

# Philippine Liturgical Music

by Manuel P. Maramba, OSB

When the first Spanish missionaries came to the Philippines in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Catholic faith they preached to the natives was expressed in a liturgy that was in Latin and the music that went with it was Western. They celebrated the liturgy using Gregorian chant, polyphonic Masses and motets, and hymns, all in Latin. Gradually they instructed the natives not only in singing but also in playing various instruments like guitar, violin, flute, harp and later on, the organ.

In 1857 a boy's choir was formed in the Dominican convent of Sto. Domingo which evolved into a music school. Later a fine organ was installed in the church. The first orchestra was formed in the Augustinian Convent of Guadalupe in 1601. In 1643, Fray Juan de Torres established the Manila Orchestra. In 1742, the Colegio de Niños Tiples de la Iglesia Cathedral was founded.

Between 1816-1824, Fr. Diego de Cerra built a unique instrument, the famous Las Piñas Bamboo Organ which is still being used for liturgical services in the Parish Church of St. Joseph. It contains 950 bamboo pipes with 22 stops, 43 pipes for each register and 12 pedals. In 1870 the Augustinian Fray Toribio organized an orchestra at the San Agustin Church in Intramuros. The orchestra was led by Marcelo Adonay, the first native Filipino to compose a Mass. Other Filipino musicians were Pantaleon Lopez and Ladislao Bonus.

**The Christianized natives did not find the Latin liturgical celebrations in church adequate enough to express their faith, so there evolved extra liturgical services in which they could perform music that was more to their taste: they sang songs in Spanish and gradually included songs in their own vernacular language.** Thus, during the Advent-Christmas season, aside from the *Simbang Gabi* (or Misa de Aguinaldo) they held the *Panunuluyan* and the *Pamamasko* where Spanish, Mexican and local *villancicos* were sung. During the Lenten season, in their homes they held the *Pabasa*, or public chanting of the Pasyon. On Easter Sunday, the *Salubong* was held early in the morning in the plaza before the dawn Mass. For the celebrations of All Saints' Day (Nov. 1) and All Souls' Day (Nov. 2), aside from going to Mass and to the cemetery to give honor to the departed, singing groups called *pangangaluluwa* pretending to be the wandering souls of the dead, would go from house to house begging for prayers and alms. In the month of May, devotion to Mary took the form of the "Flores de Mayo". Also in May, to commemorate the finding of the Cross by Empress Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine, there is the *Santacruzán*.

In all these extra-liturgical celebrations Spanish and vernacular hymns were sung with music which was not like the Gregorian chant or classical polyphony or Latin hymns that were sang in the Church. In October, the Rosary with the litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary were chanted or sung in the vernacular. During Novenas especially to patron saints, Spanish and vernacular songs as well as prayers were the rule. Gradually, non-Latin songs entered into the *Simbang Gabi* celebrations (with castanets and tambourine and even bird whistles). other extra-liturgical celebrations were more theatrical, like the *Senakulo* and the *Moriones* (Marinduque) during Holy Week. Others were dances in honor of the local patron saints like the *Ati-atihan* (Aklan) in honor of Santo Niño and the dancing during the procession in honor of Santa Clara (Obando) and other celebrations in honor of Santo Niño in Cebu, Pandacan, Tondo, etc. Up to the end of the Spanish rule, the Christianized Filipinos attended the religious services in church mostly as audience while music was sung by trained choirs in the Parish Churches accompanied by the organ and some instruments, even an orchestra. After these celebrations, they had their own extra-liturgical celebrations with their own sacred and religious songs and dances.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the situation begun to change. On November 22, 1903 Pope Pius X issued his *motu proprio*, “*Tra le Sollicitudine*” to reform the liturgy. He encouraged the participation of the congregation in the liturgical celebrations. The liturgy was still in Latin but bishops and pastors were instructed to teach the faithful to sing the ordinary of the Mass at least in Gregorian chant. As the faithful were taught to sing the Latin Mass, gradually vernacular songs were introduced side by side. Several German & French dioceses had special concessions to sing parts of the ordinary of the Mass in the vernacular (the German *singmesse*). In other places, especially in the missions, where such concessions were not given, vernacular songs with religious texts (though not, liturgical texts) were introduced.

