

BLACK CATHOLICISM AND MUSIC IN DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA:
PRAXIS IN A NEW KEY

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ABSTRACT

DOUGLAS SHADLE: Black Catholicism and Music in Durham, North Carolina:
Praxis in a New Key
(Under the direction of David García)

This thesis explores the history, vitality, and theology of liturgical music at a predominantly black Catholic parish in Durham, North Carolina. The introductory chapter explores the relationship of the methods used, diagnoses problems in the subject matter, and critiques approaches taken by others. The second chapter examines the history of music at Holy Cross. Chapter III explores the current musical practices at Holy Cross using traditional ethnographic methods. The final chapter reveals how theology can enter into fruitful dialogue with musicology. This dialogue may lead to original interpretations of musical life performed in the context of faith. At Holy Cross, music does not simply reflect the theology of black Catholics articulated by professional scholars; the theological content of music sung there does not reside solely in the musical and verbal texts. Instead, the parishioners set into motion an authentically Catholic praxis that rejects materialism while embracing the beauty of living.

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION AND METHODS

Nationwide, roughly a quarter of all people in the United States—about 72 million—are Roman Catholics.¹ Of these, approximately two and a half million are African Americans.² This number surpasses the membership of most of the largest African-American Christian denominations.³ In North Carolina, however, to be a Catholic is to be among a very small minority. Just under four percent of all North Carolinians are Catholics. Likewise, to be a person of color is to be a minority: just over seventy percent of the state is white. In 2000 the Diocese of Raleigh attempted to count registered black Catholics in the diocese and that total was 2,643, roughly three one-hundredths of one percent of the state's population of over 8 million.⁴ To be Catholic in North Carolina is to be on the cultural margins of the state, but to be *black* and Catholic is to be, in Ralph Ellison's understanding of the word, invisible.

Despite the large number of black Catholics in the United States, scholars in several disciplines—cultural studies, history, music, and even religion, to name but a few—continue

¹ Throughout this thesis, the terms “Catholic” and “Roman Catholic” are used interchangeably, unless otherwise noted.

² This number comes from an estimate by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Secretariat for African American Catholics in a report released on May 30, 2006. This report may be obtained at the following website: <http://www.usccb.org/saac/>. Statistics concerning the population of Catholics and other religions within a single country may be found on the website for the Central Intelligence Agency's World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook>.

³ The Roman Catholic Church operates on more of an international scale than the African-American denominations. The total number of black Catholics worldwide has been estimated at around 270 million, roughly a quarter of the world's Roman Catholics.

⁴ See Office of African Ancestry Ministry and Evangelization, Diocese of Raleigh, *The Study: The Plan for African Ancestry Ministry and Evangelization* (Raleigh, NC: Diocese of Raleigh, 2002).

to be vexed by or simply ignore the place of black Catholics in the larger fabric of American society and the world as a whole. Few locations in the United States can claim a relatively high concentration of black Catholics: New Orleans, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. are historically the only major metropolitan areas with a significant population of black Catholics. On the other hand, black Catholics may be found worshipping in every diocese in the nation, and several major cities have Masses, if not entire churches, devoted to black Catholics. In light of such a sparse dispersal throughout the country, any kind of large-scale historical or theoretical study of this unique cultural complex would prove and has proven to be an elusive but certainly not impossible undertaking. Simply defining the phrase black Catholicism proves difficult; each of its parts resists definition. The “essences” of both blackness and Catholicism are simply impossible to apprehend inductively.⁵ Nevertheless, as Cyprian Davis has emphasized throughout his career as a historian of black Catholics, “Catholicism” as we know it, especially in this country, but also throughout the world, would not exist without major contributions by believers from African ancestry.

Despite major historical and contemporary contributions of Africans and others of African ancestry to the development of the Church, a scholarly investigation radiating a Catholic ethos need not emphasize the “greatness” of any one person or community in order for the subject to be dignified. Instead, the best approach a smaller-scale study of subjects such as black Catholicism can adopt is an empathetic study of the embodiment, or incarnation, of blackness and Catholicism in a local context. In this chapter, I examine and

⁵ The number of African-American Studies programs in United States universities testifies to this fact, as does the increasing number of Catholic Studies programs at Catholic universities and colleges. Increasingly deeper inquiry into the nature of blackness and Catholicism enriches the total understanding that we have of both. Many theories of race are familiar in musicology, but less familiar are investigations into what it means to be Catholic. One of the best is by Richard McBrien. See his *Catholicism* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994). See also Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) and Thomas Howard, *On Being Catholic* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997).

critique the approaches of scholars in the disciplines of cultural studies, history, (ethno)musicology, and theology who have broached the intersection of blackness and Catholicism either directly or indirectly, and often with little empathy for their subjects. Each approach helps form the basis—positively or negatively—for my own path into this thesis, and I argue that the interdisciplinary methods I employ throughout the study are appropriately suitable and dignified for its subject: black Catholics at Holy Cross in Durham, North Carolina and their musical practices in the Sunday celebration of Mass.

Cultural Studies

Like black Catholicism, cultural studies as a concept ardently resists definition, but for the opposite reason: the sheer breadth and depth of the various cultural theories and the studies they generate make any abstraction of the concept impossible. Cultural theorists such as Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Cornel West tend to center their work on traditionally underrepresented or marginalized segments of society—peoples of color, women, the disabled, homosexuals, and the economically disadvantaged or excluded. The cultural umbrella of black Catholicism subsumes all five of these categories to a greater or lesser extent, but cultural studies from each of these categories rarely, if ever, approach or address black Catholicism explicitly. Even in cultural studies, therefore, black Catholics remain at the margins.

The explanation for their marginalization revolves around problems inherent in the act of representing the Catholic Church. Cultural theorists, particularly post-colonialist theorists such as Edward Said, tend to view “the West” as the source or locus of racism, sexism, hatred of homosexuality, and economic oppression. This approach leads to problematic discussions of two abstract supracultural conglomerates: the West and the Rest.

Since the histories of the Roman Catholic Church and European culture are so delicately but tightly intertwined, critics implicitly, tacitly, and all too easily lump the Roman Catholic Church under the umbrella of the West. This rhetorical strategy allows the Catholic Church to remain casually integrated within the narrative that casts a Western hegemony that dominates marginalized and colonized Others. The strategy falls apart when the overwhelming documentation of Catholic activities is brought to bear on this standard plot. The Catholic Church—the institutional hierarchy of the Church (i.e., the episcopacy and the papacy), the men who serve as ministerial priests, men and women religious, and the millions of secular Catholics who enact their faith in everyday life—exists in multiple cultural, social, and political spaces simultaneously. What happens on one level may or may not correlate with what happens on another; similarly, what happens in one place does not necessarily happen everywhere. Viewing or representing “the Church” as a unitary cultural actor or agent is therefore highly problematic in the context of cultural studies, where distillation of large cultural complexes into a single unit—essentialization—is part and parcel of the rhetorical discourse.

In this section, I critique two works in cultural studies that take “blackness” as their central subject: Samuel Floyd, Jr.’s *The Power of Black Music* and Ronald Radano’s *Lying up a Nation*.⁶ I have chosen these two from the myriad other African-American studies because they directly and substantially address race and music. Each of their theoretical approaches contains strengths and weaknesses that must be teased apart in order to develop the quilted system of methods I am proposing for this study.

⁶ Samuel Floyd, Jr., *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting its History from Africa to the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) and Ronald Radano, *Lying Up a Nation: Race and Black Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

Samuel Floyd, Jr. and The Power of Black Music

The idea of an “African cultural memory” forms the core of Samuel Floyd’s criticism and interpretation of black music. A passage from the introduction to *The Power of Black Music* articulates what the idea of cultural memory means to him:

My position in this book, however, is more in line with the survivalist theory, but my assumptions are quite different. In the pages that follow, I will demonstrate that African survivals exist not merely in the sense that African-American music has the same characteristics as its African counterparts, but also that the musical tendencies, the mythological beliefs and assumptions, and the interpretive strategies of African Americans are the same as those that underlie the music of the African homeland, that these tendencies and beliefs continue to exist as African cultural memory, and that they continue to inform the continuity and elaboration of African-American music.⁷

African cultural memory may serve as a potentially useful tool for approaching a variegated collection of musics. In a concluding passage, however, Floyd reveals the ramifications of his interpretive scheme developed from the idea of African cultural memory:

Writing this book has been in some ways a mystical experience, one in which epistemological, ontological, and metaphysical distinctions have blurred again and again, where on occasion myth was reality and reality myth—as at the crossroads of cultural memory and cognitive perception, or spiritual sensibility and objective truth, of musical composition and “musicking.”⁸

On the surface, Floyd’s critical and hermeneutical methods, which revolve around the trope of “Call–Response,” offer a workable pathway into a well-diversified portfolio of black musical styles. On a deeper level, however, the very act of blurring epistemological, ontological, and metaphysical distinctions leads to the dangerous—if not violent—exclusion of the very people whose music he is celebrating. Floyd achieves this with the rhetoric of essentialism veiled by the admittedly subjective notion of cultural memory. Regarding the

⁷ Floyd, *The Power of Black Music*, 5.

⁸ Ibid., 270.

performances and stylistic characteristics of works by various African-American composers, Floyd contends,

Any valid and effective criticism of them will reflect, directly or indirectly, critics' understandings and appreciations of these *essential* elements....They will discover and elucidate what makes a piece of African-American music "work" as an effective organization of energies—as a *work* of Call-Response.⁹

He readily implies that cultural memory is a defining feature of "blackness"—a topic that will be addressed more closely in chapter 3—and may be ignited by particular performed gestures, musical or otherwise. If the ignited cultural memory is subjective and the distinctions of epistemology, ontology, and metaphysics are blurred, how can Floyd's hermeneutic method account for a minority African-American group like black Catholics? Whose memory is authoritative? Does it not matter that "Catholic culture" often moves fluidly—even if with high viscosity—among different races? Blurring the philosophical distinctions above leads to a set of destructive consequences: the ontic, epistemic, and metaphysical foundations of a black Catholic's catholicity (e.g., professed Catholic faith, baptism, confirmation, conversion, etc.) simply do not matter. With this rhetorical strategy, Floyd can move from writing about "black music" to writing about "dominant black music."

Floyd's account of the conversion to Christianity of many blacks in America explicitly reinforces this strategy. He explains how "the Christian God was substituted for the African High God" and, quoting Christian historian Albert Raboteau, how central tenets of the Catholic faith were easily adopted by African slaves exposed to Roman Catholicism. He continues,

This African-Catholic syncretism made the transition for Africans to Western culture easier in Latin America and in some parts of the United States, particularly New Orleans, and served as support for the continuation of

⁹ Ibid., 266.

African traditions in the New World. But it was Protestantism that fueled the religion and religious fervor of enslaved and free blacks in the United States. Protestantism, with its more direct access to the High God through song and praise, made possible the emergence of a new song for Africans, a new song in which they could express themselves as freely as they had in their homeland.¹⁰

This problematic account ignores history in order to promote the idea of Floyd's rhetoric of the dominant culture. First, the religious tradition to which Africans were exposed depended largely, if not solely, on what the surrounding local religious climate offered; black Catholics, both slave and free, could be found in Catholic colonies and areas such as Louisiana (French and Spanish), Florida (Spanish), and Maryland (English). Secondly, by excluding free blacks from his account of Roman Catholic converts, Floyd suggests that free black Catholics played virtually no role in defining black Christian culture. Is it unreasonable to assume that free blacks evangelized slaves and perhaps even whites? Thirdly, beyond that minor omission, he also conveniently lumps African religion into a cultural mass. Many parts of Africa had been exposed to Christianity and Islam for centuries before European colonists began the slave trade; uncovering the stories of West African religious and cultural movement in the years between the western expansion of Islam and the slave trade would go far beyond Floyd's study, but perhaps there is a historical reason why African and Roman Catholic religious beliefs and practices are so easily aligned. Lastly, that slaves theologically preferred Protestantism ("with its more direct access to the High God") to Roman Catholicism plays into decades-old stereotypes of Roman Catholicism in America and ignores the mediatory elements in some African religions.¹¹

¹⁰ Ibid., 39.

¹¹ Catholics have been accused of worshipping Mary, the saints, and even priests. See Philip Jenkins, *The New Anti-Catholicism: The Last Acceptable Prejudice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) and Mark Massa, *Anti-Catholicism in America: The Last Acceptable Prejudice* (New York: Crossroad, 2003).

The idea of cultural memory is an important feature of contemporary theories of race, but Floyd's haphazard application of this concept for his interpretation of black music denies the historical specificity of individuals and groups whose experiences as African Americans differ radically from his own, including black Catholics. Ronald Radano, not an African American himself, approaches the same issues from a radically different intellectual and rhetorical perspective.

Ronald Radano and Lying up a Nation

Early in *Lying Up a Nation: Race and Black Music*, Radano criticizes the essentializing and formalizing tendencies in the work of Floyd and others:

The intent of tropological revision—to radicalize normative ways of knowing in order to convey a sense of creative freedom out of bounds—is obscured. Signifying [a major trope in Floyd's work] becomes, against the commitments to deconstruction as a critical practice, a formal model ready for application;

and later, "What we have once again [in the work of Houston Baker and Henry Louis Gates] is a return to the primordial wellspring of black origins, to a romantic past that transmits into the present the pure, untainted soundings of *Volk* essence."¹² The romantic past to which he refers comprises "ahistorical" and "idealist" discursive strategies that obscure any revelation of the lived experiences of individuals. In order to counter previous strategies in African-American studies scholarship, Radano looks to social historians such as Philip D. Morgan and Ira Berlin, who makes the claim that "slaves (like their owners) were simply not the same people in 1819 that they had been in 1719 or 1619, although the origins of the slave population often had not changed."¹³ This claim, which is by no means radical historicism,

¹² Radano, *Lying Up a Nation*, 39.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 63.

simply suggests that slaves, and by extension any subset of a population, cannot be historically treated as a monolithic unitary actor; where people are, what they do, and when they do it all matter.

Although he makes these points strongly with regard to black music throughout the work, Radano appears more ambivalent about the roles of religion, especially ritual and theological specificity, in the definition and creation of local musical cultures. Radano remarks that “By the 1790s, slaves’ participation had become relatively common in churches and particularly at the services of white Protestants, Baptists, and Methodists, whose quotidian religious practices offered a powerful and influential alternative to a stalled Anglican evangelicalism.”¹⁴ What he means by “Protestants” is unclear, but one can only assume that he is referring to Lutherans, Reformed churches, or perhaps Moravians, all of whom have radically different musical traditions. For Radano, however, the specificity of what these groups might have been singing does not play an important role in narrating the story of interracial musical exchange.¹⁵ Similarly, Radano relies almost exclusively on revivalist (Methodist, Baptist, etc.) conceptions of “conversion” in his account of conversion ceremonies. In Roman Catholic practice, the most important experience of conversion in the life of a non-Christian occurs at the moment of baptism, when the person receiving the sacrament dies to the life of sin and is reborn in the life of Christ. From that moment forward, conversion is a continual lifelong process. The theology of baptismal practice (and conversion) is just one of many critical differences among Christian denominations, and

¹⁴ Ibid., 117.

¹⁵ Radano also suggests that “revivalism represented a crucible for interracial exchange,” a launching point for the bulk of his discussion about slave religious musical practices. Roman Catholics are ignored throughout the discussion.

Radano consistently ignores such differences by using the term “American Christianity” throughout this segment on antebellum religious music.¹⁶

By doing so, he misses critical music–cultural phenomena that occurred in various localities in the antebellum period. Consequently, he falls into the same ahistorical trap that snares Floyd. In Louisiana, for example, a black Catholic named Augustin Metoyer, the son of a slave named Coincoin and her white owner, had, according to Cyprian Davis, “become the head of the community of Isle Brevelle.” Metoyer and his family

purchased land and slaves, and in time the community included other free people of color who had married into the Metoyer family. Before the Civil War, Augustin had become one of the wealthiest men in the Natchitoches area. He constructed a church in 1829 named in honor of St. Augustine. It was a mission of the parish of St-François in Natchitoches and is one of the oldest black Catholic churches in the country.¹⁷

Communities like Isle Brevelle certainly served as “crucibles” for interracial cultural exchange. Davis adds, “Always strong in Catholicity and French culture, it would continue to be so through the twentieth century, preserving much of its ethnic flavor in family celebrations, traditional cuisine, [etc.]” What music was performed at this church—during liturgies and in extralitururgical ceremonies? What music is performed there today? Questions such as these can only be answered if interrelated religious, ritual, and cultural differences are teased apart. In light of his discussion of Isle Brevelle, Davis claims that “the fact is that the history of black Americans is a many-textured phenomenon, embracing highly diverse social and cultural segments.”¹⁸ The same may be said of black Catholics.

¹⁶ Radano, *Lying Up a Nation*, 115-39.

¹⁷ Cyprian Davis, *History of Black Catholics in the United States* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 76.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

History and the Sources of the Study

No one has done more for the disciplined historical study of black Catholicism than Cyprian Davis, OSB, a Benedictine at St. Meinrad Archabbey in Indiana. Sixteen years after its publication, his landmark study, *History of Black Catholics in the United States*, still stands as the only large-scale post-Vatican II investigation of the roles black Catholics have played in the development of the Church in the United States and abroad. In his review of the book, historian Randall M. Miller rightly comments that Davis's work as a whole "favors the institutional over the cultural and social." Miller means that the perspective of the work aims downward from the ecclesiastical hierarchy, not upward or laterally from the average layperson.¹⁹ Although this mild criticism certainly holds, Davis himself recognizes the weaknesses inherent in his approach: "Ideally, the history of the black Catholic community should be the synthesis of carefully researched histories carried out on the parish level. To a large extent this research is still lacking."²⁰ Davis's work may therefore serve as a launching pad for more detailed and localized studies of black Catholicism in America.

Since the publication of *History of Black Catholics in the United States* in 1990, interest in black Catholic history has flowered tremendously. Numerous scholars have written studies that approach black Catholic history at the parish level, thereby fleshing out the cultural and social dimensions lacking in Davis's work. These books include histories of parishes in Washington, D.C., New Orleans, Omaha, Newark, Cleveland, and Savannah (GA).²¹ The primary difference between these local studies and Davis's more comprehensive

¹⁹ Randall M. Miller, review of *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*, by Cyprian Davis, *Journal of Southern History* 58 (1992): 765.

²⁰ Davis, *History of Black Catholics*, xi.

