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by

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2019

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**The Modern Monastic:  
The Developing Vernacular in Monasteries of the United States**

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**by**

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**Report**

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

**Master of Music**

**The University of Texas at Austin**

**May 2019**

## **Dedication**

To my parents and twin who always support me.

## **Acknowledgements**

This report would not have been possible without the hospitality and kindness from each of the six monasteries. I thank specifically my six witnesses; without them, this case study would be incomplete. I thank my report supervisors, Luisa Nardini and Charles Carson, for their continued support and guidance. To my parents, who supported me through my education and my goals. Thank you to my closest friend, Chris Aman, for your support through this whole process. To my twin sister, Kayleigh, you may live far away now, but I will forever treasure the bond between us and your random phone calls in the middle of the night. To my friends in the musicology and ethnomusicology department, your support has meant the world to me. I thank the Medieval Studies department at the University of Texas at Austin for awarding me the Medieval Studies fellowship in Spring 2018. I thank the TruScholars Research grant from Truman State University and the guidance of Dr. Marc Rice for piquing my interest in this research and for Dr. Jeffrey Marlett for his authority and guidance on Catholicism in the twentieth century. And, finally, I thank my mom for her continued support and interest in my research. Without your support and love, none of this would have been possible.

## **Abstract**

### **The Modern Monastic: The Developing Vernacular in Monasteries of the United States**

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2019

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This report covers the modern liturgy and chants of Catholic monasteries of the United States since the Second Vatican Council in 1962-1965. One of its constitutions, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, stated that the Catholic Church could use the vernacular language instead of Latin for Mass. Following Vatican II, the Congress of Abbots commenced and concluded that Benedictine monasteries would adopt the vernacular language as well. Historians, Catholics, and musicologists were dismayed by what they believed would be the inevitable loss of Gregorian Chant within the Church.

Since Vatican II, however, monasteries have composed original, vernacular chants or have translated the traditional Latin plainchants into English text with original musical settings. This case study surveys these new twenty and twenty-first century chants and compares them to their medieval and later Latin counterparts. Even though the Gregorian chant tradition has diminished since 1965, the Catholic Church has seen an increase in active participation and communal worship in congregations worldwide.

The six monasteries in this study are Assumption Abbey (Ava, Missouri), Conception Abbey (Conception, Missouri), Saint Benedict's Abbey (Bartonville, Illinois), St. Benedict's Abbey (Atchison, Kansas), St. Scholastica Monastery (Boerne, Texas), and St. Gregory's Abbey (Shawnee, Oklahoma). My fieldwork investigates the current use of English chants and how the vernacular has been a positive change for the monasteries through oral histories and observations made at each monastery by tracing the effects of the new liturgy among the religious that most prominently advocated for the changes.

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## Introduction

The liturgy of the Catholic Church changed dramatically following the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and the decision to transition from Latin to vernacular languages. As a consequence, the Catholic Church was no longer united by a common liturgical language. Since the Council's conclusion, hundreds of translations of the liturgy have been made globally, new chants and hymns have been composed, and the use of Gregorian chant has vastly diminished. Even though the Second Vatican Council did not mandate that Catholic monasteries should transition, after the Council many orders decided to use the vernacular as well. In doing so, a new tradition of twentieth and twenty-first century chants have been composed, translated, or adapted to the vernacular language. Because of the widespread influence of Catholicism, there are numerous vernacular languages worldwide and each developed its own, new chant and liturgical tradition since 1963.

This thesis is an examination of the vernacular—specifically English—in the United States. This examination will be a historical and ethnographic study based upon my fieldwork at six monasteries. The monasteries used in this case study belong to either the Benedictine Confederation<sup>1</sup> or to the Cistercian Trappists.<sup>2</sup> The monasteries are Assumption Abbey (Trappist), Conception Abbey, Saint Benedict's Abbey in Illinois, St.

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<sup>1</sup> The Benedictine Confederation is an aggregation of monasteries that belong to the same governing body. These monasteries are under the Abbot Primate (currently Gregory Polan, former abbot of Conception Abbey), elected by representatives of each monastery. The Cistercians, even though they follow the Rule of St. Benedict, are not a part of this governing body.

<sup>2</sup> The official name of the Trappists is Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance. The Cistercian Trappists follow the Rule of St. Benedict; they are, however, part of a reform group that split off from the Benedictines.

Benedict's Abbey in Kansas, St. Scholastica Monastery, and St. Gregory's Abbey. Even though they do not all belong to the Benedictine Confederation, they all follow the Rule of St. Benedict.

These monasteries have developed differently since their founding and, especially, after the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II). They have all adopted the vernacular liturgy following Vatican II through the experimentation of the monastic rite. This study will chronicle these changes and provide an updated description of modern monasticism in the United States. Each chapter will demonstrate the impact of Vatican II in these monasteries and modern Catholicism. Chapter One provides an overview of the Rule of St. Benedict, the Council of Trent, and the Second Vatican Council and their effect on monasticism. Chapter Two analyzes the daily life of each monastery including their missions, vocations, and pre- and post- Vatican II life. Chapter Three traces the vernacular tradition following the Second Vatican Council and its constitution, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, and the Benedictine experimentation of the monastic rite. Chapter Four, instead, traces the Gregorian chant tradition since its revival in the 1850s by the monks of Solesmes and the Liturgical Movement. Chapter Five compares the active participation of lay congregations before and after Vatican II and finally applies this active participation to the monastic tradition and the communal worship of the early church. Finally, Chapter Six analyzes the Council document, *Perfectae Caritatis*, and its direct mandate toward monastics to return to their founding roots.

This examination uses witness accounts from one monk or nun from each monastery that I collected in my fieldwork during the summers of 2016 and 2018. For the

purposes of confidentiality, I will refer to my witnesses as the “monk,” “nun,” or “witness,” followed from the indication of the particular monastery. I have provided edited excerpts of these witness accounts throughout the body of this thesis with a reference to Appendix C. This includes all relevant excerpts of the clean verbatim transcriptions. For each quote referenced in the appendix, I use the indicators “C1, C2, C3, C4, or C5” to denote each separate monastery with a letter referring to each sub-sections of the interviews. This examination also uses historical documentation, relevant scholarly literature, and my own observations and experiences. These observations are based upon my position as a researcher, a religious tourist, and my secular background.

These six monasteries are a representation of modern monasticism worldwide. Each, however, have their own distinctive tradition following the Second Vatican Council. This examination is, therefore, not a systematic study of all Catholic monasteries and their broad traditions. This ethnographic and historical examination provides, instead, an account of the United States modern chant, daily life, and relevance to contemporary Catholicism in the twenty-first century.

## Chapter 1: 50 CE to the Present Day: A Brief Monastic History

### THE RULE OF ST. BENEDICT: THE FOUNDING OF THE BENEDICTINES AND LATER CISTERCIANS

Benedict of Nursia wrote his *Rule* between c. 530 and c. 560 for the monks of Montecassino. He was born in Nursia in ca. 480 and lived during the rule of Justinian I and the Ostrogothic emperors. As the founder and head of numerous monasteries around Nursia, Benedict is considered the father of Western monasticism and of the Benedictines, who have followed his *Rule* for 1500 years. According to John Chamberlin, *The Rule* “is one of the most important texts in the history of our culture, not for the profundity of its ideas not, for the beauty of its language, but because of the crucial role played in medieval culture by the monastic communities.... the existence of the monasteries was essential in conserving educational and cultural continuity with the classical past.”<sup>3</sup>

Little is known about the life of Benedict except for the visit of the Gothic king of Totila at Montecassino in c. 542. St. Benedict died a few years after this visit. The earliest biography of St. Benedict is included in St. Gregory the Great’s second book of the *Dialogues*. According to Dom Cuthbert, however, “[t]he *Dialogues* is in some ways a trying book to the modern mind; but the outlines of St. Benedict’s life may be traced from it with entire security.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> John Chamberlin, Introduction to *The Rule of St. Benedict: The Abingdon Copy* ed. by John Chamberlin (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1982), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Dom Cuthbert Butler, *Benedictine Monasticism: Studies in Benedictine Life and Rule* (New York: Longmans Green and Co., 1919), 2.

Following his brief education in Rome, he quickly left the city due to its impropriety. Benedict decided to become a monk, which in those times meant “to retire to a desert place and be a hermit.”<sup>5</sup> He chose Subiaco, a town twenty-five miles east of Rome, to live in solitude. There, however, he struggled with his vow of chastity and allegedly rolled in a thorn bush to resist the temptation with pain. After this period of isolation, he founded twelve monasteries to house the followers who continuously came to him in Subiaco. Following an attempt of poisoning while still at Subiaco, Benedict decided to move to Montecassino with a few chosen followers. There, he founded a new monastery, which soon became the motherhouse of the Benedictine order, where he wrote his *Rule*, and where he stayed until his death.<sup>6</sup>

Before Benedictine monasticism, Western monasticism coincided with extreme asceticism. This practice was adopted from the early Desert Fathers and Anthony the Great, a saint in the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria. These monks spent weeks as hermits in the desert reciting all 150 psalms every day and fasting. St. Benedict split from this tradition of ascetics and hermits and created communities of monks known as *cenobites*. There are modern day hermits, as for instance, some sects of the Carmelites, whose tradition arose from Anthony the Great, who was inspired by Elijah in the Old Testament.

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<sup>5</sup> Dom Cuthbert Butler *Benedictine Monasticism*, 2.

<sup>6</sup> Lowrie J. Daly, *Benedictine Monasticism: Its Formation and Development through the 12th Century* (New York, Sheed and Ward, 1965), 77-78.

Benedict's *Rule* contains seventy-three short chapters, which lay out a daily schedule for the monks, a flexible schedule for the psalm cycle, and a hierarchy based on the monks' role within the monastery. Although written for the monks at Montecassino, the *Rule* was general and flexible enough, so that in the ensuing centuries it could be applied to and adapted for all Benedictines, Cistercians,<sup>7</sup> oblates, and Catholic lay people.

Lowrie J. Daly discussed the application of the *Rule* amongst the Benedictines and Cistercians with these words: “[t]he Rule is written for use in many different monasteries and there is little of the local about it. The monastery which it describes is to be a self-sustaining unit, independent both economically and constitutionally...The monastery is to provide for those who wish to live its Rule a delicately ordered way of life drawn from the Gospel...”<sup>8</sup> The *Rule* prescribed that the monastery should be led by an abbot.<sup>9</sup> Along with the schedule and roles for the monks,<sup>10</sup> the *Rule* also lists the daily

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<sup>7</sup> There are two distinct orders that use the name Cistercian; these are the Order of Cistercians (OCist) and Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance (Trappists). The OCist split off from the Benedictines in c. 1098 to follow a more literal interpretation of *The Rule*. They are also referred to as “White Monks” or The Bernardines. The Trappists branched from the OCist in c. 1664 in La Trappe Abbey in France. The Trappists follow an even stricter observance of *The Rule*. These two orders have their own Abbot General and, therefore, separate governing bodies from the Benedictine Confederation.

<sup>8</sup> Daly, *Benedictine Monasticism*, 88.

<sup>9</sup> St. Benedict calls this system abbatial law.

<sup>10</sup> Other roles within the community include the prior, who is directly below the abbot in the monastic hierarchy. Benedict, however, generally opposed the role of prior and wanted a system of deans who would take charge of ten or so members of the community. This was to distribute the power so the prior would not consider himself as important as the abbot. St. Benedict describes the porter as the face of the monastery. Today, the role of the porter is covered by the guestmaster, who is the first who meets guests. Instead of a prior, Benedict wanted the cellarer to be directly below the abbot. The role of the cellarer is to take care of the physical aspects of the monastery so that the abbot can direct his attention to the spiritual life of the monastery.

food allotment, the amount of beverage, *lectio divina*,<sup>11</sup> and specifics about how the monks should conduct themselves amongst their brethren.

The most important part of his *Rule* was the notion of *ora et labora*, which translates into “pray and work,” and which underlines the importance of balance between prayer and work along with communal recreation. *Ora et labora* is the foundation of the *Rule* and of the Benedictines as well as of other orders.

According to Victorine Fenton, “[f]rom time to time reform measures were introduced, or new interpretations of the Rule of Benedict were observed by groups of monks seeking to return to the Rule's original spirit. Some of these groups remained engrafted on the main trunk of the Benedictine family tree, but others separated themselves to form new Orders.”<sup>12</sup> These orders include the Cistercians and the Cistercians of the Strict Observance,<sup>13</sup> the Camaldolese, the Sylvestrians, and the Olivetans. Excluding the Cistercian groups, most of these groups “now belong to the Benedictine Confederation, a loose aggregation of monasteries under an Abbot Primate who is elected by representatives of the member monasteries.”<sup>14</sup> Over 1500 years, the *Rule* has evolved to serve monastic life in later times, with several new editions, translations, and commentaries appearing throughout the centuries. Former Abbot

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<sup>11</sup> *Lectio Divina* translates to Divine Reading, and it is the Benedictine practice of daily scripture reading, prayer, and meditation.

<sup>12</sup> Victorine Fenton, “The English Monastic Liturgy of the Hours in North America,” volumes i-iii, ((PhD diss., The University of Iowa, 1985), 1-2.

<sup>13</sup> Also known as the Trappists.

<sup>14</sup> Fenton *The English Monastic Liturgy of the Hours*, 1-2.



Primate, Jerome Theisen of Saint John's Abbey, describes the application of the *Rule* to contemporary monastic life,

The monastics of today do not follow it literally but still find in it much wisdom to live the common life. It still protects the individual and the community from arbitrariness on the part of the abbot or others; it still provides a way of living the Christian life. Monastic communities accept it as their basic inspiration even as they mitigate it, supplement it, or adapt it to the living conditions of today.<sup>15</sup>

Even though the *Rule* was written and intended for Montecassino, other monasteries adapted it in accordance to abbatial law and the needs of each monastery. Through its adaptation and flexibility, the Rule of St. Benedict has remained the authoritative text of Western monasticism for fifteen centuries.

### **THE COUNCIL OF TRENT: THE CHANGING LITURGY AND CHANT TRADITION**

The Protestant Reformation was initiated by Martin Luther in c. 1517 and resulted in the schism from Catholicism. The Catholic Church responded to the Protestant Reformation by holding the ecumenical council that became known as the Council of Trent. Although the Catholic reaction has been generally defined as the “Counter Reformation,” this is a misinformed label because it oversimplifies the events that lead to the Catholic Church's restatement of beliefs and doctrines after the Reformation. John O'Malley expresses the need for reevaluating our terminology in his discussion of early modern Catholicism and of the Council of Trent.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Jerome Theisen, “The Rule of Saint Benedict Introduction,” *The Order of Saint Benedict*, 1995, <http://www.osb.org/gen/rule.html>, accessed 27 December 2018.

<sup>16</sup> John O'Malley, *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 5

Change, that is, ‘reform,’ is crucial to Catholicism in this period. When historians apply the term to Catholicism, however, they generally do so without telling us with any precision what the concept means in this new context, so that it sometimes seems to stand for something quite specific... In any case, they often use ‘reform’ as if it operated in Catholicism in the same way it did in Protestantism.<sup>17</sup>

The Council of Trent convened from 1545 to 1563. Even though no theological compromise was made between the teachings of the Protestant Church and those of the Catholic Church, it restated the doctrines of Catholicism and ended the sale of indulgences. More than half of the decrees of the Council were about Catholic reform (*de reformatione*), and “[e]ven with the settlement of the Schism, cries for reform of the church, especially reform of the ‘abuses’ practiced by the papal curia, continued in swelling crescendo into the next century...”<sup>18</sup> Seventeen dogmatic decrees were passed in all over the eighteen years the Council convened.

The Council decreed to abandon the more complex polyphonic music in favor of polyphonic music that did not obscure the text. Legend says that Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina’s music was performed for the Council as an example of polyphony that maintained the clarity of the text and did not include polytext or isorhythms. Even though the legend has been disproved, the Council did discuss, incidentally, church music.<sup>19</sup> According to Craig A. Monson, the most important Tridentine decree during the twenty-fourth session, is the one known as the *iuxta formam concilii*. This mandate “not only

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<sup>17</sup> John O’Malley *Trent and All that*, 7.

<sup>18</sup> O’Malley *Trent and All That*, 18. O’Malley is referring to Schism, here, as referring to the East-West Schism of c. 1054, which was the break between the Eastern Orthodox and Catholic Church.

<sup>19</sup> Craig A. Monson, “The Council of Trent Revisited,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 55, no. 1 (2002): 3.

encouraged a post-Tridentine sacred music considerably more diverse than generally envisioned in much modern musical scholarship, but also appears to have prompted an immediate amplification in Rome of criteria for musical reform at the local level.”<sup>20</sup> Instead of incorporating influence from Protestantism, this mandate largely focused on past and contemporary musical traditions as well as on overall Church reform and complaints within the Church. All sessions focusing on sacred music “consistently deplored music that interrupted or obscured the sacred words of the Mass, went on too long, was inappropriate to the solemnity of particular occasions, or was overtly secular if not downright lascivious.”<sup>21</sup> The twenty-fourth and twenty-second sessions, in particular, also restricted the use of secular melodies and instruments during Mass. Consequently, instead of a secular cantus firmus melody, such as *L’homme armé*, composers started using motets and plainchant for the cantus firmus mass and later introduced the paraphrase and parody masses.<sup>22</sup>

In the Protestant Church, there were different attitudes toward sacred music. For instance, John Calvin banned secular melodies from his church music, while Martin Luther allowed them in hymns. This Catholic Church mandate is independent of the

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<sup>20</sup> Monson “The Council of Trent Revisited,” *Journal of American Musicological Society*, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Monson “The Council of Trent Revisited,” 7.

<sup>22</sup> Cantus firmus mass is a cyclic setting of the Mass Ordinary which has a unified musical theme known as the cantus firmus. Early cantus firmus themes were almost always found in the tenor voice and these themes were often adopted from plainchant or secular songs like *L’homme armé*. A paraphrase mass is another setting of the Mass Ordinary that also uses a cantus firmus, but it is an elaborated version of the cantus firmus. The cantus firmus of a paraphrase mass was usually from a sacred song. A parody mass is a later setting of the Mass Ordinary from the sixteenth century that uses fragments of a sacred song for the whole of the Mass Ordinary. The difference between a paraphrase mass and a parody mass is that a parody mass must include polyphonic fragments of the borrowed melodic material in all voices. A paraphrase mass, instead, uses the elaborated version of the cantus firmus in only one voice.

Protestant Reformation attitudes and is, instead, based upon complaints from the Church to stop using secular cantus firmus melodies. Overall, the twenty-fourth session accomplished far more for Catholic musical reform than the twenty-second session, which banned secular themes but did not mention polyphony and intelligibility. The twenty-fourth session “ensured that post-Tridentine Catholic church music would be anything but uniform and monolithic. As we shall see, it also opened the way in the immediate post-Tridentine period for an expansion of the original pronouncement on music from the twenty-second session into what has come to be understood as essential conciliar musical reform.”<sup>23</sup>

The twenty-fifth session of the Council of Trent decreed that monastic orders should continue following their own specific founding rules. It also decreed that women could not be forced to enter a monastery, monastics could not have their own possessions, and no one could make full professions before the age of sixteen. The twenty-fifth session focused specifically on female monastic orders and their liturgical music. Chapter 7<sup>24</sup> of the twenty-fifth session focused on musical reform within monasteries of women:

Let the divine services be accomplished by them with voices raised, and not by professionals hired for that purpose; and in the sacrifice of the Mass let them make the responses that the choir usually makes; but let them not usurp the role of the deacon and subdeacon of reciting the Lessons, Epistles, and Gospels. Let them abstain from modulating and inflecting the voice or from other artifice of singing, which is called ‘figured’ or ‘instrumental,’ as much in choir as elsewhere.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Monson *The Council of Trent Revisited*, 19

<sup>24</sup> (CT 9:1043) Council of Trent.

<sup>25</sup> Monson. *Council of Trent Revisited*, 20. Monson includes the Chapter 7 quote along with the Latin translation in his footnote.

Not only were external professional musicians banned, but polyphony was largely restricted in nunneries and their churches. The Council, however, ultimately decided to allow the nuns their own choice on the singing of polyphony within their own communities and orders.

The Council of Trent had minimal involvement with monastic reform, and, instead, stated that monasteries should continue observing the Rule of their order. In particular, Benedictines should follow abbatial law in the monastery. The Council decreed<sup>26</sup> that monastics should not have individual personal possessions in accordance with the Rule of St. Benedict. The monastics were not discussed until the final session, but monasteries were still widely impacted by the Council of Trent decrees because of the impact on the restatement of Catholic belief, indulgences, and liturgical music.

