

# Music in Sacred Liturgy: Some Factors to be Considered for the Catholic Dioceses in Kenya

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**Abstract:** Music is an integral part of worship. Liturgical music has been a topic of interest for centuries. Good liturgical music elevates the hearts of worshippers, uniting them to the heavenly liturgy. There is an ancient saying which proclaims: *Bis orat qui benecantat* (who sings well prays twice). St. Augustine also remarks rightly, ‘Singing is for one who loves’ (PL 38:1472). With this in mind when we look at the Catholic liturgical music today in Kenya, we find several issues to be addressed. In this paper we shall look at some general principles in liturgical music, suggested criteria for assessing music and texts, and some emerging issues regarding music in liturgy today, proposing some possible solutions.

**Key words:** Music, liturgy, inculturation, participation.

## I. Introduction

Music making is a profoundly human experience. People of every age and culture have known the power of music and have used it to express their deepest emotions and to accompany the most important events in their lives. With music, they have celebrated their harvests, mourned their dead and expressed their love. Few, indeed, are the rituals that have emerged within the collective history of humankind that have not relied on the power of music. The earliest myths of classical antiquity recognized and celebrated music’s special role in communication with the gods. In these stories music was often a divine gift.<sup>1</sup>

Music was central to the life and worship of Israel.<sup>2</sup> Our Jewish forebears taught us to sing a new song to the Lord (Psalm 96:1). At the beginning of Christian faith, St. Paul exhorts Christians not only to sing praise to God with all their hearts but also to address one another in psalms, hymns and inspired songs (Ephesians 5:19). Christian assemblies in the early centuries had an unmistakable lyrical quality.<sup>3</sup> Primitive sources repeatedly recall how the Holy Spirit invited believers to “sing and give praise to God.”<sup>4</sup> The new song they sang was Christ, who invited them and us into a divine harmony, so that “out of many scattered sounds might emerge one symphony.”<sup>5</sup>

Many changes affecting liturgy and the role of music in Christian ritual have taken place since the dawn of Christianity. Over the centuries the assembly’s voice was muted, specialists took over the song of the faithful, and Christians began to ritualize without music. Changes in language, a growing complexity in the musical arts, and the cultural evolution from a society of performers to a society of listeners all compound the challenge for us. These challenges are not new to the Catholic Church in Kenya.

<sup>1</sup> “The legends and myths of nearly all pagan peoples have sought to explain the elaborate use of music in their worship by indicating that the art of music was a gift of the gods to men.” Johannes Quasten, *Music and Worship in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*, trans. Boniface Ramsey (Washington DC: Pastoral Press, 1983), p.1.

<sup>2</sup> Many cultures, like ancient Israel, “do not in general have a term for music as a global phenomenon. Instead, they often have words that designate individual musical activities or artifacts, those who sing or play, songs, secular and religious, dance, and other more obscure categories.” Hiromi Lorraine Sakata, *Music in the Mind: The Concepts of Music and Musicians in Afghanistan* (Kent OH: Kent State University Press, 1983), p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> In English one can clearly distinguish between speech and song, between the musical and the non-musical. In ancient Judaism and Christianity, there were no such hard and fast boundaries. Rather, there existed degrees of musicality, a continuum between the musical and nonmusical. All public proclamation had a certain “tunefulness” about it, migrating back and forth between what we might call heightened speech and song. Indeed, the whole of the emerging Christian cult was disposed toward what another era and culture would call “the Musical”. A similar situation exists in many cultures today. As Jean-Jacques Nattiez notes, “Examining the borders between music and other symbolic forms along a given continuum reveals that the semantic surface of the concept ‘music’ is displaced from one culture to another. This is particularly clear in societies for which the word ‘music’ does not exist.” Jean Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*, translation Carolyn Abbate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 54 The Word “lyrical” is understood against this background. To say that the liturgy is lyrical is to admit that the liturgy flourishes in a heightened auditory environment, where the boundaries between what we consider music and non-music are blurred. The musicality of worship is not confined to the sounding of instruments or chanting of choirs, but permeates every auditory facet of the rite.

<sup>4</sup> Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 74.3.

<sup>5</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Protreptikos*, IX.88.2-3.

