My dear People:

This letter will be very brief, and I want simply to wish you all a wonderful summer, and to express the hope that some of our readers from other places will find their way to St. Mary's during the summer months. Nothing changes here, our Sunday and weekday schedule remains intact, and glory is rendered to God during these months as well as during the rest of the year.

But I do want to take this opportunity to draw your attention to several items in this issue of AVE. The first is the yearly report of our Treasurer, and I know that you will take courage in your own support of our parish as you learn again of the considered and responsible way in which we are managing our monies. I am proud to be able to tell you that the pledged income at St. Mary's today is in either the highest or the next to highest percentile of average giving of any parish in the Diocese of New York. Because of this our doors are open and our life is flourishing.

The second item I would ask you to notice is the advertisement of our MISSION OF CATHOLIC RENEWAL this October, again at the time of our Feast of Dedication. Our Missioner this year is The Rev'd John H. Heidt, Vicar of the Church of Saint Philip and Saint James at Up Hatherley, in Cheltenham, England, and a leader in the work of Catholic Renewal within the Church of England. An American by birth, Father Heidt attended Yale University and Nashotah House, in the latter of which places he was a friend and classmate of mine. A scholar in his own right, Father holds the D.Phil. degree from Oxford University.
Please mark the dates of our Mission on your calendar now: October 2, 3, & 4. The theme of the Mission will be, TOWARDS THE WORLD'S CONVERSION, and we will follow the three day format that has worked so well for us during the past few years: Mass and a parish dinner on Friday evening at 6, Solemn Evensong and Benediction on Saturday afternoon at 5, and the great Solemn Mass of our Feast of Dedication on Sunday at 11.

Lastly let me remind you of our great summer festival, the feast of Our Lady's Assumption, in mid-August. The Solemnity of the feast will be kept on Friday evening, August 14th, and Brother John Charles will come home to us to be our preacher at a Pontifical Mass at 6 PM. On the feastday itself, August 15th, a Low Mass will be offered at 12:15 PM.

With this letter go my love and prayers, and my best wishes to you all.

Affectionately in Him,

Edgar F. Wells

A MISSION OF CATHOLIC RENEWAL
at The Church of Saint Mary the Virgin, New York City

Title: TOWARDS THE WORLD'S CONVERSION
Missioner: The Rev'd John H. Heidt, Vicar,
the Church of Saint Philip & Saint James,
Up Hatherley, Cheltenham, England

Friday, Oct. 2, 6 PM: The death of Secularism & the Return of Christendom
Saturday, Oct. 3, 5 PM: The radical nature of dogma: "it is the Mass that matters"
Sunday, Oct. 4 ........ "Behold, I make all things new": a new world and a new society

CONTRIBUTIONS TO AVE are gratefully acknowledged:
The Rt. Rev'd John M. Krumm, $20.00; Mrs. Glover Ireland, $15.00; Mr. & Mrs. R. Malanaphy, $50.00; The Rev'd Francis M. Uter, $10.00; Anonymous, $50.00; Mr. & Mrs. Robert Marcellus, $25.00; The Rev'd Jay H. Gordon, $10.00; The Ven. Robert N. Willing, $15.00; Dr. M. P. Faber, $10.00; Stephen C. Petrica, $10.00; The Rev'd E. Allen Coffey, $25.00; Mr. Brannon Hall-Garcia, $15.00; The Rev'd John-Michael Crothers, $15.00; The Rev'd Alan P. Maynard, $50.00; Dr. David J. Strang, $25.00.

ALTAR FLOWER MEMORIALS

JUL. 5 — PENTECOST IV: Martha Viola Schaefer
JUL. 12 — PENTECOST V: Philip and Anicia Martin
JUL. 19 — PENTECOST VI: Lawrence Lars Larsen
JUL. 26 — PENTECOST VII: Mary Louise Reidler Dunn
AUG. 9 — PENTECOST IX: Alfred and Catherine Handy;
Edgar and Isabelle Wells
AUG. 30 — PENTECOST XII: Eliphal Beard;
Carrie Briggs Streeter

MAY THE SOULS OF THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED REST IN PEACE AND MAY LIGHT PERPETUAL SHINE UPON THEM
**CALENDAR FOR JULY**

