

FOREWORD

When it comes to the understanding of Gregorian chant, many people who study western music history may remain at the level of appreciation. After the Second Vatican Council, local church organizations acknowledged the Church's high reverence to Gregorian chants, and at the same time affirmed the importance of change with time. It became a common practice to include sacred music that was secular and those that carried its own characteristic cultural traditions. However in the course of development, it appeared that the original teaching of the Vatican Council was overlooked. "The Church acknowledges Gregorian chant as specially suited to the Roman liturgy : therefore, other things being equal, it should be given pride of place in liturgical services." (SACROSANCTUM CONCILIUM – 116)

It is against this background that the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong, under the planning and of the Sacred Music Commission, has compiled a collection of Gregorian chants with Chinese translation. Since July MMVI, various music books titled **Gregorian Chant Collection** have been published on an irregular basis, I was invited to provide some related information so that the people who are interested in Gregorian chant will not feel as confused in the learning process. Indeed, there is a lack of Chinese books or articles on this topic. I am delighted to accepted the task.

This book comprises with eight articles. Perhaps the number is related to the English Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount. The articles cover the structure and composition of Gregorian chant, its value in both art and religion. They are standpoints that are not excluding. In history, there are many music pieces that were composed with various kinds of harmony, counterpoint, orchestration components. Indeed there are many music that surpass the simple technique and single tone of Gregorian chants. However, a simple flute tune played by a shepherd boy can be more overwhelming that an orchestral performance. Therefore, the discussion in this book is not excessive.

Formation of music, investigation into history, research on theory..... all these works cannot be dismissed. Music is an art in motion. It is not just the composition or line-up of music notes and rhythms. It requires performance to accomplish the task and to reveal its beauty. Thus, before reading the book, there are two questions to b reflected upon.

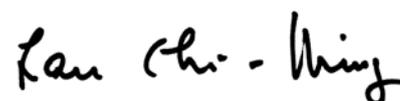
Firstly, on music creation, it is stated in Sacrosanctum Concilium, "All artists who, prompted by their talents, desire to serve God's glory in holy Church... are engaged in a kind of sacred imitation of God the Creator." (127) Certainly, the imitation of God the Creator differs from God's creation from nothing (ex nihilo). Music composers create works out of the

elements that exist or those that have yet to be discovered. They enhance and shape those elements so as to “signify effects, particularly of a spiritual kind.” (60). “These arts, by their very nature, are oriented toward the infinite beauty of God which they attempt in some way to portray by the work of human hands.” (122) Therefore, the imitation of God the Creator is an on-going process that requires expression, which is performance, so as to achieve the objective that “Christ Jesus, high priest of the new and eternal covenant, taking human nature, introduced into this earthly exile that hymn which is sung throughout all ages in the halls of heaven. He joins the entire community of mankind to Himself, associating it with His own singing of this canticle of divine praise.” (83)

Each performance varies pending on the efforts put in. Certainly, the practice will not be rewarding if it is not based on the original work in Latin. One can imagine the result of learning Beijing Opera in English. Furthermore, there should not be any misunderstanding that pastoral ministry will be hindered by the use of Latin, and that such confusion is used as a reason to make other special arrangements. What stated in Sacrosanctum Concilium – “therefore, other things being equal, it (Gregorian chant) should be given pride of place in liturgical services.” (116) – refers to the original works that are written in Latin, but not those that have been reshaped in other languages. Also, though the Church permits the use of other languages in creating songs and singing, it never rejects the music in Latin. On the contrary, it is emphasized that “particular law remaining in force, the use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites.” (36)

For all music learners, it is right to carry out performance after performance, and base their on original works. But with persistence, these two aspects are mentioned once again. Not in an absolute manner, they are discussed in details in the book. The mission is not completed until the objectives are met.

This book was originally a compilation of various articles, with a slightly academic approach. However, as the book was written in a spontaneous manner, some points or areas might have been omitted. In the writing process, the office of the sacred music commission of the Diocesan of Hong Kong have rendered great support



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March 19 MMVII (The feast of St. Joseph)