This is a questionable assertion, given the many singing assemblies and promising strides liturgical music has made in the Africa after Second Vatican Council. First the Church experienced an effort to translate Latin chants into vernacular languages. She then moved from vernacular chant to attempts at contemporary composition in popular idioms. Other developments included emphasis on scripturally based texts, the adoption of repertoire from the broader Christian community, and a growing awareness of the need for improved standards in musical and textual composition. In each of these developments a primary concern has been music's ministerial role.<sup>6</sup> Increasingly, we are coming to understand how a rite and its sound, its music, are inseparable: serving, enabling, and revealing aspects of our belief that would otherwise remain unexpressed.

The Church in Kenya manifests a very vibrant form of singing in her liturgies. Local tunes sung in vernacular languages are a common phenomenon in every celebration. Music and song continue to play a vital role in the life of God's people today. Contemporary culture and modern technology bring new possibilities and new challenges to the music ministry of the church. People's lives are surrounded with music—television, YouTube, and radio, the background music of video games, CDs, and synthesizers. Yet much of the time music functions as "background" rather than as an opportunity for serious listening, much less participation.

"In the celebration of Mass the faithful form a holy people, a people whom God has made his own, a royal priesthood, so that they may give thanks to God and offer the spotless Victim not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him, and so that they may learn to offer themselves."<sup>7</sup> This is the basis for the "full, conscious and active participation" of the faithful demanded by the very nature of the Liturgy.<sup>8</sup>

Because the gathered liturgical assembly forms one body, each of its members must shun "any appearance of individualism or division, keeping before their eyes that they have only one Father in heaven and accordingly are all brothers and sisters to each other."<sup>9</sup> Singing is one of the primary ways that the assembly of the faithful participates actively in the Liturgy. The people are encouraged "to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalms, antiphons [and] hymns. . . ."<sup>10</sup> The musical formation of the assembly must be a continuing concern in order to foster full, conscious, and active participation.

So that the holy people may sing with one voice, the music must be within its members' capability. Some congregations are able to learn more quickly and will desire more variety. Others will be more comfortable with a stable number of songs so that they can be at ease when they sing. Familiarity with a stable repertoire of liturgical songs rich in theological content can deepen the faith of the community through repetition and memorization. A pastoral judgment must be made in all cases.

The church also has greater access and has shown greater openness to a greater variety of music—from Gregorian chants to classical hymnody, from European cantatas to African/local hymns. Such diversity is to be welcomed and celebrated; it reflects the diversity and richness of God's creation. But greater variety and options in music call for greater discernment and care in planning and implementing the music ministry of the church. The people of God sing; what they sing and how they sing are important issues. It is with this background that this paper wishes to discuss the role of music in sacred liturgy as well as the criterion upon which a given music may be admitted into the liturgy.

## II. General Principles in Liturgical Music

Effective liturgical music contributes to good celebrations which "foster and nourish faith."<sup>11</sup> Therefore, liturgical music has to be guided by some principles which would help the worshipping community to foster and nourish her faith. The following principles are, therefore, of great importance:

### a) Full, Conscious and Active Participation as the Ultimate Goal

Music in the liturgy is intended to foster the full, conscious and active participation of all the faithful in the Church's public prayer. By joining our hearts and minds together, knowing the mystery we celebrate and to whom we give praise and thanks, we are led to the kind of participation which is so earnestly desired by the pastors of the Church. Music is integral to the structure of all of our liturgical rites and therefore, integral to our worship of God. It is therefore important that the songs used in the liturgical celebration are simple, common and foster participation by all the people of God, who should never be reduced to "hearers" or

<sup>6</sup>*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 112

<sup>7</sup>*GIRM*, no. 95.

<sup>8</sup>See *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 14.

<sup>9</sup>*GIRM*, no. 95.

<sup>10</sup>*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 30.

<sup>11</sup>*Music in Catholic Worship*, no. 6.

“onlookers.” In fact, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* of the Second Vatican Council tells us that participation in the liturgy is the right and duty of all the baptized.

Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious and active participation in the liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy.<sup>12</sup>

The *General Instruction* makes it very clear that this variety of offices and roles is desirable and should be maintained. In fact it goes so far as to state: “...all, therefore, whether they are ordained ministers or Christian faithful, in fulfilling their offices or their duty, should carry out solely but completely that which pertains to them.”<sup>13</sup>

The baptized faithful who form the congregation are called to join in praise and thanksgiving in song and spoken word; to listen attentively to God’s Word, to exercise their baptismal priesthood in prayer for the Church, the world and all in need during the General Intercessions. In the Liturgy of the Eucharist they join their prayer to that of the priest celebrant, offering Christ the Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also together with him and offer themselves as well<sup>14</sup> and their participation culminates in the reception of the Body and Blood of the Lord, the sacrament which unites them more fully with Christ their Head and with one another.

### b) Musical Instruments

Instruments used in Christian worship are primarily meant to lead and sustain the singing of assembly, choir, psalmist, and cantor. They are not meant to drown the human voice. The primary liturgical instrument in liturgy is the human voice. Other musical instruments in the liturgy are best understood as an extension of and support for the human voice. The organ is to be accorded pride of place. Other instruments that may be used include: wind, stringed or percussion instruments. Approved traditional instruments may be used such as drums and metals rings, the horn etc.

While the organ is to be accorded pride of place, other wind, stringed, or percussion instruments may be used in liturgical services, according to longstanding local usage, provided they are truly apt for sacred use or can be rendered apt.<sup>15</sup>

It is important to note that no instrument is to be used to accompany the celebrant and the times when all instruments are to remain silent. The Instruction *Sacred Music and Sacred Liturgy* lays down three principles for the use of musical instruments in the Sacred Liturgy:

The use of any instrument should in itself be perfect: “It is better to do something well on a small scale than to attempt something elaborate without sufficient resources to do it properly.”<sup>16</sup>

The difference between sacred and profane music is to be preserved: “Some musical instruments by origin and nature- such as the classical organ- are directly fitted for sacred music; or others, as certain string and bow instruments, are more easily adapted to liturgical use; while others, instead, are by common opinion proper to profane music and entirely unfit for sacred use.”<sup>17</sup>

In reviewing the Church’s law regarding the use of instruments in the liturgy, it is apparent that the official attitude toward them has become more and more favorable. The fears of the early Fathers are no longer valid in our day. The more recent pronouncements show that the Church has come to a realization that it is not generally the instruments themselves which are unfit for liturgy but, rather, the theatrical or profane use of them.

### c) Periods of Silence

Instrumentalists and also the choir should remember that the Liturgy calls for significant periods of silent reflection. It is important to recall that silence is a necessary condition for deep, contemplative prayer, and an important component of the liturgy. We need to call to mind the meaning of silence as a Christian ascetical value, and therefore as a necessary condition for deep, contemplative prayer, without forgetting the fact that times of silence are officially prescribed during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, so as to highlight the importance of silence for a high-quality liturgical renewal. Therefore, silence need not always be filled.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>12</sup>*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 14

<sup>13</sup>*GIRM*, no. 91.

<sup>14</sup>*GIRM*, no. 95.

<sup>15</sup>*GIRM*, no. 393.

<sup>16</sup>Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Sacred Music and Sacred Liturgy*, Sept. 3, 1958, No. 60.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 30.

In relation to the Liturgy of the Word, the Instruction underlines the importance of silence:

The Liturgy of the Word is to be celebrated in such a way as to promote meditation, and so any sort of haste that hinders recollection must clearly be avoided. During the Liturgy of the Word, it is also appropriate to include brief periods of silence, accommodated to the gathered assembly, in which, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, the word of God may be grasped by the heart and a response through prayer may be prepared.<sup>19</sup>

#### d) Recorded Music

Recorded music lacks the authenticity provided by a living liturgical assembly gathered for the Sacred Liturgy. It should not, as general norm, be used within the Liturgy. Recorded music should never become a substitute for the community's singing. The 1958 instruction "De Musica Sacra" issued by the Congregation of Rites states: "Finally, only those musical instruments which are played by the personal action of the artist may be admitted to the sacred liturgy, and not those which are operated automatically or mechanically." This document followed Pope Pius XII's 1955 encyclical "Musicae Sacrae," in which he insisted that liturgical music be "true art" if it is to be a genuine act of worship and praise of God.<sup>20</sup>

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* states:

The Christian faithful who gather together as one to await the Lord's coming are instructed by the Apostle Paul to sing together psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (cf. Col 3:16). Singing is the sign of the heart's joy (cf. Acts 2:46). Thus Saint Augustine says rightly, 'Singing is for one who loves.' There is also the ancient proverb: 'One who sings well prays twice.'