## **THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL: A HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION**

After the Council of Trent, the next most influential council on liturgical matters was the Second Vatican Council. From October of 1962 to December of 1965, the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II)<sup>27</sup> was convened in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome to reconfirm Catholic belief in the modern era.<sup>28</sup> The impact of Vatican II was unprecedented in terms of sheer numbers—there were over 2600 in attendance, including

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<sup>26</sup> “The Council of Trent,” Hanover Historical Texts Project. Translated by J. Waterworth (London: Dolman, 1848), Scanned by Hanover Historical Texts Project, 1995, [http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/1545-1545,\\_Concilium\\_Tridentinum,\\_Canons\\_And\\_Decrees,\\_EN.pdf](http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/1545-1545,_Concilium_Tridentinum,_Canons_And_Decrees,_EN.pdf) accessed 9 January 2019.

<sup>27</sup> The Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican.

<sup>28</sup> When the Council began in 1962, nearly one hundred years had passed since Vatican I in 1870.

abbots, bishops, priests, and lay people. The Council's primary focus was the relationship between the Catholic Church and the changing, modern world. Average Catholics had little involvement with the changes introduced by Vatican II, but they experienced its effects. And Catholics all around the world were able to experience the sessions because the Council was widely broadcasted. Catholics were able to witness the proposed constitutions before they were taken into effect, which was not the case in previous Councils of the Catholic Church. The most apparent changes were those that affected the liturgy of the Mass.

Vatican II was the most comprehensive complete council, albeit still incomplete, since the Council of Trent discussed above.<sup>29</sup> The Catholicism “defined by the Council of Trent and upheld by Vatican I, which only sanctioned the fallibility of the pope and the assumption of Mary, was to be renewed and updated at the Second Vatican Council.”<sup>30</sup>

Among the most drastic innovations introduced by a Vatican II constitution is the allowance of the vernacular instead of Latin for Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours. This constitution, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*,<sup>31</sup> “also introduced, if indirectly, Catholicism’s recovery of a theology of the baptismal priesthood. This teaching had been avoided in Catholic thought ever since the Reformation when Martin Luther placed the biblical teaching on the priesthood of the baptized in opposition to a sacramentally ordained

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<sup>29</sup> Vatican I accomplished little, and it was not officially closed until 1960, because the Italian military entered Rome at the end of the Italian unification and the Council ended, incomplete.

<sup>30</sup> Colleen McDannell, *The Spirit of Vatican II: A History of Catholic Reform in America* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 1.

<sup>31</sup> The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.

ministerial priesthood.”<sup>32</sup> Other provisions included the denominations of Catholic and non-Catholic Christian Churches and the Holy Communion. Although not passed, Church leaders also debated the right to Holy Communion for all baptized Christians.<sup>33</sup> With the push towards vernacularism, church doctrine became more accessible through the familiarity of language. The priest, who once faced away from his congregation and spoke Latin in celebration of Mass, now faced forward and spoke primarily in the vernacular languages.

Monasticism played an active role in the transition to the vernacular, especially during the Liturgical Movement<sup>34</sup> leading up to Vatican II and in the years following 1963. The Benedictines, especially in the United States, pushed for liturgical changes, even by maintaining fidelity to the Catholic Church. Conception Abbey in Conception, Missouri, one of the six monasteries analyzed in this study, had a prominent role in the Liturgical Movement, since its monks were among the forerunners in the transition to the vernacular. John O’Malley affirms that “[s]uch monasteries revived the notion of the monk-scholar whose life outside the hours spent celebrating the liturgy were spent on the study of texts, which made some of the monks formidable historical scholars, not always unaffected by the new methods.”<sup>35</sup> Transitioning to the vernacular was a formidable task for Catholicism, the most obvious impact on Catholic lay people.

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<sup>32</sup> Richard R. Gaillardetz, *An Unfinished Council: Vatican II, Pope Francis, and the Renewal of Catholicism* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2015), 58.

<sup>33</sup> Instead, some Catholics allow Anglicans to partake in Holy Communion but not the rest of Protestants.

<sup>34</sup> The Liturgical Movement refers to the nineteenth century movement within the Catholic Church that renewed an interest in the doctrine of the Church and overall comprehension of the liturgy.

<sup>35</sup> John W. O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 73.

Reporters and spectators expected major reform within the Catholic Church. Even with all the changes initiated in Vatican II, however, the Council still seems incomplete: Colleen McDannell laments that “[b]y the end of the Council, however, pointing to clear-cut changes was difficult. The core tenets of Christianity remained: The priesthood was still an all-male celibate institution, debates over birth control were postponed, and divorce was still prohibited.”<sup>36</sup> John O’Malley, however, explains that the Council dramatically changed Church doctrine:

this biggest meeting in the history of the world was much more than a four-year-long celebration of the glories and perennial faith of Catholicism... It gave new emphasis to the Mass as a replication of the sacred banquet that was the Last Supper. It enhanced the part of the Mass known as the Liturgy of the World. It encouraged styles of piety centered on the Mass, the Liturgical Hours, and the Bible rather than on devotional practices like novenas that had proliferated in Catholicism since the Middle Ages.<sup>37</sup>

For monastics, the Council initially brought little change. Discussed in Chapter Six, the largest change brought to monasticism was the doctrine *Perfectae Caritatis*, which translates to the Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life. Monastic orders did not have to adopt the vernacular; it was up to the discretion of the order and of the specific communities. The Congress of Abbots<sup>38</sup> that followed Vatican II ultimately decided that the Benedictine Confederation would adopt the vernacular language.

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<sup>36</sup> McDannell, *The Spirit of Vatican II*, 115.

<sup>37</sup> O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 295.

<sup>38</sup> The Congress of Abbots, led by the Abbot Primate, is the official governing body of the Benedictine Confederation, which is represented by abbots of different monasteries in the confederation. This Congress of Abbots was held in 1967, directly discussing the changes made by Vatican II.



After fifty years, the six monasteries included in this field study are still transitioning to the vernacular language. Through the adoption of *Perfectae Caritatis*,<sup>39</sup> “[t]he principal duty of monks is to present to the divine majesty a service at once humble and noble within the walls of the monastery.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life.

<sup>40</sup> *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents*, edited by Austin Flannery, OP. Liturgical Press, Doctrine 9 within *Perfectae Caritatis*.

## Chapter 2: Formation and Development of Monasteries of the United States

Table 1.

Synopsis of monasteries studied

Monastery	Founding Date	Location	Founding House	Order	Federation
Assumption Abbey	1950	Near Ava, Missouri	New Melleray Abbey, Iowa	Cistercian Trappist	Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance
Conception Abbey	1873	Conception, Missouri	Engelberg Abbey, Switzerland	Benedictine Confederation	Swiss-American Federation
Saint Benedict's Abbey	1996	Bartonville, Illinois	Puerto Rico—relocated	Benedictine Confederation	Associated to the Confederation (status)
St. Benedict's Abbey	1857	Atchison, Kansas	Metten Abbey, Bavaria	Benedictine Confederation	American-Cassinese Congregation
St. Scholastica Monastery	1911 (Cuba)	Boerne, Texas	Founded by Mother Lidwina Weber in Cuba	Benedictine Confederation	The Federation of St. Scholastica
St. Gregory's Abbey	1875	Shawnee, Oklahoma	Pierre-qui-Vire, France	Benedictine Confederation	American-Cassinese Congregation

\*Reference Appendix B for the daily schedule of each of the monasteries.

## **FORMATION:**

The six monasteries analyzed in this thesis were founded in the United States over a wide span of years. Some struggled to establish a functioning monastery in the mid-1800s, following the Latin Roman Rite during the Liturgical Movement, and eventually becoming the forerunner monasteries working to create a vernacular liturgy after the Second Vatican Council.<sup>41</sup> Others, founded after Vatican II, have adopted contemporary music more freely. Five of the monasteries are Benedictine, belonging to the Benedictine Confederation and under the Abbot Primate. Assumption Abbey, instead, belongs to the Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance, which operates separately from the Benedictines.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, The Order of Cistercians was founded in ca. 1098 by a group of Benedictine monks in Cîteaux Abbey near Dijon, France. They intended to follow the Rule of St. Benedict more strictly. The Cistercian Trappists, however, were founded later by a group of monks that branched off from the Cistercians to live even more strictly to the *Rule*. The order was founded in ca. 1664 and are named after La Trappe Abbey in Normandy, France. As a sign of distinction from the Benedictines, the Trappists wear a white, rather than black cuculla (cuculla refers to choir robe) over their habits. The white color of the cuculla is symbolic of pureness, because it is traditionally made of undyed wool. Although not practiced by most now, the Trappists once took a vow of silence and created their own sign language. The Benedictines and Trappists are both considered closed orders rather teaching orders; the Trappists, however, live their

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<sup>41</sup> These monasteries will be discussed in Chapter 3.

lives through *lectio divina* and prayer rather than through the equal split between work and prayer that characterizes the Benedictines.

Assumption Abbey lies deep in the vast wooded area twenty miles north of Ava, Missouri. The monastery's position is too remote to allow public transport to the monastery from major cities. Monks from New Melleray Abbey near Dubuque, Iowa established it in 1950. The monastery "belongs to an international federation of autonomous monasteries forming the Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance. This is the only Order in the Church where the men and women form one fully united Order, together electing one Abbot General and one General Council. This close collaboration of monks and nuns is very enriching."<sup>42</sup> Its motherhouse, New Melleray Abbey, was founded in 1849 by monks from a monastery called Mount Melleray Abbey in Ireland. Today, Assumption Abbey still adopts New Melleray's psalm tones and adapts their liturgy for Assumption's community.

In 1873, Conception Abbey was founded by priests from the Engelberg Abbey<sup>43</sup> in Switzerland. It officially became a Benedictine monastery in 1881 and the basilica was completed ten years later. Besides Conception Abbey, Engelberg Abbey also founded Mount Angel Abbey in Oregon.

Founded slightly earlier than Conception Abbey, St. Benedict's Abbey in Kansas was founded in 1857. The monastery sits high on a hill and, along with the Benedictine

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<sup>42</sup> "Assumption Abbey," Assumption Abbey in Ava, Missouri, 2019, <http://assumptionabbey.org/trappists.asp>, accessed 14 January 2019.

<sup>43</sup> Engelberg Abbey was founded in ca. 1120.

College, is visible from the downtown streets of Atchison where it belongs to the Archdiocese of Kansas City, Kansas. The monastery was originally formed as a dependent priory founded from Metten Abbey, Bavaria, to educate the German settlers in Kansas in the 1850s. According to Dom David Nicholson, “[t]he monastery was founded to minister to the settlers in the new territory. A school was opened in 1858 for this purpose and for the training of priests, and it eventually developed into a liberal-arts college awarding the Bachelor of Arts degree...” The priory received abbatial status in 1876. Its motherhouse, Metten Abbey in Bavaria was founded in c. 766 but, like many European monasteries during the Enlightenment, it was sold by the Bavarian government and was not re-founded until 1858. Then, the abbey joined the Benedictine Confederation and has served as a motherhouse to many monasteries including Saint Vincent Archabbey.

Similarly to St. Benedict’s Abbey, St. Gregory’s Abbey was founded when Fr. Isidore Robot and Br. Dominic Lambert arrived to Oklahoma in 1875 from Pierre-qui-Vire, France to work as missionaries with the Native American populations in the surrounding area.<sup>44</sup> When they first arrived in Oklahoma, they settled near Konawa, Oklahoma. There, they founded Sacred Heart Abbey and a small school; the monks, however, had to rebuild the place following a fire in 1901. After rebuilding the mission at Sacred Heart, some monks decided to relocate to Shawnee, Oklahoma where they founded St. Gregory’s Abbey and St. Gregory’s College and High School. In 1929, the

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<sup>44</sup> Dom David Nicholson, O.S.B., *Liturgical Music in Benedictine Monasticism: A Post Vatican II Survey. Volume I The Monasteries of Monks* (Mount Angel Abbey, 1986), 151.

monastery at Sacred Heart was officially abandoned and St. Gregory's Abbey became their permanent home. Soon after its founding by Robot and Lambert, the monastery "belonged to the French Province of the Primitive Observance Congregation, but when it moved to Shawnee it transferred to the American-Cassinense Congregation."<sup>45</sup>

Despite their distinct foundings, each of the monasteries follow the Rule of St. Benedict and have adopted the vernacular following the Second Vatican Council.

#### **PRE- AND POST-VATICAN II DEVELOPMENT:**

Leading up to the Second Vatican Council, monasteries in North America helped spark the Liturgical Movement, which revived an interest in the comprehension of Church liturgy and theology. By Vatican II, monasteries in North America were already receiving permissions from the Vatican to adopt the vernacular language for their liturgy. Even though each of these monasteries have adopted the vernacular, each monastery has adapted Vatican II's decrees and the teachings of the Rule of St. Benedict differently.

The sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery have adopted a circular leadership model under the new prioress.<sup>46</sup> She was reelected in May of 2018, after serving as prioress already in the 1990s. Before Vatican II and the prioress' current tenure at the monastery, the sisters were led by a top-down approach, typical of other Benedictine monasteries. The top-down approach before Vatican II was very strict, and newer sisters could not

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<sup>45</sup> Nicholson, *Liturgical Music in Benedictine Monasticism: A Post Vatican II Survey*, 151.

<sup>46</sup> At St. Scholastica Monastery, prioress and abbess are the same title. For the current prioress, the title was chosen because superior seemed too formal and abbess too old-fashioned according to the circular leadership model.

speak to the abbess directly and were discouraged from speaking with sisters of higher seniority. The group dynamic has changed dramatically in the twenty-five years since this prioress served. Instead of a top-down approach, the sisters are attempting a circular leadership model, which entails that each of the sisters oversees her own duties and may speak with the prioress directly without recurring to the leadership hierarchy. The prioress believes that the recently adopted circular model will work better for their decreasing community size, which does not allow them to fill all the positions laid out in the Rule of St. Benedict.

Unlike the other five monasteries in this study, the sisters have completely shed their habits, notwithstanding an initial resistance when asked to by the abbess in the late 1960s. So, the sisters phased out their habits by creating more casual habits sewn from donated pastel rainbow cloth. For nearly a decade, they were called “The Rainbow Nuns” until they ultimately decided to shed their habits altogether. Initially, the sisters missed wearing their habits in public. The current prioress stated that she initially was resistant shedding her habit until she noticed that she was treated with more respect in public purely because people knew she was a nun. She mentioned a specific incident at the grocery store, in which, while standing in line at the checkout in full habit, the cashier was being condescending and rude to the woman in front of her. When the cashier saw her habit, the cashier immediately changed her attitude and was kind to the nun without knowing anything more about her. She decided to shed her habit so the respect and kindness she received was through her good actions and not because of her monastic habit. According to the sisters, the habit creates a barrier between lay people and the

monastics. The prioress mentioned that when the Benedictine habit was worn hundreds of years ago, it easily fit in with contemporary society and reflected the humble life of monastics. Now, according to the prioress, the Benedictine habit has lost its original meaning because it no longer allows the monastics to blend in with society with humbleness; on the contrary, their habit immediately insinuates their profession and creates an “other” that creates a barrier. To blend in with contemporary society today, the sisters wear comfortable, often dull second-hand clothes or business casual attire depending on their mission.

Conception Abbey has remained more traditional than the sisters of St. Scholastica; like all the monasteries in this case study, however, Conception Abbey has completely adopted the vernacular liturgy. Following Vatican II, Conception Abbey became one of the forerunner American Benedictine monasteries, adopting and experimenting with the new vernacular liturgy and chant. Conception Abbey is known for its rich musical heritage, before and after the Second Vatican Council. They have always had a leadership role for American Benedictine monasteries, especially since the Liturgical Movement, Vatican II, and the following Congress of Abbots. Currently, Conception Abbey uses English chants translated from Latin, original chants written by the monks, and chants and hymns written after Vatican II. Although still chanting in Latin during the Marian Antiphon at Compline each night, the majority of the hymns and psalter are in the English vernacular. The monastery has no intention of returning to Latin because the English vernacular has worked well for the monastery.



Similarly, to Conception Abbey, the other monasteries almost exclusively use the vernacular except for the Marian Antiphon which is still chanted in Latin. Even though each community has now adopted the vernacular, they experimented and created their own characteristic tradition that is specific to the monastic community. The most obvious change made to monasteries after the Second Vatican Council was the adoption of the vernacular liturgy, but the dwindling vocations within every community in this case study has had a lasting impact on liturgical development and monastic reform.

#### **VOCATIONS:**

Notwithstanding my experience conducting fieldwork at each of the six monasteries was varied, the theme of vocations recurred several times in all conversations. None of the monasteries are anywhere near capacity. Numbers have dramatically dropped in the last fifty years. Every night the monastics pray for vocations. The problem is not simply the lack of new discernments,<sup>47</sup> but also the growing number of monastics who leave their discernment within ten years of professing solemn vows. In this section, I will detail the current state of vocations at these monasteries. This stands as a representation of Catholic monasticism worldwide.

Assumption Abbey currently has ten monks in residence.<sup>48</sup> Due to their small community, the monastery has closed their novitiate so it can no longer accept new

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<sup>47</sup> Discernment in this case refers to the internal reflection one makes while seeking a monastic vocation.

<sup>48</sup> This assessment was made during my Summer 2016 fieldwork; these numbers, however, have not changed much due to the closed novitiate and the small capacity in the monastery.

vocations. They were still able to accept transfers from other Cistercian monasteries, however. More than half of the community are recent transfers from a Cistercian monastery in Vietnam. When the Vietnamese monks arrived in 2016, they were still struggling to learn English and the prayer schedule of Assumption Abbey because their former monastery uses the Vietnamese vernacular. In a few years the monastery will completely turn over to the Vietnamese monks due to the advancing ages of the native English-speaking monks.

Saint Benedict's Abbey in Illinois is even smaller, but it didn't have to close its novitiate. During my fieldwork, there was another guest who was seeking a potential discernment there. Saint Benedict's is the second smallest Benedictine monastery in the United States. The community consists of only four monks and one sister in residence. Partially because of its limited dimensions, the monastery has adopted contemporary hymns and modern Christian music for Mass. For the same reason, they also had to be creative in how to incorporate music in their services.

St. Benedict's Abbey in Kansas, instead, has a community of fifty monks, with most of the being elderly or residing in parishes outside the monastery. In the 1960s, the monastery consisted of 125 monks. Seventy monks lived at the monastery and the rest worked in parishes in five different states including Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Iowa. In 1955, only a few years before Vatican II, Gordon Parks, Life Magazine Photographer, took photos and documented life at St. Benedict's Abbey. These pictures portray the flourishing community of young monks who were actively spreading their mission and vocation.

Like all the monasteries observed in this study, St. Benedict's Abbey is struggling for new vocations. What was once a monastery of over 125 monks, has now a dwindling population of few new vocations every five years, with a growing need for full-time nurses, and with priest monks who are unable to occupy all the parishes in the surrounding area. Abbot James Albers was elected as the ninth abbot of St. Benedict's Abbey in 2013. At the time, he was only forty-one years old, which made him one of the youngest abbots in the world and one of the younger monks at the abbey. The monastery vocations page includes the full vocations prayer, a call for new vocations, and a daily guide for lay people.

Similarly, to St. Benedict's Abbey, St. Scholastica Monastery is struggling for vocations. The last nun to profess her vows did it in the early 1990s. Since then, the sisters have had a few potential discernments, but none of them have led to new consecrations. There are currently fifteen sisters at the monastery. The youngest is their prioress, who is currently sixty-nine years old. During her tenure, the recently appointed prioress will have to evolve the monastery and its mission to meet the needs of the aging sisters. Because the prioress is currently the youngest member at the monastery, the various operations handled by the sisters will have to change in the immediate future, by setting goals for future increments of five years. During the summer of 2018, there were two potential candidates in the early stages of discernment. Even though the sisters receive a few potential discernments a year, there has not been a woman to take solemn vows at this abbey in twenty years. These two potential discernments are only possibilities for new vocations. "Answering a call to Religious life can take time. Every

person is blessed in different ways and therefore the process toward a commitment to Monastic life can vary from person to person.”<sup>49</sup>

### **MISSION:**

The most important mission of monastics is following the Rule of St. Benedict, and in particular the *ora et labora* (pray and work) and the *lectio divina*. The monks in this case study primarily center their mission around prayer, spiritual direction, retreat centers, and education. The nuns, instead, have their own individual mission on top of prayer.

Because of the dwindling vocations, the mission at each of these monasteries has evolved to reflect their changing community size.

Conception Abbey’s main mission is prayer and their active retreat center. The monks work in parishes around Northwest Missouri, at the Printery House, and aid in Conception Seminary College. They tend the grounds and farmland and operate busy retreat and guest centers. The current abbot, Benedict Neenan took over as abbot in 2016 after the previous one, Gregory Polan, was elected the Benedictine Abbot Primate during the Congress of Abbots in Rome.<sup>50</sup> The abbey website states the mission of the abbey,

In the effort to live out that tenet of Benedictine monasticism, we operate Conception Seminary College for the education of future diocesan priests, welcome guests at the Abbey Guest Center, and proclaim the Gospel and share the Christian faith through the creation and distribution of religious literature and artwork from the Printery House. Many of our monks also serve as parish priests,

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<sup>49</sup> “Answering the Call: Discerning Religious Life as a Benedictine Sister,” *Benedictine Sisters Boerne, Texas*, last modified in 2018, <http://boernebenedictines.org/answer-the-call.html>, accessed 18 January 2019.

