be all that remains...<sup>108</sup>

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of singing); secondly, at the ecclesial level (singing *as* church); and thirdly, at the divine level (participating in the mystery of God).

<sup>107</sup> Tucker, "Liturgical Perspectives on Changes in North American Hymnody", 24.

<sup>108</sup> K. Norris, *The Cloister Walk*. (New York: Riverhead Books, 1996), 220.

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