Great importance should, therefore, be attached to the use of singing in the celebration of the Mass, with due consideration for the culture of the people and abilities of each liturgical assembly...<sup>21</sup>

### III. Approval of Musical Settings of Texts

All musical settings of the texts for the people's responses and acclamations in the Order of Mass and for special rites that occur in the course of the liturgical year must be approved by the Conference of bishops. It is not permitted to use compositions during the liturgy without at least the approval of the local Bishop. Compositions are to be submitted to the local Bishop, and should always be forwarded by the Bishop's office to the National Liturgy Office. These submissions should be reviewed by the National Council for Liturgical Music, using established criteria. If a favourable opinion is given, the council then conveys its recommendation to the Bishop for approval of the composition for liturgical use.

Bearing in mind the important place that singing has in a celebration as a necessary or integral part of the Liturgy, all musical settings of the texts for the people's responses and acclamations in the Order of Mass and for special rites that occur in the course of the liturgical year must be submitted to the Conference of Bishops for review and approval prior to publication.<sup>22</sup>

#### a) Suggested Criteria for Assessing Music and Texts

Not every kind of music can have a place in Christian worship. It has its standard, and that standard is the *Logos*. If we want to know whom we are dealing with, the Holy Spirit or the unholy spirit, we have to remember that it is the Holy Spirit who moves us to say, "Jesus is Lord".<sup>23</sup> The Holy Spirit leads us to the *Logos*, and he leads us to a music that serves the *Logos* as a sign of the *sursum corda*, the lifting up of the human heart. Does the music in question integrate man by drawing him to what is above, or does it cause his disintegration into formless intoxication or mere sensuality? That is the criterion for a music in harmony with *logos*, a form of that *logikélatreia* (reason-able, *logos*-worthy worship).<sup>24</sup>

In judging the appropriateness of music for the Liturgy, one will examine its liturgical, pastoral, and musical qualities. Liturgical music is evaluated by asking such questions as:

#### i) Regarding Musicality

##### ➤ *The relationship between the music and the liturgical context*

<sup>19</sup>GIRM, 40.

<sup>20</sup>Musicae Sacrae, 45.

<sup>21</sup>GIRM, nos. 39-40.

<sup>22</sup>GIRM, no. 393.

<sup>23</sup>1 Cor 12:3.

<sup>24</sup>The Spirit of the Liturgy, p 151.

- Is the assembly able to sing the composed melody or is it too complex?
- Does the phrasing facilitate participation?
- Does it allow breathing space to the people?
- Is there consistency in the verse structure suited to congregational singing?
- Is the music suitable to the foreseen liturgical season?

➤ ***The relationship between text and music***

- Does the music suit the text?
- Does it support the text or distract from it?

➤ ***The artistry of the music***

- Is the melody memorable?
- Can it stand on its own without accompaniment?
- Does the melody provide interest and balance (steps and leaps)?
- Can the music be performed in a variety of styles?

**ii) Regarding Texts**

➤ ***Theological merit***

- Is the text in some way directed to God?
- Is the text inspired by the scriptures?
- Is it rich in sacramental and biblical language and imagery (typology and symbolism)?
- Is the text doctrinally sound? Does it express authentic Catholic faith?

➤ ***Liturgical appropriateness***

- Is the text a ritual text?
- Is it in accord with the approved liturgical text?
- Is the text consistent with the language of liturgical prayer?
- Does the text use corporate language (“we” rather than “I”) in expressing the prayer of the assembly?
- Is the text too personal, or more suited to private devotion than to liturgical use? Is it so well suited to a particular piety that it will appeal to only part of the assembly?
- Does the text include elements of petition, praise or remembrance of God’s saving deeds?