<sup>50</sup> Cindy Wooden, “American elected new abbot primate of Benedictine order,” *Crux*, 12 September 2016, <https://cruxnow.com/cns/2016/09/12/american-elected-new-abbot-primate-benedictine-order/>, accessed 14 January 2016.

hospital and prison chaplains as well as chaplains for women's religious communities, and are involved in campus ministry at local colleges.<sup>51</sup>

Conception Abbey also has an active retreat calendar that includes personal, hosted, and group retreats. The three guesthouses help keep the abbey self-sustaining through suggested nightly donations. The guests and students at the college are welcome to attend all parts of the Liturgy of the Hours, daily Mass, and may meet with a monk priest for spiritual direction. Like Conception Abbey, St. Benedict's Abbey in Kansas also has a St. Benedict's College; however, the college is more removed from the monastery and the abbey has a very small guest center and no formal retreats. The monastery's primary mission, therefore, is *ora et labora*.

St. Scholastica Monastery, instead, has a vast mission, since each sister is responsible for her own mission. The monastery grounds provide inexpensive rental costs for programs like Head Start and for secondhand stores. The sisters also run the Sister's Attic Thrift Store, The Health and Wellness Center, and the Omega Retreat Center. The retreat center provides accommodations for groups of people wanting a quiet experience for spiritual direction and reflection, and it is booked through at least 2020. One of the sisters currently lives in Eagle Pass, near the border between Mexico and the United States, where she assists with the orphanages and adult home for dependents, also sponsored by the Benedictines. Because of the sisters' busy schedule, the daily prayer schedule is flexible. Parts of the Liturgy of the Hours are merged, so the sisters do not

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<sup>51</sup> "Conception Abbey," Conception Abbey in Conception, Missouri, 2019. <https://www.conceptionabbey.org/monastery/about-the-monastery/>, accessed 14 January 2019.

have to gather at five separate hours of the day to pray. The sisters do not retire from their duties at this monastery. They are encouraged to balance *ora et labora* and spread the monastery's mission across the surrounding communities. Hospitality is the central focus of their mission, and without their habits, the sisters blend in with the oblates and lay people who assist the monastery in its mission.

The mission of St. Gregory's Abbey has been the one most severely affected by dwindling vocations and the economy. The monks' primary way to honor the principle of *ora et labora* was St. Gregory's University, where about half of the community worked as professors or in the administration. Formerly St. Gregory's College, the university began as a two-year school in 1875 but grew into a small liberal arts university. At the time of Dom David Nicholson's survey in 1986 on male communities, St. Gregory's College was "a private two-year liberal arts college with an enrollment of 400 students."<sup>52</sup> Many of the monks held teaching and administrative duties at the university, which at its peak had about 1200 students. The university, however, suddenly declared bankruptcy in December of 2017 and put on the market on 17 April 2018. After months of negotiations, the former university publicized that the grounds had been purchased by Hobby Lobby and are being leased to Oklahoma Baptist University.<sup>53</sup> Following the sudden bankruptcy announcement, lawsuits were filed from former staff not affiliated directly with St. Gregory's Abbey for the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification

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<sup>52</sup> Nicholson, volume 1, 151.

<sup>53</sup> Nolan Clay, "Hobby Lobby leases campus of St. Gregory's University to Oklahoma Baptist University," *NewsOk* (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma), 5 December 2018, <https://newsok.com/article/5616894/hobby-lobby-leases-campus-of-st-gregorys-university-to-oklahoma-baptist-university>.

Act because staff were not given more than sixty days of notification before being laid off.<sup>54</sup> With the selling of the university, the monastery is left without its major mission.

According to Dom David Nicholson, in 1986 “priests of the Abbey also serve[d] in eleven parishes and seven missions in addition to weekend and summer assistance in the diocese. In spite of these and many of activities, prayer remains the central focus of the community.”<sup>55</sup> With the community’s dwindling numbers, however, the monks are unable to fully execute the duties that were established in 1986. In the future, the monks hope to expand their guesthouse and retreat program. In consequence of the closing of the university buildings, where the previous retreat building was located, the guest area is currently limited to two small bedrooms directly outside the cloistered area. Currently, the monks will continue to seek their mission of prayer, but half of the community’s daily duties have to change.

The six monasteries have each adopted the decrees made by the Second Vatican Council differently. These monasteries reflect the global Benedictine and Cistercian Trappist traditions. The following chapters will demonstrate the role of each of them within the Catholic Church and the adoption of the vernacular and the increased universal comprehension of church theology. Even though the monasteries have adapted to the changing, modern world to remain relevant in contemporary society, they still follow a millenary monastic tradition.

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<sup>54</sup> Molly M. Fleming, “Lawsuit settled over bankrupt St. Gregory’s University,” *The Shawnee-News Star* (Shawnee, Oklahoma), 29 November 2018, <https://www.news-star.com/news/20181129/lawsuit-settled-over-bankrupt-st-gregorys-university>.

<sup>55</sup> Nicholson, volume 1, 151.

### **Chapter 3: *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the New Vernacular Introduction Post-Vatican II**

After the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, the Church began to replace Latin with vernacular languages for the liturgy. At first, monasteries were free from this directive, but the Congress of Abbots, held in 1967, concluded that Benedictine monasteries should adopt the vernacular as well. This Vatican Council decision led to a worldwide transition from Latin to the vernacular amongst lay people, Church officials, and the monastics. Even though the adoption of the vernacular was a measure to increase lay participation and comprehension of church doctrine, the transition to the vernacular is not yet complete.

In his highly popular book, *Why Catholics Can't Sing*, Thomas Day discusses the lack of proficiency that catholic congregations reveal in singing even vernacular hymns.<sup>56</sup> Day contrasts the varying abilities in singing of Catholic and Protestant congregations: “Today, a very large number of Roman Catholics in the United States who go to church regularly—perhaps the majority—rarely or barely sing any of the music. If you think about it, this stands out as a most curious development in the history of Christianity.”<sup>57</sup> As the Church transitioned to the vernacular to favor active congregational participation, Latin has still had a lasting impact on the participation of the lay people who are still not used active participation during Mass. Day questions this behavior. “What could possibly cause this odd behavior of American Catholics? The problem is certainly not one of

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<sup>56</sup> Thomas Day, *Why Catholics Can't Sing: The Culture of Catholicism and the Triumph of Bad Taste* (New York: Crossroad, 1990).

<sup>57</sup> Day, *Why Catholics Can't Sing*, 1.



unfamiliarity. The ‘new music’ and the practice of singing during the liturgy were introduced into the American ‘mainstream’ parish twenty years ago... Are American Catholics offering some kind of resistance to the liturgical innovations that hit them in the 1960s?’<sup>58</sup> Thomas Day goes on to explain that the centuries of having a relatively inactive role in Mass has had a lasting impact on lay congregations today that still do not participate, at least not in comparison to Protestant congregations.<sup>59</sup> My experience at the six monasteries during the summers of 2016 and 2018 gave me a different perspective. Although I observed a lack of participation from the lay congregations at Sunday Mass, the monastic communities and retreat guests were actively participating and comprehending the texts they had once repetitively chanted year after year. The intention of the *Sacrosanctum Concilium*<sup>60</sup> was to increase active participation of lay congregations globally. The following adoption of the decree during the Congress of Abbots indicated an interest in monastic communal comprehension of the liturgy and an increased participation for every monastic during the Liturgy of the Hours. Even though the hymns are not loudly intoned, congregations and monastic communities are comprehending the liturgy during Mass. Thomas Day and other critics of post-Vatican II vernacular reform ignore the rise of the vernacular and liturgical reform prior to 1962.

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<sup>58</sup> Day, *Why Catholics Can't Sing*, 1.

<sup>59</sup> Thomas Day did restrict his research to Anglo-American congregations, so this is not well representative of other American congregations.

<sup>60</sup> Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. Refer to Chapter One for reference of Vatican II. See below in this chapter for a more extensive discussion of this constitution.

What Thomas Day leaves out of his introduction to *Why Catholics Can't Sing* is the Liturgical Movement leading up to Vatican II and a global interest in the vernacular long before the Council was officially called. Arguably, the early frontier Benedictine monasteries of North America<sup>61</sup> started the rise of the vernacular and Liturgical Movement in the mid-1800s. The pioneers and missionaries brought their breviaries with them; the monastics and clergy, however, were far too busy building the land and surviving to follow the Hours and continue following its ritual.<sup>62</sup> Sister Victorine Fenton in her vast case study of 1985 on North American monasteries explains: “[t]he history of the Liturgy of the Hours was also affected by the changes in Christian spirituality which assumed different forms or styles throughout the centuries in response to the social, philosophical, and cultural currents of the time.”<sup>63</sup>

Prior to Vatican II, American Benedictines were already receiving special permissions to adapt their Hours and to use the vernacular. Second generation pioneer Benedictines and members of clergy were often not fluent or had received little education in Latin. Because of this, Benedictines and American clergy began to question the universality of Latin as the official language of the Catholic Church. According to Fenton, liturgists and missionaries around the world stressed the need for adopting the vernacular.<sup>64</sup> In the United States, there were calls for a new federation amongst

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<sup>61</sup> Victorine Fenton provides an excellent description of these pioneer monasteries in her dissertation—reference page begins on page 72 of the University Microfilms International digital copy.

<sup>62</sup> Hours here refers to the Liturgy of the Hours or the Divine Office. Monastics and clergy were to pray the Hours six to seven times a day; the pioneers, however, were unable to pray at exact times each day

<sup>63</sup> Victorine Fenton, “The English Monastic Liturgy of the Hours in North America volumes i-iii” (PhD diss., The University of Iowa, 1985), 69.

<sup>64</sup> Fenton, “The English Monastic Liturgy,” 85.

American Benedictines—primarily communities of women—who proposed a united vernacular federation. On the other hand, “[t]he request for the foundation of a new federation which would permit the office to be prayed in English must have disturbed Beste because he responded on June 10 that ‘the Pope was alarmed over the vernacular breviary,’ especially the truncated one used in Germany and Holland.”<sup>65</sup>

The Liturgical Movement, which sparked the beginning of the vernacular in the Church, also sought a revitalization of clarity, coherence, and participation in the Roman and monastic rite. This movement prompted the need for a new council and showed the continuing effect of the Reformation and lasting liturgical reform. In addition to proposing the use of the vernacular, Benedictines also manifested an increased interest in liturgical reform during the early-twentieth century. John O’Malley, a notable Catholic theologian and scholar, remarks:

The Benedictines continued to play a crucial role in the Liturgical Movement, but by the second and third decades of the twentieth century others were studying ancient liturgical sources and relating them to the present, a development similar to the revival of patristic studies that occurred at the same time. Moreover, the intimate relationship between liturgy and ecclesiology was becoming ever clearer; how one understood liturgy was key to how one understood church, and vice versa.<sup>66</sup>

Therefore, even before Vatican II, the Church was already discussing a need for a revision of the Liturgy of the Hours—monastic and clergy—and of the Roman rite.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Fenton, “The English Monastic Liturgy,” 88. Ulrich Beste O.S.B. This example specifically refers to the Navoo sisters who wanted to use the English vernacular but were not allowed.

<sup>66</sup> John O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 72-73.

<sup>67</sup> Note, when I refer to the Roman Rite, I am not referring to the monastic rite or the monastic Liturgy of the Hours post-Vatican II.

From the early American Benedictine pioneers to the newly-founded monasteries in non-Western countries, the reevaluation of the official language of the Catholic Church was questioned. Vatican II itself was in Latin, which is a choice that outspoken critic of the Catholic Church, Paul Blanshard,<sup>68</sup> highly criticized. Latin was deemed universal, which is the reason why every aspect of the discussion, including the use of the vernacular, was carried over in this “dead” language. This system was preferred to the simultaneous translation system that is widely adopted by world-wide organizations like the United Nations, for instance. Representatives from the Council state that American Bishops and English Bishops, however, had difficulty understanding each other’s accents and many of the bishops in attendance were not as familiar with Latin as they had thought.<sup>69</sup> Critics like Paul Blanshard, opposed the “sudden” change to the vernacular while ignoring the decades of dispute leading up to Vatican II. Brian Wilcoxon, instead, supported the vernacular tradition but lamented the Latin tradition for Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours. On the one hand, the Council *was* in Latin, on the other it reflected the discussions about the use of the vernacular that had taken place for decades within the Catholic Church prior to 1962. Therefore, the *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (The Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy), the document that changed the language of weekly Mass, did not come as a surprise for most Catholics.

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<sup>68</sup> Paul Blanshard, *Paul Blanshard on Vatican* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), 8.

<sup>69</sup> Richard R. Gaillardetz, *An Unfinished Council: Vatican II, Pope Francis, and the Renewal of Catholicism* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2015), 32.

First, Latin did not lose its status as the official language of the Catholic Church after the issuance of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. The document intended to realize the reforms that were initiated during the Liturgical Movement. Not only did the Constitution continue the Liturgical Movement reforms, it also reevaluated the Gregorian chant revival of the mid-nineteenth century initiated by the monks of Solesmes, France.<sup>70</sup> The Liturgical Movement showed the long issue of the Eucharist and of the ritualistic and often monotonous tone of Mass, which the majority of Catholics in the early twentieth-century only attended a few times a year for the partaking of Holy Communion.

According to O'Malley,

[a]t the time the decree was promulgated, most Catholics received the Eucharist only once, twice, or a few more times per year, but by the eve of Vatican II weekly reception had become standard for large numbers in a typical Sunday congregation. Daily reception was no longer uncommon or considered strange. For many people, 'going to Mass' now regularly included receiving Holy Communion. This change in the pattern of worship, gradual but dramatic, gave 'active participation' a truly substantive form.<sup>71</sup>

It was this renewed participation through the Liturgical Movement that caused a reevaluation of the liturgy in the Roman rite.<sup>72</sup> Because Catholics were regularly attending Mass in the years leading up to the Council, comprehension of the liturgy was also questioned due to increased congregational attendance. The majority of lay people within the Catholic Church prior to Vatican II had little formal instruction in Latin, except for some scholastic instruction for those who had attended private Catholic

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<sup>70</sup> The restoration was not completely finished by the 1850s; by 1903, however, it became widespread thanks to the influence of Pius X.

<sup>71</sup> O'Malley *What Happened at Vatican II*, 73

<sup>72</sup> Notwithstanding ritual differences, the Roman rite influences the monastic one in a number of ways.

schools. The Liturgical Movement promoted English translations of the Roman Missal, so that congregations could at least follow along with the priest who still chanted in Latin. Dom Lambert Beauduin initiated this translation of the Missal for lay people in Belgium. The participational success in Belgium inspired other countries who “translated the Missal into the vernacular. By the early decades of the twentieth century, therefore, the movement was having an impact on ordinary Catholics, who were exhorted to ‘pray the Mass,’ that is, follow the words and actions of the ceremony and not use the time to read other prayers or simply daydream...”<sup>73</sup> The translation of the Roman Missal into English led Catholics to question the priests’ use of Latin while the congregation was following along in the vernacular.

Spurred by American pioneer clergymen and lay people, the Liturgical Movement led to the first period of the Second Vatican Council in 1962, which confronted changes already being made in Catholic Churches. The first constitution placed at the beginning of the first period was the *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, promulgated by Pope Paul VI on 4 December 1963. The changes it introduced, which were not limited to the language of the Mass, were the first major changes to the Catholic liturgy since the Reformation and the Council of Trent. These included the renewal of baptismal priesthood,<sup>74</sup> a theology and teaching that, according to Richard Gaillardetz, “had been avoided in Catholic thought ever since the Reformation when Martin Luther had placed the biblical teaching on the

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<sup>73</sup> O’Malley *What Happened at Vatican II*, 74. O’Malley credits Beauduin with the Missal translation and “launching the movement and promoting effective measures to bring it to Catholics in the pews” (74).

<sup>74</sup> Baptismal priesthood refers to the Sacrament of Baptism. This sacrament refers to the baptized lay person’s ability to share in the priesthood of God and the Church; the lay person’s baptism, however, does not grant them the ability to transubstantiate the communion bread and wine

priesthood of the baptized in opposition to a sacramentally ordained ministerial priesthood. Article 7 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* taught that the entire liturgy was itself an action of the priestly ministry of Christ.”<sup>75</sup> Beyond the article on baptismal priesthood, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* stated that members of the Church are not merely members of the lay or church goers; they are baptized members “called to participate in the life and worship of the church.”<sup>76</sup> Brought by the translation of the Roman Missal, members of the Council stated that baptized members of the church have as much right as ordained members of the church to understand and interpret the liturgy. Active participation, therefore, would require a reevaluation of the language of weekly Mass.

As I stated above, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy did not end the use of Latin for the rites of the Catholic Church. This statement is contrary to a common misunderstanding that is made even worse by the language of article 36 in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. In fact, article 36<sup>77</sup> states that “[t]he use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites.”<sup>78</sup> As Brian Wilcoxon points out, however, the very next

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<sup>75</sup> Richard R. Gaillardetz, *An Unfinished Council: Vatican II, Pope Francis, and the Renewal of Catholicism* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2015), 58.

<sup>76</sup> Gaillardetz, *An Unfinished Council*, 58.

<sup>77</sup> “As article 33 states: ‘Although the sacred liturgy is above all things the worship of the divine Majesty, it likewise contains much instruction for the faithful.’ For this reason, the council moved to allow the use of vernacular languages in most services, as opposed to Latin which had been the norm up [to] that point. The wording of this article is a little tricky; officially, ‘The use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites’” (61). I had difficulty finding the direct quote myself in article 33 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, which, on the other hand, focuses on God speaking for the liturgy. . I am assuming, therefore, that Wilcoxon either found a translation that had a different numbering of the articles or he mistook article 33 for article 36, where the quote is actually found. Brian Wilcoxon, “Performing Community: Benedictine Chant in Post-Vatican Catholicism.” (PhD diss., Florida State University College of Music, 2016), 61.

<sup>78</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium: Norms based upon the didactic and pastoral nature of the Liturgy: Article 36: I. Promulgated by Pope Paul VI, 4 December 1963*. Vatican Archives Online. [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19631204\\_sacrosanctum-concilium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html)

section of article 36 affirms that “[s]ince the use of the mother tongue, whether in the Mass, the administration of the sacraments, or other parts of the liturgy, frequently may be of great advantage to the people, the limits of its employment may be extended.”<sup>79</sup>

Furthermore, the following passage states:

[t]hese norms being observed, it is for the competent territorial ecclesiastical authority mentioned in Art. 22, 2, to decide whether, and to what extent, the vernacular language is to be used; their decrees are to be approved, that is, confirmed, by the Apostolic See. And, whenever it seems to be called for, this authority is to consult with bishops of neighboring regions which have the same language.<sup>80</sup>

Even though this article grants permission for the vernacular, churches and monasteries must still request permission for the use of the vernacular and for altering the monastic rite in any way.<sup>81</sup>

Brian Wilcoxon’s research focuses on Solesmes in France and on Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey in Oklahoma—both monasteries resisting the vernacular. His work also discusses the choice of language at the monastery<sup>82</sup> of St Leo’s Abbey in Florida.<sup>83</sup> Wilcoxon states that “[e]ven though Latin was still held as the standard language of the church, its practice was no longer mandated. In the past, language had served as a symbolic unifying agent; the shift proposed by Vatican II allowed congregations to be

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<sup>79</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium: Article 36: II*.

<sup>80</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium: Article 36: III*.

<sup>81</sup> Monastic rite, here, refers to monasteries not to the Roman rite.

<sup>82</sup> While at St. Leo’s Abbey, Wilcoxon altered his bias towards the Latin and, instead, appreciated the vernacular liturgy because of the active participation he experienced.

<sup>83</sup> This is a small Benedictine community of monks in central Florida, founded in 1881. They primarily chant in English and follow the monastic rite post-Vatican II.



united through their shared *understanding*, whatever the language may be.”<sup>84</sup> Thus, Latin was not abandoned but churches and monasteries worldwide were given the option to adopt the vernacular and develop a new Roman and monastic rite. Given the main focus of this study, I will focus on monasteries in the United States that adopted the vernacular after Vatican II in the next section.

As mentioned above, with the passing of article 36, churches were now granted the option of adopting the vernacular ... before a common Roman rite was established. For monasteries,

[t]he use of the vernacular for the office was discussed again by the abbots at their congress in Rome in September of 1967, and it was decided that, since each federation had the authority to determine liturgical practices in the member houses, the individual presidents should send petitions for the use of the vernacular to the Congregation of the Religious. In 1967 and thereafter when petitions were requested, they were usually granted for ‘pastoral’ reasons because most monasteries invited guests and students to attend the office with the monks.<sup>85</sup>

Monasteries in the United States were granted permissions individually to experiment with their own monastic rite.<sup>86</sup> In doing so, these experiments increased flexibility of monastic liturgy and the Hours for each distinct community adopting the vernacular within their own tradition. According to Victorine Fenton, “[t]he adoption of the vernacular was followed closely by, or coincided with, the early experimentation with the structure of the office. The creative energies of monastic people were expended on

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<sup>84</sup> Brian Wilcoxon, “Performing Community: Benedictine Chant in Post-Vatican Catholicism.” (PhD diss., Florida State University College of Music, 2016), 61.