1 W. *Requiem*
2 Th. 
3 F. *Abstinence*
4 Sa. **INDEPENDENCE DAY**
5 Su. **THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**
6 M. Thomas More, Martyr
7 Tu. 
8 W. 
9 Th. *Requiem*
10 F. *Abstinence*
11 Sa. Benedict of Nursia, Abbot of Monte Cassino, c. 540
12 Su. **THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**
13 M. *Requiem*
14 Tu. Bonaventure, Bishop of Albano, and Friar, 1274
15 W. Swithun, Bishop of Winchester, 862
16 Th. Our Lady of Mount Carmel
17 F. comm. William White, Bishop of Pennsylvania, 1836 *Abstinence*
18 Sa. **of Our Lady**
19 Su. **THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**
20 M. Margaret, Martyr at Antioch, 3rd c.
21 Tu. *Requiem*
22 W. **SAINT MARY MAGDALENE**
23 Th. Bridget, Religious
24 F. Thomas a Kempis, Priest, 1471 *Abstinence*
25 Sa. **SAINT JAMES THE APOSTLE**
26 Su. **THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**
27 M. William Reed Huntington, Priest, 1909
28 Tu. *Requiem*
29 W. Mary and Martha of Bethany
30 Th. William Wilberforce, 1833
31 F. Joseph of Arimathea *Abstinence*

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**CALENDAR FOR AUGUST**

1 Sa. Alphonsus Liguori, Bishop and Doctor
2 Su. **THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**
3 M. 
4 Tu. Jean-Baptiste Vianney, Cure d'Ars, 1859
5 W. Dedication of Saint Mary Major
6 Th. **THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**
7 F. John Mason Neale, Priest, 1866 *Abstinence*
8 Sa. Dominic, Priest and Friar, 1221
9 Su. **THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**
10 M. Laurence, Deacon and Martyr of Rome, 258
11 Tu. Clare, Abbess of Assisi, 1253
12 W. *Requiem*
13 Th. Jeremy Taylor, Bishop of Down, Connor, and Dromore, 1667
14 F. **SOLEMNITY OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**
   Procession & Solemn Pontifical Mass, 6 PM  **No Abstinence**
15 Sa. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
16 Su. **THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**
17 M. *Requiem*
18 Tu. William Porcher DuBose, Priest, 1918
19 W. John Eudes, Priest
20 Th. Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux, 1153
21 F. **Abstinence**
22 Sa. Queenship of Mary
23 Su. **THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**
24 M. **SAINT BARTHOLOMEW THE APOSTLE**
25 Tu. Louis, King of France, 1270
26 W. 
27 Th. *Requiem*
28 F. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, 430 *Abstinence*
29 Sa. Beheading of Saint John the Baptist
30 Su. **THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**
31 M. Aidan, Bishop of Lindisfarne, 651
The following article is the result of a lecture given at St. Mary's by Dr. Rembert Herbert during Lent, 1987. Dr. Herbert is the Director of the SCHOLA CANTORUM of the Church of the Transfiguration in New York City.

**THE IDEA OF SACRED MUSIC**

Is the very concept of "sacred music" obsolete? Is the choice of music for the liturgy today a matter simply of taste and style which depends on the needs of the local parish? Is the concept of a universal standard, based on some inherent quality of the music, to be rejected in principle? If not, could one find an understanding of this concept which would be more exact than a kind of intuition that some music, some works of Palestrina or Bach perhaps, is more "sacred" than other music?

I would propose in what follows to consider these questions in a preliminary and tentative way, with reference to only one specific "variety" of sacred music, Gregorian chant. I propose to consider the chant, not in the context of medieval music theory, but in a context of early monastic writing about psalmody, Scripture, and contemplative prayer. These are, I believe, "sister works" to the chant, produced within the same tradition and designed to support and teach the same monastic ends of prayer and growth in the spiritual life.

When we study these writings we find two prominent themes which have a bearing on our question of the "idea of sacred music." First, we are told that a certain quality of mind is necessary in order to approach faithfully the teachings of Scripture. Gregory of Nyssa (d. 395), for example, speaks of Moses having to remove the "skins" of his worldly mind (his shoes) in order to "walk on holy ground" before the burning bush, that is, in order to comprehend Divine teachings. (The Life of Moses, Classics of Western Spirituality, p.59)