²¹ R. Bentley Anderson, *Black, White, and Catholic: New Orleans Interracialism, 1947-1956* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2005); Jack D. Angus, *Black and Catholic in Omaha: A Case of Double Jeopardy*.

study is the nature of the source material. Davis relies primarily on documentary evidence contained in archdiocesan, diocesan, or religious order archives as well as written papal and episcopal regulations.²² The local studies rely much more heavily on material obtained in parish archives, local and national journalistic publications, and recorded interviews. Their emphasis on the local fills Davis's deftly sketched outline with a rainbow of colors. Recent parish studies, especially Danny Duncan Collum's work on a parish in Natchez, Mississippi, also fill out the history of black Catholicism in the post-World War II era, a serious but justified omission in Davis's book.²³

Unlike other studies of local parishes, my own work focuses on a specific local practice—the music of the Mass—and not on the general history of the parish. In addition to the methods of other local parish historians, therefore, I use data collected in the field, the Mass celebrations of Holy Cross. Fieldwork cannot directly reveal the historical dimension of musical practices, but it does serve as one part of the ongoing history of the church. It is a lens through which to look both forward and backward into the musical life of the parish. The other specific source materials I use in this study are interviews with parishioners and others with a deep connection to the Holy Cross community, parish archival documents, papal and episcopal letters and regulations, articles from *North Carolina Catholics* (a lay newspaper), and other miscellaneous documents obtained from the Diocese of Raleigh and

The First Fifty Years of St. Benedict the Moor Parish (New York: iUniverse, Inc., 2004); Dorothy Ann Blatnica, *At the Altar of their God: African American Catholics in Cleveland, 1922-1961* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995); Morris J. MacGregor, *The Emergence of a Black Catholic Community: St. Augustine's in Washington* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999); Gary Wray McDonogh, *Black and Catholic in Savannah, Georgia* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993); and Mary A. Ward, *A Mission for Justice: The History of the First African American Catholic Church in Newark, New Jersey* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2002).

²² Examples of religious archives are the Oblate Sisters of Providence Archives and the Josephite Archives, both in Baltimore.

²³ Danny Duncan Collum, *Black and Catholic in the Jim Crow South: The Stuff That Makes Community* (New York: Paulist Press, 2006).

the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's North Carolina Collection. The printed documents rarely provide direct information about musical practices at Holy Cross, but they do serve two purposes: they offer space to argue about the cultural climate affecting liturgical practices at the parish and reveal practices at nearby parishes that received more attention from the local press.

(Ethno)musicology

All too often, the religious dimensions of culture remain absent in musicological studies, even when the subject is religious music. I have already outlined some of the problems associated with leaving this space unfilled in the many sub-disciplines of cultural studies, and the same problems continue to plague musicology. One notable exception is the collective work of the Forum on Music and Christian Scholarship, a loosely affiliated group of musicologists who make the intersections of religion and music the central foci of their work.²⁴ On the other hand, ethnomusicologists historically have been more amenable to the incorporation of religious culture into their scholarship. One recently published collection of essays, *Music in American Religious Experience*, features the work of many prominent ethnomusicologists and sensitively treats the roles of music in the religious lives of the many faith traditions in America.²⁵

Despite their efforts to incorporate religious culture into broader discussions of musical practices, ethnomusicologists have not often chosen Roman Catholicism as the

²⁴ Parts of this thesis were presented at the F.M.C.S.'s fourth annual meeting at Calvin College in February, 2006. For an example of thoroughly theological musical studies, see Michael Marissen, *The Social and Religious Designs of J.S. Bach's Brandenburg Concertos* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) and his *Lutheranism, Anti-Judaism, and Bach's St. John Passion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

²⁵ Philip Bohlman, Edith L. Blumhofer, and Maria M. Chow, ed., *Music in American Religious Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

central religious faith discussed in their work.²⁶ Nevertheless, two ethnomusicologists, Mary McGann and Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje, have used traditional ethnomusicological methods—fieldwork and ethnography—to study specifically the musical practices of black Catholics in the United States. McGann’s work focuses on a parish in San Francisco; DjeDje’s fits into a larger conglomeration of studies that revolve around religious musical life in Los Angeles. Their approaches to fieldwork, however, differ markedly from my own. Both McGann and DjeDje use fieldwork to serve the ends of pre-defined broader scholarly projects, whereas the data I collect from the field is used as a starting point for further reflection and investigation.

Mary McGann, RSCJ, is the author of four liturgical studies that focus on music for the Mass.²⁷ In her third study, *Exploring Music as Worship and Theology*, she begins with the premises that music is worship and expresses an embodied theology. From this epistemic vantage point, she states that her volume is about method for the integrated interdisciplinary approach to liturgical studies.²⁸ Her method draws from theories and scholarly orientations from three different fields: liturgical studies, ethnomusicology, and ritual studies.²⁹ In an ethnographic investigation, the dialogue between these fields asks the following question among many, “How does this community’s musical performance confirm, expand, or

²⁶ Ann Morrison Spinney’s essay on Wabanaki Catholicism in the aforementioned collection is a notable exception. See her “Medeolinuwok, Music, and Missionaries in Maine,” in Bohlman, Blumhofer, and Chow, *Music in American Religious Experience*, 57-82.

²⁷ Mary E. McGann, “Interpreting the Ritual Role of Music in Christian Liturgical Practice,” (PhD dissertation: Graduate Theological Union, 1996); Edward Foley and Mary McGann, *Music and the Eucharistic Prayer* (Washington, DC: The Pastoral Press, 1988); Mary E. McGann, *Exploring Music as Worship and Theology: Research in Liturgical Practice* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002); and Mary E. McGann, *A Precious Fountain* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005).

²⁸ McGann, *Exploring Music*, 7.

²⁹ Ibid., 13-36.

challenge current understandings of the embodied theology mediated in worship?” In order to answer this question, she feels that “the insights of contemporary liturgical theologians into six theological dimensions of Christian worship, understood to be *perennial* and *enduring*, can serve as a springboard for the exploration.”³⁰ For McGann, then, the six theological dimensions of Christian liturgy are normative and fixed, thereby transcending context. This view poses problems in situations where the boundaries of liturgical space and non-liturgical space are less clearly defined, as they often are in vibrant Catholic parishes, especially African-American parishes such as the one she studied: Our Lady of Lourdes in San Francisco.

McGann utilizes her prescribed methods in her fourth major study, *A Precious Fountain*, which assesses and interprets the worship activities, especially the musical practices, of Our Lady of Lourdes. Despite its predominantly musical focus, her conclusions speak largely, if not only, to liturgical scholars broadly defined. The following set of statements testifies to the non-correlation of her work to the academic musicological establishment:

Focusing specifically on the pivotal role of music—as worship and as theology—I have illustrated how the Lourdes community’s music-making is integral to their worship; to the processes of liturgical change and inculturation they set in motion; to the manner in which ecclesial relationships are mediated in their worship; to their perceptions of liturgical aesthetics and creativity; and to how their worship becomes sacred time and space. I have explored as well how this community’s embodied theology, mediated in musical performance, addresses current understandings of the theological character of worship—as theological-trinitarian, pneumatological, sacramental, biblical, ecclesiological, and eschatological.³¹

³⁰ Ibid., 67. Emphasis mine. She identifies the six dimensions as: theological–trinitarian, pneumatological, sacramental, biblical, ecclesiological, and eschatological; *ibid.*, 67-79.

³¹ McGann, *A Precious Fountain*, 259. Emphasis in the original.

In sum, what she has illustrated is how the worship music at Our Lady of Lourdes serves as one example of an infinite variety of ways that worship music in general expresses an embodied theology, a fact she takes—not wrongly—as given. Two major questions she is answering, then, are: How does this community’s worship function within the theological model she has proposed and how can my methods richly illuminate the individual dimensions of the model? Her ethnographic work starts with a globalized model, moves from there to the local parish and back to the model, thereby not letting the subjects of her study direct the flow of her investigation. By doing so—and this is my aim in this thesis—the theological windows that open from fieldwork may or may not turn out to be the six dimensions of liturgical theology, even if the starting point for theological reflection is liturgy.

In her work on gospel music, Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje adopts an approach similar to McGann’s, except it is inverted. Instead of using one example to illustrate possibilities within the framework of a larger model, she begins with a large-scale framework (gospel music in California) and seeks out many different examples to enrich the framework as a whole. By taking the single phenomenon of gospel music in church and drawing general conclusions from its adoption in many different contexts, DjeDje blurs the specificity and multiplicity of meanings that arise from this practice.

In her 1986 study on the adoption of gospel music in three Los Angeles Catholic settings, DjeDje uses traditional ethnomusicological methods—interviews, fieldwork, and the like—but draws superficial conclusions regarding the place of black styles of music in Catholic worship. In concluding the article, Cogdell claims, “This study has shown that when introducing a new musical idea certain social and philosophical issues must be taken into

account if the innovation is to be accepted or permanently adopted.” She later adds that “the aesthetic preferences of the audience appear to be the deciding factor as to what should and should not be included, thus giving rise to continuous change and differentiation or to the maintenance of tradition.”³² Pastoral, theological, and social considerations and decisions go beyond the mere aesthetic preferences of the congregation, but DjeDje gives these issues no substantial space in her final assessment. Her overly generalized conclusions seem to ignore the distinctness of Roman Catholicism, its rich history of liturgical inculturation, and the function of the Catholic mass in the life of an individual and the community.³³ What she concludes—that aesthetic preferences are deciding factors for the adoption of liturgical styles—could be said of any church, so long as theological differences are ignored.

What DjeDje’s work shows is that issues that can be explained aesthetically, socially, or philosophically only scratch the surface of the rich experiences of being part of a worshipping community on the local and international levels.³⁴ The *religious* dimensions of worship that define and distinguish a community’s place in Christianity (e.g., the Eucharistic Real Presence in Roman Catholic worship) simply cannot be ignored if a scholar wishes to treat the persons in the community with sensitivity. DjeDje’s larger project—the study of gospel music in California—focuses on musical practices and their attendant social contexts, but it diminishes the importance of the connections between practice and context, liturgy and

³² Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje, “Change and Differentiation: The Adoption of Black American Gospel Music in the Catholic Church,” *Ethnomusicology* 30 (1986): 244.

³³ She does briefly address the role of the pastor in liturgical planning, but she considers his role passive. See DjeDje, “Change and Differentiation,” 243. On inculturation, its history, and multi-dimensional significance, see Anscar J. Chupungco, *Cultural Adaptation of the Liturgy* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

³⁴ In an earlier article, she also focuses on social issues such as desire for socioeconomic advancement and acceptance. See Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje, “An Expression of Black Identity: The Use of Gospel Music in a Los Angeles Catholic Church,” *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 7 (1983): 148-60.

life, faith and action, religion and culture.³⁵ Only when religious faith (over and above religious practice, which can be observed externally) is taken seriously as a subject of investigation can we truly come to understand the role of music in worshipping contexts.

Religious Studies

Outside of liturgical studies, music is an alien subject for most theologians. In the broader community of black Christian theologians, however, music—worship or otherwise—often plays an integral part in the expression, if not the very definition, of blackness. For example, the seminal black liberation theologian James Cone asserts that “the power of song in the struggle for black survival—that is what the spirituals and blues are about. I grew up in a small black community in Bearden, Arkansas, where black music was essential for identity and survival.”³⁶ Without black music, Cone feels his very identity and livelihood as a human being would be in jeopardy. Since music is so tightly intertwined with the discursive concept of blackness, Jesuit theologian Joseph A. Brown identifies black sacred song as “the foundation for African American theological endeavors.”³⁷ Indeed, the words and melodies of the spirituals fully permeate Brown’s theological reflections in *To Stand on the Rock* and an essay on the foundations for an African-American Catholic theology by M. Shawn Copeland.³⁸ In the works of other prominent black Catholic theologians, the presence of

³⁵ Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje, “The California Black Gospel Tradition: A Confluence of Musical Styles and Cultures,” in *California Soul: Music of African Americans in the West*, ed. Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje and Eddie S. Meadows (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 124-78.

³⁶ James Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation* (New York: Seabury Press, 1972), 1.

³⁷ Joseph A. Brown, S.J., *To Stand on the Rock: Meditations on Black Catholic Identity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 53.

³⁸ M. Shawn Copeland, “Foundations for Catholic Theology in an African American Context,” in *Black and Catholic: The Challenge and Gift of Black Folk*, ed. Jamie T. Phelps (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1997), 107-48.

music and song is less overt but certainly tangible in titles of chapters, names of sub-headings, and even sporadically in prose.³⁹

The practice of incorporating musical thoughts derived from spirituals into prose achieved its most recognized expression in *The Souls of Black Folk* by W.E.B. DuBois, particularly chapter XIV, “The Sorrow Songs.” This chapter, like the others, begins with two epigraphs, a poem and a snippet of printed music; unlike the others, the poem is a “Negro Song.” DuBois describes this practice as a musical communication through history and spirit: “And so before each thought that I have written in this book I have set a phrase, a haunting echo of these weird old songs in which the soul of the black slave spoke to men. Ever since I was a child these songs have stirred me strangely.”⁴⁰ Beyond the practice of incorporating the spirituals as discursive elements into theological prose, DuBois’s notion of “double consciousness” figures prominently in the writings of black Catholic theologians. For many black Catholics, consciousness has been tripled: as Americans, as blacks, and as Roman Catholics. Diana L. Hayes, however, sees the era of triple consciousness for African-American Catholics as over:

This has been our quandary in the four hundred years of our sojourn in this land. But the confusion is now at end; the turmoil is over; the strivings are reconciled. There is evidence throughout this nation that our Catholic African American sisters and brothers are taking down their harps from the walls, they are taking them out of the dark trunks and closets where they have been gathering the dust of the ages and are proclaiming, as our poetic brother did years ago, that we, too, sing America.⁴¹

³⁹ For example, documents released by the United Conference of Catholic Bishops concerning black Catholics are called *Plenty Good Room* and *Keep Your Hand on the Plow*.

⁴⁰ W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, in *The Oxford W.E.B. DuBois Reader*, ed. Eric J. Sundquist (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 231.

⁴¹ Diana L. Hayes, “We’ve Come This Far by Faith: Black Catholics in Their Church,” in *Taking Down Our Harps: Black Catholics in the United States*, ed. Diana L. Hayes and Cyprian Davis (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 9.

The sounds of America *and* Roman Catholicism are being sung in black churches nationwide. It is the obligation of the rest of us to accept these gifts by listening to them and then to sing along.

As I have noted elsewhere, any kind of reciprocity toward theology in musicological studies of black music is virtually non-existent, except in the work of Jon Michael Spencer and those who practice his “theomusicology.” The guiding principle of theomusicology, as outlined consistently in Spencer’s works, is that musicology must be a theologically informed discipline, especially when the subject is black music. Spencer, however, does not take his own methods far enough. A theological spirit certainly resides in Spencer’s writings, just as the music of the spirituals resides in the writings of black theologians, but there is surprisingly little true dialogue with the discipline of theology, whose resources are vast and whose intellectual traditions are extremely far-reaching. Spencer rightfully believes religion underpins most if not all forms of black music. Taking an approach similar to James Cone’s in *The Spirituals and the Blues*, Spencer, in *Blues and Evil*, attempts to decode and articulate a “blues theology,” or a black theology expressed in and by the blues.⁴² His conclusions are therefore “theologically informed,” but they are informed by the theology of his subject of study, not necessarily his own. In other words, Spencer searches for the theological content of black music; he does not necessarily reflect upon it through the eyes of faith. The objects of theological inquiry and reflection are faith and its expressions by people, often in community. Music of a worship service, which certainly has a theological content of its own and expresses the faith of those who create it, may therefore serve as a rich source of further

⁴² Jon Michael Spencer, *Blues and Evil*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993.

theological reflection. What might a theologically informed musicology that expresses an original theological position look like?

The methodological implications of a theologically informed musicology are profound, particularly for ethnographically oriented studies, which treat living human persons as their subject. A.G. Sertillanges, a French Dominican, offers clues about the profundity of integrating disciplines:

Comparative study: by that we mean widening our special work through bringing it into touch with all kindred disciplines, and then linking these specialties and the whole group of them to general philosophy and theology.

It is not wise, it is not fruitful, even if one has a very clearly limited special subject, to shut oneself up in it forthwith. That is putting on blinkers [*sic*]. No branch of knowledge is self-sufficing; no discipline looked at by itself alone gives light enough for its own paths. In isolation it grows narrow, shrinks, wilts, goes astray at the first opportunity.⁴³

Later in the same chapter, he adds, “Everything is in everything, and partitions are only possible by abstraction,” and, “Everything is linked together, light falls from one subject on another, and an intelligent treatise on any of the sciences alludes more or less to all the others.”⁴⁴ Sertillanges’s sentiments certainly nourish the eclectic grouping of methods proposed for this study, including theology. According to Sertillanges, all roads lead to philosophy and theology, so it only makes sense to make theology one of the fundamental disciplinary approaches to a multidisciplinary historical ethnographic project. Nevertheless, my proposed methods are potentially no different than any other study with an interdisciplinary engine.

⁴³ A.G. Sertillanges, *The Intellectual Life: Its Spirit, Conditions, Methods*, tr. Mary Ryan (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1998), 102.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 102-03.

What differentiates this study from run-of-the-mill interdisciplinarity is the Catholic, and specifically personalistic, nature of its investigative perspective. Personalism as an openly expressed worldview barely exists in the discipline of musicology, and its developments in philosophy are probably not very well known in that community.⁴⁵ Since the Second Vatican Council, Catholicism cannot be separated from the personalistic teachings of the conciliar documents, especially *Gaudium et Spes* (ch. I) and *Lumen Gentium* (ch. II), which emphasize the “dignity of the human person.” Karol Wojtyła, one of the principal contributors to conciliar documents and who later became Pope John Paul II, succinctly defines the ethical norm of personalism in his book *Miłość I Odpowiedzialność*, or *Love and Responsibility* to English readers:

This norm, in its negative aspect, states that the person is a kind of good which does not admit of use and cannot be treated as an object of use and as such the means to an end. In its positive form the personalistic norm confirms this: the person is a good towards which the only proper and adequate attitude is love.⁴⁶

When applied to scholarly investigation, the personalistic norm asks the researcher essentially to love the objects or subjects being studied—to treat them with tenderness and empathy. When seen through the eyes of faith, such an application of the personalistic norm also allows the object of study itself to direct the flow of the investigation, to guide the study where it may go. Finally, the successful adoption of the personalistic norm creates a variation on Schleiermacher’s hermeneutic circle: the faith of the scholar allows the subject being studied to guide the investigation, and the subject’s expressed faith continues to inspire the

⁴⁵ The most well-known practitioners of some form of personalism—especially Catholic personalism—are Emmanuel Mounier, Jacques Maritain, Max Scheler, Edith Stein, Roman Ingarden, Karol Wojtyła, Gabriel Marcel, Vaclav Havel, John Crosby, and Rocco Buttiglione.