<sup>85</sup> Fenton, 96.

<sup>86</sup> This permission did not extend to all orders in the Benedictine Confederation. Only the Swiss-American and the American Cassinese were granted permission to experiment with the monastic office.

the restructuring, and only after the office was somewhat stabilized did the composers begin their work in earnest.”<sup>87</sup> Permission was granted to female and male monasteries and a unified monastic office was never completed because of this experimentation with the adoption of different monastic offices.<sup>88</sup> Even though a unified monastic office was never adopted, the experimentation followed Articles 87 and 88<sup>89</sup> of *Sacrosanctum*

*Concilium*. Article 88 states:

[b]ecause the purpose of the office is to sanctify the day, the traditional sequence of the hours is to be restored so that once again they may be genuinely related to the time of the day when they are prayed, as far as this may be possible. Moreover, it will be necessary to take into account the modern conditions in which daily life has to be lived, especially by those who are called to labor in apostolic works.<sup>90</sup>

Therefore, a unified monastic office for the United States or one following the Roman *Liturgy of the Hours*<sup>91</sup> for Roman members of the clergy would have been pointless because of the need for flexibility so that the monasteries could establish their own missions and have altered schedules.

Thus, in 1972 and 1973, after a period of experimentation, there was an initiative to unify the monastic office. After several years, the Benedictines decided that it was not possible to achieve a true, unified monastic office. Instead, the Benedictine Confederation established a concise list of necessary procedures that each distinct monastic office must

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<sup>87</sup> Fenton, 820.

<sup>88</sup> Fenton, 94.

<sup>89</sup> Fenton, 98. I originally found these articles in Sister Fenton’s dissertation; however, I have checked my own sources and can confirm her quotes are accurate and in context to her own argument.

<sup>90</sup> The Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium: Article 88*.

<sup>91</sup> Even though the majority of monasteries decided not to follow the *Liturgy of the Hours* for clergy, which was intended for solo prayer, monasteries do use it as a reference when developing and following their monastic rites.

follow. These can be synthesized in three major points: (1) no community can take more than four weeks to chant the psalter, (2) only specific parts of the Hours may be altered, and (3) the continued obligation for communal common prayer.<sup>92</sup> Even though a unified Liturgy of the Hours was never achieved, it was recognized that “[t]he monastic Liturgy of the Hours has its own proper tradition, and this fact implies two principles: that the monastery is truly a ‘local church,’ with its own daily liturgy; and that the daily liturgy does not merely reproduce one already existing, but is the fruit of free creativity.”<sup>93</sup>

The new monastic offices were a success. The translations of chants and hymns from Latin to English, however, were far more difficult to achieve. While the use of the vernacular allowed the average lay person a deeper understanding of the liturgy used in Mass, there were several problems associated with the new English liturgy, especially with the singing of chants and hymns. This is in part due to a different prosody of the two languages, with English being more fragmented than Latin. Translators, thus, struggled to keep the musical setting and text on the level of the original Gregorian chant. Even though Gregorian chant has no measure, *per se*, the inflection of the consonants influences the rhythm of the chant. Translating the original Latin texts into English completely alters the original prosody. This led translators to choose between literal interpretations or adaptations of the original musical setting. This applies to both the new monastic offices, discussed in this work, and the weekly Mass. A reference to Thomas Day’s *Why Catholics Can’t Sing* and his accurate, although oversimplified, explanation

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<sup>92</sup> Fenton, 114.

<sup>93</sup> Fenton, 121.

and call for a change in contemporary congregational participatory singing can be useful here. In his conclusion, he expresses an overall satisfaction with contemporary Catholic music even if it entails a lack of participation. Hymns in English were significantly easier to implement at Mass than in the monastic office because of the adoption of Protestant hymns and style for the service of Mass. Thomas Day's analysis, however, is focused only on Anglo-American communities, since he has largely dismissed non-Anglo communities in the United States and communities in Europe.

The choppy, incoherent, and often inaccurate early translations led to newly composed original hymns, psalm tones, and antiphons that exemplified the new, vernacular language, even within Benedictine monasteries in the United States.

Because of its limited size, the community at Assumption Abbey, has adopted more popular hymns, especially during Sunday Mass. The community has also composed some original chants along psalm tones from New Melleray Abbey. For instance, a monophonic version of *How Great Thou Art* was one of the hymns I heard during the Hours. Although there is a pump organ in the church, the monks are unable to use it because it overpowers the small community. They prefer to use an electronic piano, which is more compatible with the popular hymns often used during Sunday Mass and the monastic office.

During my stay, I encountered a community shifting in demographics and struggling even to chant together in English because of the recent transfers of monks from Vietnam, who were used to singing a vernacular Vietnamese monastic rite in their home country. Consequently, Assumption Abbey is pondering the incorporation of some

Vietnamese, as the community increments the number of non-English native speakers. The monk from the abbey expressed his preference for the vernacular over Latin partly because he became a monk in 1970,<sup>94</sup> a time when the new vernacular was being implemented. He states: “I think the fact that you didn’t understand [Gregorian chant] made it more mysterious. You might have known a few words and the prayer’s meaning, but you certainly weren’t translating it as you went along. I took [Latin] two years in high school but to translate as you’re singing it ... there’s no way.”<sup>95</sup>

The monastery currently chants the *Salve, Regina* in Latin at Compline each night for the Marian Antiphon. This antiphon is the only Latin chant used regularly. The monks have little desire to return to the Latin liturgy and chants, because they have been using the new English chants and liturgy for so long that it would be as difficult to transition back to Latin as it was to transition to the vernacular initially. The monk says: “[t]here’s a nostalgia among young catholics who want to go back to Latin. People in their twenties into their fifties want to go back to Latin. I would say, first of all, they don’t know the language, so how could they understand it? And they want to go back to a language they don’t understand? To me that doesn’t make sense.”<sup>96</sup> He explained that prior to Vatican II anyone entering the seminary would have taken several years of Latin and anyone entering a monastery would have known some Latin. Overall, the music at Assumption

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<sup>94</sup> The monk became a monk after Vatican II. The monk, however, does explain later in his discussion with me that he did grow up in the Catholic Church and did appreciate the mysticism of the Latin chant. For the sake of congregational participation, on the other hand, he prefers the vernacular as the language for the monastic office.

<sup>95</sup> Witness from Assumption Abbey. Oral History. 9 July 2016, Appendix C1A.

<sup>96</sup> Witness from Assumption Abbey. Oral History. 9 July 2016, Appendix C1B.

Abbey is more contemporary than most of the other monasteries. This is mostly the consequence of the community's small size and the loyalty of lay people and oblates.

Conception Abbey presents a different picture. As one of the forerunner Benedictine communities experimenting with the monastic office after Vatican II, they sing the entire Liturgy of the Hours. According to the monk from the abbey, "we have chanted the Liturgy of the Hours and the Mass entirely since our foundation."<sup>97</sup> Their entire Office and Mass is in English except the Marian Canticles on Thursdays and the *Salve, Regina*. Even so, their background in English chants is very abundant and Conception Abbey helped pave the way for the new English liturgy. In fact, as journalist Tony Brown, former Abbot Polan Gregory's,<sup>98</sup> states, "recent scholarly work has included translations for the New American Bible and a complete translation of the Psalms, which has resulted in a new Revised Grail Psalter that will be used in the English-language liturgy."<sup>99</sup>

Currently, Conception Abbey uses English chants translated from Latin, original chants written by the monks, and chants and hymns written after Vatican II. According to the monk, "the most significant change was the change in texts and the fact that we had to create a new corpus of music to accommodate the new text, which went through a very slow transition since the Vatican Council."<sup>100</sup> Their liturgy went through a variety of

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<sup>97</sup> Witness from Conception Abbey. Oral History. 15 July 2016, Appendix C2A.

<sup>98</sup> Not long after my stay, Polan was elected Abbot Primate for the Benedictine Confederation and now resides in the Vatican.

<sup>99</sup> Tony Brown, "Conception's Polan to lead world's Benedictine's," Maryville Daily Forum, 12 September 2016, maryvilledailyforum.com, accessed 12 September 2016.

<sup>100</sup> Witness from Conception Abbey. Oral History. 15 July 2016, Appendix C2B.

stages as it was translated, and these stages, of course, affected their chants as well. Prior to Vatican II, Conception Abbey only used Latin. Moreover, according to the monk, “Conception was a leader during the Gregorian chant revival, and our first choirmaster was an expert in Gregorian chant...we come from a very strong chant tradition. When we transitioned to English...that continued.”<sup>101</sup> The first choirmaster at the abbey was largely self-taught when he came to Conception from Switzerland. From there, he attained every possible edition of the chants coming from Solesmes and implemented those for Conception Abbey. Because Conception Abbey came from an established chant tradition before Vatican II, it became one of the forerunners of the vernacular liturgy.

Post-Vatican II chants also went through a variety of stages. At first, beginning in about 1964, under a different choirmaster, the texts of the newly composed English chants for the Liturgy of the Hours were metrical, but the melodies were modal. After about six years, they compiled the “best” chants from the 1964 edition. The “best” chants were compiled based upon the translations and musical settings at the discretion of the choirmaster in 1964. To date, they have published numerous editions of their own hymnals, which includes several original compositions that are no longer used. In the monk’s words, for Mass, “[n]ow, we are setting the entrance and communion antiphons given in the Roman Missal in English ... we’ve been doing this in earnest for the past year.” For the Liturgy of the Hours, the monk says: “we are revising the responsorial

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<sup>101</sup> Witness from Conception Abbey. Oral History. 15 July 2016, Appendix C2C

psalms to match the new lectionary, which is already twelve years old ... we are currently undertaking two books, and this is a massive project.”<sup>102</sup>

The monastery has also experienced issues instituting the new vernacular chants, such as the syntax of the English settings does not coincide with the original Latin musical settings. According to the monk, “[t]he reason some of these earlier editions fell into disuse is that there was a little less sensitivity to the treatment of prepositions, conjunctions, and so forth in the 1960s; they are over-emphasized so the antiphons sometimes do not have a natural feel to them. It feels as though the text generated the music instead of the music generating the text.”<sup>103</sup> Now he says that they are much more sensitive to the original texts or they have just created their own musical settings for the translated English chants.

Founded after the Second Vatican Council, Saint Benedict’s Abbey in Bartonville, Illinois, did not have to translate their liturgy and chants to English. They use a variety of contemporary hymns and songs, especially for the Mass. During Sunday Mass, they incorporate a guitar and other percussion instruments into the service and more contemporary hymns are often played through the sound system. Given their small numbers,<sup>104</sup> they had to be creative in order to use music actively at Mass and for the Liturgy of the Hours. Regarding the size of their community, the monk says, “St. Benedict in the Rule actually says that the liturgy should be done according to the

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<sup>102</sup> Witness from Conception Abbey. Oral History. 15 July 2016, Appendix C2C.

<sup>103</sup> Witness from Conception Abbey. Oral History. 15 July 2016, Appendix C2C.

<sup>104</sup> Mentioned in Chapter 2, Saint Benedict’s Abbey (not to be confused with St Benedict’s Abbey in Kansas) is a community of 4 monks and 1 sister founded from a monastery in Puerto Rico.



community size. So if you have a large group, with nice voices, then you should sing the liturgy, but we have had to adapt that because we only have five people in our choir...”<sup>105</sup> They do minimal singing for some of the canticles, for instance. They have set their own Rule on what they have to sing, but that all depends on who is leading the liturgy, and whether they are chanting or speaking.

Even though this monastery was founded after Vatican II, they chant the Marian Antiphon in Latin at Compline each night. When asked whether he prefers the vernacular or the Latin, the monk responded, “I’d rather [prefer that] the language of the country be the language for the monastery.”<sup>106</sup> The question of the language of use in this monastery is complex, since during their Puerto Rican period, the monks sang the Liturgy of the Hours in Spanish, while in Illinois in English. As a consequence, the monastery incorporates both vernaculars into their Liturgy of the Hours and Mass. On Sundays, for instance, they have Mass in English in the morning and in Spanish in the afternoon. During the Spanish Mass, the Latinx population of the Bartonville area join the monastic community. They also do a full Spanish Liturgy of the Hours twice a week. The same monk explains, “[s]o with music then, we have had to learn a lot more English music because our repertoire of Spanish music is very expansive. And then, the English was very limited, so we have had to learn more and more music.”<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Witness from Saint Benedict’s Abbey. Oral History. 23 July 2016, Appendix C3A.

<sup>106</sup> Witness from Saint Benedict’s Abbey. Oral History. 23 July 2016, Appendix C3B.

<sup>107</sup> Witness from Saint Benedict’s Abbey. Oral History. 23 July 2016, Appendix C3C.

Compared to the other four monasteries, Saint Benedict's Abbey uses more contemporary music, especially for Mass. According to the monk, "[w]e incorporate both traditional hymns— 'traditional,' meaning some of them are eighteenth century—and contemporary music."<sup>108</sup> We kind of blend a little bit of the two. We do intend to use more contemporary music than traditional music. During Lent, Easter, or certain seasons, we incorporate more traditional hymns."<sup>109</sup> The monk mentioned his passion for contemporary Christian music and its incorporation into Sunday Mass. There is a rotation of the leaders of the Hours each week, so it is largely up to the individual how much contemporary music is utilized.

Currently, they use original hymns composed by the monks of the monastery, contemporary and traditional English hymns, and chants translated into English or Spanish from Latin. When asked about these translated chants, the monk stated that "sometimes you have to compromise translation to try to get as close to the interpretation as possible but at the same time using the poetic side of the language. Unfortunately, we lose some of the poetic side."<sup>110</sup> Saint Benedict's Abbey uses music that fits best to the size of their monastery and the needs of their weekly congregational singing.

St. Benedict's Abbey in Atchison, Kansas once had a community of nearly 125 monks. Now there are fifty monks, with many of them residing in parishes outside the community or too elderly to attend the Hours. Despite this, the choirmaster has already

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<sup>108</sup> Contemporary music here referring to hymns written after Vatican II and even popular Christian music.

<sup>109</sup> Witness from Saint Benedict's Abbey. Oral History. 23 July 2016, Appendix C3C.

<sup>110</sup> Witness from Saint Benedict's Abbey. Oral History. 23 July 2016, Appendix C3D.

implemented a strong vernacular tradition that includes a number of his own compositions. Already a monk before Vatican II, he was especially eager to transition to the vernacular after 1965. This monk explains that before Vatican II, the monastery used the Antiphonale and the Graduale; the implementation of the vernacular, however, entailed a complete overhauling of the Liturgy of the Hours. According to him,

we did it gradually, as did most places, because it meant replacing much of the chants ... you should see all the books that we have for the Latin music. There were two book this size—one was called the Graduale and the other was called the Antiphonale. The Graduale contained all of the music needed for Mass for the entire year. The Antiphonale contained all the music needed for Vespers for the entire year. With Vatican II, that was set aside but all of this couldn't be replaced immediately. As far as the Mass went, the first things introduced were hymns in English. We had already been singing some in English, but certainly not enough, so we had to learn new hymns, compose new hymns, and so on.<sup>111</sup>

The choirmaster began composing, initially, psalm tones that were used within the community. The monastery has also adopted some of the psalm tones of St. Meinrad Archabbey, written by Columba Kelly. Overall, St. Benedict's Abbey uses nearly ninety separate psalm tones, so the recitation of the psalter does not become dull for the community.

The current choirmaster has also composed nearly fifty hymns, which are rotated throughout the year. In total, the choirmaster is incorporating a couple hundred different hymns. For the most part, these hymns are newly composed and not English translations of Latin hymns. According to the monk, they have a representative number of translated hymns, but

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<sup>111</sup> Witness from St. Benedict's Abbey in Kansas. Oral History. 29 July 2016, Appendix C4A.

a bulk of the number were composed originally. The hymns that you will find here—this little hymnal which comes from England—made an attempt to take the Latin and translate it with some success. We are buying a new hymnal, which is kind of an expanded version of this one—Worship II—that comes from England. We have ordered sixty copies of it, and it will primarily be used by the monks, not by outsiders—if we have some guests, sure, but it’s not meant for the college students. It will be primarily for the monks.<sup>112</sup>

Compared to the other monasteries in this study, St. Benedict’s Abbey has the largest body of hymns and psalm tones used in the liturgy of the Hours and Mass.

St. Gregory’s Abbey has decided to incorporate Gregorian chant notation into the vernacular monastic office. According to the choirmaster, the version of their monastic office is by the previous choirmaster and dates back to 1978. The former choirmaster “had composed in and identified in a mix of metrical and sung, chant-like pieces in modern notation. Because of ongoing liturgical revisions and clarifications in the Catholic Church, our abbot has asked that we return to simpler, chant-like works and Gregorian chant notation. The community is more adept at reading Gregorian chant notation than [it is] modern notation.”<sup>113</sup> The community will use both translated Gregorian chant notation settings from Latin to English and, according to the monk, “preserve some of what the previous choirmaster did that was newly composed but was done in free rhythm and only chant-like. We will convert the notation from modern notation to Gregorian chant notation.”<sup>114</sup> Then, the community will decide what still needs to be replaced, but the community does rely on several other sources of music and

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<sup>112</sup> Witness from St. Benedict’s Abbey in Kansas. Oral History. 29 July 2016, Appendix C4B.

<sup>113</sup> Witness from St. Gregory’s Abbey. Oral History. 20 August 2018, Appendix C5A.

<sup>114</sup> Witness from St. Gregory’s Abbey. Oral History. 20 August 2018, Appendix C5B.

antiphons that come from other monasteries that use original Latin chant melodies. For instance, the choirmaster recalls:

[m]y mentor at St Meinrad Archabbey, Father Columba Kelly O.S.B., spent his career post-Vatican II, after receiving his doctorate in sacred music from Rome back in the 1950s, finding suitable ways to adapt the Gregorian melodies to English text. The difficulty is that the Latin is free rhythm that is based on the accented text. You cannot simply take a Latin word and replace it with an English word because the accents are different. Father Kelly created a way of looking at each individual chant melody to then adapt the chant to a more suitably translated version.<sup>115</sup>

St. Gregory's Abbey also uses the hymns from Conception Abbey. The choirmaster at Conception, however, borrows modern Gregorian notation—note-heads without the stems—so the choirmaster at St. Gregory's is adapting that notation to Gregorian chant notation.<sup>116</sup> The approach to notation at St. Gregory is unique within the North American context, but the monks believe that their approach could be adapted and used by other communities.

The four monasteries I have discussed above are among the dozens of monasteries in the United States that went through a process of adaptation of their own monastic office after the Second Vatican Council. Each monastery has adopted their own method in following the rules sanctioned by the Consilium, as a consequence of a need for flexibility in missions and schedules. In general, the six monasteries use very little Latin. Even though still transitioning to the English vernacular, these monasteries have inaugurated a new monastic tradition in English in only fifty years. In the next chapter, I

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<sup>115</sup> Witness from St. Gregory's Abbey. Oral History. 20 August 2018, Appendix C5B.

<sup>116</sup> Witness from St. Gregory's Abbey. Oral History. 20 August 2018, Appendix C5B.

will outline the Gregorian chant tradition and provide examples from the monasteries, but, in particular, from the strictly Latin tradition of Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey in Oklahoma.

## **Chapter 4: The Waning Gregorian Chant Tradition: Past and Present**

In Chapter 3 I asserted that the Second Vatican Council had no plans to eliminate Latin from liturgy. All the monasteries in this case study, however, have adopted the vernacular and nearly abandoned Gregorian chant, except for special occasions or for a nightly Latin Marian antiphon. This chapter discusses the continuing tradition of Gregorian chant after the Second Vatican Council.

During the Liturgical Movement leading up to 1962, Gregorian chant was popularized again. According to John W. O'Malley, “[d]uring the second half of the nineteenth century, the cry for ‘sacred music’ in the liturgy ... swelled ever stronger .... This development prompted Pius X [1903-1914] to issue in 1903 an important document titled *Inter Sollicitudines*, which called for the use of Gregorian Chant in ordinary parishes and for the congregation’s participation in singing it.”<sup>117</sup>

Before delving into the discussion of the counter-parallel Gregorian chant tradition after Vatican II, it is useful to provide some background about the work of the monks of Solesmes in the mid-1800s that ignited the Gregorian chant revival. This revival should not be confused with the Liturgical Movement of the early 1900s that revived the Gregorian chant in France and the rest of Europe.