Closely related is a second theme in monastic teaching, which is that in our normal state, the secular world is not only all around us, but also within us, in the form of the wandering thoughts, opinions, emotions, and desires of daily life. In order to awaken the kind of intelligence which can "walk on holy ground," the influence of this inner material must be resisted. Gregory the Great (d. 604) wrote of this resistance: "Unless there is an ardent striving of the heart, the water of the world is not surmounted, that water by which the soul is ever being borne down to the lowest place." (Morals on the Book of Job, Oxford, John Henry Parker, 1844, Vol. II, pp.42f)

These ideas are relevant to our present discussion in the following way. We are urged to adopt a certain skepticism toward our own everyday thoughts, opinions, and feelings. We are warned that this material is not all there is and that it may indeed obscure the larger realities of the faith from us. To have confidence in this material is to put our faith in "the world." Those things which have to do with the Holy Mysteries, we are told, are of a different order.

And further, as we will see in a moment, monastic teaching associates music with resistance to these inner distractions, with Gregory's "ardent striving of the heart" against this downward stream. This is of course in contrast to many modern approaches to music, which see its function as stimulating rather than resisting these very emotions, and see "excitement" as a virtue to be cultivated in worship.
The idea of sacred music which I wish to put before you, then, one which I believe has its source in monastic teaching about prayer, is of music as "inner resistance," or better yet, as "inner preparation" first of all of those who are singing, but also of those listening. Music in this sense is sacred because it can help bring us into contact with that quality of mind within, which is of a different order from what we know in ordinary life. We may find it possible, for a moment, to "remove the shoes of the mind," so to speak. At the same time, this preparation may help us sense a corresponding presence—a quality of meaning beyond the literal—in the Scriptural text, the bush which is burning in our presence.

The nature of this inner preparation is suggested by the chant itself. One of the most universally recognized qualities of plainsong is the stillness which one may feel as it is sung. This quality points both to the essential nature of the music and to the way in which the music is tied to the tradition of monastic spirituality within which it finds its natural home.

According to Eastern and Western monastic Fathers of the Church, stillness is inseparable from contemplative prayer, where prayer is understood not as spoken words but as a condition of being receptive within. It is only in stillness that the "spiritual intelligence" can be awakened; as the psalmist says, "Be still, then, and know that I am God" (46:11). Stillness and knowing are inseparable.

The first step toward prayer is said to be the quieting of wandering thoughts and the gathering of inner attention. John Climacus (7th century) gives this advice to monks in their training for prayer: "Do not lose heart when your thoughts are stolen away. Just remain calm, and continually call your mind back." (The Ladder of Divine Ascent, Classics of Western Spirituality, p. 112) According to Hesychius of Jerusalem (5th century), "The ear of the silent mind will hear untold wonders." (Kadloubovsky and Palmer, Writings from the Philokalia on Prayer of the Heart, p.306) And Richard of St. Victor (12th century) wrote: "Let one who eagerly strives for contemplation of celestial things, who sighs for knowledge of divine things, learn to assemble the dispersed Israelites—let him endeavor to restrain the wanderings of the mind." (The Twelve Patriarchs, Classics of Western Spirituality, p. 142)

What is the source of this stillness which we may find in the singing of the chant? Sung without the support of conductor or organ, the music demands from singers an extraordinarily alert quality of inner listening. This demand brings a singer face to face with the "noise" and instability of his or her own thoughts and with the difficulty of finding a more gathered condition. In time, if the singer is willing to respond to this demand, the music itself may help the singer find a source for this quietness. The paradox here is that this stillness is active and is found by the mind's becoming more alert rather than being "lulled" or "soothed." But the activity is of a certain kind, a resistance against the familiar flow of everyday thoughts and feelings.

To learn this alert but quiet condition, constantly to return the listening attention again and again to the line of singing, to develop a real knowledge of the difficulty of so-called "simple" listening, and to learn to know with conviction, as St. Bernard said, that in real listening the ear can "teach the inner sight"—to learn to do this and to labor at this inner preparation continuously while singing—this could be the special calling of the church musician.