⁴⁶ Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, tr. H.T. Willetts (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 41.

scholar to continue working. I can only pray that my own faith allows me to begin to understand the faith of those whom I treat as the source of my own inspiration.

The two chapters that follow address how musical practices are integral parts of the history and contemporary life of Holy Cross. In the fourth and final chapter, I reflect on both previous chapters through the prism of theology as it has been practiced by black Catholic theologians. A second layer of theological reflections emerges from the first as the life of Holy Cross parish, as expressed in the Mass, diverges from standard black Catholic theological discourses. My own experiences at Holy Cross reveal that celebrations of the Mass there are culturally distinct and cross-culturally relevant, significant, and meaningful. They are touched by blackness, and they are Catholic; they are authentically Catholic, and they are truly catholic.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORY AND MUSIC OF HOLY CROSS

In this chapter I take up the thread of historical specificity that Radano expounds in *Lying Up a Nation*. Changes in musical practices at Holy Cross, around the country, and around the world may be attributed to a variety of factors, but most importantly they stem from the works of individual persons, whose actions were conditioned not only by their socio-cultural locations but also their own personal faith and belief systems.

The Early Years: Before Vatican II

If to be black and Catholic in North Carolina today is to be invisible, then being a “Catholic Negro” in North Carolina during the 1920s was even worse. It meant being less than invisible, to the extent that is possible. At that time, North Carolina’s Catholic population totaled just over 8,000 people, less than one-third of one percent of the entire population of the state.¹ The majority of North Carolinians viewed Catholics of any kind with suspicion, and Catholic missionaries viewed North Carolina as foreign territory ripe for evangelization—more ripe than China itself, according to Bishop Vincent Waters (1945-1974), who wished to found a church in every county in the state.² In 1924, a group of Catholic laymen around the Washington, DC area founded an organization called the Federated Colored Catholics, whose purpose was “to unite black Catholics in a closer bond,

¹ William Powers, *Tar Heel Catholics: A History of Catholicism in North Carolina* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2003), 237.

² Ibid., 41-42.

to increase the possibility of Catholic education in the black community, to raise the overall position of black Catholics within the church, and to bring about a greater participation of black Catholics in the cause of racial justice.”³ Although the Federated Colored Catholics was not the first organization of its kind, it brought issues of race relations and interracial justice to the forefront of Catholic social consciousness. The FCC eventually split into two camps: one, led by John LaFarge, SJ, wanted to combat racial injustice with interracial dialogue and improved race relations; the other, forcefully led by Dr. Thomas Wyatt Turner, a black Catholic layman, saw the problem of racial injustice as rooted in “discriminatory actions that prevented blacks from becoming mature and responsible members of the church.”⁴ In an age of overt racial discrimination and the legal doctrine of “separate but equal,” the logical conclusions of each ideology resulted in two widely divergent practical consequences: full integration of segregated parishes (LaFarge) or a laissez-faire segregation in which black parishes are given equal resources and ecclesial legitimacy (e.g., through the assignment of black priests). In North Carolina, the number of black Catholics was so low that no large-scale protest of inequality or injustice among parishes could be staged, so neither option was a viable alternative to the de facto segregation already in place at this time.

The climate of race relations among Catholics in North Carolina was not as turbulent as in other areas of the nation, but that is not to say that blacks were treated with any more dignity than in other regions. In 1938, the *Bulletin of the Catholic Laymen’s Association of Georgia* published selections from a “Seven-Point Program” from Most Rev. Gerald O.

³ Davis, *The History of Black Catholics*, 220.

⁴ Ibid., 229.

O'Hara, Bishop of Savannah-Atlanta, one of which dealt with black children: "Negro Children:...These little ones are equal members of flock; they are equally a charge on our fraternal sympathies. I place their needs, without distinction, alongside all those other needs of our Diocese which I am laying on your hearts."⁵ O'Hara's position lays a middle road between the two extremes of LaFarge and Turner. He recognizes the fundamental and absolute equality of the races but does nothing to erase the ecclesial rift among whites, who typically had fully formed parishes, and blacks, who most often worshipped in mission churches. It is safe to assume that this ecclesial situation in 1930s North Carolina was no different than in Georgia, because African-American churches were by and large in the same towns, even small towns, as white parishes. Additionally, as a result of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore held in 1884, most blacks who had any exposure to the Catholic Church received it at school. From 1887-1936, the Church founded six elementary schools in towns with relatively large numbers of Catholics: New Bern, Wilmington, Washington, Greensboro, Asheville, and St. Monica's in Raleigh.⁶ These were often the best schools in the area available to black children.

Two churches devoted to African Americans in the Diocese of Raleigh began their operations in the 1930s. Two short stories—one about each church—reveal how the two prevailing attitudes toward race relations manifested themselves musically. The Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus founded the Holy Cross Mission in Durham, North Carolina in 1939. In his memoirs, Monsignor William Francis O'Brien, a leading developer of the Diocese of Raleigh and the city of Durham in particular, recounts,

⁵ "Our Bishop's Seven-Point Program," *Bulletin of the Catholic Laymen's Association of Georgia*, March 26, 1938.

⁶ Powers, *Tar Heel Catholics*, 384-85.

In my early Pastorate here I was deeply moved by a class of High School Colored pupils singing Negro Spirituals. I felt as if it were called from Heaven to help them and their people to travel here as pilgrims in a direction pleasing to God. The thought of Priests as teachers and pastors coming from elsewhere at that time seemed out of the question. I was naturally devoted to my work, yet I felt urged to write to Bishop [Leo] Haid that I was willing to let a Priest take over my work, and I would take up the Colored work here, starting from scratch...At last the day dawned, when our good, tireless, and devoted Bishop Eugene J. McGuinness negotiated and planned for the Jesuit Fathers of Baltimore to take up the work for the Colored people. Father John Risacher, S.J., was sent here about three years ago to take up the work for the Colored people, and how well did he plan his work and how devoted he is to it!⁷

The expression of cultural “blackness” in the spirituals and its perceived piety and religiosity thus played no small part in the decision to found Holy Cross. The *Bulletin of the Catholic Laymen’s Association of Georgia* reported in June of 1939 that a black mission church in Raleigh, St. Monica’s, celebrated the blessing of its shrine with music performed by students at St. Monica’s school, which was founded in 1930. According to the *Bulletin*, “The band played processional hymns, [and] hymns in honor of our Blessed Mother were sung beautifully by the children.”⁸ These hymns probably came from *St. Basil’s Hymnal* or *The St. Gregory Hymnal and Catholic Choir Book*, two very popular hymnals of the time that were used in Catholic churches across the country. Needless to say, these hymns would have been associated with the dominant white—especially Irish—segment of the Church. Both of these musical snapshots—the founding of a mission church and the installation of a shrine, respectively—illustrate how white onlookers viewed black culture and its place in Catholicism. One camp saw blacks as having unique cultural gifts; the other praised the beautifully assimilated sounds of black children singing traditional Catholic hymns.

⁷ Msgr. William Francis O’Brien, *Memoirs of Monsignor William Francis O’Brien* (Durham, NC: Christian Printing Company, 1958), 93.

⁸ “Raleigh Parish Shrine Blessed,” *Bulletin of the Catholic Laymen’s Association of Georgia*, June 24, 1939.

The early years of Holy Cross proved to be filled with trials, but the community, led by Father Risacher, remained steadfast. Indeed, the missionaries and lay faithful worshiped without an actual church building until 1952. In the meantime, they celebrated Mass in the office of the dentist Dr. Norman Cordice and later in a classroom at DeShazor Beauty Parlor Training School.⁹ Also in these early years, the Holy Cross community received little coverage in the lay Catholic press. Two news briefs in the *Georgia Bulletin* devote only a few words to the new Durham church. In 1940, one headline reads, “Parochial School at Durham Rendering Splendid Service: Jesuit Father Begins Work Among Colored People—Father Curran Now Assistant to Monsignor O’Brien at St. Mary’s Church.”¹⁰ Two years later, one reporter notes, “Durham also has a Colored parish, the Holy Cross Mission, where the Rev. John A. Risacher, S.J., is the pastor.”¹¹ With such scant attention from the Catholic press, determining the musical practices at Holy Cross during this period is difficult without some other kind of evidence. Since singing spirituals in place of hymns approved by the bishop would have been unorthodox in the 1940s, it seems likely that the congregation sang hymns similar to those sung by the choir of St. Monica’s in Raleigh.¹² This, however, would soon change.

The debate between factions within the FCC and among others interested in social justice focused on more than the relationship between blacks and whites, laypeople and

⁹ Powers, *Tar Heel Catholics*, 377.

¹⁰ “Parochial School at Durham Rendering Splendid Service: Jesuit Father Begins Work Among Colored People—Father Curran Now Assistant to Monsignor O’Brien at St. Mary’s Church,” *Bulletin of the Catholic Laymen’s Association of Georgia*, November 30, 1940.

¹¹ *Bulletin of the Catholic Laymen’s Association of Georgia*, November 28, 1942.

¹² In an interview I held with him, Msgr. Thomas Hadden also remembered this as being the case. Thomas Hadden (Vicar for African Ancestry Ministry and Evangelization, Diocese of Raleigh), in discussion with the author, February 2006. Hadden also attended St. Monica’s in Raleigh as a child before he converted to Catholicism.

priests. It also addressed the questions of cultural difference among ethnic groups and the need for social justice in the everyday church life of all Catholics. John Gavin Nolan, who eventually became Auxiliary Bishop of the United States Military in 1987, wrote an essay called “Justice for Negroes” at the age of twenty-two in 1946, three years before he became a priest in Albany, New York. In this essay, Nolan envisions more than just social equality among the races but also the recognition by the Church of all persons’ rights to “full participation” in the Church.¹³ Full participation in Catholic life fuses the questions of social equality and representation in the church hierarchy while also opening up the problems of ritual and liturgical autonomy—that is, taking cultural ownership of liturgical styles within the rubric of the Mass. Christian historian Albert Raboteau accurately captures the psychological tension inherent in the conflict between interracialism and autonomy for black Catholics:

Set apart from other Catholics by race and from other blacks by religion, black Catholics have a heightened sense of the “double consciousness” that, as W.E.B. DuBois claimed, characterizes African-Americans generally. Catholic blacks, as a religious minority, have defended their religion to the black Protestant majority by asserting the universality of the church. Black Catholics, as a racial minority, have attacked discrimination and continually faced their own particularity as a people set apart. Religious universalism and racial particularism have been the two poles of black Catholic consciousness, rising out of their singular position as a minority within a minority.¹⁴

Unlike many other Christian denominations, dissatisfied or troubled Roman Catholics cannot splinter off from the Church without losing their communion with it, even if the reason for leaving is simply to have a more culturally relevant and expressive liturgy. In a Church not

¹³ John Gavin Nolan, “Justice for Negroes,” *North Carolina Catholics*. December 8, 1946.

¹⁴ Albert J. Raboteau, *A Fire in the Bones: Reflections on African-American Religious History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 135.

only divided by race but also divided by views on how to address race, radical action may have been the only solution to the real and perceived racial tensions within the Church.

The Catholics of North Carolina received just such a dose of radicalism in 1953 when Vincent Waters, the bishop of Raleigh, desegregated parish churches and other institutions within the diocese.¹⁵ The controversy over church closure and integration began shortly after the building of Holy Cross in Durham. On May 31, 1953, Waters celebrated Mass three times in Newton Grove, a small town in central North Carolina whose two churches, separated by race, he had insisted worship together in one building, the white church. The first Mass had fourteen whites and twenty blacks attending; the second, nine blacks and three whites; and third, about a dozen whites only.¹⁶ As one would expect, not everyone was happy with such a change. On June 12 of that same year, he wrote a letter elaborating his feelings about race, part of which mandates integration of diocesan parishes:

There is no segregation of races to be tolerated in any Catholic Church in the Diocese of Raleigh. The pastors are charged with the carrying out of this teaching and shall tolerate nothing to the contrary. Otherwise, all special churches for Negroes will be abolished immediately as lending weight to the false notion that the Catholic Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, is divided. Equal rights are accorded, therefore, to every race and every nationality as is proper in any Catholic church, within the church building itself everyone is given the privilege to sit or kneel wherever he desires and to approach the sacraments without any regard to race or nationality. This doctrine is to be fully explained to each convert who enters the church from henceforth in the Diocese of Raleigh.¹⁷

Two main themes emerge in this conclusion to the bishop's pastoral letter: integration of separate churches in the same neighborhood (or those in close proximity) and equal treatment

¹⁵ Davis, *The History of Black Catholics*, 256.

¹⁶ Powers, *Tar Heel Catholics*, 20-21.

¹⁷ Quoted in Cyprian Davis and Jamie Phelps, eds., *Stamped With the Image of God: African Americans as God's Image in Black* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 133.

of all Church members during the reception of sacraments. Bishop Waters could not touch Holy Cross, however, because of its unique financial situation among black churches in North Carolina. The Maryland Province of Jesuits not only staffed the mission with priests, but they also owned the land on which the church had been built. This position allowed Holy Cross to retain its integrity as a predominantly black church when so many others were closed and integrated with nearby white churches. Waters simply did not have the juridical authority to integrate Holy Cross with nearby parishes. This situation shielded Holy Cross from the kind of backlash felt in Newton Grove.

In this same period—the late 1940s and mid-1950s—theologians and ecclesiastical authorities started to create a climate increasingly amenable to liturgical renewal and change. As early as 1947, Pope Pius XII wrote,

It cannot be said that modern music and singing should be entirely excluded from Catholic worship. For, if they are not profane nor unbecoming to the sacredness of the place and function, and do not spring from a desire of achieving extraordinary and unusual effects, then our churches must admit them since they can contribute in no small way to the splendor of the sacred ceremonies, can lift the mind to higher things and foster true devotion of soul.¹⁸

Although throughout *Mediator Dei* the Pope emphasizes the absolute authority of the Holy See in matters of liturgical appropriateness, certainly a traditional stance, he recognizes the development of musical styles as a potentially enriching source of liturgical expressivity. Since the specifics of liturgical music planning were left to commissions on the diocesan level, any perceived conservatism in musical practice may be partly attributed to individual bishops and their staffs. Traditional forms of black music, especially spirituals, could feasibly

¹⁸ Pope Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*, §193. The official English text may be found at the following website: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_20111947_mediator-dei_en.html.

be viewed by commissioners as not “unbecoming to the sacredness of the place and function” of the music. If, however, black Catholics felt that “full participation” on all levels of church life were hindered or denied, it seems reasonable to assert that mild experimentation with the introduction of spirituals was extremely rare.¹⁹ Clarence Joseph Rivers describes the one effort he was aware of, a mass by Sister Mary Elaine: “She attempted to cover the language of the Latin Mass with unadapted melodies from Negro spirituals. I remember the Kyrie was sung to the exact tune of ‘Nobody Knows the Trouble I see.’ The melody was an ill fitting garment for the works, however noble the idea behind the effort; the effect itself was less than successful.”²⁰

Pope Pius XII continued his interest in liturgical enrichment in his two documents pertaining directly to music in the liturgy: an encyclical in 1955 and a curial instruction in 1958. The encyclical, *Musicae sacrae disciplina*, which, like other encyclicals, is addressed to Catholic bishops, explicitly allows and encourages the incorporation of vernacular hymn singing into the sacred liturgy:

As we have written above, such hymns cannot be used in Solemn High Masses without the express permission of the Holy See. Nevertheless at masses that are not sung solemnly these hymns can be a powerful aid in keeping the faithful from attending the Holy Sacrifice like dumb and idle spectators. They can help to make the faithful accompany the sacred services both mentally and vocally and to join their own piety to the prayers of the priest. This happens when these hymns are properly adapted to the individual

¹⁹ The only systematic use of black spirituals in the Catholic Mass before 1950 was in the *Mass in Honor of Blessed Martin de Porres* by Sister Mary Elaine, once an officer in the Texas chapter of the American Musicological Society. According to Msgr. Hadden, it was popular in some black Catholic churches, probably in Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, but he does not remember hearing it in the Diocese of Raleigh. “I never celebrated a Mass in which it was sung,” he said. Hadden, discussion.

²⁰ Clarence Joseph Rivers, “Thank God We Ain’t What We Was: The State of the Liturgy in the Black Catholic Community,” *Freeing the Spirit* 6 (1979): 29.

parts of the Mass, as We rejoice to know is being done in many parts of the Catholic world.²¹

Although the encyclical rejects the use of vernacular hymns in the *Missa solemnis*, its practical implications were nevertheless profound. In addition to non-solemn masses, it also encourages the use of hymns as evangelizing tools in other devotional contexts:

In rites that are not completely liturgical religious hymns of this kind - when, as We have said, they are endowed with the right qualities - can be of great help in the salutary work of attracting the Christian people and enlightening them, in imbuing them with sincere piety and filling them with holy joy. They can produce these effects not only within churches, but outside of them also, especially on the occasion of pious processions and pilgrimages to shrines and at the time of national or international congresses. They can be especially useful, as experience has shown, in the work of instructing boys and girls in Catholic truth, in societies for youth and in meetings of pious associations.²²

In the United States, pronouncements such as these legitimized the use of musical traditions such as spiritual singing and the adoption of black Protestant styles of hymnody that might have been theologically questionable prior to the encyclical.²³ It also meant that culturally conscious Catholics could use music as an evangelizing tool in order to attract non-parishioners in the community during extra-liturgical functions such as processions, cookouts, or any other meeting of Catholics on the church grounds or elsewhere.²⁴

The curial instruction, *De Sacra Musica et Sacra Liturgia*, addresses the relationship between music and liturgy and the need for “active participation” among congregants in the

²¹ Pope Pius XII, *Musicae sacrae disciplina*, §64. The official English text may be found at the following website: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_25121955_musicae-sacrae_en.html.

²² Ibid., §65.

²³ The melodies of spirituals could be utilized, as in Sister Mary Elaine’s *Mass in Honor of Blessed Martin de Porres*, but the texts had to be the standard Latin texts of the Mass Ordinary.

²⁴ From the end of World War II and 1967, the number of adult Catholic converts who were black rose from one in fourteen (in 1953) to one in eight. See Jon P. Alston, Letitia T. Alston, and Emory Warrick, “Black Catholics: Social and Cultural Characteristics,” *Journal of Black Studies* 2 (1971): 245-46.

