



Among the cares of the pastoral office . . . a leading one is without question that of maintaining and promoting the decorum of the House of God in which the august mysteries of religion are celebrated, and where the Christian people assemble to receive the

grace of the Sacraments, to assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar, to adore the most august Sacrament of the Lord's Body and to unite in the common prayer of the Church in the public and solemn liturgical offices. Nothing should have place, therefore, in the temple calculated to disturb or even merely to diminish the piety and devotion of the faithful, nothing that may give reasonable cause for disgust or scandal, nothing, above all, which directly offends the decorum and sanctity of the sacred functions and is thus unworthy of the House of Prayer and of the Majesty of God. . . . Filled as We are with a most ardent desire to see the true Christian spirit flourish in every respect and be preserved by all the faithful, We deem it necessary to provide before anything else for the sanctity and dignity of the temple, in which the faithful assemble for no other object than that of acquiring this spirit from its foremost and indispensable font, which is the active participation in the most holy mysteries and in the public and solemn prayer of the Church.

Pope St. Pius X (1903)

The traditionally appropriate musical instrument of the Church is the organ, which, by reason of its extraordinary grandeur and majesty, has been considered a worthy adjunct to the Liturgy, whether for accompanying the chant or, when the choir is silent, for playing harmonious music at the prescribed times . . . Let our churches resound

with organ-music that gives expression to the majesty of the edifice and breathes the sacredness of the religious rites; in this way will the art both of those who build the organs and of those who play them flourish afresh and render effective service to the sacred liturgy.

Pope Pius XI (1928)

Among the musical instruments that have a place in church, the organ rightly holds the principal position, since it is especially fitted for the sacred chants and sacred rites. It adds a wonderful splendor and a special magnificence to the ceremonies of the Church. It moves the souls of the faithful by the grandeur and sweetness of its tones. It gives minds an almost heavenly joy and it lifts them up powerfully to God and to higher things. Besides the organ, other instruments can be called upon to give great help in attaining the lofty purpose of sacred music, so long as they play nothing profane, nothing clamorous or strident, and nothing at variance with the sacred services or the dignity of the place. Among these the violin and other musical instruments that use the bow are outstanding because, when they are played by themselves or with other stringed instruments or with the organ, they express the joyous and sad sentiments of the soul with an indescribable power.

Ven. Pope Pius XII (1955)

The difference between sacred and secular music must be taken into consideration. Some musical instruments, such as the organ, are naturally appropriate for sacred music; others, such as string instruments which are played with a bow, are easily adapted to liturgical use. But there are some instruments which, by common estimation, are so associated with secular music that they are not at all adaptable for sacred use. . . . The principal musical instrument for solemn liturgical ceremonies of the Latin Church has been and remains the classic pipe organ.

Sacred Congregation of Rites (1958)

In the Latin Church the pipe organ is to be held in high esteem, for it is the traditional musical instrument which adds a wonderful splendor to the Church's ceremonies and powerfully lifts up man's mind to God and to higher things. But other instruments also may be admitted for use in divine worship, with the knowledge and consent of the competent territorial authority . . . This may be done, however, only on condition that the instruments are suitable, or can be made suitable, for sacred use, accord with the dignity of the temple, and truly contribute to the edification of the faithful.

Second Vatican Council (1963)

It is necessary that the principles of sacredness and dignity which distinguish church music, in regard both to singing and to musical instruments, should remain intact. All that which is merely secular should be proscribed from the house of God. Jazz, for example, cannot today be part of a musical repertoire designed for worship. Where musical instruments are concerned, differing mentalities, cultures, and traditions are to be borne in mind, and those instruments which have an entirely secular connotation should not be allowed in church. The Church has immense possibilities for deep, effective and uplifting action, without having recourse to means which are very dubious and even, by common consent, harmful.

Cardinal Lercaro, for the Consilium (1966)

In permitting and using musical instruments, the culture and traditions of particular peoples must be taken into account. At the same time, however, instruments that are generally associated with and used only by secular music are to be absolutely barred from liturgical celebrations and religious devotions. Any musical instrument permitted in divine worship should be used in such a way that it meets the needs of the liturgical celebration, and is in the interests both of the beauty of worship and the edification of the faithful.

Sacred Congregation of Rites (1967)



Music and song are servants of worship and are its subordinates. Accordingly they must always possess the qualities befitting their place: grandeur yet simplicity; solemnity and majesty; the least possible unworthiness of the absolute transcendence of God, to

whom they are directed, and of the human spirit, which they are meant to express. 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. . . . Since that is the essential function for sacred music, what ground is there for allowing anything that is shabby or banal, or anything that caters to the vagaries of aestheticism or is based on the prevailing excesses of technology? . . . Vocal and instrumental music that is not marked by the spirit of prayer, dignity, and beauty is barred from entrance into the world of the sacred and the religious. The assimilation and sanctification of the secular, which is today a distinguishing mark of the Church's mission in the world, clearly has limits; this is all the more the case when the issue is to invest the secular with the sacredness belong to divine worship.

Bd. Pope Paul VI (1968)

We must avoid and banish from liturgical celebrations profane types of music, particularly singing with an agitated, intrusive, or raucous style that would disturb the serenity of the service and would be incompatible with its spiritual, sanctifying purposes. A broad field is thus opened for pastoral initiative—the effort, namely, of leading the faithful to participate with voice and song in the rites, while at the same time

protecting these rites from the invasion of noise, poor taste, and desacralization. Instead there must be encouragement of the kind of sacred music that helps to raise the mind to God and that, through the devout singing of God's praises, helps to provide a foretaste of the liturgy of heaven.

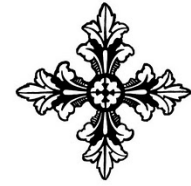
Cardinal Villot, for Paul VI (1973)

Christians should rediscover the newness of the faith and its power to judge a prevalent and all-intrusive culture.

Pope St. John Paul II (1993)

Solemn sacred music, with choir, organ, orchestra, and the singing of the people, is not an addition of sorts that frames the liturgy and makes it more pleasing, but an important means of active participation in worship. The organ has always been considered, and rightly so, the king of musical instruments, because it takes up all the sounds of creation and gives resonance to the fullness of human sentiments. By transcending the merely human sphere, as all music of quality does, it evokes the divine. The organ's great range of timbre, from *piano* through to a thundering *fortissimo*, makes it an instrument superior to all others. It is capable of echoing and expressing all the experiences of human life. The manifold possibilities of the organ in some way remind us of the immensity and the magnificence of God.

Pope Benedict XVI (2006)



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