The chant revival of the monks of Solesmes can be interpreted as a reaction to the anticlericalism of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment began a new paradigm in religion and philosophy. According to Brian Wilcoxon, “[n]o institutions or philosophies

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<sup>117</sup> John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 72-73.

were deemed too sacred for enlightened thinkers to contemplate and dismantle. This rogue spirit, backed by the cosmopolitan ideal, provided the humanistic grounds for the complete upturning of society during the French Revolution. To be fair, there were a number of other outside factors that contributed to the unrest that eventually broke out into a full revolution...<sup>118</sup> I find this assertion on the French Revolution overly-simplified. Three lines below this quote on the French Revolution, Wilcoxon mentions the successful American Revolution. I find this to be biased towards the United States (Wilcoxon is from Florida State University) and our position towards revolutions and our often pro-revolution stance. He attempts to elaborate on his assertion in the following sentence, but this assertion would require a more extensive treatment rather than a passing remark. I still find Wilcoxon's quote useful to frame the rise and fall of Solesmes and other monasteries impacted by the revolution in France. During the French Revolution, monasteries were either disbanded, forcefully so, or completely destroyed as a revolutionaries' reaction to the Church's conservatism and support of the monarchy. This led to the *dechristianization* of France. Beginning in 1789-1794, "the Church had its lands taken away and sold, priests were forced to pledge allegiance to the country (as opposed to Rome), monastic orders were disbanded, France started its own calendar completely separate from the Gregorian standard, churches were turned into secular

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<sup>118</sup> Brian Wilcoxon, "Performing Community: Benedictine Chant in Post-Vatican Catholicism." (PhD diss., Florida State University College of Music, 2016), 40.



temples to Reason, and clergy were neglected to flee the country were either sent to Guiana or executed.”<sup>119</sup>

By the turn of the eighteenth century, the Enlightenment waned as a philosophical and aesthetic movement with the rise of Romanticism. By 1795, the urge for *dechristianization* decreased and the practicing of Catholicism was permitted again and priests were allowed to celebrate religious rituals, as long as they followed the post-monarchical National Convention doctrines.<sup>120</sup> In 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte and the pope, Pius VII, began to restore public worship; this restoration was not made official, however, until Napoleon and Pope Pius VII “signed the Concordat of 1801 which allowed freedom for the practice of Catholicism, and encouraged exiled priests to return to France.”<sup>121</sup> Monasteries were again restored. Solesmes was virtually newly founded in 1837 by abbot Prosper Louis Pascal Guéranger,<sup>122</sup> who was authorized by the Vatican to transform an almost completely destroyed twelfth-century priory into a monastery. After just a few decades after its refoundation, its monks began revising the sacred liturgy of

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<sup>119</sup> Wilcoxon, 41.

<sup>120</sup> The National Convention refers to the first government formed during the French Revolution, forming as a republic instead of a monarchy. The system was established in 1792 and only lasted until 1795.

<sup>121</sup> Wilcoxon, 42. I will not go into more detail on the effect that the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars had on Catholicism. There is an extensive bibliography on the impact of the Revolution on French culture. A good overview can be found in William Rogers Brubaker’s “The French Revolution and the Invention of Citizenship” in *French Politics and Society*.

<sup>122</sup> Guéranger’s efforts were not isolated attempts. He was influenced by writers such as Victor Hugo and Chateaubriand who wanted to rebuild and protect infrastructure in France following the French Revolution. Brian Wilcoxon mistakenly refers to Dom Guéranger as Proper Guéranger instead of Prosper Guéranger.

the Church and Gregorian chant<sup>123</sup> because of Guéranger's interest in reviving the sacred liturgy that had been lost after the 1790s and in rebuilding monasteries around France.

Scholars and Catholics today recognize the centrality of Solesmes in the revival of Gregorian chant and its influence. According to Katherine Bergeron,

“[t]he true spirit of Saint Benedict flowed through the space of this new history in the form of two imperatives of monastic life that Guéranger was obliged to revive: *ora et labora*, pray and work. These two activities neatly converged during the early years of Solesmes, for the labor of this tiny community (less than half a dozen strong) was largely devoted to restoring the texts on which their prayer, and hence their life, would be based—in particular, the texts of the Roman liturgy whose sacred canticles represented, for Guéranger, the very soul of the monastery. This intellectual work, in other words, directly affected their daily existence as monks within a community dedicated to prayer, a community of which they were among the sole living representatives.”<sup>124</sup>

In sum, the monks of Solesmes facilitated the revival of Gregorian chant and the stylistic evolution of sacred music, which had largely been lost in France and the rest of Europe as an effect of the diffusion of the Enlightenment. The monks worked specifically on the Tridentine Mass. The main focus of this chapter, however, is the reconstruction of the role Solesmes had on the revival of Gregorian chant and its spread throughout Europe and the Americas. In his efforts to restore Gregorian chant, Guéranger looked at early medieval monophonic Gregorian chant traditions. Solesmes's work on the compilation of Gregorian chant is still strongly influential today, especially because of their many publications, primarily the Paléographie Musicale and the several chant editions.

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<sup>123</sup> Katherine Bergeron, *Decadent Enchantments: The Revival of Gregorian Chant at Solesmes* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 11.

<sup>124</sup> Katherine Bergeron, *Decadent Enchantments*, 14.

Guéranger's goal was to trace the tradition of Gregorian chant back to its medieval roots. His idea was to reconstruct the chants' original status by analyzing hundreds of European manuscripts. This task entailed painstaking paleographical work, the interpretation and transcription of neumes,<sup>125</sup> and the creation of editions based on these transcriptions. Since medieval manuscripts present several variants even for highly international chant, Solesmes monks had to make decisions about the most "authentic" version of chants to be inserted in their editions. Brian Wilcoxon rightly questions the notion of authenticity in the "Solesmes" canon: "[w]ithout diminishing the incredible work of the Solesmes monks, their restoration of chant created some problematic issues. Foremost were the judgements that regarded one piece of chant or one performance style as more 'authentic' than another ... The truth is that no single monastery, collection, manuscript, or performance has an inherent right to be called 'authentic...'"<sup>126</sup> This "authentic"<sup>127</sup> Solesmes canon has been very influential to monasteries using Latin or English translations from Latin in the liturgy. Even monasteries that have almost completely abandoned Latin still recur the Solesmes tradition, sometimes filtered through the intermediation of some other monasteries inspired by Solesmes.

Although this study is devoted to the post-Vatican II vernacular chant of the United States, it is still useful to discuss the Gregorian chant revival at Solesmes because of the persistence of Latin and Gregorian chant in the rites of the Catholic Church after

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<sup>125</sup> Neumes are the symbols used in plainchant notation.

<sup>126</sup> Wilcoxon, 47.

<sup>127</sup> I'm directly using Brian Wilcoxon's language to describe this canon.

Vatican II, as stated in the previous chapter. All the monasteries in this case study use at least some Latin chant, and every monk or nun who participated in this study was aware of the practice of Latin liturgy in the immediate vicinities of the monastery. More specifically, Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey participates in the revival of this chant tradition within the vernacular tradition.

The Abbey is located near Hulbert, Oklahoma and is the direct “granddaughter” of Solesmes.<sup>128</sup> It currently uses exclusively Latin for the liturgy and, consequently, for chant. Officially founded in 1999, it received abbatial status only in 2010. The monastery follows the Roman Rite dating back to 1962, thus rejecting the provisions of the Second Vatican Council and the Benedictine Confederation. According to the website, “[t]he Church acknowledges Gregorian chant as especially suited to the Roman Liturgy: therefore, other things being equal, it should be given pride of place in liturgical services.”<sup>129</sup> This quote refers to article 36 of the *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. The quote, however, discards the section on the vernacular and the need to ease the participation of the people.

Because of their fidelity to Solesmes, the monks do take position regarding the “authenticity” of Solesmes’s teaching in chant matters either on their website or in personal interviews. As Brian Wilcoxon puts it, Clear Creek Abbey is “like Solesmes, in

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<sup>128</sup> Clear Creek Abbey’s Motherhouse is Fontgombault Abbey in France. Clear Creek Abbey and the nunnery of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Vermont are the only two monasteries in the United States affiliated with Solesmes.

<sup>129</sup> “Gregorian Chant,” *Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey*. 2016, <https://clearcreekmonks.org/abbey/gregorian-chant/>, accessed 20 February 2019

Oklahoma.”<sup>130</sup> This lineage is emphasized, in addition to the adoption of the chants, through the architectural dimension of the monastery, which, still under construction, is in an advanced stage of development.<sup>131</sup> The monastery is like stepping back through time: “Visit Clear Creek Abbey in Oklahoma and you will see something as close to 12<sup>th</sup>-century Benedictine monastic life as can be found in 21<sup>st</sup> century.”<sup>132</sup> With fifty monks currently at the monastery (full capacity is about seventy), the monastery outnumbers all others included in this study. The monastery closest in proximity is St Gregory’s Abbey, even though the monks at both monasteries assert that there is no direct competition between the two.

Most monks are in their thirties. According to the monk from Assumption Abbey, younger generations of Catholics are often drawn to Latin and the former Gregorian chant tradition and that could be the case for Clear Creek’s vocations. The monk from Assumption Abbey “[t]here’s a nostalgia among young catholics who want to go back to Latin.”<sup>133</sup> He explained that prior to Vatican II, anyone entering the seminary would have taken several years of Latin and anyone entering a monastery would have known some Latin. The monks of Clear Creek Abbey took a few years of Latin before entering the monastery. I would note, however, that the monks I spoke with in this study claimed that

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<sup>130</sup> Wilcoxon, 152.

<sup>131</sup> On this aspect I rely on Brian Wilcoxon’s dissertation. I did not visit Clear Creek, given my primary focus on vernacular chant. I could have not have access to the Liturgy of the Hours due to my gender because they limit female guests’ access to the daily Hours. I will discuss this limitation more in Chapter 5. See also Wilcoxon, 152.

<sup>132</sup> “Did You Know?: Interesting and Little-Known Facts About Benedictine Monasticism,” *Christian History & Biography* 93 (2007): 2-4, 9 September 2016.

<sup>133</sup> Witness from Assumption Abbey. Oral History. 9 July 2016, Appendix C1B.

the monks at Clear Creek did not understand Latin but that is only their assumption. I do not know the motivations of Clear Creek Abbey or their comprehension of the sacred liturgy, so this account is based only upon secondary statements. The witness from St. Gregory's Abbey in Oklahoma, however, had a much different perspective than the monk from Assumption Abbey. This also contrasts with my own interactions with other monastics. The witness states,

every community, every religious community, every monastery is, in some sense, different because we're all independent of each other. We have the permission of the Vatican to adapt our liturgical practice in some ways to our local traditions, and Clear Creek comes from a history of their founding house in France where they didn't convert to the vernacular after Vatican II. They got the permission from Rome to stay with the Latin, and Clear Creek is simply continuing that tradition.<sup>134</sup>

In my own research, I met guests who complained about the lack of mysticism within the Church now that the Mass is in the vernacular. Even scholars—secular and theologians—see the abandonment of Gregorian chant and a thousand years of tradition as a loss. Victorine Fenton's position about the loss of Gregorian chant directly contradicts the work of the choirmaster at St Gregory's Abbey.<sup>135</sup> “The use of Gregorian chant is to be encouraged indeed, but it is not the Latin chant that will be the liturgical music of the future in the Catholic church, or for the monastic office, nor should it be. Gregorian chant is being sung on occasion in many monasteries, and often in some others. It should always be sung in Latin, the language for which it was written. Chant

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<sup>134</sup> Witness from St. Gregory's Abbey. Oral History. 20 August 2018, Appendix C5C.

<sup>135</sup> I am referring here to the Gregorian chant notation the choirmaster is adopting. Fenton, in 1985 at least, directly warned against using the Gregorian chant tradition within the new vernacular. Because St Gregory's notation is only just now being implemented, I will not know for a while if Fenton is correct or if St Gregory's Abbey is a solution. Refer to Chapter 3 and Appendix C5B

adapted to English texts will probably not endure.”<sup>136</sup> Even Brian Wilcoxon, who witnesses the Latin chant firsthand at Solesmes and at Clear Creek Abbey, remarks on the loss of unification within the Church. “Since Latin is scarcely heard except within the Church, its use (for church-goers) signifies the Church itself and, is thus associated with the divine. By singing in this language, monks and other religious remove themselves from the early realm of vernacular languages and fill themselves with both the Word and language of God.”<sup>137</sup>

On the other hand, Colleen McDannell asserts that

[c]ritics complained that Catholics had little understanding of the deeper meanings of their religious life...The use of Latin had only managed to unify the whole Church in mystification because so few had mastered the ancient language...American Catholics acted like passive and threatened sheep performing their religious duties in a stupor.<sup>138</sup>

McDannell’s point leads me back to the reason why the Church adopted the vernacular for active participation. Without contradicting or negating the work of Solesmes and Clear Creek Abbey, I wonder how much the monks at these monasteries are comprehending and actively participating during the Liturgy of the Hours or if they are just passively going through the motions. I do not know how much the monks at Clear Creek comprehend the liturgy, so my statement is, once again, based upon secondary statements. Both these monasteries have a Sunday congregation who

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<sup>136</sup> Fenton, 823.

<sup>137</sup> Wilcoxon 53. Wilcoxon is commenting here on Gregorian chant as a Romantic construct; however, he is directly asserting his own opinion in that quote.

<sup>138</sup> Colleen McDannell, *The Spirit of Vatican II: A History of Catholic Reform in America* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 42.

experience the mysticism but cannot comprehend the sacred liturgy, at least at a surface level. The following chapter focus on active participation within the vernacular tradition following Vatican II and provided remarks on the advantages and disadvantages of both traditions and future outcomes.



## Chapter 5: Active Participation: The New Congregation

Before 1962, the priest faced away from the congregation and spoke or chanted softly the Latin Mass. In the meantime, in the congregation some privately prayed their rosaries, while others dreamed away completely lost in the silence of Mass. Others participated with the call and response, oblivious to the Latin they spoke. After the Liturgical Movement, lay people had access to missals translated into English. In Anglo-American parishes, the Mass was largely devoid of music, at least in comparison to monasteries in Europe.<sup>139</sup>

Thomas Day's analysis of lay congregations before and after the Liturgical Movement in the United States, although oversimplified, offers a useful perspective on United States Catholicism and is based on direct experience. His book *Why Catholics Can't Sing*, while being strongly critical of the tradition of the silent Mass before 1962, offers a perspective on congregational participation in the United States before and after Vatican II. According to him,

American Catholics not only accepted the idea of the Mass without a note of music, they boasted about it. This was their mark of distinction. It set them apart from their Protestant neighbors who went to church 'only for the music' and who had made music 'the center of their worship.' To a largely working-class Catholicism, music was the religion of the employers. The special attention paid to it in other denominations was a sign of the spiritual corruption. American Catholics, in contrast, had a higher and purer form of worship with a message so awesome that it could only be watched in silence and communicated through the most exalted symbols.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> These assumptions are largely based upon my witness oral histories and Thomas Day's *Why Catholics Can't Sing*.

<sup>140</sup> Thomas Day *Why Catholics Can't Sing*, 9.

In other countries, for instance in Europe, congregational participation during Low Mass was common through the singing of hymns and chorales; these chants punctuated the sections of the Mass that were spoken in Latin by the priest. Congregations in the United States, however, resisted the introduction of these hymns and songs and sat silently during Mass. This silence was partially due to the high costs of hiring trained musicians and singers and of purchasing instruments, such as a pipe organ. Costs connected with music, therefore, were considered unnecessary. This contrasts with the attitude that these communities had toward interior decorations, which were considered a necessity: “Stonework, marble, gold, and stained glass were all considered the things that made a church a church. They had a high priority. Liturgical music was tolerated as a nicety or a ritual requirement, but anything beyond the minimum was scorned as a waste, especially in the decade before Vatican II and in the northeast corner of the United States.”<sup>141</sup> Without the resurgence of liturgical music as a consequence of Vatican II, music would have all but disappeared from United States parishes. This, however, only applies to Anglo-American parishes, as opposed to immigrant parishes, who employed music more extensively. Congregations in Europe had congregational singing during Mass celebration.

In the context of Benedictine monasticism, however, participation before Vatican II responded to completely different criteria. Choir monks and other members of the clergy chanted the Liturgy of the Hours and the Mass daily. Although completely in

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<sup>141</sup> Day, 10.

Latin, the majority of the monks had at least had a few years of Latin and were familiar with the daily liturgy. Moreover, many of the monks had the Latin text memorized, especially the psalter, and did not try to make literal translations of the texts they were singing.

By 1962, the amount of communal and individual praying exceeded St. Benedict's prescriptions in the *Rule*.<sup>142</sup> During my stays at the six monasteries, I directly asked about the monks' and nuns' pre-Vatican II experiences. Here are the recollections of a monk from St. Benedict's Abbey in Kansas:

We got up at 4:30 a.m. and we prayed at 5 a.m. for an hour in Latin. Then the priests, who were living in the monastery, would offer Mass. They would go in seniority, and before the church was built, there were chapels in every available room. The church remedied that by creating thirty-two chapels in the basement. Oftentimes, every young monk would serve one Mass, but sometimes two or even three. Each Mass would take twenty minutes. Three Masses: this is after that hour prayer in Latin, then you go and serve Mass in Latin. Then, you go back upstairs and pray for another twenty minutes. Finally, we would go to breakfast. After breakfast, we had community Mass. So that would get you up to about 9 a.m.<sup>143</sup>

Following this rigorous morning schedule, the monks met again for Lauds (mid-morning), Terce (noon), None (mid-afternoon), Vespers (afternoon), Compline (evening), and so on. This clear imbalance between the Rule's *ora* and the *labora* in the monk's account left little time for personal reflection. The lack of fluency in Latin, which was counteracted by substantial efforts of memorization, also affected the monks' active participation in intellectual and spiritual participation while praying.

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<sup>142</sup> In the final chapter, I will refer to Vatican II's declaration to monastics to return to your roots. I will not address the simplification of the Divine Office following Vatican II until Chapter VII; I will, instead, address the lack of active participation in this chapter.

<sup>143</sup> Witness from St. Benedict's Abbey. Oral History. 29 July 2016, Appendix C4D.

The Liturgical Movement incited a renewed interest in overall liturgical comprehension amongst lay people, clergy, and monastics. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the translated missal increased comprehension during the Mass; it was ironic, however, that the priest still faced away from the congregation, while chanting in Latin. The Liturgical Movement began officially when monks in Germany and France

sought a deeper connection to God through a more serious participation in Catholic rituals. They wanted to make the Mass a vital thing in the life of the faithful, and their efforts toward renewal comprised this movement. Whereas earlier ritual experts had looked to the Middle Ages as the primary resource for Catholic life, by the twenties, reformers were studying historical documents from the earliest years of Christianity.<sup>144</sup>

The main goal of looking back on these early Christian traditions was communal worship and participation. This renewal of early tradition led into the major changes of Vatican II, namely, the *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and increased active participation.

I have previously discussed the vernacular, but I have mostly avoided the increased participation following Vatican II. Article 36 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* stated that churches now have the option to use the language of the people for increased comprehension and active congregational participation. By describing the participation in parishes around North America, I am, therefore, describing the local parishes in which the majority of the monks were active after Vatican II or during the Liturgical Movement. This is useful because it allows for the discussion of the changes they experienced. These six monasteries also have weekly congregations at Sunday Mass and daily Liturgy of the

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<sup>144</sup> Colleen McDannell, *The Spirit of Vatican II*, 40.

Hours. I will, on that account, analyze active participation in American parishes before and after Vatican II.

The Liturgical Movement led many lay people to question the Catholic institution. By the opening of Vatican II, lay people were questioning the supposedly improved sanctuary designs and the Church's right to prohibit birth control, the supposed sanctity of marriage, and the celibacy of members of clergy. According to Colleen McDannell,

[c]ritics complained that Catholics had little understanding of the deeper meanings of their religious life, in spite of any change in sanctuary design. The use of Latin had only managed to unify the whole Church in mystification because so few had mastered the ancient language. Because parishioners did not understand the spiritual dimension of their faith, they saw the Church as little more than a legal institution set up to enforce a complicated set of moral and ritual laws.<sup>145</sup>

Vatican II, while addressing these questions, attributed many of them to incomprehension of Church doctrine. Rather than directly acknowledging the specific issues of the Catholic Church that had been raised by lay people, most of the deliberations during Vatican II focused on church doctrine and active participation. Because of this primary focus, celibacy, birth control, and the ordaining of women, for example, were not even wholly discussed during the three years the Council convened. This, rather than dismissing the effectiveness of the Council as a whole, raises the question of the completeness (or lack thereof) of the Council and of subsequent discussions within the Catholic Church. The developments promoted by the Council

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<sup>145</sup> Colleen McDannell, 41.

about active participation was an absolute success for monastics, parishioners, and the entirety of the Church and especially in United States Catholicism.

The introduction of the vernacular in churches worldwide allowed an increased exposure to church doctrine for lay people. Instead of praying their rosaries and having an overall inactive role, lay people had to participate during weekly Mass. The priest, who once stood with his back to the people, now faced the congregation in the recitation of the Mass. Hymns were added to Mass in the United States along with short antiphons and graduals that the parishioners intoned. Before Vatican II, these Anglo-American congregations boasted about their silent Mass and passive participation that were so different from the Protestants who had been singing and participating actively in their church services for generations. The changes introduced by Vatican II also entailed backlash from parishioners who disliked the “noise” that disrupted their weekly sanctioned silence, reflection, and prayer.