At the start of the American rule in the Philippines, the new missionaries, this time coming from the United States of America, introduced English hymns and songs in English. Missionaries from Europe taught English translations of their own vernacular hymns, such as the German hymns: *Grosser Got Wir Loben Dich* (Holy God, We Praise thy Name), *Lobe den Herren* (Praise to the Lord) & *Stille Nacht* (Silent Night); the French Lourdes hymn (Immaculate Mother), *Cantique de Noel* (O Holy Night); even the Latin hymn: *Veni Veni Emmanuel* (O Come, O Come Emmanuel). A four-hymn pattern for Mass started to evolve. The liturgy was still in Latin but the faithful would sing at the entrance, offertory, communion, and after the Mass using vernacular songs.

Although some Protestant missionaries like the Methodists started to arrive toward the end of the Spanish rule (last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century), the advent of American rule signaled an influx of Protestant missionaries, mainly American. They brought with them a liturgy that emphasized the participation of the congregation in singing hymns not in Latin but in their vernacular (English). The Protestant liturgy was alive with congregational participation and in a language the congregation could understand. The Aglipayan Church which was also founded at this time separated itself from the main Catholic body and introduced the use of the vernacular in their liturgy. Local sects (like *Iglesia ni Cristo*) were being formed and the services were in the vernacular

Catholic composers followed the example of Marcelo Adonay who composed *Liberamus* (1869), *Benedictus* (1895), *Hosanna* (1899), and *Te Deum* and a grand mass. *Ave Marias* were composed by Nicanor Abelardo, Francisco Santiago, Francisco Buencamino, Sr., and Manuel Veluz. The songs were usually sung by a soloist during the offertory or communion on Sundays, as well as during weddings and funerals. Masses were written by Antonio J. Molina, Juan Hernandez & Antonio Buenaventura, all in Latin. A few non-Latin hymns were written during the period (first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century): *Nomas Amor que el tuyo* by Simeon Resurrecion and *Gloria a Jesus en el Cielo* which was composed for the International Eucharistic Congress in 1937. The Benedictine Jaime Bofill, OSB composed *O Nino Dios* in honor of the Sto. Niño de Prada enshrined in the Benedictine la Virgen in honor of the La Naval statue which had been venerated at the Dominican Convent of Santo Domingo since the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

On December 25, 1955, Pope Pius XII issued his encyclical letter “*Musicae Sacrae Disciplina*” on Sacred Music and on September 3, 1958, the Sacred Congregation of Rites issued an Instruction, “*De Musica Sacra*” which detailed new norms on sacred music. Among the norms was a universal concession to sing sacred vernacular songs during the Latin liturgy.

When the preparatory Commissions were preparing for the Vatican Council II after the announcement made by Pope John XXIII in 1958 that he will convene a General Council, there was a strong lobby to change the Tridentine decree that required Latin to be used in the liturgy. The Council convened in 1962 and on December 4, 1963 approved its first document, the Constitution on Sacred Liturgy, “*Sacrosanctum Concilium*”. The document permitted the translation of parts of

the liturgy (especially the Mass) into the vernacular. Subsequent documents would eventually allow more parts to be translated until the whole liturgy was in the vernacular.

On January 1964, the bishops of the Philippines met in Cebu City and immediately approved the use of Philippine languages for the liturgy in addition to English and Spanish. The approved languages were: Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilocano, Pangasinan, Pampango, Bicolano, Hiligaynon, & Waray. Ibanag and Chavacano were later approved and all were confirmed by Rome.

Filipino composers were at first in a quandary as to what music to use in the liturgy since there was no Filipino liturgical tradition to speak of. The Spanish colonial music that evolved during the more than three centuries of Spanish rule and which spilled over to the 20<sup>th</sup> century after the coming of the American rule was mostly secular in character, and at best used in extra-liturgical services. Some masses and other hymns and prayers like *Ave Maria*, *Stabat Mater*, *Tantum Ergo*, *O Salutaris* have been set to music in this style.