Mass. Despite pre-dating the Second Vatican Council, the views expressed in the Instruction appear relatively progressive, but they actually fall neatly in line with the previous writings of Pius XII on sacred music, including *Musicae sacrae disciplina*. Two themes emerge in the Instruction: what types of music are acceptable and what role the congregation plays in celebration. Referencing section 47 of *Mediator Dei*, the writers of *De Sacra Musica* pronounce that “*modern sacred music* is admissible in all liturgical functions, provided it is really in keeping with the dignity, gravity, and holiness of the Liturgy, and there is a choir capable of singing it properly.”²⁵ Also according to the writers, “‘Modern sacred music’ is the music composed in more recent times with the progress of musical technique, for several voices, with or without instrumental accompaniment.”²⁶ These two statements absolutely reinforce my contention that traditionally African-American styles of musical composition would have been acceptable in the 1950s pending approval by the local bishop, Bishop Waters in Raleigh. Moreover, the Instruction suggests that traditionally African-American styles of musical performance also would have been acceptable:

Every effort must be made to secure that the faithful are present at low Mass also, “not as strangers or silent spectators,” but taking that share in it demanded by so great a mystery, a participation which yields such abundant fruits.

The first way by which the faithful may take part in low Mass is when each one *of his own accord* plays his parts, either interiorly by pious attention to the chief parts of the Mass, or externally, according to the approved custom of different places.

The second way of participating is when the faithful share in the Eucharistic Sacrifice by prayer and song *in common*...

²⁵ *De Sacra Musica et Sacra Liturgia*, §18. Emphasis in the original. For the full text, see Sacred Congregation of Rites, *Sacred Music and Liturgy*, tr. J.B. O’Connell (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1959).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, §7.

Finally, there is a third, the more complete, way when the faithful LITURGICALLY MAKE ANSWER to the celebrating priest, in a kind of “dialogue” with him, by RECITING ALOUD THE PARTS PROPER TO THEM.²⁷

All three of the enumerated ways of taking part in the low Mass readily support the externalized expression of African American Christians in general: 1) unlike many Protestant groups, both black and white, white Catholics before the Vatican Council often prayed the rosary or simply sat as spectators during the Mass, but this was not the intent of the documents;²⁸ 2) singing in communion is common in black churches;²⁹ 3) the Catholic liturgy consists largely of call and response elements, which should be an interaction between congregation and priest.³⁰ Despite the possible allowance of more traditional black style of music and music-making in Catholic masses—at least, the low Mass—very few churches in the United States experimented with innovative liturgical practices.

The Nexus of African and African-American Music in Catholic Worship: *Missa Luba*

It was in this climate of theological fecundity that Guido Haazen, a Belgian priest working in the Belgian Congo, wrote his famous *Missa Luba*, a setting of the Mass Ordinary that combines the Latin language, Congolese drumming patterns, and local folk song melodies.³¹ Belgians and other Catholics had established missions in the Congo region decades before 1958, when *Missa Luba* was first performed, but in the mid-1950s, the

²⁷ Ibid., §§28-31. Emphasis in the original.

²⁸ See Thomas Day, *Why Catholics Can't Sing: The Culture of Catholicism and the Triumph of Bad Taste* (New York: Crossroad, 1990).

²⁹ See Jon Michael Spencer, *Black Hymnody: A Hymnological History of the African-American Church* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992) for an overview of the tradition of hymn singing in black churches.

³⁰ See Floyd, *The Power of Black Music*, 226-66 for a discussion of the importance of call and response in black musical practices.

³¹ The Luba people are a Bantu-speaking people from the Congo region.

Belgian Congo experienced increasing nationalistic fervor as groups sought independence.³² Strangely enough, however, the genesis of *Missa Luba* came as a response to an invitation by the King of Belgium to sing at the 1958 World Exhibition in Brussels.³³ Nevertheless, the original singers of the work took great national pride in hearing their own native music being sung at a high technical level with Haazen's help. The mass itself was originally a collective improvisation, as the singers in the choir transplanted the words of the Latin Mass Ordinary onto Luba melodies, which members of the choir harmonized in their traditional manner; drums provided rhythmic support. Nothing like the completely African *Missa Luba* had been written prior to 1958, and its genesis contrasts greatly with, for example, Sister Mary Elaine's *Mass in Honor of Blessed Martin de Porres*, which was merely an adaptation of spirituals. Finally, African Americans, Africans, and others of African descent (especially in Europe) could claim a musical setting of the Mass as an authentic expression of blackness.

At around the same time that Haazen was experimenting with his choir in the Belgian Congo, Clarence Joseph Rivers, a priest in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, was thinking along similar lines. Concerned that he was not enriching the congregation at St. Joseph's in Cincinnati, Rivers's boss at the church asked Rivers if he might try to do something about it. In an autobiographical essay, Rivers recounts that his boss, Monsignor Clement J. Busemeyer, "had also indicated that he saw a place for Black music in the Catholic Church," and had "lamented the fact that the archbishop had not allowed a concert of Negro music at the (not yet restored cathedral)."³⁴ After accepting a challenge from a fellow priest, Fr.

³² Marc Ashley Foster, "*Missa Luba*: A New Edition and Conductor's Analysis" (DMA dissertation: University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2005), 6.

³³ Foster, "*Missa Luba*," 10.

³⁴ Clarence Joseph Rivers, "Freeing the Spirit: Very Personal Reflections on One Man's Search for the Spirit in Worship," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 19 (2001): 97-98.

Boniface Luykx (a Belgian), Rivers began to compose in an idiom that he felt came from his own background as an African American. He took the words to his first work from the breviary, and “was struck by the words of St. John: ‘God is love; and he who abides in love abides in God; and God in him.’ I started applying a melody and a musical rhythm to the piece, mostly in my head...I repeated the melody incessantly in my head...With one stroke, almost unconsciously, a change in American church music had begun.”³⁵ Nevertheless, it was not only Rivers’s first song, “God is Love,” that instigated this change.

Rivers became acquainted with *Missa Luba* in the late 1950s and helped its dissemination in the United States. He tells the story of how he came to know the work:

Fr. Luykx had brought me a tape of the *Missa Luba*, which the sisters had taught to the primary school. One day, Msgr. Brusmeyer had heard the children’s lusty, robust singing of the Luba Mass as he strolled through the school. He returned to the rectory almost breathless with enthusiasm. He said that he had never heard the “Kyrie” and the “Sanctus” and other parts of the Mass Ordinary sung with such enthusiasm. Therefore, he asked, weren’t we obliged to let the children sing this at Mass? Not entirely guileless I responded, “I guess so Father!” Msgr. Brusmeyer insisted that the children sing the Luba Mass for his twenty-fifth ordination jubilee. The barn door had been left open! In due time, in rushed in the spirituals, gospel, jazz, my occasional compositions, and all the rest.³⁶

Monsignor Thomas Hadden, the retired Vicar of African-Ancestry Ministry in the Diocese of Raleigh, told me that *Missa Luba* spread like wildfire in the 1960s, especially after it was transcribed and printed in 1964.³⁷ He said that African-Americans in the parishes he visited loved this mass and sang it all the time during this period, a trend that spread all over the

³⁵ Ibid., 98-99.

³⁶ Ibid., 99. Rivers’s continued impact on musical developments in the black Catholic community nationwide are described below.

³⁷ Philips recorded the work in 1958 during the World Exhibition in Brussels, but recordings could only spread and be used as templates for choirs as quickly as listeners could transcribe or imitate them. Hadden, discussion.

country. Hadden claims that *Missa Luba* was so popular partly because of its singability, but there are other, more important, factors that led to the sharp rise of interest in vital liturgies, especially among black Catholics: the Second Vatican Council and the movements for civil rights in the 1960s.³⁸

The Council and Beyond

That the Second Vatican Council led to radical changes in thinking about Roman Catholicism, its theology, and its liturgical practices is unquestionable, but many of the Council's statements are actually reformulations or elucidations of previous doctrine and orthodoxies. As I have shown above, for example, the Vatican considered the use of the vernacular in music, the implementation of local musical performance practices, and active participation of the congregation not only acceptable but desirable. Nevertheless, the inculturation of African-American musical practices into the Mass was not a hot-button item for discussion in the United States before the Council. Although bishops essentially had ultimate authority over what were or were not acceptable forms of music, the neglect of black musical forms of worship did not stem solely from the whims or racism of individual bishops.

Before the Council, religious leaders on the forefront of interracialism viewed "the Negro question" simply as a question of biological characteristics, not cultural history and expression. John LaFarge, a leader of the interracialism movement, preached that race is something that can be transcended with the power of Christ:

When we receive Holy Communion this unity of the religious community is reinforced. We are made one in a mysterious and most marvelous fashion through our unity not only with the divinity of Christ but with His Body and Blood as well. And this is particularly significant in connection with the

³⁸ See Marc Foster, "*Missa Luba*," 46-88 for a definitive transcription and performing edition of *Missa Luba*.

question of racial differences. Since these differences rest upon bodily characteristics, since we carry the source of contention in our body, there is a peculiar fitness that this bodily differentiation should be transcended and overcome through our union with the sacred Body of Jesus Christ. The distinctions of body and blood among men are transcended by unit with the Body and Blood of Christ.³⁹

On its face, LaFarge's position is not contrary to Catholic teaching, then or now: Catholics, regardless of bodily characteristics, participate equally in the sacrifice of Christ during the Holy Eucharist. The transcendence of bodily difference in the Mass, however, could be translated easily into theological justification for the homogenization or universalization of worship practices, which are largely functions of cultural difference. This prevailing view allowed episcopal authorities to continue to neglect the evangelization and liturgical needs of African Americans with *culturally* relevant liturgical forms. With the Council's emphasis on the vernacular language as the vehicle for celebration of the Mass, bishops could no longer ignore the cultural dimensions inherent in liturgical practice.

The implementation of the Council's pronouncements came relatively quickly in North Carolina after the close of the Council on December 8, 1965. In January of 1966, Church officials met in Charlotte to discuss proper strategies for liturgical renewal, and the Bishop ordered that all celebrations of the Mass be spoken in English starting on March 27.⁴⁰ Later in the year, the lay-run newspaper of the diocese, *North Carolina Catholics*, printed an article on the musical practices now found acceptable by the Diocesan Liturgical Music Commission.⁴¹ The Commission promoted the singing of hymns from hymnals such as *The Book of Catholic Worship*, *Our Parish Prays and Sings*, and the *People's Mass Book*, none

³⁹ John LaFarge, *The Catholic Viewpoint on Race Relations* (Garden City, NY: Hanover House, 1956), 157-58.

⁴⁰ Fr. Paul Byron, pastor at St. Gabriel Church in Charlotte from 1957-67, led the commission.

⁴¹ "Music Guidelines Approved: Hymns to be Fostered, Varied Instruments Permitted," *North Carolina Catholics*, July 17, 1966.

of which contain any significant contributions by Africans or African-Americans, including spirituals. Additionally, the Commission allowed the use of the organ and other instruments, as long as “they [are] played in a manner suitable for worship.” It would therefore be acceptable in the Raleigh diocese to sing musical settings such as *Missa Luba*, which calls for African drums, but moving beyond this readily transplantable innovation by rejecting the suggested hymnals and devoting musical practices to newly-composed or arranged works by African Americans would have been pressing the boundaries of acceptability.

Despite the relatively traditional stance of the Diocese of Raleigh toward black musical styles, Clarence Rivers and others started moving in much more progressive directions. The liturgical scholars Mary McGann and Eva Lumas briefly describe these innovations:

Several years before Vatican II, Rivers began composing liturgical music in a Black idiom, producing his *American Mass Program* in 1963. In his compositions, Rivers drew on the spirituals, jazz, and gospel, thus introducing American Catholics to the rhythms, melodies, and harmonies of the Black musical idiom.⁴²

Rivers believed that there “should be a place for all Black religious culture in worship.”⁴³ It comes as no surprise, then, that his work was not received without resistance. An article in *North Carolina Catholics* from April 3, 1966 reports,

Archbishop William E. Cousins has issued a statement elaborating on “sacred music as applied to the mass,” [in which he asserts,] “Spirituals and similar songs, including popular hit tunes, religious parodies of folk tunes, jazz and the like do not conform to the requirements for liturgical music laid down in recent official documents and hence are not to be used in our religious services.”⁴⁴

⁴² Mary E. McGann and Eva Marie Lumas, “The Emergence of African American Catholic Worship,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 19 (2001): 31.

⁴³ Rivers, “Freeing the Spirit,” 98.

⁴⁴ “Forestall Innovations: Church Music’s Need for Quality Cited,” *North Carolina Catholics*, April 3, 1966.

Archbishop Cousins was certainly condemning experiments like Rivers's *American Mass Program*, but he had no compelling theological or pastoral reason for doing so. As the decade waned, however, Rivers recalls a loosening of the authorities' stranglehold over his innovations:

As I remarked earlier, a Cincinnati archbishop [Most Rev. Karl J. Alter] had forbidden a concert of Negro spirituals at the cathedral on the implausible and shaky grounds that they were "secular" songs, but by this time the patently implausible grounds were much too shaky to stand up under the potentially weighty charge of racism. Certainly, not even the archbishop would have risked his authority being tainted with the opprobrium of being politically incorrect.⁴⁵

Clearly by the mid- to late 1960s, issues of race concerned more than just skin color: they also involved the question of cultural difference among races. As the political climate of the nation became increasingly race conscious with the advent of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s nonviolent civil rights campaign and the more militant approaches of Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael, ecclesiastical authorities simply could not continue to neglect the needs of black Catholics that exceeded the concerns of John LaFarge and his old-fashioned biological conception of race.

Rivers, then the director of the National Office for Black Catholics Department of Culture and Worship, released his first major publication on African-American worship, *Soulfull Worship*, in 1974. With it, he unleashed a flood of ideas about what authentic black Catholic worship might and ought to entail. First, Rivers re-affirms the idea that worship is the center of Church life. He illustrates this by claiming that "the Church's priorities are not where she says they are...The Church's money is not where her mouth is in the matter of

⁴⁵ Rivers, "Freeing the Spirit," 99-100.

worship.”⁴⁶ High-quality worship experiences of course require the cost of sound systems, church music (including parts for a choir and hymnals for the congregation), musical instruments, and other artistic objects that contribute to the worship experience as a whole. Rivers also attacks the amount of time that most congregations spend on worship preparation: “More than likely, the average janitor spends more time at his job each week than is allotted altogether to plan the Liturgy...So much into building maintenance and so little into worship itself!”⁴⁷ In order for parishes to develop authentically black forms of worship, appropriate resources must be directed toward this end, which for many parishes in North Carolina’s more remote areas would be a limiting factor in the development of worship as Rivers envisions it. Msgr. Hadden recounted that during the late 1960s and early 1970s, younger parishioners at the church where he was pastor—a predominantly black parish—performed what they would call the “Hootenanny Mass,” an eclectic presentation of Mass music with guitars and whatever other instruments were readily at hand.⁴⁸

Secondly, Rivers underscores the importance of *authentically* Afro-American worship. This requires a definition of black cultural authenticity within which a Catholic form of worship can be developed. Rivers identifies these differences as “manifestation of soul (a lack of Puritanism) and a difference in theological perspective.” Puritanism, or Jansenism, “leads the average churchgoer to believe that his ideal is to become ‘angelic,’ to be above human emotions, especially pleasurable ones.” Soul, on the other hand, is “the source of life and liveliness, of dynamism and movement, of motion and emotion.”⁴⁹ Rivers

⁴⁶ Clarence Joseph Rivers, *Soulfull Worship* (Cincinnati: Stimuli, 1974), 6.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁸ Hadden, discussion.

⁴⁹ Rivers, *Soulfull Worship*, 13-14.

feels that “soul” manifests itself in the black community as musical improvisation, congregational participation, spontaneity, and the manner of preaching. Although Rivers is speaking in general terms, what he is describing is the empirical reality of worship in many black churches across the country, not essentialized visions of black and white. Msgr. Hadden also recounted that before and shortly after the Vatican Council, black Catholics sang traditional, “syrupy,” hymns (e.g., from *St. Gregory*) “with just a little more soul in it, a little more feeling in it, you know, instead of just the way...you know they may change the value of the notes slightly. You know it was just something that would happen without anyone doing it. And when I was pastor at St. Monica’s in Raleigh, our organist was a nun, and she wouldn’t lean in it!”⁵⁰ Rivers and Hadden are both describing the exterior expression of piety that Pope Pius XII found so desirable. Recall that in *Musicae Sacrae Disciplina*, Pius writes, “Nevertheless at masses that are not sung solemnly these hymns can be a powerful aid in keeping the faithful from attending the Holy Sacrifice like dumb and idle spectators. They can help to make the faithful accompany the sacred services both mentally and vocally and to join their own piety to the prayers of the priest.” In authentically black communities, according to the standard established by Rivers and Hadden, it was not the hymns themselves that kept congregants from attending like idle spectators; instead, it was the approved hymns coupled with a particular performance practice—singing with soul, an exteriorization of piety—that generated authentic blackness in the service.

After this broad overview of black Christian musical life, Rivers asserts that “we are talking about the possibility of Afro-Americans being true to themselves and being—at the

⁵⁰ Hadden, discussion.

same time—Catholics.”⁵¹ Nevertheless, he identifies four obstacles to realizing the possibility of developing a mode of worship that integrates black life with the institution of the Catholic Church: white racism, black self-hatred, stereotyping, and incompetence. In 1974, before many of the official statements of the American bishops on the status of racism in America, these impediments likely seemed all too real. Speaking specifically about music, Rivers makes his objections to these obstacles are perfectly clear: “Music really ought to be a bridge of unity and understanding between brothers of different cultures,” even though “in practice most religions become so identified with particular cultures that it is frequently difficult to distinguish basic religious principles from their particular cultural expressions.”⁵² By recognizing the difference between religious principles (orthodoxy) and cultural expression of those principles, Rivers counters LaFarge’s implicit understanding of American Roman Catholic worship as homogenous or universal instead of a particular cultural manifestation.

For African Americans in general, Rivers feels that “music is one area in which [they] generally need no liberation,” but for black Catholics, “the same cannot be said.” In order to show how the aforementioned impediments have manifested themselves in black Catholic worship until the publication of this text, he writes:

We have been musically enslaved in the past because, until very recently, Church authorities discouraged the use of our rich Afro-American heritage. We tend to be enslaved in the present first: because most of us have not yet developed the facilities and skills to perform Afro-American music adequately; second: because some of us who are learning Black American music are not learning at the same time to use that tradition creatively...; and

⁵¹ Rivers, *Soulfull Worship*, 17.

⁵² Ibid., 18-20.

third: because some of us think that we should not be free to borrow from other musical traditions.⁵³

Of the four elements Rivers lists, three of them, those “in the present,” involve the choices made by pastors, liturgists, and parishioners in local churches, not official pronouncements coming from Church authorities. Without dogged resistance or simple neglect pouring out of episcopal offices, which had been the case prior to the Vatican Council, Rivers places the blame for lack of enthusiasm about authentically black forms of worship squarely on the shoulders of local leaders. In order for change to come about, more interested parties would have to be creative movers and shakers like Rivers himself.

