

July 24, 2019

Praised be Jesus Christ.

Today concludes the first three-day workshop offered by the newly founded St. Gregory Institute of Sacred Music. With this Votive Mass of the Holy Ghost offered in the ancient form of the Roman Rite, we implore God to send down abundant graces upon this noble project. Music is integral to our worship; it is, in fact, an act of worship itself.

Saint John Paul II, speaking on the topic of sacred music in 1988, affirmed that music in the sacred liturgy *performs a function which is noble, unique, and irreplaceable. When it is truly beautiful and inspired, it speaks to us more than all the other arts of goodness, virtue, peace; of matters holy and divine.*

If you will permit me to wax poetic for a moment, the sacred music of the Church — and especially the venerable treasury of Gregorian chant, which is *the* unique and organic expression of the Church's voice at prayer — reveals to us something of the very Spirit of God. At the very beginning of time, Genesis tells us that the *earth was void and empty, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved over the waters.*

The word *spirit*, Latin *spiritus*, is also the word for *breath*. And so when Christ appears to his Apostles after the Resurrection there is an echo — or perhaps, a fulfillment — of that primal Spirit of Genesis. The Gospel of Saint John tells us that *he breathed on them; and he said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost.* Risen from the dead, Christ comes to impart this new life into his Body, the Church; and through that breath, he is creating the world anew. Just as the Spirit of God moved upon the waters, that same Spirit moves within the Church, moving her to speak *in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual canticles.* When we speak in the Church's

language and sing in the voice of her own song, it is truly the Holy Ghost who speaks through us; it is truly the Holy Ghost in whose voice we sing.

*The Paraclete, the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name; he will teach you all things.* The sacred music of the Church has much to teach us. In the psalms, we find expressions of joy, sorrow, hope, and trust; and in time, as we sing these words and meditate upon them, they became our *own* voice of prayer.

Like a child learning how speak, there is a certain effort involved in this process. The sober restraint, flowing cadence, and occasional exuberant and melismatic expressions of the Church's chant are not the native musical language of anyone living today; but then again, these songs sounded just as alien to the ears of Mozart as they do to us. Perhaps they have always been so.

And I so I would like to commend the effort of those who have participated in the Institute's workshops for the past three days. Their efforts find a fitting culmination and fulfillment here in the sacred liturgy, where all the arts and all our human efforts are crowned by the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Upon this altar, we offer to God the best of what we have, grateful that these sincere efforts are accepted and perfected by God for his glory and for our salvation.

On my own account, I would like to thank Mr. Nicholas Will for the invitation to celebrate this Mass and to be present for the inauguration of this important initiative. May the experience of these past three days bear much fruit for all who have participated in them, and through the intercession of Saint Gregory the Great, may the future of this institute be richly blessed.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.