

Editorial

Musical traditions are a treasure to be shared and an immense source of human experience. Forms, modes, styles and sounds abound in giving great variety to many different community expressions, including those of faith, trust and desire for the promises of Christ. Be they precentor-led free improvisation in the Gaelic psalm singing on the Scottish Western Isles echoing that landscape, the ordered hymns, anthems and carols of the Anglican and Teutonic traditions, sacred compositions using the African-stringed instrument the Kora, the melisma of chant, or indeed any of the expressions of “high culture” in the renaissance, baroque and classical traditions through to the contemporary spiritual music of Lauridsen and Part, no vehicle is better suited to giving expression to the response of a faith-filled people to the marvellous deeds of God. Nor should we forget how religious belief is also a facet of pop music.

This volume of *Cultures and Faith* explores musical practices both as cultural artefacts of wisdom traditions and also as points of encounter for men and women of different backgrounds engaged in the quest for meaning and significance. We present seven different perspectives on engagement with different musical treasures, before reporting on the regular “activities” of the Dicastery, including through a new column from our Women’s Consultation Group that takes its name from Aristophanes’ play about Women leading the Assembly, *Ecclesiazusae*.

The first article, by musicologist Chiara Bertoglio, is a focus on musical scores as technological devices that hint at the presence of something greater than time. Analysing the development of musical writing techniques, she describes a useful reference marker to contemplate Eternity.

Next comes a consideration on the transmission of the faith through music in the context of celebration by Daniel-Alberto Escobar Portillo. He develops the insights expressed in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and shows how theology, liturgy and music

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are necessarily united. In many celebrations music is used to emphasise aspects of the faith due to its communicative capacities, appeal to sentiments, ability to serve the word and be an able expression of incarnational gratuity.

Franz Karl Prassl helps us unwrap Gregorian Chant not just as beautiful melody, but as the rhetoric-musical expression of texts formulated with intelligence and theological insight. A coda explores the Sacred Triduum and the intrinsic interplay of different modes, melodies and accents on key words.

Francesca Leto, an architect, then looks at the physical place of music within the liturgy showing how the different areas of a church building accentuate the multiplicity of voices of the worshiping community, from priest celebrant, to ministers of the word, through the choir and the entire assembly. To each voice its own role and function.

The binomial fasting and feasting introduces our next paper by Dominican Fergus Ryan who explores spaces for dialogue with sincere agnostics or non-believers. Wherever cultural artefacts survive without an adequate understanding of their significance, the challenge is educational – know thy roots! – and also of translation to overcome the rupture in the relationship between the Church and the world through culture.

Jean-Polycarpe Seys offers a paper looking at one form of musical singing, “cantillation” where the word is priority. Similar to the recitative, it focuses on the prayerful pronouncement of words enriched with the properties of song.

Finally, in dialogue with Marta Cagnola, a member of the Dicastery’s first Women’s Consultation Group, we listen to the hopes and interests of the pop music generations through songs competing in an Italian light music festival. As musical traditions vest new languages some constant factors remain: an engagement with human experience, a quest for something greater, the priority of meaning, and the surety that artists read the world with prophetic vision.

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