The first attempt was to translate the English text of hymns into the vernacular which proved to be a disaster for the most part. The Benedictine Abbey of Our lady of Monserrat in Manila introduced the Pilipino chant adopted from indigenous ethnic chants from the north: (Kalinga), from Mindoro (Mangyan) and from Mindanao (taken from the collection of Dr. Jose Maceda of UP). This was presented to the bishops in their meeting in Baguio City in January 1965. This chant was flexible enough to be sung in different languages and was published in English, Cebuano, & Bicol. One bishop commented: “Why use these pre-Hispanic chants when the Filipino Christians are more familiar with Spanish colonial music developed during the three centuries of Spanish rule?” Another approach was to adopt foreign songs especially American songs and music composed and compiled by the Taize Community in France.

At the forefront of the liturgical reform in the Archdiocese of Manila was a Belgian missionary, Fr. John Vanders Sten CICM, who was the director of the Manila Cathedral Choir as well as the San Carlos Major Seminary choir. With Sr. Graciana Raymundo, DC, dean of the College of Music of La Concordia and the Benedictine monks, Fr. Van de Steen, CICM organized concerts of Sacred Music in the Abbey Church of Our Lady of Monserrat and the Manila Cathedral and other venues. Seminars on Sacred Music, the forerunner of the Manila Archdiocesan Institute of Music in the Liturgy (now based in Sta. Isabel College).

In the 1970's the Jesuits spearheaded the introduction of Spanish colonial music into the liturgy. Fr. Eduardo Hontiveros, SJ was at the head of this movement with his confreres Fr. Nemy S. Que, SJ, Fr. Fruto Ramirez, SJ and later joined by the young Fr. Manuel Francisco, SJ. Most of the songs they composed were in Tagalog liturgy. In Davao City in Mindanao, Narcisa Fernandez, a music graduate wrote for the Cebuano liturgy. In Cebu, a musician educated in the USA, Msgr. Rudy Villanueva, enriched the music for the Cebuano liturgy. Lucio San Pedro & Edgardo Parungao made their own contributions in a more classical but traditional style. Ernani Cuenco used a more popular style; Lucrecia Kasilag composed a mass with ethnic influences and Ryan Cayabyab, in his own personal idiom, rhythmic and melodious, composed a mass which was even choreographed and performed at the Manila Cathedral.

The Benedictine Missionary Sisters of Tutzing (St. Scholastica's College) helped in the reform, not only by composing new songs but, in addition, through a collection of hymns and songs for the liturgy: “PAX”. They also conducted Summer Sessions on Liturgical Music with students coming from all over the country. Foremost among them is Sr. Mary Placid Abejo, OSB, the dean of the College of Music. Under her direction, the sisters put together music for the Liturgy of the Hours (the Roman Office) which is used widely among religious communities.

The Benedictine monks of the Abbey of Our Lady of Monserrat (San Beda College) set their monastic Liturgy of the Hours to music by composing new chant formulae. *Pasyon* chants were adapted for use in the Holy Week liturgical celebrations. Music for the All Soul's Day *Mangangaluluwa* were adapted for the funeral liturgical rites. Christmas carols and mass songs were composed for the *Simbang Gabi* liturgies including the midnight mass. Plain chant is still sung by the monks in their daily compline office, in the office of vigils, especially of Christmas, and on special occasions.

In the 1980's, the Benedictine monks conducted Seminars on Liturgy during Easter week. These later evolved into the Paul VI Institute of Liturgy when the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) requested the Philippine Benedictines who belong to the Subiaco Congregation to establish a liturgical institute not only for the Philippines, but also for Asia. Fr. Anscar Chupungco, OSB, a Filipino Benedictine who had been elected president of the Pontifical Institute of Liturgy in Rome for four consecutive terms, was appointed the first director of Paul VI Institute of Liturgy. The Institute is located on the grounds of the Monastery of the Transfiguration in Malaybalay City, in Bukidnon, Mindanao. Among the liturgical subjects offered is liturgical music. The Institute also offers one week seminars for composers of liturgical music. The Institute attracts students from all over Asia and even some missionaries from the United States of America and Europe. The Institute is preparing for the publication of *Misa ng Bayang Pilipino*, the Roman Mass for the dioceses in the Philippines with music by Dom Benildus Ma. Maramba, OSB. The *Misa* was prepared under the direction of Dom Chupungco, OSB, an expert in liturgical inculturation, after extensive research, studies, and consultations on Filipino culture and values as well as language. The *Misa* has been approved by the CBCP and has been submitted to Rome for confirmation. Music for the new ICEL translation of the Liturgy of the Hours has also been composed.