During my own fieldwork, I heard some guests complain about this “new” vernacular and the disrupted quiet. The most obvious difference with the Vatican II Mass was the vernacular, so that the mystery of the liturgy had been lost, according to these guests. Moreover, the “silence” of the pre-Vatican II Mass offered an escapism and an hour of reflection each week. Thomas Day recounts the new noise of the Anglo-American Mass. The same Mass, once mostly devoid of music, was now full of short antiphons and instrumental music, often electronic keyboard music that disrupted the quiet. The guests I met recounted the lost mystery of the Mass and, therefore, the mystery of the priest. These reactions, however, might be referring to the loss of silence rather

than to the use of the vernacular. The vernacular by itself did not automatically entail the addition of hymns and communal recitation. Thomas Day recounts this ambivalence to the active participation, “[t]he deal used to be this: the church would use the stick of Sunday obligation but would leave ‘the people’ alone during Mass. It was a fair trade, but the church has now changed the rules of the game. The new requirement is both obligation and excited involvement, the stick and the stick.”<sup>146</sup>

Active participation entailed much more than simply changing the language of the liturgy to the vernacular. It also entailed increasing transparency and communal worship, influenced by early Christian traditions. Colleen McDannell evaluated these new participatory changes far more positively<sup>147</sup> than Thomas Day or self-proclaimed Catholic bigot Paul Blanshard. McDannell states that “[t]he Council documents stressed that Christ came as a servant of humankind and not as a powerful king. They called on Catholics to cultivate the positive and holy aspects of their individual lives—those aspects of their humanity that they shared with Christ. The Mass needed to strengthen what people had in common with Jesus rather than reiterate what separated the human from the divine.”<sup>148</sup> Part of this shared humanity prompted that the priest no longer

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<sup>146</sup> Thomas Day, 117.

<sup>147</sup> Colleen McDannell is highly critical of issues that Vatican II ignored or mostly ignored, however. She heavily critiques the lack of women in attendance or their being allowed to speak up during the council. She asks, who is the Church actually representing? What about birth control? Celibacy? Ordaining women? For the purposes of this thesis, I will focus on her positivity towards the vernacular tradition and the new communal Mass.

<sup>148</sup> McDannell, 158.

prayed quietly facing towards the altar. He now stood facing the congregations who prayed along with him.<sup>149</sup>

Changes in monastic participation, however, seemed less drastic compared to those entailing lay congregations. Following Vatican II, the Liturgy of the Hours was simplified so that the majority of monastics were now in prayer for a significantly smaller number of hours each day. As stated in Chapter 3, most Benedictine monasteries in the United States had transitioned to the vernacular language by this time. Besides the obvious participation caused by the use of the vernacular, monastics had an increased interest in their own liturgy and monastic rite after Vatican II. This interest was the consequence of receiving permissions to experiment with the rite. This experimentation increased flexibility and overall participation at each monastery.

Also, prior to Vatican II, there was a stark division among lay brothers and choir monks, divisions that disappeared after Vatican II. Before 1962, lay brothers hardly participated or attended the Divine Office and, instead, prayed the office alone with their rosary. Choir monks, who were chosen for their musical talent, were devoted to chanting the Divine Office. When these divisions were removed, the lay brothers had the option to join the choir and the majority did.<sup>150</sup> The witness from Assumption Abbey<sup>151</sup> explained the division specifically placed and dissolved at their monastery. He said that the choir

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<sup>149</sup> I will remark later on the issues of the priest and his new attitude following Vatican II.

<sup>150</sup> I have not yet encountered a monastery where this division still exists. I have heard that Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey, however, has reinstated the choir monk and lay brother division. Because of dwindling numbers, the majority of monasteries can no longer operate under this division.

<sup>151</sup> Trappists are not members of the Benedictine Confederation; on the contrary, their vernacular tradition is very similar to Benedictine Confederation monasteries.



monk wore a black and white scapular while the lay brother wore a brown habit.<sup>152</sup> The monk said that when the Divine Office was in Latin, the lay brothers had no reason to attend the Hours. Once the vernacular was implemented, there was no real reason for the lay brothers not to attend the Divine Hours in the choir.<sup>153</sup>

Smaller monasteries, like Saint Benedict's Abbey in Illinois and St. Scholastica Monastery in Texas, have introduced contemporary hymns and other forms of vernacular singing. St. Scholastica Monastery, for instance, uses a circular leadership model.<sup>154</sup> Each week, a new sister oversees the daily Office and of the hymns used. During my stay, the sisters in charge of prayers became self-conscious of their singing voices and decided to recite, rather than sing, psalms and antiphons. Instead, the only music I heard during my stay were hymns played from a stereo while the sisters roughly sang along to the recording, which they shut off after two stanzas to continue their recitations. One of the sisters remarked to me that the sisters had at one point released an album,<sup>155</sup> but their voices have now dropped and become gravelly, and they are sensitive of this.

Saint Benedict's Abbey and their small community utilize contemporary music in their daily Mass and Liturgy of the Hours because it is easier for their community size and their loyal congregation. The monk explained that he listens primarily to

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<sup>152</sup> This description of lay brother and choir monk habits specifically apply to the habits worn by Trappist monks. The division was still placed in Benedictine monasteries, even though the habits were different from the Trappists.

<sup>153</sup> Witness from Assumption Abbey. Oral History. 9 July 2016, Appendix C1D.

<sup>154</sup> Circular Leadership Model was defined in Chapter One. Its purpose in a smaller monastery grants increased equality to all the sisters who can directly go to the prioress instead of following a hierarchy. Instead, the sisters are all in charge of their own mission and each have their own leadership responsibilities.

<sup>155</sup> Although I do not know the specific date, it has been over twenty years since the release.

contemporary Christian music and has incorporated some of it into Sunday Mass, This, while common in parishes and Protestant churches, is atypical of Benedictine monasteries. According to the monk, “St. Benedict in the *Rule* actually says that the liturgy should be done according to the community size. So, if you have a large choir with nice voices, then you should probably sing the liturgy. We found out that having just five people in choir is difficult, so we just sing some of it.”<sup>156</sup> They do sing a little, especially some of the canticles. At St. Scholastica Monastery, for instance, they recite the majority of their liturgy. This, too, depends on the brother or sister in charge of the liturgy.

Another major participatory change after Vatican II was the active participation of guests. At each of my stays, I was encouraged to participate during the Liturgy of the Hours and during the daily Eucharist. At each monastery, there was always a monk or two, whose job during the Office was to ensure that guests in the monastery were aware of the books being used, the psalms chanted, and the hymns incorporated. At times, in truth, guest participation seemed enforced, because the guestmaster or monk in charge for that day would automatically come over to verify that I was on the correct page or prayer. At Assumption Abbey, there was a monk outside of the guest area and entry to the chapel whose job was to hand the guest anything they needed for prayers, including a flashlight at Vigils. During prayers, I had to avoid eye contact with the monk to prevent him from walking over to make sure I was following along accurately.

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<sup>156</sup> Witness from Saint Benedict’s Abbey. Oral History. 23 July 2016, Appendix C3A.

My experience at Conception Abbey was quite different, also because of the busy liturgical retreat they were hosting the weekend I stayed. Since there were dozens of guests at each of the Offices and daily Eucharist, active participation during Office was less important. Many guests just sat in silence and glared at other guests involved in the recitation or in the chanting of the psalm tones assigned to them. Sunday Mass was also full of guests on their last day of retreat and of local students from Conception College and Seminary. At Conception, the guests sat far from the monks, who were in the choir towards the front of the basilica, but the guestmaster always hovered around to answer questions. For the most part, guests' participation was optional and, in some cases, discouraged by other guests wishing to hear the "music" and experience the spirituality of the monks chanting.

Brian Wilcoxon devoted a large part of his dissertation to the notion of the *Performing Community*, based on his visits to Solesmes and Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey and focusing on the Latin chants he experienced at each. He also visited St. Leo's Abbey in Florida, where he experienced communal participation as I did. According to Wilcoxon,

[t]here was a joyousness that came from Mass at St. Leo; part of my observation was due to my own involvement in the ritual and getting to finally participate in this way, but others seemed to be similarly happy. The monks themselves, and the priest in charge of Mass, were instrumental in creating those feelings. Being in close proximity with these individuals, both the monks and the other laypeople, helped me emphasize with their experience of Mass and helped me understand how they shaped the ritual.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Wilcoxon, 129.

At each of the six monasteries I was invited to participate in the Mass and in the Liturgy of the Hours. Two standout monasteries in communal participation were Saint Benedict's Abbey in Illinois<sup>158</sup> and St. Benedict's Abbey in Kansas.<sup>159</sup> At Saint Benedict's Abbey in Illinois, all guests were welcome to partake in Holy Communion as long as they were baptized Christians. St. Benedict's Abbey in Kansas, with its dwindling community and large basilica, welcomed all guests to join the monks in the choir. Because of this, I was always in close proximity with the monks and other guests and the barrier between the monastic and the "other" was abandoned during these prayers. Similar to my experience in the communal worship during Compline at Conception Abbey, I had the opportunity to chant within the same intimate choir as the monks who sat next to me or across from me. Unlike the Latin hymn I chanted at Conception Abbey, the majority of the recitations and hymns were in English. Still, I experienced the mysticism of communal worship between the monastics and lay. I am aware, however, that my experience is unlike that of Anglo-American parishes because I was participating in a community built around monastic communal prayer.

My critique of the rejection of Vatican II for Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey included in Chapter 3 also extends to their attitude toward their relationship with lay guests. My initial plans to visit the monastery encountered serious obstacles because of their conservative rules about women, which barred me from having a full experience at this monastery. Women are required to stay at the separate guesthouse ten miles from the

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<sup>158</sup> Bartonville, Illinois. Community of four monks and one sister

<sup>159</sup> Atchison, Kansas. Community of fifty monks.

abbey grounds. The grounds around much of the abbey are cloistered so, even walking around the abbey, is prohibited to women. Men, on the other hand, are welcome to stay in the cloistered area, if interested in discernment, or to stay in the guest area located within the abbey. They are welcome to eat all meals with the monks and attend every part of the Liturgy of the Hours. Women, instead, must provide their own food, with the nearest town being nearly an hour away, and pay an increased nightly donation fee. They are not permitted to attend all parts of the Liturgy of the Hours either. Instead, female guests “are invited to assist at Mass and at some of the ‘Hours’ of the Divine Office: Prime, Terce, Sext, None and Vespers. Male guests may also attend, if they wish, Compline, Matins and Lauds.”<sup>160</sup> In this case, female guests are prevented from active participation in communal prayer, in stark contrast with what men are allowed to do. Therefore, Clear Creek Abbey, in its rejection of the vernacular, has also resisted the changes for communal prayer from early Christian traditions. Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey is, therefore, not representative of United States monasteries and of the communal active participation. I am aware, though, that the guest retreat calendar and active guest center can become burdensome for the monastics at these abbeys. Their whole lives and prayers become a performance, and it is understandable that the monks of Clear Creek Abbey have adopted a more reclusive form of communal prayer. Guests are welcome, but space is limited, and the monks have a few times a day to pray alone together.

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<sup>160</sup> “Visit.” Clear Creek Abbey, *Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey*, ND, <https://clearcreekmonks.org/visit/>, accessed 28 February 2019.

There has been substantial criticism about this new and improved active participation within the Catholic Church. Thomas Day questions why lay congregations of Anglo-American parishes still do not sing vernacular hymns during weekly Mass. Even though they are supposed to be participating, the congregations still sit and stand passively while the Mass is being celebrated. In Chapter 3, I had critiqued his statement, “[a]re American Catholics offering some kind of resistance to the liturgical innovations that hit them in the 1960s?”<sup>161</sup> I disagree that it is some kind of resistance. It is the centenary habit of passive participation of Anglo-American Catholic tradition, that may have led to a need for several more years to implement this new communal tradition. It is important to note that Day ignores the non-Anglo-American Catholic communities in the United States, which did participate during religious rites, much in the way European congregations participated together. Thomas Day is correct to critique the lack of urgency within the Church to begin actively participating. “In a sense, this is not a book about music but about a people struggling with their destiny. The uneven singing of the American Catholic congregation is really a symptom, not the disease itself. It is the result of a human history that stretches across the centuries, not the result of some recent artistic or musical development. These historical realities intrude into every Catholic parish and every Mass.”<sup>162</sup> Compared to Protestants, Anglo-American Catholic congregations are comparatively quiet because of their previously passive role in Mass. Protestants, instead, have hundreds of years of communal participation, which was one of the major triumphs

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<sup>161</sup> Day, 1.

<sup>162</sup> Day, 5.

of the Protestant Reformation. In conclusion, Day asks, “*Question*: What is the condition of music in American Catholic churches today? *Answer*: It has never been better and it has never been worse.”<sup>163</sup> This, again, refers to the Anglo-American Catholic tradition. My criticism of Day’s book is his focus on only a few communities, all Anglo-American, that are not fully representative of diverse Catholic United States congregations.

Compared to active participation, the new role of the priest is far more controversial amongst Catholics. At the monasteries, the monastics and guests all welcomed this “new” priest to Mass. Following Vatican II, the priest turned around to face the congregations instead of facing away to give Mass. Staring face to face, the personability of the priest increased. The priest was no longer abstract; instead, Thomas Day presents this new priest as “Mr. Nice Guy.”<sup>164</sup> Colleen McDannell lauded the new priest and his increased involvement with the congregation:

[t]he language of the new Mass emphasized the communal nature of the ritual. In the pre-Vatican II version, the priest represented the congregation to God. When it came time to state what the assembled people believed, the priest spoke for himself and his congregation when he said in Latin, ‘I believe in one God, the Father Almighty.’ In the new Mass, the entire congregation stood and declared, ‘We believe.’ They said the words of the Apostle’s creed not as discrete individuals but as a community.<sup>165</sup>

According to McDannell, when the priest turned around to face the congregations, he broke the barrier between lay and clergy. I could confirm this from my own experience—the priest faces them to participate with them. Thomas Day’s epithet of

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<sup>163</sup> Day, 162.

<sup>164</sup> Day, 133.

<sup>165</sup> McDannell, 156.

calling the new type of priest “Mr. Nice Guy” introduces another level of controversy.

According to him:

[i]n the old days, ‘the priest’ approached the altar with much bowing, breast-beating, and protestations of unworthiness; he left his personality back in the sacristy. ‘The people’ assembled behind him. Together they offered ‘the Mass.’ Today, ‘the priest’ is almost gone. He has been replaced by Mr. Nice Guy, who strides into the sanctuary as the triumphant President of the Assembly. He stands and sits at the architectural climax of the entire building. Everyone’s eyes are on him. His face is the center of attention. The celebrant becomes a celebrity. ‘The priest’ develops a state character. A star is born.<sup>166</sup>

Day directly contradicts the so-called liturgical experts who say that the priest who faces towards the congregation is lowering the curtain, *per se*, instead of conducting the Mass with their back to the congregation. Day, however, warns that this new priest may well be the undoing for Catholicism—even more so than the Protestant

Reformation—because the priest is revealed to be “*just another flawed human being.*”<sup>167</sup>

Day goes on to claim that

[a] recent unexamined cliché goes something like this: ‘Years ago, *the Mass was the priest.* He monopolized everything. All that has changed. Today, *the Mass is the people.*’ This kind of talk is so dishonest. A tour of the churches in any diocese will show that, in most cases, *the Mass is still the priest,* and with a vengeance. He now enjoys more visibility, more celebrity status, more control than at any other time in history. Nearly everywhere, the priest is the triumphant monarch. The entire service pivots on him—not his role but his personality.”<sup>168</sup>

The priest, with more celebrity status and personability, is still not up for open scrutiny by the lay people. After all, the Protestant pastor also stands at the front of the church facing the congregations, making jokes and light conversation, a long sermon, and

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<sup>166</sup> Day, 133.

<sup>167</sup> Day, 132.

<sup>168</sup> Day, 135.



a final Amen to conclude the service. The people, however, are also welcome to take part in the scripture. Growing up in a small Presbyterian church, I witnessed members of the congregation often reading the scripture before the pastor gave his or her sermon. The pastor at these churches is always up for scrutiny. They can be fired and are chosen by a committee decided by the congregation. A priest, instead, is appointed by a bishop, and is almost never fired or defrocked for the quality of their sermons or celebrations.<sup>169</sup> With him facing the congregation, people are witnessing his “performance.” “The liturgical experts work themselves into a state of fury when they remind everyone that, in the old days, the priest used to say Mass ‘with his back to the congregation.’ But that is a modern interpretation. For centuries priest and people, symbolically, they were pointing themselves and their prayers toward the unseen God.” The priest facing toward the congregation now creates an other, a you and me, instead of an us.<sup>170</sup>

Although my primary focus is United States monasticism, a discussion of the new role of the priest is useful because nearly half of all the monks at these five monasteries also absolve the role of priest.<sup>171</sup> Even though many of them are cloistered for much of the time, they work or live in parishes around the monastery. An explanation, therefore, on the functions of the new priest is relevant to a discussion of modern monasticism in America. The priest(s) at Conception Abbey, for instance, have an active retreat center with a constant flow of guests and a number of oblates. During Sunday Mass, all the

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<sup>169</sup> Day, 140.

<sup>170</sup> Day, 132.

<sup>171</sup> I am obviously excluding St. Scholastica Monastery because it is a community of women who have a priest from a local parish celebrate the Mass each day.

priest monks in attendance wear their green or white vestments and celebrate the eucharist. The guests stir once the transubstantiation is complete and remark on the beauty of all the priest monks joining in together.

Overall, I agree with Thomas Day in the context of this new front-facing priest and Day's "Mr. Nice Guy" persona. I think this new priest merely revealed corruption and weakness that already existed underneath the clerical collars. They have never not been human. The priest turning around and facing the congregation only made that corruption, which has always existed, more apparent. I do, however, disagree slightly with Colleen McDannell. Her romantic stance upon this altar and its transparency is overly simplified. At the end of her book, she questions what Vatican II did not accomplish or even discuss and what the Church should be allowed to regulate. Nevertheless, McDannell is overtly positive towards the new priest and the added participatory layer of facing the congregation. McDannell ignores the negatives, at least when concerning this development. Regarding this new priest, it is important to avoid over simplifying the phenomenon. I personally believe that it does not matter which direction the priest stands—either way he is just human. To paraphrase Thomas Day, I would rephrase the question about the state of music in the Church to make it pertinent to the priest: "What is the condition of the new priest in American Catholic Churches today?" by rephrasing that "it has never been better and it has never been worse."<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> "*Question: What is the condition of music in American Catholic churches today? Answer: It has never been better and it has never been worse.*" Thomas Day, 162.

Undoubtedly, the renewed communal prayer tradition has been arguably the most important development after Vatican II. Leading up to the Council, lay people were questioning the liturgy and Catholicism in general. This is a position that developed after the Enlightenment and the Liturgical Movement and showed an overall increased interest in the liturgy of the Church. Vatican II, however, also convened during crucial events in the twentieth-century history: the Vietnam War, Civil Rights, and Women's Movements, which led to increased level of critical awareness. While the Council addressed only some of these issues, the real change Vatican II made to Catholicism was active participation. As discussed in reference to Clear Creek Abbey and their attitude toward women, we should ask "who is actually permitted to participate?" Women, now invested in this new supposedly transparent church, can still not even become deacons, let alone priests, or hold leadership positions, even though they may recite the liturgy, sing the hymns, and comprehend the poetic text. They are, however, prevented from going to seminary. In light of this, how can we define active participation?

Although it is undoubted that this communal prayer has widely benefited congregations globally, still there are groups that are prevented from fully participating in their congregation. These include those who are baptized but cannot partake in Holy Communion and those who cannot become priests. Active participation is more than just following along with Mass. Colleen McDannell critiqued the attendance of the Second Vatican Council and the absence of women with agency to speak out. St. Peter's Basilica was full of men representing everyone within the Church. "None of the reporters who covered the opening of the Council noted the irony of a crowd of over two thousand men

dressed in lace and silk solemnly striding into St. Peter's on the feast day of the Maternity of the Virgin Mary without being accompanied by a single woman."<sup>173</sup> For that reason, I believe that the definition of active participation within the Catholic Church is debatable. While there is increased participation and communal prayer, there is still a need for redefining agency and participation by many marginalized groups within the Church.

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<sup>173</sup> McDannell, 69.

## Chapter 6: By the Decree of Vatican II: The Vernacular and Extant Gregorian Chant Tradition

This final chapter covers *Perfectae Caritatis*,<sup>174</sup> the document promulgated in 1965, which focused specifically on monasticism in the modern world. Leading up to the Second Vatican Council, Benedictine monasteries worldwide had increased their Liturgy of the Hours far beyond the specified schedule St. Benedict laid out in his *Rule*. As mentioned in Chapter 5, one of the monks from St. Benedict's Abbey stated that the abbey had increased their daily schedule to seven community prayer times, in addition to High and Low Mass and the *Lectio Divina* and individual prayers. This increase is also reflected in the uses of Conception Abbey and St. Gregory's Abbey, where the Liturgy of the Hours had been augmented far beyond the specifications within the *Rule*.