This preparatory function of music is treated most directly by the Fathers in discussion of psalmody. The recitation of psalms is consistently recommended as a means of quieting the mind and gathering the attention. This is understood as preparation for prayer, but among those writers most closely associated with the chant, it is preparation for prayer of a certain kind, what we might call "prayer of the Word," when the text begins to speak in the heart. We must look then not only at what these writers have to say about psalmody, but also at their teaching about Scripture in general. When we do this we find, to our surprise perhaps, that they are again speaking of preparation—the preparation of the text so that we can receive it.
So we gradually perceive in the writings of the Fathers a remarkable idea—that I stand over here on one side, and the sacred text stands over there on the other, and that both have to be shaped, fashioned, prepared, and presented, if there is to be a real meeting. Gregory the Great writes of both sides of the equation. Of the person, he says: “By means of the voice of psalmody, directed by the attention of the heart, a way to the heart is prepared for almighty God, so that he may pour into an attentive mind either the mysteries of prophecy or the grace of compunction.” (Homiliae in Hieremiam Prophetam, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, Volume 142, p.12)

And of the shaping of the text, Gregory writes:

Holy Scripture is sometimes meat to us, and sometimes drink. It is meat in the harder parts, in that it is in a certain sense broken in pieces by being explained, and swallowed after chewing; and it is drink in the plainer parts, in that it is imbibed just as it is found.

Morals on the Book of Job, I 47

Elsewhere he speaks of “bruising” and “pounding” the sacred text until its “aroma of meaning” is released.

Among the Fathers, including Gregory, this “explaining” of the text is usually accomplished by means of allegory. This is not the place to analyze this approach to Scripture in detail, but it is necessary for the present discussion that we get some taste of it. The central idea behind the symbolic use of Scripture is that all of Scripture speaks one consistent, single message in a consistent language. The message lies on a plane above the historical context of any given passage and is constant through the centuries. It has to do with transcendent realities—the laws and being of God, the inner nature of the human person reaching for God, the mysteries of Christ, His Incarnation, and His Church. The literal meaning of the text, what was called the “historical sense,” although extremely important in its own right, is most important as a bearer of this spiritual teaching, as protection for this “fruit”:

... whereas when ships carry fruits, they mix chaff with them, in order that they may transport them to land without injury, the days of the Fathers of yore are rightly described (Job 9:26) as like ships bearing fruit, for when the sayings of the Ancients tell of the mysteries of the spiritual life, they preserve these by means of the intermingled chaff of the narrative, and so they bring down to us the fruit of the Spirit under a covering, when they speak of historical things.

MBJ I 528

The author of this message is the Holy Spirit, and this fact is taken quite seriously by the Fathers. From that point of view, writings which seem to us many centuries apart are simultaneous, one sentence right together with another, Old and New Testaments created “together,” so to speak. From this point of view, it isn’t at all surprising that the image of Moses lifting up a bronze serpent before Israel should be meant to tell us of the lifting up of the Savior on the Cross. Or that the cool shadow of the Beloved, under which the Bride rests in the Song of Songs, would be that same shadow which is promised to St. Mary when the Angel says to her, “The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee.” The message and the language are consistent.

Paradoxically, this unity of Scripture expresses itself in diversity. According to the Fathers, a wonderful virtue of Scripture is its ability to speak differently to each believer, according to the occasion and the need. Any passage or image can have multiple meanings. As Gregory put it: “The Word of God is manna and gives, in truth, that taste in the mouth of the eater, which the wish of him who partakes it rightly deserves.” (MBJ II 448) Or again, “The Divine Word, being at the same time suited to all minds, yet never at variance with itself, condescends to the kind and character of its hearers.” (MBJ I 328) The mystery, of course, is in the line, ... “yet never at variance with itself.”

What is important to our present discussion in this teaching is that this “speaking” of the Word was thought to act within an individual not in terms of concepts and ideas but as an activity—a touch, a taste, or, as Gregory put it, an “aroma of meaning.” The real experience of this action, the feel of this touch, the awakening of a certain quality of mind in response—these change a person, if only for an instant. And if that person is singing, this experience changes the
sound, and the space that is filled by the sound.

I would suggest that what is important in the allegories of the Fathers is not any single "interpretation," but the fact that these multiple allegories, this wide-ranging play of the mind, is visible evidence of the inner action of the Word in contact with the awakened intelligence—a bit like a trace left in a cloud chamber by speeding electrons. Gregorian chant, I believe, draws on this same inner process. The same traces can be left in the sound of sacred chant as it is being sung, and they act as nourishment not only for the singers but for all those within hearing. If only for a few moments, something in the air is changed.

The written record of the Scriptural commentaries of the Fathers then is evidence of a process and at the same time is a guide to that process—an active, free, inner contact with the Word. The commentaries are worth our study, not so that we can assemble in our minds a collection of patristic readings of lines from the Bible, but so that we too can learn to engage the text by this process.