One such mover and shaker was Mary Lou Williams, “the First Lady of Jazz.” According to Williams’s biographer, Tammy Kernodle, Williams, “who had converted to Catholicism in 1957, had by 1962 begun composing sacred works displaying a strong musical connection between the liturgy, jazz, and blues.”⁵⁴ Williams first composed Catholic hymns that were criticized for their complexity, but eventually she discovered that hymns would be more successful if they could be sung by the average congregant. Once she began composing jazz Masses, however, the scope of the pieces increased greatly; Alfred Ailey’s dance company choreographed one of them, the *Mass for Peace*. Nevertheless, Williams “continued to perform the work in churches and schools across the country, each time rescoring the piece to fit their vocal abilities.”⁵⁵ Indeed, according to John S. Wilson, a reporter for the *New York Times*, “She had written her Mass for a church service and

⁵³ Ibid., 41.

⁵⁴ Tammy Lynn Kernodle, “This is my Story, This is my Song: The Historiography of Vatican II, Black Catholic Identity, Jazz, and the Religious Compositions of Mary Lou Williams,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 19 (2001): 85.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 92.

wherever she went to other cities to perform in jazz clubs, she and [her manager] Father O'Brien tried to arrange to do the Mass as a service at a nearby church."⁵⁶ After Williams performed another version of the *Mass for Peace*, now called *Mary Lou's Mass*, at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City, a social, cultural, and religious tour de force, critics and inculturation enthusiasts greeted her work with overwhelming pleasure.

Mary Lou's Mass, however, was not successful everywhere. Hadden contrasted the excitement about *Missa Luba* with the relative lack of local enthusiasm for Mary Lou Williams's jazz Masses from the late 1960's and 1970's, especially *Mary Lou's Mass*. After her conversion to Catholicism and eventual settlement in Durham, Williams chose to worship at Holy Cross and "tried out" her Masses there. Her works were apparently more popular in Washington, DC and New York City, where they were premiered. Hadden, who was rector of the cathedral in Raleigh during the 1970s, likened Williams's pieces to the concerted masses of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries, "like Mozart." "It was more like a performance," he said, "because the people just didn't know it...It went on for light years...I didn't think it was congregational. I think it was too intricate...Legitimate or illegitimate, that's my reaction." At the cathedral, Williams performed the Mass at the front of the church, as opposed to the choir loft—a practice that would have been less common at this time. In the choir loft, the music "goes over the people, they can hear it, and it helps them sing...I almost lost my life on the parishioners <pause> you know, both black and white, because it was a concert in their minds."⁵⁷ Hadden's experience with *Mary Lou's Mass* reveals that although the quality and authenticity of musical expression in the music

⁵⁶ John S. Wilson, "Mary Lou Takes Her Mass to Church," *New York Times*, February 9, 1975.

⁵⁷ Hadden, discussion.

used for Masses are important for successful inculturation of African-American idioms, local pastoral and other practical considerations may equally determine the success or failure of any given attempt to inculturate the liturgy.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that in order to interpret musical responses to given situations, these responses must be placed in a context that includes not simply the social, cultural, or religious surroundings. The interior beliefs, thoughts, and feelings of individuals and corporate entities—in this case, the Roman Catholic Church—must also play a part. When Monsignor O'Brien heard spirituals sung in 1930s Durham, he decided to found a mission for African Americans. To him, these souls, who could sing so vibrantly about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, were ripe for conversion and salvation, regardless of their skin color. Although O'Brien's response to the spirituals sounds paternalistic to our twenty-first century sensibilities, colorblindness with regard to salvation would have been a radically progressive theological position for a clergyman to take when it is compared to other white Christian denominations in the South. When Archbishop Alter heard these same spirituals, he denounced them as secular, a move that on the surface appears racist. More deeply, however, Alter was simply unable to separate religious principles from their cultural expression, because Catholic attitudes toward race before the 1960s only dug skin deep. The prevailing attitude, LaFarge's view of racial transcendence in the Mass, was not racist, but it failed to take into account the development of cultural expressions of religious principles that African Americans claimed as their own. This attitude explains how adoption of African-American musical styles, which would have been perfectly orthodox by Vatican standards, simply did

not occur to large numbers of episcopal liturgical planners. It took the adoption of an African worship style for this view to begin to change.

When the Second Vatican Council allowed congregations to adopt the vernacular language as acceptable, if not desirable, for the Mass, issues of cultural difference immediately jumped to the forefront of liturgical planning discourse. In many areas, the vernacular is the well from which all other cultural waters spring, but in the United States, where peoples from different cultures were all speaking the same language, other means of expressing cultural identity had to be explored. Music was an obvious starting point, but other means included the manner of preaching, religious art, and wardrobes. Nevertheless, many black Catholic communities were slow to adopt what Rivers called authentically black worship styles. Hadden agreed with Rivers that it was not the fault of the official positions taken by the Church hierarchy that led to this slow pace of adoption. He felt that “part of the reason the people were not prepared was because of the clergy.”⁵⁸ Priests simply did (and do) not always view the liturgy as the subject for the catechetical instruction of parishioners so that they might know what each element of the Mass means and how it should be done. In that case, it took the initiative of innovators like Rivers and Williams to inculturate “from the ground up” with tours, workshops, and publications to disseminate their ideas. In the next chapter, we will meet one such innovator at Holy Cross, Gloria Burton, the choir director.

⁵⁸ Hadden, discussion.

CHAPTER III

MUSIC AT HOLY CROSS TODAY

Before taking a deeper look at the current musical practices at Holy Cross, it will be helpful to rewind for a moment and take a closer look at some of the liturgical and theological changes instituted by the Second Vatican Council. In section 11 of the Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Council Fathers elucidate one of the most important aspects of the liturgy, full and active participation of the congregation, by acknowledging,

[I]n order that the Liturgy may be able to produce its full effects, it is *necessary* that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions, that their minds should be attuned to their voices, and that they should cooperate with Divine Grace lest they receive it in vain. Pastors of souls must therefore realize that, when the Liturgy is celebrated, something more is required than the mere observation of the laws governing valid and licit celebration; it is their duty also to insure that the faithful take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects.¹

Moreover, an entire section of the first chapter, "The Promotion of Liturgical Instruction and Active Participation" (§§ 14-20), is devoted to how these changes are to be implemented. Priests, bishops, and others in pastoral positions are to "lead their flock not only in word but also by example."² Active and full participation in liturgical rites by the congregation more adequately allows them to participate in revealing and experiencing the two natures of the

¹ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, §11. Emphasis mine. The official English text may be found at the following website: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html.

² *Ibid.*, §19.

Church—human and divine. In the introduction, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* expresses the concomitant effects of such participatory doubleness:

While the liturgy daily builds up those who are within into a holy temple of the Lord, into a dwelling place for God in the Spirit, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ, at the same time it marvelously strengthens their power to preach Christ, and thus shows forth the Church to those who are outside as a sign lifted up among the nations under which the scattered children of God may be gathered together, until there is one sheepfold and one shepherd.³

In her theological study of Catholic liturgical music, Miriam-Therese Winter sums up this expression succinctly, “Liturgy is what the Church is and believes.”⁴ The sections that follow explore three main themes: 1) the intellectual and practical foundations that underlie inculturation processes among people of African descent in the United States; 2) what resources the Church has provided that help bring these processes to the parish level; and 3) the challenges that local planners experience when faced with real communities and their needs.

Problems: What is a Black and Catholic Liturgy?

Since the implementation of the Second Vatican Council’s liturgical reforms, music in the Catholic Mass has been difficult for scholars to study on a broad scale. Virtually no two churches approach the question of Mass music in quite the same way. In Chapel Hill, for example, one affluent church near the University sings a chant-based “Gloria,” in Durham, at least one parish omits the “Gloria” when omission is permissible; at Holy Cross, the Gloria is spoken. Diversity within a local area suggests that any attempt to theorize a general musical practice among Catholics in a diocese, much less the nation as a whole, is doomed to failure.

³ Ibid., §2

⁴ Miriam-Therese Winter, *Why Sing? Toward a Theology of Catholic Church Music* (Washington, DC: Pastoral Press, 1984), 111.

Given this difficulty, exploring the depth of practices within local churches is much more enriching than trying to create tenuous connections among many churches.

As chapter 2 demonstrated, the success and effectiveness of liturgical inculturation rely largely on the efforts of individuals as well as the cultural makeup of the congregation. J. Glenn Murray, SJ, in his role as liturgist and pastor, identifies six main issues involved in making pastoral decisions about liturgical music in predominantly black Catholic parishes: 1) the purpose of the liturgy; 2) authentic Catholicity; 3) authentic Blackness; 4) music's integration into worship; 5) the structure of the liturgy; and 6) constant evaluation of musical choices in order to continue to meet the needs of the community.⁵ Each of these issues fits as a piece into the liturgical planning puzzle.

The Sunday Mass celebrates the summit of sacramental life in the Catholic Church, the Eucharist. During the eucharistic celebration, the Church teaches that Christ is present in four distinct ways: 1) in the person of the priest; 2) in the sacraments (e.g., baptism and the eucharistic species—bread and wine); 3) in the reading of Holy Scripture; and 4) in the community of the faithful, “when the Church prays *and sings*, for He promised: ‘Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them’ (Matt. 18:20).”⁶ Recognizing the importance of the presence of Christ among the faithful, Murray claims that the liturgy “is and has been for us disenfranchised African Americans a sacred time which is both profound and central; a time of celebration and of wholeness; a time to ‘sing a new song unto the Lord’ (Psalm 98:1).”⁷ Murray singles out the act of singing as being a fundamental

⁵ J. Glenn Murray, “The Liturgy of the Roman Rite and African American Worship,” in *Lead Me, Guide Me: The African American Catholic Hymnal* (Chicago: G.I.A. Publications, 1987), xi-xv. The structure of the liturgy and the integration of music into worship will be examined more closely in the following two sections.

⁶ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, §7. Emphasis mine.

⁷ Murray, “The Liturgy of the Roman Rite,” xi.

part of the black Catholic liturgy, so crucial that the entire liturgical celebration becomes a “new song,” a song different from that sung by the historically European-American Church and one that is also a gift to God from the black community. According to an official Vatican document released in 1967, “the genuine purpose of sacred music” is “the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful.”⁸ These two elements—glory of God and sanctification of the faithful—emphasize the “given” nature of music: music is a gift to God given by individuals and a community, and it is also a gift from God made to sanctify His people. Music’s givenness in the liturgy helps make the Eucharist the summit of the liturgical life of Catholics.

To have a Roman Catholic Sunday Mass, three elements must be present: the correct order of Mass, including the readings from the lectionary; the proper environment, vessels, and vestments for the celebration (e.g., bread, wine, chalice, altar, etc.); and adherence to the liturgical calendar and its seasons.⁹ Murray adds, “What makes our celebration fundamentally ‘catholic’ (universal) is that it is open to welcome the spiritual contribution of all peoples which are consistent with our biblical faith and our historical community.”¹⁰ Murray’s position is certainly orthodox, but others believe that liturgical orthodoxy does not necessarily mean accepting the Roman liturgical rite without question. D. Reginald Whitt, OP, suggests that there may be a need for an “African-American Catholic rite,” which he believes could be justified with the curial instruction on the Roman liturgy and inculturation,

⁸ *Sacram Musicam*, §4. cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, §112.

⁹ These requirements may be found in chapters II, V, VI, and VII of Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2002).

¹⁰ Murray, “The Liturgy of the Roman Rite,” xi.

Varietates Legitimae, released by the Vatican in 1994.¹¹ In the late 1990s, Murray and a Marist Brother, Cyprian L. Rowe, engaged in a fierce polemical debate about adherence to the ritual rules of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*. Murray, a Jesuit, adopted the position of obedience to Rome, while Rowe eventually left the Catholic Church and joined George Augustus Stallings at the Imani Temple in Washington, D.C. as a bishop.¹² A Jesuit parish, Holy Cross follows the forms of the Latin Rite and adheres to the rules set forth in the *General Instruction*. Using creativity, parishes may adopt inculturation strategies that adhere to all of the instructions received from the hierarchy without being subversive, and Murray appears to subscribe to this position.

In chapter 1, I examined and critiqued the cultural essentialism of Sam Floyd, Jr.; Murray, on the other hand, offers a decentralized view of blackness that more closely resembles that of Ronald Radano:

A Louisiana Black Catholic is not a West Baltimore Black Catholic; neither is a New York Haitian Catholic a Los Angeles Black Catholic or a Chicago Black Catholic. What does reveal our worship as authentically Black is the interplay of some or all of the following: our indigenous music, dialogic preaching, effective and spontaneous prayer; a spirit of “fellowship”; hospitality; suspension of time; ... What makes our worship fundamentally Black is our Black life which arises from and shares in a common history, a common experience, a common struggle, a common culture, and a common soul.¹³

He recognizes that black Catholicism is different for individuals and communities facing a variety of real-world problems. For Murray, then, blackness does not simply spring from an

¹¹ D. Reginald Whitt, “*Varietates Legitimae* and an African-American Liturgical Tradition,” in Hayes and Davis, *Taking Down Our Harps*, 247-80. See also Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Liturgiam Authenticam: Fifth Instruction on Vernacular Translation* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2001).

¹² For a concise summary of this debate, see Mary E. McGann and Eva Maria Lumas, “The Emergence of African American Catholic Worship,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 19 (2001): 59-62.

¹³ Murray, “The Liturgy of the Roman Rite,” xii.

essence tucked inside the color of one's skin. Instead, it reveals itself in two ways: performance by the body and spirit and the experience of a *common* history, culture, and struggle. Although Murray's formulation resembles Radano in its historicism, it actually resonates loudly with Paul Gilroy's conception of black Atlantic identity:

Whatever the radical constructionists say, [black identity] is lived as a coherent (if not always stable) experiential sense of self. Though it is often felt to be natural and spontaneous, it remains the outcome of practical activity: language, gesture, bodily significations, desires.¹⁴

What Murray and Gilroy see in performance can be related to Monsignor Hadden's definition of "soul" in black Catholic singing, particularly before the Second Vatican Council; Rivers's conception of "Soulfull worship" might very well be added to Gilroy's list. Murray's understanding of blackness, however, does not occur in isolation from its manifestations in concrete situations—the parish, the worship service, and the souls of individuals.

Echoing section 19 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Murray emphasizes the role of the priest and liturgical planners in the inculturation process:

If our celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy (and by extension, all the other liturgical rites) is to be both Catholic and Black, then those whose responsibility it is to plan and execute worship must continue to *study* the Roman Liturgy in order to understand its inner dynamics, come to *appreciate* the significance and integrity of each of its parts, *learn* those places where improvisation may legitimately occur, *keep the assembly central*, *read* voraciously about inculturation, and *remain open* to the Spirit. It can and must be done!¹⁵

Each of these tasks—studying, appreciating, learning, keeping the assembly central, reading, and remaining open—leads to a deeper, more complete understanding of the liturgy, the

¹⁴ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 102.

¹⁵ Murray, "The Liturgy of the Roman Rite," xv.

community of persons to which it belongs, the relationship of the community to the larger Roman church, and the aspects of local culture that may effectively express religious principles. They lead to emic, or “insider,” knowledge of the parish community, but this knowledge is not merely structural; it cannot be apprehended by sensual, intellectual, or volitional experience alone or in tandem. Opening oneself to the Spirit allows emic knowledge to be apprehended by faith. By joining the community in a shared faith—not simply the orthodoxies of the Church, but also the local manifestations of faith—the leader of the parish can plan liturgies that, to outsiders, appear like natural processes in religious life; to insiders, the liturgy is indeed part of the *Lebenswelt*—the life-world—of the community.¹⁶

Solutions: The Bishops Lend a Hand

In this section, I will show how communities of black Catholics, including bishops, priests, religious, and lay have addressed these problems concretely over the past twenty years, roughly the amount of time that Holy Cross has worshiped with a gospel choir at its 9 A.M. Sunday liturgies. Taken along with Rivers’s and Murray’s formulations of effective black Catholic worship, they form a structured but fluid paradigm for the inculturation of black musical practices into the Mass.

In Spirit and Truth

The Secretariat of the Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy approached and debated issues of liturgical inculturation in the United States from 1985-1987. These discussions resulted in the release of *In Spirit and Truth: Black Catholic Reflections on the Order of Mass* at the end of that period. The document describes what liturgical procedures and authentic black worship practices are permitted in predominantly black parishes; it also

¹⁶ Murray’s propositions for the role of the liturgical planners also have important ramifications in fieldwork and ethnography.

encourages “Black Catholics to utilize fully all of the present options and opportunities to bring our cultural treasures to the worship life of the Church we love.”¹⁷ Such a statement falls in line with the openness of Church authorities to creative experimentation at the parish level. In addition to addressing the possibilities for incorporating black worship practices into the liturgy, *In Spirit and Truth* also offers a framework within which dioceses and parishes that have multicultural congregations might inculturate practices of other represented cultures as well.

Celebration of the Mass truly begins before the Introductory Rites. The authentically Catholic nature of the service becomes readily apparent in the moments just before Mass begins as the local church shows respect for the present liturgical season. The bishops make certain they present this position: “The expression or art forms employed in this preliminary gathering should draw their spirit and tonality from the liturgical season. Similarly, when adaptations are made to other parts of the Eucharist, the liturgical mood or sense proper to that portion of the liturgy should be respected.”¹⁸ In an interview, Monsignor Hadden expressed disappointment about the current effectiveness of the implementation of this aspect of the Mass. He cautions, “Sometimes services can be too Protestant. Part of what makes us Catholic is that we have a cycle of liturgical seasons. If it is Lent, hymns and other parts of the liturgy should be about prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.”¹⁹ The season of the Church and the specific feast days celebrated in Daily Masses form two invisible temporal threads for all Catholics to follow from day to day. The rhythm carried by these threads leads to and away

¹⁷ Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *In Spirit and Truth: Black Catholic Reflections on the Order of Mass* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1988), 2.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, §9.

¹⁹ Hadden, discussion.

from the Sunday Mass: before the Introductory Rites, parishioners may douse themselves with holy water and sign themselves with the cross in order to renew their baptismal covenant; after the Mass, the celebrant commissions the congregation to be Christ in the world, and parishioners once again douse themselves in water, renewing the baptismal covenant as they leave the church. For Catholics, these ritual gestures and temporal threads dissolve the separation between sacred and secular time and space.

