

# Church Music Association of America

## Publisher of *Sacred Music*

November 22, 2006  
Feast Day of St. Cecilia

Dear Friend of Sacred Music,

The first Sunday of Advent is soon upon us. For most of Church history, people at morning Mass would hear a glorious Gregorian melody sung to the text of the Introit from the choir's book, the *Graduale*. The words of the first chant of the new liturgical year convey the meaning and capture the purpose of all sacred music:

*Ad te levavi animam meam.*  
To thee have I lifted up my soul.

If you are like most Catholics in this country, you will not hear this melody on Advent. Nor will a bright of "Puer natus est" greet you on Christmas morning. Nor will a plaintive "Invocabit me" mark the first Sunday of Lent. For many people, not even the most basic chants, such as seasonal Marian antiphons, are heard in their local parishes.

It is no secret that Catholic music is not what it should or could be, so I'll not continue with a litany of loss. What we need now is a clear path forward. More precisely, we need to walk the path that the Church has laid before us. Our generation must continue the restoration of sacred song.

Indeed, the Church has urged our parishes to adopt Gregorian chant and polyphony because the chant is an integral part of Mass. Pope Benedict XVI has said that even new music for the Church should share in the lineage of chant. Cardinal Arinze, head of the Congregation of Divine Worship, has called for a full Latin Mass with chant every week in all but the smallest parishes.

But how do we get from here to there? Musicians need training, singers need resources, priests need education, the Bishops who are working for change need support, and the faithful need to experience sacred music so they can come to love it and sing it with the angels and saints.

As a means toward that end, I like to ask you to join and generously support the Church Music Association of America. The CMAA is a nonprofit organization uniquely positioned to make a difference: through our journal *Sacred Music*, through colloquia and workshops around the country, through distribution of music and educational resources, and through expertise that we can share with musicians around the country and the world. We've put together an ambitious plan to make this a reality in our parishes and in our lifetimes.

We have already seen results. People around the world are using the CMAA's authoritative editions of Gregorian chant, via our website ([musicasacra.com](http://musicasacra.com)). We've published some of the most scholarly—and practical—writings on sacred music to appear in many years. Our

summer colloquium, the most well attended in years, has produced fruit in parish after parish around the country.

The activities of the CMAA have been written up in *Catholic World Report*, *The Wanderer*, and *Catholic World News*, as well as many secular venues that are taking notice of the change in the air. Journalist Amy Welborn credits the CMAA for sparking a revival of sacred music that it impossible to miss.

When the US Bishops' subcommittee on music and the liturgy met in the Fall of 2006 to draft a new document on music, the CMAA was there to present a perspective that reflected the true intent of the Second Vatican Council, which called for Latin chant to be given primacy of place in the liturgy.

Our journal *Sacred Music* is the oldest continually published journal of music in the United States. A new generation of writers, composers, conductors, and editors have infused its pages with an impassioned zeal for beauty and truth. Circulation is rising rapidly. It is now a 60-page quarterly and has been warmly received in parishes around the country.

The CMAA is not a new organization. It was founded in 1964 in the closing days of the Second Vatican Council, as the coming together of the St. Cecilia and St. Gregory Societies. It quickly gained an affiliation with the *Consociatio Internationalis Musicae Sacrae* in Rome, founded by Paul VI to protect and propagate sacred music after the Council.

In a real way, the CMAA was made Rome's voice on matters of music in the United States. Our journal made the case for continuity with our sacred musical heritage. The CMAA helped publish the *Liber Cantualis* and the *Adoremus Hymnal*—two collections that have done so much to restore a sense of dignity and solemnity to modern worship.

Thanks to the efforts of its presidents, officers, members, and benefactors, the CMAA worked quietly and behind the scenes from the late 1960s onward. But music publishers began to promote styles and approaches that reflected popular and secular trends, rather than the true wishes Council. Even in the midst of upheaval, the CMAA maintained its high standards and ideals, and prepared for the future that is now upon us.