The Conservatory of Music of the University of Sto Tomas offers a course towards a diploma in Sacred Music. The conservatory has two choirs in residence: the Coro Tomasino under Professor Ricardo Mazo and the Liturgikon under Dom Maramba, OSB and Fr. Nilo Mangusad. These choirs sing at important liturgical services at the university chapel with the UST symphony orchestra. Dom Maramba, OSB has composed several masses for these occasions: mass in honor of St. Lorenzo Ruiz on the occasion of his canonization, for two choirs, soloist, organ and orchestra; mass in honor of St. Joseph for choir, soloist, and orchestra; and mass for the novena in honor of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary (La Naval) for choir, congregation and orchestra.

The UST Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Professor Herminigildo Ranera with musicians from St. Scholastica's College and other schools, performed at the Papal Mass during the World Youth Day in Manila on January 15, 1995. The choir consisted of more than 700 members organized and rehearsed under the leadership of Sr. Mary Placid Abejo, OSB. It was a Filipino liturgy with the Mass mainly in Filipino composed by Dom. Maramba, OSB. Pope John Paul II celebrated the Eucharistic liturgy with more than five million people.

The Asian Institute of Liturgy and Music (1977) admits students from different Christian communions from all over Asia and the Pacific even from Africa. It emphasizes inculturation of music in the liturgy and encourages the use of indigenous instruments in the liturgical celebrations. The head of the Institute is Dr. Francisco Feliciano.

Catholic seminaries and houses of formation (Immaculate Conception Seminary, Malolos; Our Lady of the Angels Seminary, Franciscans; Holy Rosary Major Seminary, Naga; John Paul I Biblical Institute, Vigan; St. Francis Regional Seminary, Davao; etc.) as well as Protestant Institutions (Asian Institute for Liturgy and Music, Quezon City; Adventists University of the Philippines, Silang; etc.) are active in producing and compiling new music. Other composers in the different regions are also contributing their talents: Damaso Panganiban, Lipa; Nilo Mangusad,

Manila; Crispin Cadiang, San Fernando, Pampanga; Floro Bautista, Bangued; Lorenzo Jarcia, Naga; Nestor Alagbate, Daet; Ronaldo Samonte, Malolos; Nathaniel Cabanero, Kidapawan; Pablito Maghari, Antique; and Vicencio Neniël, Davao.

Liturgical Music in the Philippines is now in ferment trying to find its identity amidst so much diversity. Composers from different linguistic and subcultural groups have composed music for the liturgy in the vernacular. The music has become ecumenical. It is not surprising that Lutheran, Anglican and Methodist hymns and even Baptist gospel songs as well as charismatic songs find their way into Catholic liturgical celebrations. It is not also unusual to hear music by Hontiveros, Francisco or other Filipino Catholic composers in the liturgical celebrations of other Christian communions. Today, Sunday liturgies, Catholic or Protestant, are alive with active participation of the assembly in a liturgy that is gradually being inculturated and acquiring Filipino features. Filipino Christians of various communions can now pray and sing together with songs whose provenance really does not matter provided that it proclaims their same faith in Christ, their common Redeemer and Saving Lord

**About the Author:** Manuel P. Maramba, OSB graduated with a Master of Music and an Artist's Diploma in piano at the Peabody Conservatory of Music. An active member of the League of Filipino Composers, his major works include "Awakening", (1981) and a full-length ballet "Seven Mansions"; concerto for Piano (1982); "Transfiguration I" for Strings, Woodwinds, and Bass (1983; and "Transfiguration II", a sacred cantata on San Lorenzo Ruiz and is responsible for the highly-successful operas "Aba! Sto. Niño" and "La Naval". He is the Assistant Director of the Paul VI Institute of Liturgy in Malaybalay, Bukidnon and teaches at the UST Conservatory of Music and the Central Seminary.

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