In Spirit and Truth outlines the correct Order of Mass and offers suggestions on how to fill each part. The Mass has four major sections: 1) Introductory Rites; 2) Liturgy of the Word; 3) Liturgy of the Eucharist; and 4) Concluding Rites. Each section contains smaller units that must be sung or may be sung, according to the season or the needs of the community. The first substantial musical moment in the Mass occurs during the procession, which is accompanied by an entrance song. Although the entrance song may be sung by the choir alone, the bishops emphasize that congregational participation is of the utmost importance. They identify viable choices for the entrance song's configuration that are uncommon in predominantly white parishes, but may be found in many black congregations:

- a) The procession may be accompanied with ritual gesture and movements such as handclapping or singing.
- b) The entrance song may reflect a variety of tempos or rhythms.
- c) The assembly itself may be involved in the procession through singing (antiphonally or responsorially, in unison, or in parts), handclapping and so forth.²⁰

These possibilities reflect the freedom that Clarence Rivers claims is the “essence of Black music” and exemplify the kinds of bodily gesture that Gilroy suggests perform a black identity.²¹ The “Kyrie” and the “Gloria” comprise the other two parts of the Introductory

²⁰ Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, *In Spirit and Truth*, §12.

²¹ Rivers, *Soulfull Worship*, 42.

Rites that may be sung. Regarding the “Gloria,” the bishops note, “It is a sung prayer of great joy, as many settings frequently used by the Black Catholic community attest.”²² At Holy Cross, the “Gloria” is not sung but spoken. Speaking the “Gloria” does not reduce the joy it expresses, but it does greatly inhibit the potential for cultural distinctiveness. The other places in the Order of Mass where music is commonly sung are: the responsorial psalm, the gospel procession (Alleluia or Lenten acclamation), the general intercessions, the Eucharistic prayer (Sanctus, memorial acclamation, and Amen), the “Lamb of God,” the communion song, and the recessional song.

Finally, the authors of *In Spirit and Truth* address the intense evangelizing dimension of liturgy. First, the Mass celebrates the life, death, and resurrection of Christ as the congregation participates in His sacrifice. The bishops note that “as the celebration of the faithful’s reconciliation in Christ, the worship of God in the liturgy continually challenges the community to change their hearts.” Secondly,

[W]orship impels all Catholics to bring the message of conversion to others, especially those who do not know Christ Jesus. The very style and manner of Black Catholic worship will assist in the evangelization of peoples, especially when the liturgy is accommodated to the cultural traditions and present needs of people.²³

The bishops therefore view the liturgy as an opportunity to build up the community, energize it, and prepare its members for life in the world by allowing Christ’s presence to permeate both the interior life and its external manifestations. By adapting the liturgy to common cultural practices—and common cultural practices to the liturgy—the community draws in

²² Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy, *In Spirit and Truth*, §20.

²³ *Ibid.*, §68-69. cf. Matthew 7:15: “By their fruits you shall know them.”

those who are otherwise abandoned and allows those individuals to enrich the community further.

Lead Me, Guide Me: The African-American Catholic Hymnal

Holy Cross uses *Lead Me, Guide Me*, the only African-American Catholic hymnal, as its main source of music for the Mass. In its preface, Bishop James P. Lyke, OFM and William Norvel, SSJ address the problems of racial, cultural, and religious essentialism and how the compilers of the hymnal have tried to avoid them:

Black Catholics...have increasingly seen the need for liturgical and devotional settings and hymnody that lend themselves to the unique and varied styles of song and expression that are characteristic of our people. Similarly, Black Catholics, who embody various religious and cultural traditions, wish to share our gifts with the wider ecclesial community and draw from the great musical corpus of our Roman Catholic tradition and that of our Sister Churches. Thus, *Lead Me, Guide Me* is both universal and particular as well as ecumenical in composition.²⁴

The variety of music represented in the hymnal—hymns, chants, spirituals, gospel songs, and newly composed songs in —testifies to its usefulness in a diverse community of the faithful. For example, in the section devoted to pastoral care of the sick, the compilers have included, among other items, spirituals (including “There is a Balm in Gilead”), a Swahili folk hymn (“Bwana Awabariki”), and “Leave It There” by C. Albert Tindley, who also wrote “We Shall Overcome,” an anthem of the civil rights movement in the 1960s. Later in the section of settings of the Ordinary, a Mass by Clarence Rivers sits next to the Gregorian *Missa de Angelis*. Such diversity makes *Lead Me, Guide Me* ideal not only for predominantly African-American parishes but also predominantly white parishes or those with multicultural congregations. This hymnal presents the gifts of black Catholics, white Protestants, and

²⁴ James P. Lyke and William Norvel, preface to *Lead Me, Guide Me*, iv.

everyone else in between on an equal footing, and thus stands as a monument to the kind of “full participation” that John Nolan understood as a fundamental right of all Catholics.²⁵

Plenty Good Room

Plenty Good Room: The Spirit and Truth of African American Catholic Worship, another directive released by the U.S. Bishops, presents a more detailed picture of the lived experiences and cultural particularities of African-American Catholics than *In Spirit and Truth*. It also outlines the reasons for active inculturation of black worship styles:

This document lays the theological foundation for cultural adaptation; frames the discussion of the interplay between culture and liturgical celebration; examines the historical, cultural, and religious experience of African Americans; and distills several elements particular to African American worship.²⁶

Elaborating on Murray’s non-essentialized understanding of black culture, the authors add that they

are aware and respectful of the multicultural diversity embraced by the African American religious heritage. While we might speak in general terms regarding elements of Black culture, we realize that such generalities do not exhaust the complexity of our own heritage. Nonetheless, those dimensions of the African American culture referred to in this statement have achieved a status within Catholic liturgical celebrations, which makes them significant for further reflection. We acknowledge that many of these same elements elicit a variety of opinions within the African American community itself, as well as among members of the Catholic Church at large.²⁷

The bishops take an official position, therefore, that is almost an about face from LaFarge’s common perspective in the 1950s and 1960s. They recognize that not only do African Americans have distinctive if not unique cultural practices but also that among those

²⁵ See page 27 above.

²⁶ Secretariat for the Liturgy and Secretariat for Black Catholics, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Plenty Good Room: The Spirit and Truth of African American Catholic Worship* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1990), v.

²⁷ Ibid., viii.

practices there are many variations. This recognition is less theoretical than empirical, because they have seen and experienced the varieties of black Catholic worship already taking place in parishes around the country.²⁸

The most important contribution of *Plenty Good Room* to the liturgy and its music is the section called “Toward an Authentic African American Catholic worship” (§§77-104). In this section, the authors discuss what is authentically black and Catholic in sacrament, spirituality, emotion, and ritual. Like Monsignor Hadden, the bishops warn against too literal a transplantation of Baptist, Methodist, and Pentecostal practices into the Roman Catholic liturgy. They attribute their warning to the ecclesiological, credal, theological, and sociological differences—specifically the difference between sacramental-eucharistic theology and evangelical theology—inherent among the Roman Catholic faith and those of other predominantly black denominations.²⁹ African American spirituality is defined and explained as contemplative, holistic, joyful, and communitarian, and these four elements are and should be all-pervasive in liturgy. Emotion, for many African American Catholics (and anyone so disposed to learning in this way), may be a primary way of knowing or apprehending the natural and supernatural worlds. Emotional knowing “asserts that peoples everywhere are not poetic or discursive, but both poetic and discursive.”³⁰ The different threads formed by poesy and discourse weave together in contemporary society in a manner that matches the variety of expressions found in the Bible; in cultures today, as in the Bible, either manner of expression or way of knowing is present, but both receive different levels of

²⁸ cf. *Plenty Good Room*, §§40-46.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, §77.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, §87. Both ways of knowing may be contrasted in Roman Catholic spirituality by comparing and contrasting the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, a Scholastic and St. John of the Cross, a mystic and poet.

emphasis. The bishops find it important that there be room for these threads to mingle in an infinite variety of ways.

Finally, the authors discuss the importance of ritual expression, especially through music (§§101-04). Echoing many of Clarence Rivers's formulations, they discuss the supreme importance of "soul" in the liturgy:

The African American assembly is not a passive, silent, nonparticipating assembly. It participates by responding with its own interjections and acclamations, with expressions of approval and encouragement....The assembly has a sense of when and how to respond in ways that would no more disrupt the liturgy than applause would interrupt a politician's speech or laughter a comedian's monologue.³¹

As I noted earlier, these cultural expressions mesh well with the call-and-response structure already built into the Mass. Furthermore,

classical music; anthems; African Christian hymns; jazz; South American, African-Caribbean, and Haitian music may also be used where appropriate. It is not just the style of music that makes it African American, but the African American assembly that sings it and the people whose spirits are uplifted by it.³²

Here, the authors stress the importance not only of musical style but also of the performative context. An understanding of music as both style and performance carries with it profound interpretive (and theological) significance, which will be explained in more depth in the following chapter. The bishops emphasize that their ideas "make it clear that the Church is sincerely and fundamentally committed to translating its liturgical rites to the many voices of various people, creating, it is hoped, *one song of praise*."³³ One goal of liturgical inculturation therefore is the identification of the Church, the Body of Christ, with the sounds

³¹ Ibid., §§101-02.

³² Ibid., §104.

³³ Ibid., §29. Emphasis mine.

of music and praise. Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar employs the same metaphor in *Truth is Symphonic*: “As [the world] performs God’s symphony under the Son’s direction, the meaning of its variety becomes clear.”³⁴ The cultural expressions of black Catholics in the liturgy may thus serve as one equal and necessary part of the symphony called the Church, within which each parish community, no matter how great or small, sings an important voice in the Church’s polyphonic life: Glory to God in the highest!

Implementation: Liturgical Life at Holy Cross

In this section, I explore my own experiences at Holy Cross over a span of about seven months. All of the services I attended are not described here, because only snapshots of each service have imprinted themselves on my memory. The ethnomusicologist Gregory Barz has described a valuable model of fieldnote-taking in which the fieldnote serves as a fulcrum between field research, or experience, and ethnography, or interpretation. Barz formulates, “With the addition of an adjustable fulcrum, our model of field research becomes more interactive, allowing time, reflection, and change to assume greater roles in the mediation of knowing. The three elements of the model offered here—Field Research, Fieldnote, Ethnography—are no longer static and locked into place.”³⁵ For Barz, the purpose of the fieldnote shifts from being an objectification of experience later used as a static mediator between ethnography and experience to being a fluid, open-ended text that stimulates dialogue between the two. Nevertheless, a fieldnote is a fieldnote, and there is no way for it to capture the immediacy of experience in the field. I see this as a problem in the context of Catholic Masses, because the average parishioner probably does not keep track of

³⁴ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Truth is Symphonic*, tr. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 8.

³⁵ Gregory Barz, “Confronting the Field(Note) In and Out of the Field,” in *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*, ed. Gregory Barz and Timothy J. Cooley (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 55.

what is going on from minute to minute. The mind focuses sporadically on God, the priest, the Word, the Eucharist, the music, itself, or even the climate and one's neighbors. In presenting my own experiences in the field, therefore, I rely on memory, or "headnotes," as the only barrier between experience and interpretation: time, reflection, and further experience are the only mediators between the two.³⁶ This approach mirrors the way in which two parishioners from different churches might answer the question, "What was your Mass like today?"

When I began attending Holy Cross at around Easter time in 2005, I did not know what to expect, only that they did "something different" at the 9 A.M. Mass—something "African-American." Before this time, I had only attended Catholic churches with predominantly white populations: one in Conway, Arkansas; another in Sherwood, Arkansas, a suburb of Little Rock, the capital city; and two others in the Triangle area (Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill). These churches sang music that I had simply never heard before as a child; there were no spirituals, no Charles Wesley or Lowell Mason hymns, and certainly no Martin Luther!³⁷ I grew up as a United Methodist at a small church in Sherwood, which had at most one black member (or family, perhaps) at any one time. This was life in the Deep South as I understood it as a child and teenager: blacks and whites simply do not go to church together.

School, on other the hand, was a different story. As far as I knew, laws in the Pulaski County Special School District mandated that each public school must enroll the same ratio of blacks and non-blacks found in the county's general populace. This meant that in majority

³⁶ Admittedly, this approach leaves me open to "misremembrances," but it does help capture the *lived* and *interior*, as opposed to the objective and external, reality of an experience.

³⁷ Early on I did not realize that parishioners might view this music as "too Protestant."

black neighborhoods, white students had to be bussed to school from outlying areas, most often through incentives created by special programs, or magnets in some cases. This was the case for me growing up: despite living in a typical majority-white upper-middle class neighborhood, I went to school (beginning in fourth grade) about nineteen miles away from home in a predominantly poor, black, and for all intents and purposes dangerous neighborhood.

My experiences in primary and secondary school formed my initial impressions of living in a racialized society. At least once a year, we heard stories on the news of students from school being murdered at gunpoint, often in gang-related incidents. Sometimes fights at school involved kids wearing the wrong colors, and the resulting fights ended up with someone having their head kicked into the wall. Most of these incidents were black-on-black violence. Other students from “the local neighborhood” were poor, white, and would not have gained entry into the magnet program had they been from other areas. Although they did not have black skin, they were still marginalized in the overall scheme of the public school system. Despite the troubling aspects of the neighborhoods surrounding the school, racial and class stratification often blurred, especially in high school. “Neighborhood kids,” as we called them, would take advanced classes on their own initiative, and often they succeeded. In less academic settings, I became friends with people from all walks of life working for the school newspaper and playing in the school orchestra. Most importantly, divisions blurred at sporting events. When one young basketball star was shot and killed when I was a sophomore, the whole school mourned even though some of the suburban kids felt that it could never happen to them: they were safe in suburbia.

Walking up to Holy Cross from the parking lot for the first time is not an overwhelming experience, especially when it is compared to the huge size of another parish to the west in Chapel Hill. The stony church building, erected in the late 1940s, does not blend in with the rest of the cityscape along Alston Avenue in south Durham, whose frontage has gas stations, small businesses inside plaza shopping centers, and homes. The church stands on the edge of North Carolina Central University, a historically black college, and also serves as its Newman Catholic Student Center. On the drive from my out-of-the-way apartment to Holy Cross, I drove through neighborhoods that looked like the neighborhood around my high school: there were apartments that looked like housing projects; people hung around at gas stations; and the whole environment seemed dusty and barren. Perhaps it was just too early in the morning for any bustle. Nevertheless, memories of gang shootings and the color red (the gang name “Bloods” always frightened me) came to mind as I finally made it to the NCCU campus. By the time I arrived at Holy Cross, which I missed on the first pass, I felt differently: I was at church—Church—and it was time for Mass. I was safe.

Just inside the church doors, there are familiar sights: a basin or two of holy water, a greeter from the congregation, and bulletins outlining the activities and services of the week ahead. After dipping my hand in holy water and making the sign of the cross, I walked into the main church, whose lighting struck me (and still strikes me) as mystical, as if it were deep inside a sixteenth-century Spanish monastery. Icons of African and African-American saints line the walls: St. Martin de Porres, St. Benedict the Moor (also known as “the Black”), and perhaps St. Moses the Black. Also on the walls are icons of Martin Luther King, Jr. and St. Katharine Drexel, the benefactor of many African-American mission projects including Xavier University in New Orleans, the only African-American and Catholic

university in the nation. Only two sets of pews line the church—one on either side—and as I prayed before Mass I noticed that the priest, not an attendant, was preparing the sanctuary for Mass. In the choir loft, I heard an electric keyboard that sounded like a piano with an extra tinkle in its timbre; the choir director, Gloria Burton, often plays with a light touch.

Soon everyone had entered the building, and I sat alone my pew, noticing that there were mostly black families in attendance with whites, Asians, and maybe Hispanics scattered around the seating area.³⁸ Then we began to sing! Gloria's playing lost its tinkle as the whole congregation rose up in song during the processional. Processional songs at Holy Cross tend to be strikingly traditional. During Ordinary Time in 2005, some of the songs included "O God, Almighty Father" ("Gott vater sei Gefriesen"), "Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us" by William Bratchelder Bradbury (1818-1868), and "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus," supposedly an Indian folk melody. On August 28, when we sang "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus," part of the Gospel reading came from Matthew 16, "Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.'"³⁹ In song, we were following Jesus, "no turning back!" During a quick glance up to the choir loft I noticed one woman playing what I thought was an axatse, a traditional African rattle, and wearing what looked to be traditional Nigerian garb—a buba (blouse), an iro (wrapped bottom), and a beautiful gele, or headpiece. The sounds of the rattle fill the hall as the entire congregation anticipates the arrival of the priest at the front of the sanctuary. "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." "Amen!"

³⁸ Nearly all of the people I saw on this first visit are regular parishioners.

³⁹ Matthew 16:24.

Communion songs always touch deep inside my heart. When I first began to attend Holy Cross and returned regularly “to the field” there, I was not yet a fully initiated Catholic. As such, I was not allowed to take the Blessed Host and Sacred Blood during the Eucharistic celebration. For about four months, I had been a member of my own parish’s Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, the formal process by which non-Catholics enter into full communion with Rome. During the communion rite, non-Catholics are not barred from walking with the congregation to the priest or Eucharistic minister, either of whom may bless the non-member in the name of the Holy Trinity. Children under the age of seven do this all the time, but it is much rarer to see adults participating in such a manner. During communion on May 29th, the Feast of Corpus Christi, we sang Suzanne Toolan’s “I Am the Bread of Life,” one of the most famous hymns of its kind and one that I had sung many times at the parishes I had visited—nothing special here. The week before, however, we sang “Taste and See,” another standard communion song by James Moore, Jr. Unlike Toolan’s tune, the music for the verse in “Taste and See” has relatively adventurous harmonies—added ninths, major sevenths, etc.—and the occasional mixture of syncopated eighth notes and quarter-note triplets. In order to perform these composed-out embellishments within an otherwise uninteresting setting, the choir sang the song with a little bit of “lean” on the dissonances, as Msgr. Hadden would call it, and irregularly staggered voice entries that make the verse sound like a spontaneous collective improvisation. About a month later, we sang “Taste and See” again, but this time it became an entirely different piece. A soprano soloist added descant parts above the chorus that reiterated the phrase “Taste and see, taste and see” in a manner that bordered on the arrhythmic. This is a typical strategy in gospel singing, in which a soloist sings as a moment of testimony, moved by the spirit while continuing to seek

communion in the choir environment. For me, this woman’s testimony became almost like a siren call, “Taste and see the power of the Lord, young man. Taste and see Him.” “I will one day,” I said in return. “Bless you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,” said the priest as I arrived at his station.

On September 4, 2005, the Sunday following the death and destruction of Hurricane Katrina, Gloria Burton, the choir director of Holy Cross for about twenty years, walks to the ambo before mass and says we are going to do the general intercessions differently today. Between each intercession, we will sing:



In the Igbo language of Nigeria, this prayer approximates the typical English response in general intercessory prayers (“Lord, hear our prayer”), but it also means something more. In traditional Igbo religion, Chinèkè is the Creator-God, God the Father in the Christian Trinity. Mmoọ, or mmuo, is an invisible spirit or ghost, the Holy Spirit. “Answer, answer, answer, answer! With resolve, Oh God, Holy Spirit! Quickly quickly quickly!”⁴⁰ I had attended my own parish the night before, and one woman, a Carmelite, spoke before the congregation saying that she had lost her entire Carmelite library and asking if we might pray for her. “Answer, answer, answer, answer!”