Times have changed again. Rome is becoming more explicit in its demands, and many US Bishops are prepared to help. A generation of new priests is determined not to repeat the mistakes of the 1970s. Many young people today are learning chant and Latin, and they want to help bring them back. New scholas are being founded all over the country, and they are singing at Mass. Diocesan Catholic newspapers are noting the change, and running more stories about exciting developments in sacred music.

The CMAA today is helping to make the difference. The restoration of the music of the Church requires a large investment of time and energy. But it is worth our every effort.

As John Paul II said in his St. Cecilia Day message, Gregorian chant and choral music based on it has "a special place" because it "corresponds best with the qualities demanded by the notion of sacred music, especially liturgical music."

Pope Benedict XVI, too, has been a magnificent defender of sacred music, speaking on the subject in many formal and informal talks. He has given a much-welcome tribute to the organ, which he said "gives resonance to the fullness of human sentiments, from joy to sadness, from praise to lamentation. By transcending the merely human sphere, as all music of quality does, it evokes the divine."

It is for this reason that the annual CMAA Colloquium on Sacred Music features organ at Mass and in recitals. This coming year, we will introduce new tutorials for organ as well, along with the best training in Gregorian chant and polyphony available. This conference alone—we have reserved enough space this year for 125-plus attendees—can transform Catholic music in America.

Now, let me let share with you a striking truth: the CMAA has no paid staff. Not even the outstanding contributors to *Sacred Music* are compensated. Maybe that can change someday, but, for now, anyone who does anything for the organization directly is contributing time and talent purely out of love for beautiful liturgy.

There are nonetheless expenses, and they are mounting by the day. There are website costs, printing costs, typesetting costs, promotional costs, travel costs, and so much more. It is gratifying work but it is also rather alarming to do what we do on such an extremely thin budget.

This system works for now, but I look forward to the day when the CMAA can be more financially stable and thus expand dramatically our workshops, publications, and educational efforts.

Thus do we need your help.

Please keep your membership in the CMAA up to date, or, if you are not a member, join today. [Musicasacra.com](http://Musicasacra.com) has a paypal button that makes joining and contributing easy. Or you can write the address below.

How much should you give? Year-end gifts of \$50, \$100, \$200, and \$300 are very much welcome. If you can give more--\$500, \$1000, or \$5,000—please do, and know of our deep gratitude.

Also, please consider giving a gift subscriptions to *Sacred Music* to every Church musician you know. We also provide an option for a full parish membership for \$150.

We do not have the resources to undertake expensive mailings with color brochures, much less hire writers to make just the right pitch. We have to rely on you to forward this note to other friends of sacred music. You know people who understand how critical this issue is. Help us to get to know them too.

Finally, I would like to ask you to say a prayer of thanks for those who have led this cause through difficult times, and pray for the future success of the CMAA and the restoration of the sacred in the liturgy and of excellence in its music.

Sacred music is a cause that affects all our lives as Catholics. It should be beautiful, holy, and universal, like the faith itself. The quality of our liturgy is also linked with the quality of our prayer. A revival in the Catholic Church will also have an impact on our culture. It will encourage conversions. It will help rebuild the practice of our faith after so many years of wandering.

Perhaps not this year, but maybe next or the next and then forever after, we can all be greeted on the morning of Advent to a rebirth of music that causes us to lift our souls to the Lord our God. A renaissance awaits. Please help make it possible.

Sincerely

*William Mahrt*

William Mahrt  
President

P.S. Can you please forward this letter to others who might help? I leave you with an Introit for the first Sunday of Advent, as restored by the Abbey Saint-Pierre de Solesmes.

A musical score for the Introit for the first Sunday of Advent, as restored by the Abbey Saint-Pierre de Solesmes. The score is written on a grand staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It begins with a large, stylized letter 'A'. The lyrics are in Latin and are written below the musical notation. The lyrics are: "D te levá-vi \* á- nimam me- am : De- us me- us in te confi- do, non e- ru- bé- scam : neque irri- de- ant me in- imí- ci me- i : ét- e- nim u- ni- vér- si qui te expé- ctant, non confun- dén- túr. Ps. Vi- as tu- as, Dómi- ne, de- món- stra mi- hi : \* et sémi- tas tu- as é- do- ce me. Gló- ri- a Patri. saecu- ló- rum. Amen."