By the time Vatican II began, the Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours were unrecognizable compared to the early church traditions. The fathers of Vatican II looked back to the early church—far beyond the Medieval traditions and post-Council of Trent changes. *Perfectae Caritatis* was one of the final constitutions of the Council. Following the themes of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the theology of *Lumen Gentium*, this constitution instructed monasteries and other professed religious to look at their own roots, specifically their founders' teachings and at their rules. Article 1 of the decree states: “[t]he sacred synod has already shown in the constitution on the Church that the pursuit of perfect charity through the evangelical counsels draws its origin from the doctrine and example of the Divine Master and reveals itself as a splendid sign of the

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<sup>174</sup> Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life

heavenly kingdom. Now it intends to treat of the life and discipline of those institutes whose members make profession of chastity, poverty and obedience and to provide for their needs in our time.”<sup>175</sup> The opening of the constitution points to the religious who are professed to the evangelical counsels. Therefore, this constitution directly refers to the monastics and religiously professed, unlike previous constitutions that are either for the continuing tradition of the Church as a whole or restating and developing ongoing Church theology. So far, most constitutions of Vatican II have primarily left monasteries free to adapt the teachings of Vatican II to their own lives and traditions; *Perfectae Caritatis*, however, directly instructs religious orders to return to a more fundamental approach and to the guidance of their founders. The constitution lays out principles for monastic orders to follow. In other words, the document states that the religious should abide by the Gospels, their founders and their rules, the Bible, and finally, prayer.

*Perfectae Caritatis* refers to all those who are professed, including members of the clergy. The constitution also separates monastic orders into two groups: cloistered monastics and teaching orders. Given the focus of the present study, I will focus on cloistered monastics. As already stated, the constitution’s main goal is the return of monasteries to their roots. According to Article 9,

[t]he monastic life, that venerable institution which in the course of a long history has won for itself notable renown in the Church and in human society, should be preserved with care and its authentic spirit permitted to shine forth ever more splendidly both in the East and the West. The principal duty of monks is to offer a service to the divine majesty at once humble and noble within the walls of the

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<sup>175</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Decree on The Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life: Perfectae Caritatis: Article 1: Promulgated by Pope Paul VI 28 October 1965*. Vatican Archives Online. [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651028\\_perfectae-caritatis\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_perfectae-caritatis_en.html)

monastery, whether they dedicate themselves entirely to divine worship in the contemplative life or have legitimately undertaken some apostolate or work of Christian charity. Retaining, therefore, the characteristics of the way of life proper to them, they should revive their ancient traditions of service and so adapt them to the needs of today that monasteries will become institutions dedicated to the edification of the Christian people.<sup>176</sup>

As mentioned above, the Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours had become nearly unrecognizable compared to the early tradition of the Church and the daily monastic schedule laid out by St. Benedict. The testimony of the monk from St. Benedict's Abbey who had been a monk, albeit young, before Vatican II, thus, become especially important to compare the liturgy predating and postdating *Perfectae Caritatis*. According to him, before 1965 the day began long before dawn. This led to an imbalance between work, prayer, and reflection.<sup>177</sup> I asked the monk about the ways in which *Perfectae Caritatis* affected his monastic life and the way monasteries live by the Rule of St Benedict. He replied:

You still have the rules and regulations, but they aren't as strict. I think Vatican II acknowledged that monks are human and, they have weaknesses and they fall, and sin and their job is to get up and try again. I think Vatican II instilled that attitude very strongly, and I think it was healthy. A whole new healthy attitude. Vatican II was described as opening the windows and letting fresh air in.<sup>178</sup>

This monk was the only religious I spoke with who had been professed before Vatican II. The others, however, agreed that Vatican II relieved most of the imbalance between the rigorous communal prayers and work. Although St. Benedict's *Rule* did

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<sup>176</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Decree on The Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life: Perfectae Caritatis: Article 9: Promulgated by Pope Paul VI 28 October 1965*. Vatican Archives Online. [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651028\\_perfectae-caritatis\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_perfectae-caritatis_en.html).

<sup>177</sup> Witness from St. Benedict's Abbey. Oral History. 29 July 2016, Appendix C4D.

<sup>178</sup> Witness from St. Benedict's Abbey. Oral History. 29 July 2016, Appendix C4C.

prescribe seven Divine Offices, the monks at St. Benedict's Abbey, for instance, have dramatically decreased their daily Office from over seven distinct prayers to three. This monastery, however, has decided that the flexibility in the *Rule* allows them to combine some of the Offices,<sup>179</sup> like vigils and lauds. Because of this, the monks have more hours of daily work, individual prayer, and time for short recreational periods.

Even though all of the monastics who participated in these oral histories agreed with this constitution, many of them interpreted *Perfectae Caritatis* differently. The overall consensus was that the return to the roots was the document's intention. There are, however, different interpretations about how to interpret the "authentic" Benedictine tradition and how literally the Rule of St. Benedict should be followed. For instance, the constitution refers to the founders of monasticism. Although St. Benedict *is* considered the Father of Western Monasticism, most of his teachings are adapted from the Desert Fathers and Eastern monasticism. Therefore, even though most monastics and religious agree with the notion of returning to their roots, they are unsure as to what their roots are. St. Benedict's *Rule* was written specifically for the monks of Montecassino, but because of its flexibility and adaptability, it can be used for other monasteries. Still, many of the fundamental values and traditions stemming from the *Rule* are no longer followed or applicable and have not been followed within the Benedictine tradition for centuries. One of these is about the punishment of boys at the monastery.<sup>180</sup> Chapter 30 of the *Rule*, for

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<sup>179</sup> Witness from St. Benedict's Abbey. Oral History. 29 July 2016, Appendix C4D.

<sup>180</sup> Currently, Benedictine monasteries will not accept discernments before the age of eighteen; however, the majority of monasteries want potential novitiates to be at least three years out of high school either working or in school.



instance, is dedicated to children being brought up in the monastery and how they should be raised and punished:

Every age and every stage of intellect ought to have its own appropriate degrees of discipline; and so as often as boys and youths and any who are hardly able to understand how great a punishment is that of excommunication commit faults, let all such be punished by means of rigorous fasts, or corrected with sharp stripes, that they may be cured.<sup>181</sup>

Another prescription often disregarded is the daily allotment of wine and of a pound of bread per monk.

Today, most monastics have chosen to live by the *Rule* through adaptation and reinterpretation instead of literal applications. Because the *Rule* prescribes abbatial law, it is up to the abbot or abbess<sup>182</sup> to decide how regulations will be adapted and applied to their monastery. Even though many of the monasteries in this study still read excerpts of the *Rule* daily, they include modern interpretations of St. Benedict's *Rule* as a guide.

Besides returning to the Rule of St. Benedict, the monastics had differing opinions of the connotation of *Perfectae Caritatis*. The monk from St. Benedict's Abbey describes the overall increased humaneness of Vatican II's decree and the increased flexibility for each monastery.<sup>183</sup> The monk from Assumption Abbey had similar viewpoints but also considered the whole of Vatican II as completing the foundations of Catholicism. The monk says:

I think that the church's theology before the Second Vatican Council was as solid as a rock, but I don't think it was complete. For example, we used to call it

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<sup>181</sup> *The Rule of St. Benedict* (London: A Pax Book, 1931) PDF, [http://www.solesmes.com/sites/default/files/upload/pdf/rule\\_of\\_st\\_benedict.pdf](http://www.solesmes.com/sites/default/files/upload/pdf/rule_of_st_benedict.pdf).

<sup>182</sup> In the case of St. Scholastica Monastery, the sisters have decided to call their abbess the prioress instead. They felt like it was more fitting for a monastery attempting to use the circular leadership model.

<sup>183</sup> Witness from St. Benedict's Abbey. Oral History. 29 July 2016, Appendix C4D.

confession and the emphasis was sins between you and God. Now, the sacrament is not called that anymore. It's called reconciliation—not only have I offended God, but I have also offended my neighbor. Now, that emphasis was still the same before Vatican II but it was not stressed as much. Where, Vatican II came along and stressed that. 'I have offended God, but I have also hurt my brother and sister.'<sup>184</sup>

The monk's opinion about Vatican II also includes his interpretation of *Perfectae Caritatis*: “[r]emember that the Second Vatican Council's one big message to religious orders was to go back to our roots, which was very wise. A lot of communities had expanded the Divine Office, added the litanies, and so forth. People forget that St. Benedict's *Rule* actually shortened the Divine Office.”<sup>185</sup> I would elaborate this last point and add that St. Benedict already shortened the prayers of the Desert Fathers, who recited all 150 psalms each day. St. Benedict still laid out seven distinct Offices, which is a common misinterpretation of the *Rule*.

The prioress at St. Scholastica Monastery stated that *Perfectae Caritatis* was one of the reasons they decided to shed their habits. Even though St. Benedict described the habits to be worn by monastics, these habits were worn as a sign of humility and a way of becoming invisible within the contemporary society during Benedict's time. The prioress explains that because *Perfectae Caritatis* told monasteries to return to their roots, shedding their habits and wearing modest clothes—often secondhand—is a way of living by the *Rule* today.<sup>186</sup> The monk from Saint Benedict's Abbey, instead, called the shedding of habits a misinterpretation of the document: “it said that habits need to be

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<sup>184</sup> Witness from Assumption Abbey. Oral History. 9 July 2016, Appendix C1A.

<sup>185</sup> Witness from Assumption Abbey. Oral History. 9 July 2016, Appendix C1C.

<sup>186</sup> Witness from St. Scholastica Monastery. Oral History. 21 July 2018.

adapted to the times and to the climate. It's in the Rule of St Benedict—he wrote it there. So, it didn't mean what was interpreted as: 'let's take our habits off.' That's not what it meant. It meant to adapt it."<sup>187</sup> Article 17 of *Perfectae Caritatis* states:

The religious habit, an outward mark of consecration to God, should be simple and modest, poor and at the same becoming. In addition it must meet the requirements of health and be suited to the circumstances of time and place and to the needs of the ministry involved. The habits of both men and women religious which do not conform to these norms must be changed.<sup>188</sup>

Similarly, to other documents of Vatican II, including *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, it is up to the monastery to decide their own interpretation, within Benedictine tradition.

There are definite misconceptions about this document and what it imposed and changed for the monastics. Sara Butler explains the four misconceptions of *Perfectae Caritatis*:

(1) that it deposed religious life from its previous position of prominence in the Church; (2) that it called into question the special character of religious life and the possibility of acknowledging any morally valuable difference between Christian vocations; (3) that it deliberately changed the traditional theology of the vows professed by Religious by reordering the evangelical counsels (chastity, poverty, and obedience instead of poverty, chastity, and obedience); and (4) that it opened the way to a redefinition of religious life including societies of apostolic life and secular institutes in a chapter entitled 'Religious.'<sup>189</sup>

Even though there are many different interpretations of *Perfectae Caritatis*, the document's overall emphasis on returning to the roots and on how these early monastic

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<sup>187</sup> Witness from Saint Benedict's Abbey. Oral History. 23 July 2016, Appendix C3E.

<sup>188</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Decree on The Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life: Perfectae Caritatis: Article 17: Promulgated by Pope Paul VI 28 October 1965*. Vatican Archives Online. [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651028\\_perfectae-caritatis\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_perfectae-caritatis_en.html). In my opinion, the document does not clearly state whether the habit can be shed or not. I would, conversely, state that, based on abbatial law, it is up to abbot or abbess to decide.

<sup>189</sup> Sara Butler, MSBT, "*Perfectae Caritatis*," in *The Reception of Vatican II*. ed. by Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 209.

traditions should be applied to modern life is generally defined in article 3: “[t]herefore let constitutions, directories, custom books, books of prayers and ceremonies and such like be suitably re-edited and, obsolete laws being suppressed, be adapted to the decrees of this sacred synod.”<sup>190</sup> The different interpretations of the document are relatively minor among the changes and intention of this document. Monasteries were to return to their roots and their founders had to adapt to the modern world through the early traditions of the church. This included refocusing their interest in communal prayer and increasing the flexibility and independence of each individual monastery through abbatial law.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the increased flexibility following *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, would not have been as possible without *Perfectae Caritatis*. There are issues with this increased flexibility, however, since after Vatican II monasteries were no longer united by the use of the Latin language.

*Perfectae Caritatis* had an effect on vocations, even though this interpretation was adopted nearly fifty years after Vatican II was completed. Because of their dwindling numbers, monasteries have adopted new ways of preserving cloistered monasticism.<sup>191</sup> After all, Vatican II made nominal changes to the religious in general and the evangelical counsels were left largely unchanged. Article 24 of *Perfectae Caritatis* states that “[r]eligious communities have the right to make themselves known in order to foster

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<sup>190</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Decree on The Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life: Perfectae Caritatis: Article 3: Promulgated by Pope Paul VI 28 October 1965*. Vatican Archives Online. [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651028\\_perfectae-caritatis\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_perfectae-caritatis_en.html)

<sup>191</sup> I am largely excluding teaching orders because they are having far less difficulty overall with vocations.

vocations and seek candidates. In doing this, however, they should observe the norms laid down by the Holy See and the local Ordinary.”<sup>192</sup> This article has been applied for the use of social media and monastic websites. According to Richard Gribble,

[t]he present status of religious life in the United States obviously calls for a renaissance in vocations, and religious communities are responding with new and advanced methods to attract new members. Religious congregations, like the rest of the world, are now on the World Wide Web; the Internet has become a chief tool to reach out to those who are contemplating religious life.<sup>193</sup>

All the monasteries in this case study have websites and many also have social media accounts for vocation outreach and for spreading their mission. The use of technology for vocations is one of the many ways *Perfectae Caritatis* has been interpreted in the last fifty years.

Another way *Perfectae Caritatis* attempted to remedy dwindling vocations post-Vatican II is found in article 22 of the Council’s decree:

Independent institutes and monasteries should, when opportune and the Holy See permits, form federations if they can be considered as belonging to the same religious family. Others who have practically identical constitutions and rules and a common spirit should unite, particularly when they have too few members. Finally, those who share the same or a very similar active apostolate should become associated, one to the other.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Decree on The Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life: Perfectae Caritatis: Article 24: Promulgated by Pope Paul VI 28 October 1965*. Vatican Archives Online.

[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651028\\_perfectae-caritatis\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_perfectae-caritatis_en.html)

<sup>193</sup> Richard Gribble, “The Challenge of Religious Life in the United States Today,” *American Catholic Studies* 122, no. 1 (2011): 36.

<sup>194</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Decree on The Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life: Perfectae Caritatis: Article 22: Promulgated by Pope Paul VI 28 October 1965*. Vatican Archives Online.

[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651028\\_perfectae-caritatis\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_perfectae-caritatis_en.html)

Assumption Abbey, for example, has adopted this portion of the document by attracting monks from a monastery in Vietnam, notwithstanding their closed novitiate.

Fifty years after its emanation, there is still a divide on the application of *Perfectae Caritatis* amongst religious life. Sara Butler underlines this confusion amongst the religious and the distinct divide before Vatican II on whether *Perfectae Caritatis* should be its own distinct constitution. Butler references articles 5 and 6 of *Lumen Gentium*. This constitution translates to “Light of the Nations,” and the articles Butler references to are found in chapter 1 of the constitution, “The Mystery of the Church”. She states that *Perfectae Caritatis* and *Lumen Gentium* cannot be read separately because *Lumen Gentium* is so necessary for the renewed foundations of Catholic theology and spirituality. This constitution explains the reasoning behind many of the decrees in *Perfectae Caritatis* including the reordering of the evangelical counsels,<sup>195</sup> which is further explained in article 42 of *Lumen Gentium*. Sara Butler writes,

[f]ifty years after *Perfectae Caritatis*, the Council’s teaching is still disputed, but there is a growing confidence that religious life is the Holy Spirit’s gift, essential to the realization of God’s plan for the Church; that it is established by the hierarchy’s recognition of a founder’s charism; that those called by God to enter it are invited to follow Jesus Christ ‘more closely’ by the public profession of the evangelical counsels; and that by their consecration in a religious institute they freely accept a vocation to live wholly for the glory of God, the service of the rest of the baptized, and the realization of God’s kingdom.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Chastity, poverty, obedience found in Article I of *Perfectae Caritatis*.

<sup>196</sup> Butler, 223.

Butler's stance stems from her dedication as an ecumenist, which should be taken into account when interpreting her words. John O'Malley, instead, offers a more generalized and objective explanation to the issue of this document:

Perfectae caritatis has provoked much discussion and even controversy over how to implement its injunction to religious to make changes in their institutes while remaining faithful to their original charism. The sources for the disagreements over how to interpret the decree in this regard are many and complex, but surely one of the most fundamental is the very framework in which the Council presents religious life.<sup>197</sup>

I did not expect going into my case studies to find such a broad interpretation of a document that directly acknowledges the religiously professed as *Perfectae Caritatis*. I will not, therefore, make a definitive statement regarding the interpretation of *Perfectae Caritatis*. Each monastery within this case study has interpreted the decree in the matter that best suits its interests and lasting relevance in the Catholic Church and the world.

I have briefly touched upon *ora et labora* and its fundamental importance within Benedictine monasticism. I have avoided, however, the issues with the imbalance of prayer and work leading up to Vatican II. As described by the monk from St. Benedict's Abbey, monasteries had piled on more prayers and expanded the Mass to the point where it was unrecognizable: "St. Benedict in the Rule prescribes that prayer is not to be long and dragged out. I think we had brought an end to that because we had started piling on prayers."<sup>198</sup> To remedy this, *Perfectae Caritatis* stated that monasteries should return to their roots while maintaining the flexibility set forth by *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. These

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<sup>197</sup> John W. O'Malley, "Priesthood, Ministry, and Religious Life: Some Historical and Historiographical Considerations," *Theological Studies* 49, no. 2 (1988), 248-249.

<sup>198</sup> Witness from St. Benedict's Abbey. Oral History. 29 July 2016. Appendix C4D

two constitutions allowed Benedictine Confederation monasteries the opportunity to experiment with their monastic rite; therefore, these monasteries were granted permission to rebalance *ora et labora* within their distinct communities.



## Conclusion

The six monasteries in this case study adopted the vernacular after the Second Vatican Council differently, and, therefore, have developed new vernacular chant traditions in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The intention of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* was to increase active participation in the Catholic Church. The council fathers sought to return to the communal worship of the early church. Thomas Day may disagree with the lack of congregational singing in Anglo-American churches, but I experienced communal worship during my stays at each of the monasteries. In Chapter 5, I recounted my experience at Conception Abbey and the lack of my own participation amongst the dozens of guests.

I only experienced communal prayer at Conception Abbey at Compline on a feast day. Instead of sitting separately from the monks during the Marian antiphon, the guests and monks were led into the small altar at the front of the basilica where we all chanted the Latin antiphon together. The altar was dark, except for candles and an inkling of electric light, and monks stood as shadows around us. Together, we chanted the monophonic *Salve, Regina* in the dim light. I found myself enveloped by the chant as I participated. Even though the chant was in Latin, according to pre-Vatican II practice, this communal worship was discouraged and nonexistent for hundreds of years before the changes made by the Council. The vernacular aside, I had the opportunity to partake in worship in the millenary tradition of communal prayer. This brief communal chant was unique to anything that guests would have experienced in the hundreds of years leading

up to Vatican II. The barrier between monastics and the lay was broken for that one hymn.

The vernacular and the Latin aside, the Second Vatican Council discussed this communal worship and increased participation. In doing so, the vernacular has become the favored mode for increased participation. The Gregorian chant tradition is not yet lost, and its continued existence is not the sole responsibility of the Church. According to Colleen McDannell, “[Pope John XXIII] explained that the Church was not a collection of precious objects found ‘in some old museum.’ Although museums and ancient monuments are good for appreciation, real life is about change. ‘We live to advance,’ he observed; ‘we must move ever further onward along the road which Our Lord has opened up before us. The Christian life is not a collection of ancient customs.’”<sup>199</sup> This thesis serves as a small representation of global Catholic monasticism in the twenty-first century. These new vernacular chants and hymns composed after 1963 allow us to observe an ongoing tradition grounded in the early roots of monasticism and Catholicism. This case study demonstrates the relevance and importance of these communities in twenty-first century Catholicism and in the study of medievalism and musicology.

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<sup>199</sup> Colleen McDannell, *The Spirit of Vatican II: A History of Catholic Reform in America* (New York: Basic Books, 2011): 79.

## Appendices

### APPENDIX A: MONASTERY OVERVIEW

Monastery	Founding Date	Location	Founding House	Order	Federation
Assumption Abbey	1950	Near Ava, Missouri	New Melleray Abbey, Iowa	Cistercian Trappist	Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance
Conception Abbey	1873	Conception, Missouri	Engelberg Abbey, Switzerland	Benedictine Confederation	Swiss-American Federation
Saint Benedict's Abbey	1996	Bartonville, Illinois	Puerto Rico—relocated	Benedictine Confederation	Associated to the Confederation (status)
St. Benedict's Abbey	1857	Atchison, Kansas	Metten Abbey, Bavaria	Benedictine Confederation	American-Cassinense Congregation
St. Scholastica Monastery	1911 (Cuba)	Boerne, Texas	Founded by Mother Lidwina Weber in Cuba	Benedictine Confederation	The Federation of St. Scholastica
St. Gregory's Abbey	1875	Shawnee, Oklahoma	Pierre-qui-Vire, France	Benedictine Confederation	American-Cassinense Congregation

## **APPENDIX B: DAILY SCHEDULE**

I have not included daily recreation, work hours (held between morning and afternoon prayers), and meal times. There are no work hours on Sundays.