➤ ***Quality of language***

- Is the text grammatically correct?
- Does the text possess clarity of language?
- Does the text incorporate metaphors and evocative images? Is there a movement of thought from one verse to the next?
- Does the author respect the prosody of the text (the rhythmic structure of speech)?
- Is there consistency of address within the composition?

**iii) Regarding Acclamations**

- Do they adhere to the approved liturgical text?
- Does the melody involve the assembly in a way that is truly acclamatory?
- Is there a tonal and melodic relationship between the acclamations which are intended to be sung together during a single liturgical celebration?

#### IV. PARTICIPANTS IN LITURGICAL MUSIC

##### a) Liturgical Music Commission/Committee

There should be a Liturgical Committee and Music Sub-Committee in each parish who meet regularly to make the preparations necessary for a good use of the available liturgical and musical options. These Committees should always be guided by the Diocesan Commissions for Sacred Music.

The diocesan Commissions for sacred music are of most valuable assistance in promoting sacred music together with pastoral liturgical action in the diocese.

Therefore they should exist as far as possible in each diocese, and should unite their efforts with those of the liturgical Commission.

It will often be commendable for the two Commissions to be combined into one, and consist of persons who are expert in both subjects. In this way progress will be easier.

It is highly recommended that, where it appears to be more effective, several dioceses of the same region should set up a single Commission, which will establish a common plan of action and gather together their forces more fruitfully.

The Liturgical Commission, to be set up by the Episcopal Conference as judged opportune, should also be responsible for sacred music; it should therefore also consist of experts in this field.<sup>25</sup>

##### b) Composers and New Compositions

In every age, the Church has called upon creative artists to give new voice to praise and prayer. The church joyfully urges composers and text writers to draw upon their special genius so that she can continue to augment the treasure house of sacred musical art. Composers should find their inspiration from Sacred Scripture, especially in the texts of the Sacred Liturgy, so that their work flows from the Liturgy itself. A sung text must not only be doctrinally correct, but must in itself be an expression of the Catholic Faith. The melody itself should be such that someone who would happen not to understand the language feels that his faith is, in spite of all, being fed. The descriptive role of the melody may be alluded to, in the sense that the melody should make the singer “see” what he/she hears. Liturgical songs must never be permitted to make statements about faith which are untrue. Songs must be biblically, liturgically and doctrinally correct. Care should be taken as new songs are composed and sung in the church, the songs are not allowed to fall into disuse. With this in mind, there are some religious songs which lack the hinge from the Bible, from the liturgical texts and from doctrinal documents. Such songs may neither nourish the faith nor raise the hearts of the people of God, a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that they may declare the praises of him who called them out of darkness into his wonderful light.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, inasmuch as there are new compositions, old songs should not be neglected, ignored or abandoned. There are old popular Catholic songs which will ever remain “new” within the Liturgical assembly. The people of God, both young and old, still hold such songs with emotions and nostalgia so much that they get nourished and their spirit lifted to the divine majesty. The Catholic Church may at times pride in the antiquity and not in the newness, hence the popular saying: “old is gold.”

##### c) The Leader of Song

Ideally, the assembly is led by the accompanist in its songs, acclamations and responses. However, a leader of song may announce the hymns and support the singing of the assembly as required. While it is fitting to have a leader of song even when a choir is present, it is always desirable to have a leader of song when there is no choir to support the song of the assembly.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Musicam Sacram*, 1967, nos. 68-69.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. 1 Pt. 2:9.

<sup>27</sup> See *GIRM*, no. 104; Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction on Music in the Liturgy, *Musicamsacram*(March 5, 1967) no. 21.

A careful use of the microphone will ensure that the voice of the leader of song does not overpower or in any way inhibit the singing of the assembly, but aids it. The leader of song does not stand at the ambo, but rather at another place which is visible to the assembly. In some cases, the leader of song also serves as the cantor.

#### d) The Cantor

The principal role of the cantor is to proclaim God's Word by singing the verses of the psalm<sup>28</sup> and to elicit the assembly's response. This ministry is exercised at the ambo from which God's Word is proclaimed. Frequently, the cantor will also sing the invocations during litanies and the intercessions during the Universal Prayer. Where it is permitted in the liturgical books, the cantor may also sing texts normally sung by the priest or deacon (e.g., the Easter proclamation). Because of the unique ministry which the cantor exercises, in addition to musical skills the cantor must have knowledge of the scriptures and understand the place of the psalms and biblical canticles in the liturgy. It is therefore, necessary that the cantor be formed and trained in these areas so as to be effective to his ministry geared towards the glorification of God and for salvation of souls.

