

Our approach to worship music at Sacred Heart is based upon the teachings of the Magisterium of the Church, in particular the Vatican II document on the liturgy, Sacrosanctum concilium. Chapter one of Sacrosanctum concilium states: "The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows .... From the liturgy, therefore, and especially from the Eucharist, grace is poured forth upon us as from a fountain, and the sanctification of men in Christ and the glorification of God .... " (SC 10) The document goes on to state: "Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy, and to which the Christian people, 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people' (1Pet. 2:9,4-5) have a right and obligation by reason of their baptism." (SC 14)

What does this mean? The Church teaches that the Mass is the highest form of prayer in the Church. It is the one sacrifice of Calvary, the wedding feast of the Lamb, the outpouring of the grace of God for the sanctification of the world. "For in the liturgy God speaks to his people, and Christ is still proclaiming his Gospel. And the people reply to God both by song and prayer." (SC 33; italics ours) Therefore, to participate in the Mass is to communicate with God, to hear from Him and to speak and sing to Him in prayer. It is to offer our lives, the lives of all those we love, and the life of the world. To participate in the Mass is to partake of God and be united with Him in the Holy Eucharist, ultimately to be transformed by Him and go forth to transform the world.

Music for the Mass, then, is also prayer and must assist with prayer. It is not a performance or meant to draw attention to the singers or musicians; rather it is a servant of the Mass and meant to draw attention to God. It should prepare us, help us forget mundane distractions and attune our awareness to God, who is present with us in the Mass. It should help us focus on and reinforce the message of the readings and the homily. It should help us move smoothly and without distraction from one stage of the Mass to another, with each stage a deeper penetration into the mysteries of God. It should help us, above all, immerse ourselves deeply in prayer and communion with God, ultimately the deepest communion with God in the Holy Eucharist. It should give us opportunity for heartfelt expressions of love, of rejoicing, of thanksgiving to God for His beauty and grace, and His love for us. It should help us leave each Mass with a deeper appreciation for His wonder and power than we had before, and take that wonder and power into the world with us.