⁴⁰ The transcription and translation are my own.

The readings for the 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time in Year A come from Ezekiel 33: “You, son of Man, I Have appointed watchman for the House of Israel”; Romans 13: “Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law”; and Matthew 18: “Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” “Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ,” we say. Whatever I loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. What can I do for these people, these suffering souls devastated by something “loosed” on earth but brought on by no man? After the homily, an angry homily, and the recitation of the Creed, the general intercessions begin. Someone from the congregation speaks, “For all of those who have lost their homes and their families in New Orleans, we pray to the Lord.” “And their Carmelite libraries,” I think. I shout, “ZAMÒ, ZAMÒ. ZAMÒ, ZAMÒ. ZAMÒ, ZAMÒ, CHINÈKÈ MMOQ. ZAM ZAM ZAM.” Another, “For the students at Xavier University in New Orleans, especially those from our parish, who no longer have a school to attend, we pray to the Lord.” “ZAMÒ, ZAMÒ...” Xavier University: that is where many of the black Catholic theologians are employed. Are they safe? “AMEN!” I add after the Nigerian chant. The intercessions go on like this, but suddenly a woman begins to cry, “Oh God, I haven’t heard from my brother and sister and I don’t know where they are!” At a fever pitch, “ZAMÒ, ZAMÒ!” “Some of us have no homes to return to.” “ZAMÒ, ZAMÒ!” All I, no, we, could hope to do was love one another by asking God to answer us: quickly, quickly, quickly.

Finally, spirituals play a major role in black Catholic musical life, especially at Holy Cross.⁴¹ *Lead Me, Guide Me* contains no fewer than fifty-five spirituals, and the spirituals themselves have such a wide variety of themes that one or more can be used during all

⁴¹ For an in depth discussion of the meaning of spirituals in a black Catholic context, see M. Shawn Copeland, “*The African American Catholic Hymnal and the African American Spiritual*,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 19 (2001): 67-82.

seasons of the Church and any part of the Mass. The spiritual performance that stands out most in my mind is a rendition of “Every Time I Feel the Spirit” that we sang as a recessional, or closing, song. I joined in the chorus, which seemed to move pretty quickly and excitedly. As soon as the verses began, a younger gentleman with a powerful baritone voice sang a solo into the microphone with accompaniment from the piano, axatse, and tambourine. It was as if the Lord were truly speaking from atop the mountain, roaring with fire and smoke! Even more ferociously than before, we testified to each other that we would pray whenever we felt the Spirit. Somewhere deep in my heart, I cling to the old Greek and Scholastic idea that music relates intimately with the movement of the soul. Singing this song becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy: when singing, the Spirit moves the heart, leading the soul to prayer. The last verse sent shivers down my spine as I heard about the cold Jordan River, the outside world, life away from this place. The Jordan River, however, chills the body and not the soul. For that reason, I was safe.

Conclusion

On the surface, the musical selections at Holy Cross come from the standard sources for either Catholic or African-American liturgies and mix in a seemingly haphazard fashion. When studied more deeply, however, the songs and the manner in which they are performed reveal a close connection between black culture and the authentic rhythms of the Catholic Mass. A spiritual is not just a spiritual; it can commission the parishioners to pray and sing with joy, even when treading the waters of the cold River Jordan. Moreover, what music will be sung when is not a decision that can be put on auto-pilot, as if songs could be placed in liturgical slots based on a theological algorithm. J. Glenn Murray emphasizes the need for liturgical planners to be in touch with the community, its needs, its people, and its situations.

“Lord, hear our prayer” was simply not going to be enough after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. The congregation needed unity that could be found in the African expression, “Zamò, Chinèkè, mmoọ. Zam zam zam.” This music and text came from no hymnal we could see, only the voice, heart, and mind of a fellow Catholic in pain, who found comfort in this prayer of our Igbo Catholic brothers and sisters.

CHAPTER IV THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

I suggested in chapter one that a major weakness of Jon Michael Spencer's theomusicology lies in its lack of dialogue with contemporary theologians and the history of theology. According to Spencer, "Theomusicology is a theologically informed discipline. This theologically informed musicology, which especially borrows thought and method from anthropology, sociology, psychology, and philosophy, has as its subject the myriad cultural worlds of ethical, religious, and mythological belief."¹ Theology is conspicuously missing from his list of borrowed disciplinary methods. Seen in this light, theomusicology attempts to provide an exegesis of music's theological content without engaging with this content using theological modes of thought, conventional or otherwise.² Spencer's method also discards the specificity of the act of performance; a spiritual, for example, possesses the same theological content regardless of who performs it, where it is performed, or why.

Although the work of Spencer and others has begun to alter the discipline of musicology's traditional neglect of religious and theological issues in musical culture, even more radical steps may be taken, especially in light of Sertillanges's challenging assertion that comparative study must involve the connection of one's own discipline with philosophy and theology. The discipline of ethnomusicology, which tends to emphasize synchronic

¹ Jon Michael Spencer, *Theological Music: Introduction to Theomusicology* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), xi.

² See Spencer, *Protest and Praise: Sacred Music of Black Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

musical practices of living cultures while not neglecting the historical forces that effect social change, may serve as a particularly rich point of departure for one such step: contextual theology.³ Contextual theology challenges the view that theology must be derived solely from two sources: scripture and tradition, both of which transcend culture, time, and human frailty. Since it is the work of people in a particular place and time, however, theology can never extract itself from its context. According to Stephen Bevans, a leader in the development and theorization of contextual theology, “even a cursory glance at the history of theology reveals that there has never been a genuine theology that was articulated in an ivory tower, with no reference to or dependence on the events, the thought forms, or the culture of its particular place and time.”⁴ The history of theology itself debunks the ideal of a transcendent and purely objective theology. Bevans certainly does not dismiss the value to be found in traditional theological methods. Instead, contextualization enriches the explication, meaning, and truth found perennially in those methods.

Nevertheless, the idealized view of theology persists when theologians fail to recognize the context of their own work or ignore the validity of human experience as a source of theology. Bevans offers a two-pronged method for combating this deficiency:

We can say, then, that doing theology contextually means doing theology in a way that takes into account two things. First, it takes into account the faith experience of the *past* that is recorded in scriptures and kept alive, preserved, defended—and perhaps even neglected or suppressed—in tradition...Second, contextual theology takes into account the experience of the present, the *context*.⁵

³ In the preface to a collection of theomusicological essays, however, Spencer complains that his movement has been rejected by the academic community. See *Theomusicology: A Special Issue of Black Sacred Music: A Journal of Theomusicology* 8 (1994): v-ix.

⁴ Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 9.

⁵ Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 5.

In this chapter, I take Bevans's strategy and adapt it in order to reflect on the musical practices of Holy Cross. The sources of the following contextual theological reflections, then, are derived from the data presented in the previous two chapters—one of which is historical in nature; the other, experiential.

Black Catholic Theology: Liberation, Liturgy, and Praxis

Bevans grants context four general features: “personal/communal experience,” “culture,” “social location,” and “social change.” Contextual theologies, then, arise from a rich matrix of experiential *loci theologici* in addition to the more traditional sources of scripture and tradition. The historical context for the origins of black Catholic theology comprises the matrix of race, national identity, experiences of racism in the Roman Catholic Church and American culture, and rapid modernization and globalization. As the hard boundaries of each unit of the matrix become increasingly difficult to define, the possibilities for the generation of contextual theology become increasingly rich. With the rise of immigration to the U.S. from African and Caribbean nations, the label “African-American” ceases to capture the rich racial and cultural plurality of peoples of African descent, many of whom have differing concepts of nationhood and national identity. The legacy and consequences of slavery and colonialism also play a major role in the contextualization of black Catholic theology. The development of black Catholic theology in the United States helps place Holy Cross's liturgy within a broader and more meaningful contextual–theological matrix.

The systematization and expression of black Catholic theology occurred simultaneously with the rise of a more generalized black Christian theology in the second half of the 1960s. With the publication of the first two of his highly influential books, James

H. Cone, an ordained minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, became one of the first scholars to articulate a theology that drew from the experienced reality of “blackness” in America and the larger world.⁶ J. Deotis Roberts, also a Protestant, soon followed with the publication of his *Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology*.⁷ During this same period, Fr. Herman Porter founded the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus and Sr. Martin de Porres Grey, RSM, founded the National Black Sisters Conference.⁸ In addition to addressing the needs of black priests and religious sisters, both organizations argued for an increased attention to the “struggle of black people for freedom” and the eradication of

the powerlessness, the poverty, and the distorted self-image of victimized black people by responsibly encouraging white people to address themselves to the roots of racism in their own social, professional, and spiritual milieu.⁹

Cone, Roberts, the N.B.C.C.C. and the N.B.S.C. were all adopting language that echoes the sentiments of the liberation theology being developed in Latin America from 1965-1971, most notably by the Peruvian Dominican theologian, Gustavo Gutierrez.¹⁰

As a consequence of their synchronic development, black theology and Latin American liberation theology are often treated as if they were one and the same, even though the social factors that surrounded the development of each—that is, their contexts—were radically different. Latin American liberation theology arose from the criticism of societal

⁶ James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (New York: Seabury Press, 1969) and *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1970).

⁷ J. Deotis Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971).

⁸ Jamie T. Phelps, “African American Catholics: Struggles, Contributions, Gifts,” in Phelps, *Black and Catholic*, 32-33.

⁹ National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus, “A Statement of the Black Catholic Clergy Caucus, April 18, 1968,” in *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979*, ed. Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 322-24; Martin de Porres Grey, *Black Religious Women as Part of the Answer* (Pittsburgh: National Black Sisters’ Conference, 1971), 26-27.

¹⁰ The first major tract of early Latin American Catholic liberation theology was Gustavo Gutierrez, *Teología de la liberación* (Lima: C.E.P., 1971).

neglect of the poor, whereas black theology, while concerned for the poor, also served as a response to ecclesiastical and cultural racisms: institutional racism. The 1960s in the United States witnessed the exponentially increasing importance of civil rights in the political arena; black leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr. saw the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 as major victories in the struggle for justice for all citizens. During the 1970s, however, James Cone, unrestricted by the authority of Catholic hierarchy, began to adopt the more militant and nationalistic outlook of Black Power advocates such as Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael; Cone and others advocated the establishment of black churches separate from predominantly white denominations. This was not a viable option for orthodox Catholics loyal to Rome. Instead, African-American Catholic theologians used the Protestant conceptions of African and African-American spirituality (i.e., “the Black Church”) as a launching point for the development of a “distinctively African American Catholic liturgy.”¹¹

Liturgical renewal and adaptation became the most successful outlet for black Catholic theological expression during the 1970s. In chapter 2, I described the liturgical movement led by Fr. Clarence Rivers and its effects on the musical practices at Holy Cross and elsewhere around the nation. The movement also articulated a theology that picked up the thread of liberation without adopting the radicalism of Cone and other Protestants.¹² Also during the seventies, Rivers offered workshops to train liturgists, composers, and musicians in the art of creating an authentic black Catholic liturgical style. According to Mary McGann and Eva Marie Lumas, “the purpose of these workshops was to educate and ‘liberate’ Black

¹¹ Secretariat for the Liturgy and Secretariat for Black Catholics, *Plenty Good Room*, §79.

¹² See Clarence Joseph Rivers, *The Spirit in Worship* (Cincinnati: Stimuli, 1979).

Catholics to reclaim the fullness of their religious and ritual heritage and to train ministers for the tasks of leadership.”¹³ The movement culminated with a conference in February of 1977 called “Worship and Spirituality in the Black Community,” sponsored by the National Office for Black Catholics.¹⁴ The conference and its attendant published proceedings, *This Far by Faith*, marked a major step toward the articulation of the theological varieties of liturgical experience in black Catholic communities. Liturgical scholars and theologians met with priests and musicians in order to create dialogue among those who were envisioning the nationwide implementation of black Catholic worship and those who were already putting it into practice. By the end of the 1970s, the movement toward greater liturgical inculturation in black communities had begun to bear many fruits.¹⁵

In addition to black Catholic scholarly theology, the Church hierarchy threw its hat into the ring of articulating a theology for black Catholics as the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops became involved in the development of liturgical multiculturalism during the late 1970s and early 1980s. In 1979 the National Conference of Catholic Bishops wrote its first major post-Vatican II document on racism, *Brothers and Sisters to Us*.¹⁶ The letter was conceived as “an initial response to one of the major concerns which emerged during the consultation on social justice entitled ‘a Call to Action,’ which was part of the U.S. Catholic

¹³ McGann and Lumas, “The Emergence of African American Catholic Worship,” 32.

¹⁴ The proceedings of this conference were released by the National Office for Black Catholics and the Liturgical Conference as *This Far By Faith: American Black Worship and its African Roots* (Washington, DC: National Office for Black Catholics, 1977).

¹⁵ Parishes in strongholds of black Catholicism such as New Orleans, Washington, DC, and Baltimore had, for example, introduced gospel singing as a regular ministry during the liturgy. See *This Far By Faith*, 77-87.

¹⁶ National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Brothers and Sisters to Us: U.S. Bishops’ Pastoral Letter on Racism in Our Day* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1979).

participation in the national bicentennial.”¹⁷ In it the bishops claim that racism continually pervades American society in the forms of continued racial and economic injustice, even fifteen years after the passage of significant civil rights legislation. Such continued racism runs counter to the spirit of American law, because “the United States of America rests on a constitutional heritage that recognizes the equality, dignity, and inalienable rights of all its citizens.”¹⁸ This means that the civic institutions of the United States government lend themselves particularly well and are open to the Church’s goal of evangelizing not only individuals but also society at large. Through their criticisms of racism in the nation, they counter the decades-old prejudice that American and Catholic identities are mutually exclusive; instead, they are mutually reinforced. Nevertheless, the truth of the lived experiences of Americans and Catholics—especially of racial minorities—in 1979 and the previous fifteen years belied the ideals of American and Catholic institutions alike.

Continued racism, the bishops contend, exists subtly within social institutions of every kind. As evidence of continued racism, the bishops cite statistics showing economic, social, and legal inequity among the various races. Moreover, they scold those who would maintain the status quo, claiming that the “status quo favors one race and social group at the expense of the poor and nonwhite.”¹⁹ Subtle or covert racism, then, becomes the manifestation of indifference—as opposed to open hatred—toward the victims of historical racial injustice. In order to counter this type of covert institutional and societal racism, the bishops suggest that “new forms of racism must be brought face-to-face with the figure of

¹⁷ Ibid., 14.

¹⁸ Ibid., 2.

¹⁹ Ibid., 4-5.

Christ.”²⁰ The bishops’ recommended courses of action used for countering racism include works on the individual, local Church, and societal levels.²¹ Recommendations for individuals—basically sensitivity to racial injustice—stem from the Catholic notion that “conversion is the ever present task of each Christian.” The Church’s means of combating racism should include equal employment opportunities, expansion of Catholic education initiatives, and encouragement of “the incorporation of [cultural–racial] gifts into the liturgy,” which was the focus of chapters two and three. Finally, the bishops suggest that societies should strive for racial justice while individuals should hold governments accountable for the services they provide. These recommendations, embedded with the idea that countering racism means bringing it face-to-face with Christ the liberator and redeemer, intersect with the teachings of theologies of liberation, both black and Latin American.

Stephen Bevans considers liberation theology an example of his “praxis model” of contextual theology. The praxis model, he claims, “focuses on the identity of Christians within a context particularly as that context is understood in terms of social change.”²² Praxis theologians, including black liberation theologians, tend to think the idea or rhetoric of social change is not enough; only concrete social change matters. Although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 attempted to remedy social injustices that heavily favored whites and the status quo, the praxis theologian would consider these laws merely steps in the right direction, not ends in themselves. The passage of laws does not guarantee justice nor positive social change; it merely facilitates them. For the praxis theologian, doing theology “is also about discerning the meaning and contributing to the course of social

²⁰ Ibid., 6.

²¹ Ibid., 10-14.

²² Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 70.

change.” The theologian must become an agent for effecting social change. Praxis theology, therefore, forms the “close connection of ethical behavior with theological thought.”²³

Contemporary work among black Catholic theologians has taken up the praxis-oriented proclivities of liberation theology. In a recent essay by Jamie Phelps, for example, seven of nine sections are devoted to the subject of oppression, both in contemporary lived experience and in the life of Jesus. Consequently, overtly politicized expressions permeate the work:

Current political and legislative debates about national taxes, medical care, welfare, women’s rights, and affirmative action clearly continue the legacy of protecting the interests of the economic and power elite. Appeals to the idealized American traditions of “rugged individualism” and “self-made men” protect the status quo, which privileges a few economic elite and their immediate families with little regard for the masses of the poor and marginalized people from all ethnic-racial groups.²⁴

Similarly, Diana Hayes and Bryan Massingale have begun addressing issues related to sex-based discrimination and environmental injustice, respectively.²⁵ The position taken by Phelps, Hayes, and Massingale—that the theologian can and should be both social critic and advocate for social change—differs dramatically from those in the black Catholic theological community who, two decades prior, had emphasized the importance of liturgy as a way of achieving “full participation” in the Church. Robert Schreiter, another proponent of contextual theology, has accurately addressed one of the concerns and complications arising from this disjunction:

²³ Ibid., 70-71.

²⁴ Jamie T. Phelps, “Inculturating Jesus: A Search for Dynamic Images for the Mission of the Church among African Americans,” in Hayes and Davis, *Taking Down Our Harps*, 76.

²⁵ Diana L. Hayes, *And Still We Rise: An Introduction to Black Liberation Theology* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1996), 135-60; Bryan N. Massingale, “The Case for Catholic Support: Catholic Social Ethics and Environmental Justice,” in Hayes and Davis, *Taking Down Our Harps*, 147-62.