#### e) Organist and Other Instrumentalists

The organist and other instrumentalists provide the primary support for the song of the assembly and the other music ministers. At particular moments in the liturgy, instrumentalists can add a note of festivity, lend dignity or create a meditative atmosphere for the people's prayer. Again, the instruments are accompaniments which should not overtake the singing of the assembly, but to aid it. The instrumentalists should note that the primary instrument is the human voice which MUST NOT be overshadowed in praising God. Like all ministers of music, instrumentalists are not primarily performers, but rather servants of the Church's prayer.

During Advent the organ and other musical instruments should be used with a moderation that reflects the character of this season, but does not anticipate the full joy of the Nativity of the Lord. During Lent the playing of the organ and musical instruments is allowed only to support the singing. *Laetare* Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent), Solemnities, and feasts are exceptions to this rule.<sup>29</sup>

#### f) The Choir

The Second Vatican Council stated emphatically that choirs must be diligently promoted while ensuring that "the whole body of the faithful may be able to contribute that active participation which is rightly theirs."<sup>30</sup> The choir is able to enrich the celebration by adding musical elements beyond the capabilities of the congregation alone.

Choirs exercise a distinct ministry within the liturgy and are, therefore, to be diligently promoted. Most often the choir provides leadership by supporting the song of the assembly.<sup>31</sup> Sometimes the choir enhances the people's song with harmony and descants. At other times the choir alternates with the assembly. Occasionally, the choir alone sings works that are beyond the competence of the assembly to sing, but which, nevertheless, enrich its prayer. At all times, the choir is part of the assembly and enriches its prayer.<sup>32</sup>

Choir members/masters, like all liturgical ministers, should exercise their ministry with evident faith and should participate in the entire liturgical celebration, recognizing that they are the servants of the liturgy and members of the gathered assembly.

Among the faithful, the *schola cantorum* choir exercises its own liturgical function, ensuring that the parts proper to it, in keeping with the different types of chants, are properly carried out and fostering the active participation of the faithful through the singing. What is said about the choir also applies, in accordance with the relevant norms, to other musicians, especially the organist.<sup>33</sup>

The music of the choir must always be appropriate to the Liturgy, either by being a proper liturgical text or by expressing themes appropriate to the Liturgy. The role of the choir is not to lead the congregation in singing but to sing with the congregation.

#### Formation of the Choir

All who serve in the ministry of music in a parish should attend special training sessions to become aware of theological, pastoral and procedural aspects of their ministry. Training of all ministers of music will focus on preparation for their major

<sup>28</sup> See *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 102; *Ordo Lectionum Missae*, no. 56.

<sup>29</sup> *GIRM*, no. 313.

<sup>30</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 114.

<sup>31</sup> See *GIRM*, no. 103.

<sup>32</sup> See *GIRM*, no. 312.

<sup>33</sup> *GIRM*, no. 103.

responsibilities. In order to assure that all music ministers have the opportunity to receive adequate training and formation, those who are responsible for music ministry in a parish should have further special education and training that prepares them to reach out to others. Having appropriate knowledge and training will help all ministers to function effectively and bring confidence and joy to their experience. The following principles are especially significant in this regard:

- It is important that all musicians be informed and guided by the liturgical documents: the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC), *Music in Catholic Worship* (MCW), *Liturgical Music Today* (LMT), and the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM).
- “All liturgical ministers must be deeply imbued with the spirit of the liturgy, in the measure proper to each one, and they must be trained to perform their functions in a correct and orderly manner.”<sup>34</sup>
- The responsibility for effective pastoral celebration in a parish community falls upon all those who exercise major roles in the liturgy. An organized ‘planning team’ or committee should meet regularly to achieve creative and coordinated worship with a good use of the liturgical and musical options of a flexible liturgy.”<sup>35</sup>
- Musicians should use appropriate gestures for animating the assembly without conducting them.
- Those who assume musical leadership in worship need to balance their skills with an awareness that their musicianship is always at the service of the assembly. The nature of the liturgy requires a unique style of musical leadership: one that is, at its core, both professional and pastoral.
- There is need always for the Pastors to work closely with the Choir by guiding them and ensuring that they are there for the good of the Church.
- The choir is an integral part of the liturgical assembly and should therefore not separated itself from it. The choir members should always take the posture of the worshiping assembly and must not to reduce themselves to actors in a theatrical arena. If the assembly is sitting, the choir should also sit. In some occasions the choir keeps standing when singing, while the rest of the assembly is sitting, obstructing the assembly from focusing upon the altar.

**NOTE:** Ministers of Music should assume only one liturgical role at the liturgy. “**In liturgical celebrations of each one, priest or layperson, who has an office to perform, should do all of, but only those parts which pertain to that office by the nature of the rite and the principles of liturgy.**”<sup>36</sup> The Church has experienced some confusing situation whereby a minister moves from the sanctuary and rush to play a musical instrument. Such scenarios should not be taken to be normal and should never be accepted within the liturgical celebration.

## V. Some Emerging Issues of Concern

### a) The Question of Inculturation

As a principle from John Paul II, sacred music must adapt to the legitimate demands of inculturation. We must bring the universal Truth of our Liturgy to bear into each hut, each marble cathedral, each home and lift them up. But this must be done with a voice and a sound that they recognize. The Liturgy must serve the heavenly Liturgy and never cheapen it. But we’ve got to be able to reach into every place on the planet that has its own beat and own heartbeat. The question of inculturation is a non-negotiable. The question of inculturation, recognizing each culture in its place and bring it to Christ. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* says,

Great importance should therefore be attached to the use of singing in the celebration of the Mass, with due consideration for the culture of the people and abilities of each liturgical assembly.<sup>37</sup>

In the sacred liturgy, we enter, not the precincts of man’s culture, but the heavenly court of Christ, the culture of the Church, the wedding feast of the Lamb: and new festive garments are required for this feast.<sup>38</sup> In liturgical music, the peoples drawn into the sacred liturgy learn to sing, in one voice, through the often unfamiliar melody and rhythm of the Church’s sacred music. This

<sup>34</sup>*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 29.

<sup>35</sup>*Music in Catholic Worship*, no. 10.

<sup>36</sup>*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 28.

<sup>37</sup>*GIRM* 40.

<sup>38</sup>*Cf. Mt* 22:1-4.



oneness is exemplified for Roman Rite Catholics primarily in Gregorian Chant and Polyphony, the musical “garments” of the texts of the sacred liturgy.

On inculturation, we could extend the Church’s teaching on the new translation to the use of liturgical music:

So the liturgy of the Church must not be foreign to any country, people or individual, and at the same time it should transcend the particularity of race and nation. It must be capable of expressing itself in every human culture, all the while maintaining its identity through fidelity to the tradition which comes to it from the Lord.<sup>39</sup>

In other words, the Church, though existing in many cultures, has her own authentic culture because she has authentic liturgy ... both which come to her from Christ. The unity and integrity of the Roman Rite is embodied in the Rite’s sacred texts and musical forms, as a vine is expressed in its branches. Any form of inculturation has to begin from the authentic culture of the Church. Growth requires pruning and nourishing, but never ignoring or starting from scratch.

### **b) Dangers to Liturgical Music Today in Kenya**

The role of music is to serve the needs of the Liturgy and not to dominate it, neither seek to entertain, nor draw attention to itself nor the musicians. The primary role of music in the Liturgy is to help members of the gathered assembly to join themselves with the action of Christ and give voice to the gift of faith. However, there are some dangers today that become a snag to the liturgical music. These include:

