

Sacred Music & Art

Sacred Music

"The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art. The main reason for this pre-eminence is that, as a combination of sacred music and words, it forms a necessary or integral part of solemn liturgy" (Sacrosanctum Concilium, no. 112). The composition and singing of inspired psalms, often accompanied by musical instruments, were already closely linked to the liturgical celebrations of the Old Covenant. The Church continues and develops this tradition: "Address . . . one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart." "He who sings prays twice" (Eph 5:19; St. Augustine, En. in Ps. 72,1:PL 36,914; cf. Col 3:16).

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1156*

Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship

One of God's greatest gifts to us, his creation, was the gift of song. In words and music, our ancestors in faith—Moses, David, Deborah, Paul, St. Gregory—have taught us how to revel in God's infinite love, proclaim his glory, give thanks for his abounding generosity, and plead for mercy and forgiveness. *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, guidelines approved by the bishops of the United States in 2007, recalls this vast, rich musical tradition as it provides basic guidelines for understanding the role and ministry of music in the liturgy. Standing on the foundational work of the Council fathers, *Sing to the Lord* echoes the call to full, active, and conscious participation in the Liturgy through its sung elements. It addresses the practical concerns of pastoral leaders: appropriate ministers, cultural diversity, instrumentation, formation, acoustics, and copyrights. It also outlines considerations for preparing and judging music for worship with an in-depth review of the musical structure of Liturgy.

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Sacred Art

Sacred art is true and beautiful when its form corresponds to its particular vocation: evoking and glorifying, in faith and adoration, the transcendent mystery of God—the surpassing invisible beauty of truth and love visible in Christ, who "reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature," in whom "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily." This spiritual beauty of God is reflected in the most holy Virgin Mother of God, the angels, and saints. Genuine sacred art draws man to adoration, to prayer, and to the love of God, Creator and Savior, the Holy One and Sanctifier.

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2502*

Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship

In every church building, art and architecture become the joint work of the Holy Spirit and the local community, in preparing a place to receive God's Word and to enter more fully into communion with him. In these guidelines, approved in 2000, the bishops of the United States offer instruction on how to design places of worship that are dignified, beautiful, and "suited to sacred celebrations."

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Resources and Documents

- [Authority of *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*](#)
- [Baptismal Water and Pathogens](#)
- [Fish in a Baptismal Font](#)
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