To be asked to rid African liturgy of its Western accoutrements, or to introduce gospel music into a middle-class, United States, black Episcopal or Roman Catholic church service has often met with resistance. The resistance often stemmed from a suspicion on the part of the people that this was another trick of the powerful whites to take away their access to a better economic world by keeping them clearly black (i.e., inferior). Calling it contextualization or inculturation was perceived as simply a way of concealing the actual motives of the white leadership.²⁶

In the situation Schreiter describes, groups of once-marginalized African Americans willfully accept and indeed desire assimilation into the cultural and liturgical status quo as they achieve greater economic independence. A liberation theologian who is politically and economically sensitive but articulates theological positions based on quantifiable demographic data cannot address the needs and perspectives of members of a racial category who do not fit the statistical mold. An overly praxis-conscious theological approach falls victim to the same primary difficulty of theoretical abstraction faced by other cultural critics: there are always members of a group whose *Lebenswelt*, or life-world, does not fit the mold formed by abstraction.²⁷

Liturgical Music at Holy Cross: Catholic Praxis in a New Key

The experience of liturgy at Holy Cross falls into just such a position outside the mold of race created by traditional praxis-based liberation theology. For example, the mission statement of Holy Cross proclaims:

Holy Cross was founded by the Society of Jesus to serve the African American Catholics of Durham. We are a people baptized in Christ. We gather to worship the Lord in joy, to proclaim the Gospel, and to serve the Durham community, as well as the needs of the whole people of God. Our special character as an African American parish continues to shape our worship, our ministries and our contribution to the wider Church.

²⁶ Robert Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 27.

²⁷ See pages 2-10 above. See Robert Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology Between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 98-155 for a more detailed critique of the traditional strategies of liberation theology.

This mission emphasizes two elements that relate to organized social injustice only tangentially: service to the community and Church as well as the manifestation of African-American culture in worship. With the right amount of politicized rhetoric, the statement may be manipulated in the service of traditional liberation theology, but the liturgical life of Holy Cross, especially its music, resists such rhetoric—first, in its conception and embodiment of culture and secondly, in its practice of Catholicism.

The Diocese of Raleigh has an office of African *Ancestry* Ministry and Evangelization. I emphasize the word “ancestry” because the population of blacks in the Diocese has increasingly become more international. This office suggests that “to do this ministry, we must create an atmosphere in which individuals of African descent can maintain their identity, heighten their visibility, and enhance their lives as Catholics.” Does the mission statement of Holy Cross run counter to the mission of the office of African Ancestry Ministry? The fluid worship practices at Holy Cross, especially the musical practices, suggest that it does not. As I explained in chapter three, Paul Gilroy claims that “black identity is lived as a coherent (if not always stable) experiential sense of self. Though it is often felt to be natural and spontaneous, it remains the outcome of practical activity: language, gesture, bodily significations, desires.”²⁸ The “shades” of blackness at Holy Cross are extremely diverse: there are French-speaking Haitians, English-speaking Kenyans, multilingual Nigerians, and African-Americans from across the nation.

Although Holy Cross began as a mission church for the evangelization of African-Americans, the current mission statement’s recognition of the parish’s “special character” as an African-American parish refers to the constellation of black cultural identity as Paul

²⁸ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 102.

Gilroy has described it. It is a microcosm of the African Diaspora or Black Atlantic. The practical activity that reveals this unique identity is precisely the communal worship activity and experience taking place inside the church, which is best exemplified by the unique prayer of the faithful after Hurricane Katrina. This prayer spontaneously mixed languages (English and Igbo), gestures (postures of prayer), bodily significations (tears), and desires (petitions) through the spoken word and music. My own experiences of hymn, gospel, and spiritual singing at the Church also exemplify Gilroy's outline of black culture as well as J. Glenn Murray's: "What does reveal our worship as authentically Black is the interplay of some or all of the following: our indigenous music, dialogic preaching, effective and spontaneous prayer; a spirit of 'fellowship'; hospitality; suspension of time..."²⁹ Traditional hymns such as "Taste and See" give rise to fellowship and hospitality for visitors who know the song from their home parishes; its performance style, however, more in the tradition of gospel music, comes across as more "indigenous" to African-American culture, as I explained in the previous chapter. Although they are commonly identified as the cultural property of African-Americans, spirituals such as "Every Time I Feel the Spirit" contain messages that, when sung in church, may speak from and to "the whole people of God," particularly when they are performed in the position of the Catholic liturgy that most accurately fits the theological and emotional content of their lyrics and musical gestures.

Locating Holy Cross, its members, and its liturgy within the cultural constellation of the Black Atlantic, however, does not speak to the nature of its catholicity. Churches of several denominations certainly contain multi-cultural congregations similar to that of Holy Cross, and few of them, if any, make the claim of catholicity. Robert Schreiter has recently theorized what he calls the "new catholicity," which is "marked by a wholeness of inclusion

²⁹ Murray, "The Liturgy of the Roman Rite," xii.

and fullness of faith in a pattern of intercultural exchange and communication.” Holy Cross’s mission statement includes service to the whole people of God, and its congregation is undoubtedly inclusive of people from all backgrounds. Furthermore, since the parish is always staffed by Jesuits, the church retains a feeling for the pulse of a Church community larger than itself; it finds in its very being a pattern of intercultural exchange. “To the extent that this catholicity can be realized,” Schreiter adds, “it may provide a paradigm for what a universal theology might look like today, able to encompass both sameness and difference, rooted in an *orthopraxis*, providing *teloi* for a globalized society.”³⁰ Enacting the new catholicity must therefore serve the ever-changing pastoral needs of the cultural community around the parish, especially through the ways in which the congregation worships. The Roman Catholic nature of Holy Cross—its catholicity—is best revealed in the historical dimensions of its changing musical worship styles. These dimensions encompass sameness and difference, are rooted in orthopraxis, and provide *teloi* for a globalized society.

The history of musical practices at Holy Cross and the surrounding black Catholic parishes can be organized roughly into three periods: 1) assimilation, 2) importation, and 3) inculturation. Liturgists and pastors in each of these periods addressed Schreiter’s concern for the ability “to encompass both sameness and difference” in different but altogether successful ways, therefore engendering a version of the “new catholicity” well before Schreiter came up with the idea. In the period of assimilation, the children of St. Monica’s parish and the choirs at other African-American mission parishes including Holy Cross sang the traditional Catholic hymns found in the St. Gregory and St. Basil hymnals; white Catholics across the nation sang these same hymns. In their assimilation of actual musical selections to be sung during Mass, however, African Americans continued to sing with

³⁰ Schreiter, *The New Catholicity*, 132-33.

“soul,” not by performing the notes strictly as they appear on the page. During this period, the music itself remained the same, but the manner in which it was sung and the people who sang it encompassed differences in skin color and performed cultural expression. In the second period, marked by the introduction of Haazen’s *Missa Luba*, black Catholics often viewed sameness as arising from Africa. Music coming from a common cultural homeland allowed persons of African descent to express historical and cultural unity in the liturgy. At the same time, sameness involved absolute adherence to rubrics set down by the Vatican and the local bishop. During this period, then, musical differences among parishes emerged, often along racial lines, while within parishes and in the liturgy, sameness prevailed. Finally, in the period of inculturation, local parishes obtained relative autonomy in musical selection with the goal of ministering to the cultural makeup of the surrounding community. At this point, sameness existed solely in the adherence to the Roman Rite, whereas difference permeated all parish boundaries, even among those with similar racial and cultural members: some predominantly black parishes wished to remain without gospel music and other traditional African-American styles, whereas others experimented with jazz, gospel, spirituals, and even musics from Africa and the Caribbean. Even some predominantly white parishes have changed their musical styles to minister to a more multicultural congregation. If catholicity depends in part on encompassing sameness and difference, then each musical strategy at Holy Cross and around the country successfully realized this ideal during each period despite the changing natures of sameness and difference.

If the new catholicity is also rooted in orthopraxis, or “right action,” in what ways does Holy Cross participate in it and thus reveal itself fully as part of the Body of Christ in its catholicity? Answering this question requires a brief look at the word “praxis” and how it

relates to black Catholicism and its theologies. As I have shown briefly above, black liberation theology focuses on the notion of praxis as a means of effecting social change through instrumental action. Bevans considers this theology an example of his “praxis model” of contextual theology. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, praxis has taken on this meaning in Marxist and materialist circles (e.g., the Frankfurt School). Bevans describes this understanding of praxis as a radical point of departure for theology:

Practitioners of the praxis model stress that Christian action, as one of the key components of theology, will inevitably come up against the fact that such action takes place within a sinful world and a world of sinful structures that condone the sins of those who support them and oppress those who do not. True Christianity, it becomes clear, must work against such oppressive structures not just by seeking to change certain features, but by seeking to supplant them completely. Liberation and transformation, not just gradual development or friendly persuasion, is the only way that men and women can fulfill their call to be genuine children of God.³¹

Liberation theologians’ emphasis on orthopraxis and concomitant de-emphasis on orthodoxy have resulted in a degree of skepticism among ecclesiastical authorities about the “rightness” of their teachings.³² One significant problem with understanding praxis as instrumental action is that its value is determined by its usefulness or practicality—that is, its ability to “produce.” If orthopraxis derives its meaning from this concept, then it is a bankrupt term: value is determined by the “left over” not by the “doing” itself. “Right action” becomes morphed into “right results.” With this definition of orthopraxis, the moral goodness of the individual performing an action and the moral dimension of the action itself simply do not

³¹ Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 72-73. It should now be clear how closely the statement made by Phelps quoted above resonates with Bevans’s formulation.

³² See Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Certain Aspects of The “Theology of Liberation”* (1984), §VII. The official English translation of this document may be accessed at: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19840806_theology-liberation_en.html.

matter. If the “doing” is not the valuable activity, then praxis is no longer the operative term; instead, it is what Aristotle calls *technē* and *poiēsis*.

In an Aristotelian context, *praxis* has itself as its own end and reward. In his theology of accompaniment, Roberto Goizueta—himself a Latino—reorients orthopraxis toward this Aristotelian definition of praxis.³³ Summarizing his argument, he writes:

Such an understanding of human action, or praxis, would retrieve the central insights of both Latin American aesthetic philosophies and Latin American liberation theologies. Human intersubjective action is “beautiful” and, as such, is its own end; the fundamental nature of human action is thus enjoyment, celebration, and worship; *and* human action implies ethical-political relationships mediated by economic relationships; the intrinsic beauty of life is experienced only *in* the struggle to make these more equitable. Worship and celebration are always aesthetic and ethical-political acts that are mediated by economic products and structures. Before the bread and wine are the body and blood of Christ they are the body and blood of the poor person; the bread was kneaded by some-*one* and the grapes were picked by some-*one*.

He goes on to explain how this takes place concretely in a U.S. Hispanic parish in San Fernando, Texas:

Yet the deepest significance of [the preferential option for the poor] is not social transformation *per se*, but the celebration of everyday human life. This is why, paradoxically, it is among the poor, in parishes like San Fernando, that one will find the most vibrant and vital communities of celebration and worship.³⁴

The situation is similar at Holy Cross. By understanding and accounting for the plurality of aesthetic–stylistic *and* pastoral needs of the community while, crucially, adapting the liturgy to meet these needs, the liturgical ministers at Holy Cross embrace the parish’s diasporic cultural identity and create a space in which cultural communication and orthopraxis can occur. During the moment of worship—the celebration of the Mass and all its component

³³ Roberto Goizueta, *Caminemos con Jesús: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995), 89-131.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 131.

parts—the individual human lives, struggles, and joys of the parishioners come together in word, in gesture, and, most importantly, in music. The beauty of their everyday lives, no matter how painful or joyful, is made manifest in both the performances *of music* and the *performances* of music.

By following the parish's stated mission of worshiping the Lord in joy, the participatory expression of a full faith among unique individuals marks liturgical action, especially music-making, as a specific form of praxis that effects a spiritual change, a change of heart within the person. Once this praxis has taken place, the parishioners, like all Catholics, are commissioned to be Christ in the world and to be served by serving. The socially liberating effects of Christ's presence in the community outside the church walls thus come as *byproducts* of the praxis of the mass. Although the maxim, "Think globally, act locally" most often occurs in isolated political contexts, it can be applied in a special way to the congregation at Holy Cross. The parishioners there act locally in the mass by adopting a style of worship music that both reflects and constitutes their local cultural identity. They think globally by joyfully giving praise to God through worship. They act locally by being Christ to the Durham community. They think globally by being Christ in the world. The truth of Christ, revealed in their own praxis during the mass, sets them free. Liturgy is what they believe.

Finally, The Holy Cross community also enacts the final component of Schreiter's new catholicity, providing *teloi* for a globalized society. The periodization of changing worship styles above reveals one way that this component has emerged over time, but *teloi* are also present today. In his analysis of official twentieth-century documents relating to music in the Catholic liturgy, Jan Michael Joncas addresses the "eschatological function" of

worship music suggested in *Musicam Sacram*, a document released shortly after the Second Vatican Council. In worship, he claims, “although technically this eschatological function refers to the mirroring of the heavenly liturgy by its earthly participants, there is also a sense in which the use of worship music from other eras connects us with those ‘who have gone before us in faith’ and are now celebrating celestial worship.”³⁵ According to *Musicam Sacram*, a liturgy with music:

gives a more graceful expression to prayer and brings out more distinctly the hierarchical character of the liturgy and the specific make-up of the community. It achieves a closer union of hearts through the union of voices. It raises the mind more readily to heavenly realities through the splendor of the rites. It makes the whole celebration a more striking symbol of the celebration to come in the heavenly Jerusalem.

As music in worship increasingly unites a community in faith, it points more and more sharply to the *eschaton*, or end of the world, in which Jesus Christ comes again in glory. The juxtaposition of African Mass settings, old Marian hymns, spirituals, hymns by Lowell Mason and Charles Wesley, traditional Nigerian prayers, and gospel songs that can be found in the history of worship at Holy Cross marks the union of the lived experiences, the life worlds, of all who sang and continue to sing those very notes in the Mass and elsewhere. Indeed, it prepares the world for the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth.

Conclusions

In the sections above, I have treated the performance practices of music at Holy Cross to theological reflection drawing from the ideas of contemporary Roman Catholic theologians. These reflections are built upon my own experiences at Holy Cross, the experiences of those who worshiped with me (evidenced in their outward expressions of faith), and the experiences of those, such as Monsignor Hadden, who experienced worship in

³⁵ Jan Michael Joncas, *From Sacred Song to Ritual Music: Twentieth-Century Understandings of Roman Catholic Worship Music* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 41-42.

a black Catholic community in the generations preceding my own and shared these experiences with me. Since they come from the same faith tradition, Roman Catholicism embodied in the Roman Rite, all of these experiences share an identity as experiences *of* worship, above and beyond being simply experiences *in* worship. Thus built from experiences of worship and drawn from the ideas of other theologians, my reflections have originated in what Hans Urs von Balthasar calls the freedom of theology:

The object of theology as a “science” is the Christian faith with all the specific characteristics of its nature....Can a science have a voice in determining its own object? It cannot do so in the sense that through it the object could be changed or called into question, but only in such a way that it is extended further or limited to a special field or that its relations with other fields of research are investigated....But changing its object is something that it cannot do.³⁶

Christian faith in all its varieties forms the central kernel of the liturgy of the Roman Rite. The object of this investigation, then, the musically embodied and expressed faith of the worshipers at Holy Cross, is self-determining, something that can be accessed only through the intersubjective participation in it. When faith remains the primary object of investigation throughout a study and that faith is shared by all involved, problems of emic and etic knowledge disappear and exegetical analyses of musical and other worship practices seem strikingly inadequate. Moreover, by starting with a local, almost invisible, expression of faith in the Mass at Holy Cross and moving toward questions of race, culture, theology, music (and musicology) from a “situated” perspective, I have avoided the problematic methods in the work of Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje, Mary McGann, Sam Floyd, Jr., and Ronald Radano. Worship in all its richness does not conform to easily generalized principles and the Christian faith in all its wonder cannot be simplified into a singular cultural phenomenon. By treating

³⁶ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *A Short Primer for the Unsettled Layman*, tr. Michael Waldstein (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 54-55.

faith, race, culture, music, worship, and scholarship sensitively, this study approaches the personalistic norm of treating human life and living as ends in themselves while maintaining the fluidity of methods implied in A.G. Sertillanges's formulation of comparative study.

Nevertheless, many questions remain unanswered. In order to create a study of music and worship at Holy Cross that justly reveals its richness, the liturgy must be experienced for years on end and many close relationships with parishioners must be established. Many more newspapers could be mined for the social, political, and religious contexts of worship now and in the past. The cultural and ethnic demographics of the Durham area continue to change as economic and other opportunities avail themselves to Catholics, foreign and domestic, who might not otherwise want to live in North Carolina; immigrants from Caribbean and African nations continue to arrive in the Triangle area and worship at Holy Cross.

Expressions of cultural identity also find themselves in new places. In November of 2003, the North Carolina Central University Newman Center held a Mass with live drumming and an African dance exhibition in honor of Black Catholic History Month.³⁷ Similarly, the first North Carolina Black Catholic Conference sponsored by the Diocese of Raleigh convened in Greensboro in June of 2004, and African drumming was an integral part of celebrations there. Black Catholics in North Carolina, then, are becoming increasingly visible, often paradoxically through their music.

Lastly, the musical life at Holy Cross reveals the relationship of such a marginalized group of people to the larger institutions of the Roman Catholic Church and the United States of America. W.E.B. DuBois famously asked of white Americans, "Your Country? How came it yours? Before the Pilgrims landed we were here....Actively we have woven ourselves with

³⁷ Advertisement, *North Carolina Catholics*, October 12, 2003.

the very warp and woof of this nation...Would America have been America without her Negro people?"³⁸ Had he not possessed the nearsighted vision of secularism and Americentrism, DuBois might have instead asked, "Your Church? Your Country? Your world? How came it yours? Before the Pilgrims landed, before the Muslims invaded, we black Catholics were here on Earth, living, worshiping, and dying in the arms of our Lord and Church...Since then, actively we have woven ourselves with the very pulse of this nation, this Church, this world...Would the Church have been the Church without her Negro people?"³⁹ The Roman Catholic Church is catholic only because of the gifts of those who went unseen and remain, at the hands of so many who might find them, unheard. It is only appropriate that Holy Cross is staffed by Jesuits. Mary Lou Williams's manager after her conversion to Catholicism was Peter O'Brien, himself a Jesuit of a strange breed. Reporting on Williams and O'Brien in the *New York Times*, George Riemer, who also wrote a book called *The New Jesuits*, commented:

Here we are then, today, at the burnt-out end of the Age of Reason: analyzed, de-personalized, de-humanized, measured, compartmented, and categorized—body counts in the Land of Numbers. We've discovered that developing the intellect alone develops the part-time human being. We have atomic energy but lack compassion. We have the moon but we feel incomplete. Since "seeing is believing" it has to follow that we've lost the art of believing. Have we had enough of Science Man?⁴⁰

Although black Catholics are invisible, unseen, when they sing and pray, who knows but that, on some lower frequencies, they speak for us?

³⁸ W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 238.

³⁹ On DuBois's anti-Catholicism, see Don Hufford, "The Religious Thought of W.E.B. DuBois," *Journal of Religious Thought* 53 (1997): 77.

⁴⁰ George R. Riemer, "The New Jesuits," *The New York Times*, August 9, 1971. See Riemer, *The New Jesuits* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1971).

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