- i) **Lack of Liturgical Formation.** This is evident in many liturgical assemblies. Many choir members and directors lack the basic knowledge on liturgy. This affects the composition of, participation in and the final goal of the Liturgical music. The choir members need both catechetical and liturgical formation so as to help the congregation to full, conscious, active and fruitful participation in the Liturgy. The Church leaders should take seriously the needs of the liturgy and respond to the lack of formation by providing training opportunities for pastoral musicians.
- ii) **Commercialization of Church music.** This has taken various forms. On one hand choirs want to record new songs, produce DVDs and getting into the digital space through YouTube, Facebook etc for the purpose of making money. The concentration has moved so much in to these sectors, forgetting the primary role of establishing the choirs, i.e., to help in full, conscious, active and fruitful participation in the Liturgical Assemblies.
- iii) **The above concern is also accompanied by the today’s unfortunate mentality of competition and festivals which are devoid of liturgical consciousness.** Many choirs perform very well in the festivals but are not in the liturgical celebrations. With this many choirs have missed the mark by forgetting their primary duty of their ministerial office in the liturgy. The pastors need to assist the choirs to understand the intention of music festivals and recordings as moments of evangelization which should spring from the liturgy and lead back to it. Choirs need to overcome these dangers by remembering that good deeds should be done with the intention and not for attention, and the Father who sees in secret will abundantly reward them. Church music can continue to exist only in the form of congregational singing, which in turn is not to be judged in terms of its artistic value but only on the basis of its functionality, i.e. its “community-building” and activating function.
- iv) **Protestantism/Pentecostal Influence.** Today, there is a lot of Protestantism and Pentecostal influence in Catholic Liturgy in general. This does not spare Catholic music as well. Many compositions today are very Pentecostal/Protestant in nature. This is quite evident in theology as well as the singing itself. There is a certain lack of sobriety and calmness which is seen in the Catholic liturgies due to these influences. The bishops as the custodians of the Liturgy need to be cautious on this and bring Catholic formation to the Catholic Christians.
- v) **Infiltration of secular music styles:** The Church teaches that sacred music is the highest form of sacred art. Since liturgical music is oriented toward God, above all, “the musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater than that of any other art. The main reason for this is that, as a combination of sacred music and words, it forms a necessary or integral part of solemn liturgy” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1156, quoting *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, No. 112). Therefore, great care must be taken to ensure that whatever direction the musical charism of a parish is, it is brought forth correctly. Liturgical music comes in all styles and genres. There is no denying that music has had various forms and styles throughout the 2,000-year history of our sacred liturgy. From polyphony, Gregorian chant, full orchestras, soloists, scholas and contemporary music, the Church has always made use of music of the time. Please note that while the music of the time was incorporated, it did not take away from the liturgy.

<sup>39</sup> Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Instruction *Liturgiamauthenticam*, March 28, 2001. No. 4.

## VI. Conclusion

The Church, as in all things, has not changed its mind on liturgical music. The faith "once for all delivered to the saints"<sup>40</sup> will never be altered, and the Mass always remains fundamentally the same in nature, despite periodic rubrical and textual modifications. As it is always a participation in the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Mass must always be celebrated with a dignity that befits it. Because the Mass will always remain the same, so will the Church's teaching on liturgical music. As this paper has shown, this teaching remains as valid and binding today as it was when it was formulated by the early Church.

Despite the confusion reigning in many sectors of the Catholic Church regarding liturgical music, the Church's doctrine on the subject has been well established by Vatican Council II and by the Church's highest authorities during the post-Vatican Council II era. This teaching has been consistent throughout the Church's history, beginning with the Church Fathers, running through the writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas, Pope Benedict XIV, and numerous other authorities, and reconfirmed repeatedly by the popes and Vatican officials of the 20th century, both before and after Vatican Council II.

Finally, liturgical music must have a grandeur yet simplicity; solemnity and majesty," and must have "dignity," and "gravity," should be "exalted" and "sublime," should bring "splendor and devotion" to the liturgy, and must be conducive to prayer and liturgical participation, rather than distracting the listener from prayer. It must be music that befits the profound nature of the Mass, which is the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. As Pope Paul VI put it: "The primary purpose of sacred music is to evoke God's majesty and to honor it. But at the same time music is meant to be a solemn affirmation of the most genuine nobility of the human person, that of prayer."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Jude 1:3.

<sup>41</sup>Pope Paul VI, Address to the *Associazione Italiana di Santa Cecilia* (September 18th, 1968) [Notitiae 4 (1968) pp. 269-273].

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