Traditional chant, perhaps because it is in unison and makes such strict demands on the attention, perhaps for other reasons as well, seems to have the ability not only to help prepare us for this process, to help us find the stillness and alertness necessary, but to become a reflection of this interior engagement as it takes place. The chant as it is being sung can be, in a sense, an unwritten record comparable to the written record of the Fathers' commentaries. One supports the other, because both draw on the same interior action. The two are, as I said at the outset, "sister works."

Among some monastic writers, this action of the Word essentially is prayer. And it is by opening to this action that the believer comes to sense within him or herself the presence of that different quality of intelligence which I believe is what we instinctively recognize as "sacred." As we have seen, preparation for this encounter is closely tied by some of the Fathers to music—to psalmody and chant. It is in this sense that traditional chant can be understood both as "sacred music" and as "preparatory music," the music of the "prayer of the Word."

There will always be an important place in worship for music which warms the heart and stirs the emotions. But beyond our emotions there is this other quality of mind which is able to communicate to us a sense of the reality of the Divine Mysteries and the presence of the Word in Scripture. This "otherness" within is one of the springs of our faith, and we need steady reminding of its existence, since it stands to some extent in contradiction to what we know of "reality" in daily life. To some extent, its laws and demands are different. Music of a certain kind, and probably many kinds of music under certain conditions, can help prepare us to be reminded, help us to resist "the world" as we have it inside us. And that may be what we should understand as the "sacred" function of music.

It seems to me that a recovery of an understanding of the various possible functions of music in worship, and, more important, a recovery of the practical functioning of this particular sacred aim in the form of choirs dedicated to the study of the chant, could provide us with an important point of reference in our thinking about music and liturgy. This recovery could tremendously enrich our spiritual life in itself, and might also provide some guidance as we try to organize and put to use in their proper places the many varieties of music which are available to us in the Church today.

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**PREACHERS IN JULY & AUGUST**

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A LETTER FROM THE TREASURER

Dear Parishioners & Friends of St. Mary's,

I am pleased to submit to you our Church's 1987 Budget as approved by your Trustees at their January meeting. For the first time in several years the operating budget for the current year is less than the actual amounts received and disbursed in the prior year. Despite this "lean-and-mean" 1987 budget, St. Mary's future is hardly gloomy.

Although many of you generously increased your 1987 pledges, total income has been reduced, in part, to compensate for declining interest rates which in turn lower the return on our investments. Rather than "dip into capital" to meet current expenses, the Budget Committee and the Trustees feel it is imperative to maintain and increase our portfolio.

In order to cover our general expenses, including a 100% increase in our property insurance premiums, the Trustees deferred salary increases for clergy and staff with the exception of a small increase for our parish secretary. The Board hopes that salary increases in 1988 will be possible.

In 1986 we paid our Diocesan Assessment in full. We expect to pay this year's in full, as well, even though it represents an increase of more than $8,000 for 1987.

The amount allocated to Repairs and Improvements was reduced significantly in the hopes that deferred maintenance will be short-lived owing to major improvements which must take place as a result of the preparatory work that the Centennial Restoration Committee has begun. As you know, the CRC's goal is to insure the total restoration of our buildings and their contents in time for the 100th anniversary of the opening of our present site on December 8, 1995. As one of the preliminary steps to meet this goal, an architectural and engineering firm recently started a detailed survey of our property.

In 1986 we received a number of small bequests for our endowment fund; in the first quarter of 1987, however, gifts totalling almost $100,000 were received. We hope that all of you will make provisions to enrich our capital funds.

Your continuing sacrifices insure the health and development of this place. The sacrifices of Fr. Wells, Fr. Sloane, and Fr. Willoughby enrich our Christian community in many ways. We are grateful to them for their work.

Yours in Christ,

Ian Renton McCart
Treasurer
CHURCH OF SAINT MARY THE VIRGIN
145 West 46th Street • New York, N.Y. 10036-8591

After prayerful consideration of the needs of my church and of God's gifts to me, I pledge for 1987:

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Please check □ Within each appropriate box. This pledge may be changed by notifying the Treasurer.

_________________ ______________________
Signature Date

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City ———— State ———— Zip ————

The Church of Saint Mary the Virgin depends for its operation expenses on the sacrificial giving of its clergy, parishioners, and friends. Pledge envelopes may be obtained from the Parish Secretary by phoning (212) 869-5830. We need and are grateful for your support.

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