

INVITATIONAL GROUPS

- Topic: *Ave Verum Corpus*: Music and the Eucharist
Presenter: Jan Michael Joncas, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul
Copresenters: Paul A. Jacobson, Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley
Marc Janos, Normandale College, Minneapolis
Vicki Klima, Director of the Worship Center,
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This seminar was intended to explore from historical and systematic perspectives the interaction of music, text and ritual in liturgical celebration of the eucharist as well as eucharistic devotion. Joncas took as his thesis that theological analysis of aesthetic artifacts is not as developed as the theological analysis of texts, and that few are the theologians that attempt to engage systematically music, dance or performance art as bearers of revelation. To this end, this invitational session was designed both to analyze and experience selected examples of devotional and liturgical music intended for the celebration and/or contemplation of the eucharistic mystery.

In order to narrow the focus for the session, Joncas proposed two limitations on the study's scope: the exclusion of strictly scriptural texts (i.e., psalms and canticles); and the inclusion of those compositions whose texts commented directly on the mystery of the eucharist (i.e., eucharistic hymnody).

The theological analysis of musical composition lags behind that of texts due to the difficulty of constructing a rigorous yet appropriate method by which the meaning of music can be evoked. For example, it is quite clear that the meaning of "Ave verum" is affected when the text is sung in chant or in Mozart's setting, but attempting to account for the surplus of meaning is quite difficult.

How then, does one approach this task? Joncas' own work has employed the tripartite semiotic framework of Jean Molino and Jean-Jacques Nattiez, which explores music as a "sign system." Therein, one concentrates on the processes by which music is generated ("poietics"), the process by which music is employed ("esthetics"), or the residue abstracted from both of these processes ("immanent analysis"). Thus, a "global analysis" of music as sign system would then involve: (1) analyzing what the composer/performer intends either by correlating the written music or recorded performance with external evidence of performative intent such as diaries ("deductive poietics"), or by extrapolating the

composer/performer's intention from the repeated patterns of musical elements such as melody, harmony, rhythm, etc. ("inductive poietics"); (2) analyzing what the auditor receives, either by correlating the perceived music with external evidence of thoughts and feelings in the auditor through interviews, etc. ("deductive esthetics"), or by extrapolating from the written or recorded work what an auditor might be expected to perceive ("inductive esthetics"); (3) analyzing the musical artifact without reference to the intent of either composer/performer or auditor ("neutral level"): an analysis of pitch, tonal, harmonic, timbre, etc., relationships; and (4) correlating the results of the other three investigations.

The application of semiotic theory to music is still in its infancy, and the sheer complexity of musical semiotics and the technical terminology by which it is undertaken is daunting. For example, in a recent study, Willem Marie Speelman applied the theory of meaning developed by Algirdas Julien Greimas (1917-1992) to the musical and literary discourses yoked in liturgical songs; Speelman takes about 300 densely written pages to analyze five Dutch liturgical songs.

Such scope and rigor were clearly outside of the scope of the morning's seminar, and Joncas suggested some possible approaches to a theological reading of the eucharistic doctrine operating in a particular example by concentrating on its character as *Artifact*, the *date* at which it was generated (including the matrices of the texts' translations, the dating of the music, and the dating of the yoking of text and tune); *Text* (both as aesthetic whole and a purveyor of theological insight); *Music* (analyzed most simply as interaction of pitch, volume, duration and timbre, but becoming more complex in terms of melody, texture and form); *Authorship* (of text, music, adaptation); *Use* (both officially prescribed and popularly received); and *Affinities/Sources* (identifying issues of intertextuality and reception).

After establishing the method, Joncas proceeded to lead an analysis of a broad range of eucharistic hymnody. We began with a Greek hymn and a *Kanon* (hymn cycle) by Cosmas the Melodist of St. Saba (d. ca. 760), with particular attention to Odes 1, 8, and 9. The difficulty of analysis here is that the former contains no musical notation at all, and the *kanon* would have been cantillated, rather than sung to what we would identify as a melody. Nevertheless, the texts provided useful insights to operative eucharistic theologies.

From the more familiar Latin tradition, the group examined and sang *Pange lingua gloriosi* (ca. 13. c.); and *Ave verum corpus* (ascr. to Innocent VI, d. 1362). Non-Roman Catholic eucharistic hymns were also analyzed. The first was Martin Luther's *Gott sei gelobet und gebenedeiet*. Here the group commented on the striking theme of social ramifications of the eucharist, to be heard again in Gary Macy's plenary talk. In this case, Luther's text reads *Gott geb' uns Allen seiner Gnade Segen, dass wir gehen auf seinen Wegen*, "May God bestow on us his grace and favor / To please him with our behavior." We then turned to Charles Wesley's *Victim Divine, Your Grace We Claim*, as set in the *Lutheran Book of*

Worship. Modern editorial policies and difficulties were highlighted with this hymn. In the LBW, it is set to a Vulpius tune, with a strong dance feel to it. Textually, the editors decided to alter Wesley's original last line "And show your real presence here" to "And show your very presence here."

Finally, the group sang and analyzed Joncas' own setting of a table prayer *God of Life and of the Living*, with an eye to fruitful approaches to eucharistic celebrations in the future.

In the last analysis, the morning's seminar session was full to overflowing, a perpetual problem in developing fields. Nevertheless, Joncas successfully engaged both participants and material, and gave encouragement, method and vocabulary for beginning to give our ears new eyes.

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