### **Assumption Abbey**

3:15 a.m. Rise

3:30 a.m. Vigils

Between 4:00 a.m. and 6:30 a.m. Lectio Divina

6:30 a.m. Lauds and Eucharist

9:00 a.m. Mid-morning prayer

11:45 a.m. Midday prayer

2:00 p.m. Mid-afternoon prayer

5:45 Vespers and meditation

7:45 Compline

8:30 Retire<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Assumption Abbey, "A Monk's Day," Assumption Abbey, 2019, accessed 28 April 2019, <http://www.assumptionabbey.org/monksday.asp>

## **Conception Abbey**

Monday-Saturday

6:00 a.m. Vigils

7:15 a.m. Lauds

11:45 a.m. Eucharist

1:00 p.m. Daytime prayer

5:15 p.m. Vespers

7:15 p.m. Compline

Sundays

6:20 a.m. Vigils

7:45 a.m. Lauds

10:30 a.m. Eucharist

12:30 p.m. Daytime prayer

5:30 p.m. Vespers

7:15 p.m. Compline<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Conception Abbey, "Monastic Prayer Schedule," Conception Abbey, 2019, accessed 28 April 2019, <https://www.conceptionabbey.org/monastery/monastic-prayer-schedule/>

## **Saint Benedict's Abbey in Illinois**

Monday-Saturday

6:30 a.m. Vigils/Morning prayer

12:00 p.m. Midday prayer

5:15 p.m. Evening prayer

8:30 p.m. Compline

Mass Schedule

7:00 a.m. Monday-Thursday

5:30 p.m. Friday

7:00 a.m. Saturday

Sunday

7:00 a.m. Morning prayer

10:00 a.m. English Mass

3:00 p.m. Spanish Mass<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Saint Benedict's Abbey, "Daily Schedule of Prayer," Saint Benedict's Abbey, 2019, accessed 28 April 2019, <https://www.sbabbey.com/schedule.html>

## **St. Benedict's Abbey in Kansas**

Monday-Friday

5:45 a.m. Vigils/Lauds

11:45 Midday prayer

12:10 p.m. Mass

5:00 p.m. Vespers

7:30 p.m. Compline

Saturday

5:45 a.m. Vigils/Lauds

11:45 a.m. Midday prayer

12:10 p.m. Mass

5:45 p.m. Vespers

7:00 p.m. Holy Hour

Sunday

6:30 a.m. Vigils/Lauds

10:00 a.m. Mass

12:05 p.m. Midday prayer

5:00 p.m. Vespers<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> St. Benedict's Abbey, "Prayer Schedule," St. Benedict's Abbey, 2019, accessed 28 April 2019, <https://www.kansasmonks.org/heritage>

## **St. Scholastica Monastery**

### Morning Prayer

8:00 a.m. Monday-Wednesday, Friday

Following 8:00 a.m. Eucharistic Liturgy, Thursday

10:00 a.m. Saturday

10:15 a.m. Sunday

### Midday prayer

11:50 a.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday

### Evening Prayer

5:00 p.m. Monday-Friday

### Eucharistic Liturgy

11:30 a.m. Wednesday

8:00 a.m. Thursday

\*daily Mass held at St. Peter's Catholic Church in Boerne<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> St. Scholastica Monastery, "Our Liturgy of the Hours schedule," Benedictine Sisters: Boerne, TX, 2019, 28 April 2019, <http://boernebenedictines.org/ministry-prayer.html>



**St. Gregory's Abbey**

Monday-Friday

5:30 a.m. Rise

6:00 a.m. Vigils

6:30-7:30 a.m. Lectio Divina

7:30 a.m. Lauds

12:00 p.m. Sext

12:50 p.m. None

4:00 p.m. Eucharist

5:00 p.m. Vespers

7:00 p.m. Compline

Saturday

5:30 a.m. Rise

6:00 a.m. Vigils

6:30-7:30 a.m. Lectio Divina

7:30 a.m. Lauds

8:30 a.m. Eucharist

12:00 p.m. Sext

12:50 p.m. None

5:00 p.m. Vespers

7:00 p.m. Compline

Sunday

5:30 a.m. Rise

6:00 a.m. Vigils

6:45 a.m. Lectio Divina

7:30 a.m. Lauds

10:00 a.m. Eucharist

12:00 p.m. Sext

12:50 p.m. None

4:00 p.m. Lectio Divina

5:00 p.m. Solemn Vespers

7:00 p.m. Compline<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> St. Gregory's Abbey, "The Horarium," St. Gregory's Abbey, 2019, accessed 28 April 2019, <https://monksok.org/about-us/daily-schedule>

## **APPENDIX C: ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPTIONS**

These clean verbatim transcriptions detail excerpts of the oral histories by five monks at these monasteries. The nun opted out of recording our conversation during the oral history so I will only include the witness testimonies of the monks in these transcriptions. I have included all relevant excerpts; not all of the excerpts, however, will be referenced within the body of the thesis. Where relevant, I will reference in a footnote to the specific quote in the appendix. Each witness statement from each monastery will be numbered C1, C2, C3, C4, or C5. I will denote the quotes I reference in the main body of the thesis by going alphabetically in order by the interview for each section. For instance, C1A would reference the first quote and its context in the Assumption Abbey C1 appendix.

Witness from Assumption Abbey. Oral History. 9 July 2016.

*Appendix C1*

**Overview of monk from Assumption Abbey:** He joined an Augustinian abbey in 1970 in California where he was a monk for thirty-three years before transferring and joining Assumption Abbey.

**McElveen:** My research focuses on liturgy and music after Vatican II and because you have been a monk at two monasteries, I wanted your input-on differences post-Vatican II. How have you used music in your daily, personal, and monastic life?

**Monk:** The psalms are Hebrew poetry, and they're meant to be sung and they're very beautiful—here they're beautiful and there they're beautiful, if that makes any sense to you. But, when I joined in 1970 and became a monk, everything was already in English. Now when I joined the Augustinians in 1959—of course the Augustinians don't have choir—the Mass was still in Latin because Vatican II didn't begin until the '60s. So, I did grow up with the Mass being in Latin. And, of course, I had a missal with English on one side and Latin on the other...Yeah, the Gregorian chant was very beautiful but even some of the monks that did Gregorian chant, some of them understood Latin but many of them did not. And, like here, with the Vietnamese monks, their chant in Vietnamese is very much like Gregorian chant, and it's very beautiful. Vietnamese really lends itself to chant just like Latin does. Well, they've taught us a little bit of Vietnamese... I've always been a cantor because God gave me a decent voice, but I don't read music. I memorize it. And, our chant is very simple. Now it's interesting, the hymns we sing are regular hymns that you're used to hearing like A Mighty Fortress Is Our God and things like that. But, the

monastery in California, where I was for 33 years, one day we were having a meeting and some of us said that these hymns are nice but they're really not our tradition. These are not monastic hymns. They're popular hymns. Is there a difference between the two? Yes, there is. The Gregorian hymns or the Ambrosian hymns present more of a theology, where a modern hymn is kind of to lift you up so it's kind of a different idea. So that monastery there in California decided to take all the old Latin hymns but translated them into English. Of course, here we only have, well, 10 monks now but there you have nearly 30 monks, so with a bigger community you can do more—you have more talent to do more things. So, they translated the hymns from the Latin into English—and even the psalm tones. Here we just have very simple psalm tones but there they have many, many psalm tones. So that is the difference. That is one monastery that really does follow all the Ambrosian and Gregorian hymns. Which is really our tradition. The modern hymns are nice but they're really not our tradition. Here I hope this monastery does the same thing, but we only have a very few people here.

**McElveen:** Maybe eventually you'll go back to Gregorian chant?

**Monk:** Well I'm hoping. Now, remember our novitiate was closed here. I'm 75 now but I was one of the youngest monks [when he joined], so there was just a few of us. And, they closed the novitiate which if you close your novitiate, you don't get new people. But the general chapter challenged us they said, “to see if you could come up with quote creative solution to continue and monastic presence here.”

**McElveen:** So that's why you got the Vietnamese monks

**Monk:** Right, so the Vietnamese, they have a monastery with 130 people—they're just bursting at the seams. When you have that many people, you found a new monastery. So, somehow the Holy Spirit brought the two groups together. And eventually they're going to take over this monastery.

**McElveen:** Once the Vietnamese monks take over will they be switching to the Vietnamese vernacular?

**Monk:** No, this will be an American monastery so they will take anyone who wants to enter. Whether they are Vietnamese or American—that's beside the point, so they will take anyone. We have been talking about using Vietnamese liturgy once or twice a week but that hasn't happened yet but that might come about. I don't know yet.

**McElveen:** How do you feel the Council has impacted your monastic life?

**Monk:** I think, first of all, that the church's theology before the Second Vatican Council was as solid as a rock, but I don't think it was complete. For example, we used to call it confession and kind of the emphasis was sins between you and God. Well, now the sacrament is not called that anymore. It's called reconciliation—not only have I offended God, but I have also offended my neighbor. Now, that emphasis, you know that was still the same before Vatican II, but it wasn't stressed as much. Where, Vatican II came along and stressed that. I have offended God, but I have also hurt my brother and sister. So now instead of just calling it confession, it is called the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Reconciliation between God and our brothers and sisters. So, you can see how that theology completed the sacrament and made the theology even better. It was solid before, but this has made it even better. So, I see Vatican II as kind of completing a theology

which was already very good. And then of course the Mass was in Latin and a lot of Catholics would explain that the priest's back was facing away from them and doing his magic act—I've heard people talking about that. And what do women do during the Mass, well, they pray their rosary, of course, and God only knows what the men did. So, I think that by the Mass becoming English, it kind of forced everyone to take a look and ask really what is happening here.

**McElveen:** How do you feel monastic music has changed since the Second Vatican Council?

**Monk:** Well I really can't say that I have experienced monastic music. But had I, I would have been talking about Gregorian chant to you. But when I came to the monastery, the music had already gone from Gregorian chant into English already. So, I really never experienced it, but the little Gregorian chant that I did experience with the Augustinians wasn't real very much either. But it was really quite beautiful. The chant just kind of flowed along and I think the fact that you didn't understand it—I mean, you might have known a few words but you certainly didn't know what the prayer is about but you certainly weren't translating as you went along. I took [Latin] for 2 years when I was in high school but to translate as you're singing it, there's no way. I would have to sit down and start looking up words again. But certainly, chanting something that you don't know the words to made it more mysterious. And I mean that in a positive sense.<sup>206</sup>

**McElveen:** Do you prefer the English or the Latin chants or the liturgy?

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<sup>206</sup> C1A

**Monk:** Oh I think I prefer the English. But, see, we do sing Latin hymns and some of it is very nice. Well, like for example, the Salve we do at night. We all sing it in Latin—never in English—and it does move differently. There's no doubt about it...Whether you're doing it in English or you're doing it in Latin or some other language, it's what's in the heart that counts. English language is pointing in one direction oh, I mean, we need a language to speak but it's what's in your heart that matters. We come up with these words that are from the heart that are from the Holy Spirit to begin with. The Holy Spirit is alive and dynamic.

**McElveen:** How do you believe modern society has had an impact on monastic music?

**Monk:** One of the things that happens in monasteries—a monastery just can't shut itself off from what's happening. Before Vatican II, we didn't find out too much about what was happening outside the monastery, now you do. We have newspapers. Now the only the superior has a computer and since I'm the vocations director, I have a computer. Some of the older monks will say that they don't need to know what's happening to pray for it. But I want to know what's happening because I am dealing with people who are coming to the monastery and I want to know what they're coming from. I do keep up with the news—not with a fine-tooth comb but I do keep up with the main things. It's up to each individual monk for how well they want to know the news and I think most the monks do want to know. The amount of monks that entered before Vatican II are starting to get older and dwindle...Certainly there's a nostalgia amongst young Catholic people who want to go back to Latin. I mean, people in their twenties and even into their 50s. They want to go back to Latin. First of all, they didn't know what the language was so how can



they understand it? They want to go back to a language they don't understand. To me that doesn't make sense.<sup>207</sup>

**McElveen:** How do you believe your monastery has adapted to the Rule of St. Benedict to modern times since the Second Vatican Council?

**Monk:** Remember that the Second Vatican Council's one big message to religious orders was go back to your roots, which was very wise. Because a lot of places had added—well, like to the Divine Office—they added the litanies and so forth and people forget that St. Benedict's Rule actually shortened the Divine Office. When the Second Vatican Council closed in 1965, we had a general chapter in 1969 which was kind of a Second Vatican Council of the orders so to speak. You can really put the two together. They came out with new documents such as unity and pluralism—thing like that—and the use of social media in the monastery, for example. The Second Vatican Council told us to return to our roots. Remember that before, the monasteries were following a book of usages. So, every Trappist monastery in the world was using the same book of usages exactly. You could go into any Trappist monastery—whether it was in England or France or the United States or Belgium or South America or wherever—it would all be about the same. Well, the general chapter of '69 decided that we wouldn't use the book of usages anymore so it is up to each monastery to come up to the up with their own local usages so they can live their monasticism in their own particular place. Also, they made new constitutions, very practical, and they're extremely deep and theological.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Appendix C1B

<sup>208</sup> C1C

**McElveen:** Since Vatican II, what have been some of the biggest changes you have made to Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours?

**Monk:** The biggest change was the liturgy becoming an English. Of course, a big change was—remember the choir monk wore a black and white scapular where the lay brother wore a brown habit. Well, obviously, since the chant was in Latin, only the choir monks went to choir because they needed to chant Latin, but the lay brother did not chant Latin. Their prayer was the rosary...so the first thing that happened was all of a sudden now that the Divine Office was not in Latin anymore and it was an English. What's to keep the brothers from coming to the Divine Office? So that was the biggest change.<sup>209</sup>

**McElveen:** How do you feel about the loss of unification about Vatican II?

**Monk:** Before, you could go into any Trappist monastery and more or less everyone was doing about the same thing. The monasteries use a large variety of instruments—you have organs, guitars, zithers. It all depends on the monastery, so it's not the same anymore. If you have a lot of monks, then of course you have more people that know how to sing and more that can read music and some of them can play more instruments or the organ. Where is smaller monastery might have talent, but they do not have much talent. Our pipe organ currently is too loud for a choir, but I would say we're almost to the point where we can use it if we can maybe have four more people.

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<sup>209</sup> CID

Witness from Conception Abbey. Oral History. 15 July 2016.

*Appendix C2*

**McElveen:** How have you used music in your daily, personal, and monastic life?

**Monk:** It's integral to the life we live. It's primarily two things: the Liturgy of the Hours—we sing the entire Office at Conception and have ever since our foundation—both the Liturgy of the Hours and the Mass.<sup>210</sup>

**McElveen:** How do you feel the Second Vatican Council has impacted your daily monastic life through music and the liturgy?

**Monk:** Well, primarily, I was kind of thinking about that ahead of time, probably the most significant change is the change of text and the fact that we had to create a whole new corpus of music to accommodate the new text. We went through a very slow transition since the Vatican Council and that's kind of what I have detailed for you is to show you the various stages of books that we went through the process that we went through. I'm not sure if that fits in what you're going to ask...<sup>211</sup>

**McElveen:** No, I'm sure what you have is excellent. So, it went from Latin to English. Do you still use any Latin chants?

**Monk:** Some. The most obvious ones would be the Marian canticles at the end of compline which we use daily and on Thursday evenings when we have our Holy Hour, we often use the *Ave Verum*. Other than that, it would it would primarily be pieces we do with the schola for the preparation of the gifts and so forth.

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<sup>210</sup> Appendix C2A

<sup>211</sup> Appendix C2B

**McElveen:** Do you feel modern society has influenced your music?

**Monk:** There's no doubt that modern music and music trends have had their influence on what we've done. Conception was a leader in the Gregorian chant and our first choirmaster Gregory Higley was an expert in chant and he was largely self-taught when he came from this country from Switzerland. He was a trained musician. He bought up every edition that came up from Solesmes and implemented it right away. He started using chants as soon as they were available in the early days. So, we come from a very strong chant tradition and when we started in English that continued. A lot of the music we used in the early 1960s. Let me show you for example, for Mass. This would be the first book of music that we used, and it was arranged just like the Graduale with chants for each Sunday. Most of them were metrical because the choirmaster at the time felt that it was easier for the congregation as the whole to join in if it was metrical but still modal for the most part or semi-modal. And when he composed a lot of these, he kept the chant book open in front of him and used it as a reference. He wasn't slavish about it, but he often used it as a reference, and these come from about 1964—about that period of time so immediately after the Council. They implemented it very soon. This lasted, I would say for probably about six years that they used this. For some reason and I don't know why—I'll have to ask him because he's still living—it was reduced and sort of took the best of the best and reduced it to this volume which was no longer specific to a particular day which gave them a lot more freedom to choose things and this was used along with a hymnal that was called the Missouri Catholic Hymnal. It was a hymnal that was done by the local diocese and when I arrived—I came here in 1970—this was the book that was in

use...When I joined the community in 1974, I assisted with a lot of projects. One was the revision of this book and we just came out with a cleaner, printed form of it with lots of updating. We moved from handwritten to typed set and one of the big projects that was undertaken at the time was the responsorial sung refrains for the entire church year. There were not nearly so many in the old Graduale. There were not nearly as many refrains as there are in the new lectionary with three for every Sunday, one for weekday on a two-year cycle so that changed a lot. We also came out with our own hymnal—the Conception Abbey hymnal—at the same time. This came out in 1985 and this one came out in 1983. There are a number of our own compositions in this book which we used for some time. But I think we underused this book. We recently retired it. Because now we are undertaking the—this was an attempt to replicate the Graduale in English—now what we are doing is setting the entrance and communion hymns from the Roman missal in English. Many of which overlap with the Graduale but that’s what we are working on now and we have been doing this in earnest for the past year by week. A lot of these go back to this earliest source. A lot of those we have used for more than forty years and with great success, so we have decided not to change and try to fix something that isn’t broken. So, wherever there is an antiphon that matches the new missal but is not exactly the same translation, we have kept the original. But, anything new that we are doing, we are updating it to the new translation or if we are reviving an old antiphon from the past that hasn’t been used in forty years, we’re updating the translation as we go so that’s kind of what we are doing for Mass. We are also revising the responsorial psalms to match the new lectionary which is already twelve [now fourteen] old. There were many changes in

that, and we are slow about getting that done so we are doing that now. We are currently undertaking two books—they're massive projects because there are more than 600 entrance and communion in the missal and there are 505 lectionary refrains but not all unique. Some of them, we have many settings of the same text but there are around 500. For the Liturgy of the Hours, it follows a similar pattern. Also, around 1964, the community came out with an English version of the Antiphonale, basically. And I believe this was primarily used on Sundays, but I am less familiar with this book. This was used before I came into the community. Again, it was an attempt to replicate in English, the feel of the chant, but in this case for the Office it is not metrical generally, it is free rhythm to emulate the chant. I would say that probably the reason some of these early editions fell into disuse is that in the 1960s, I think there was, just as they were starting to experiment setting English to chant melodies or adapting chant melodies to English—either way—they were even creating new chant-like melodies. There was—maybe it was just the size of the project—there was less sensitivity to the treatment of prepositions, conjunctions, and so forth. Sometimes they are over emphasized, and the antiphons sometimes don't have a natural feel to them. It feels that the text generated the music instead it felt like the music generated the text, if you know what I mean. An attempt to maintain the melody with a so so setting in English. I think where we are today, there is much greater sensitivity to the part of not only the composers and the community as well to having a chant that feels very natural—as though it flows out of the text itself. And in many cases, we have been lucky to match up original chants, traditional melodies and keep that flow. But in most cases, we have just created new tunes. And, I think that's

what many other communities have done. When I entered the community in 1974, as a matter of fact, even as a novice, the first project I was assigned was to assist—this book had just been printed and this was a first attempt at dealing with the Liturgy of the Hours in a more systematic way with more specific Offices for each day with three psalms with antiphons in the traditional layout—hymn, three psalms, and an antiphon in a two week cycle and the only thing about it was this was done right before the Directives came out. I believe it was in 1970 that the Directives came out. No not—more like 1976 or something like that. This four-volume set was already done—there was one for Advent, one for Lent and Easter combined, and one for the sacral cycle. There were a couple of major problems with this—for one thing, we did not have a daily canticle—we did not have the Canticle of Mary or Zachary and that was a requirement that was in the norms after they came out right after we finished the book so we attempted to do that and came up with canticle antiphons which we began to add to each book. We weren't using compline daily—we were only using it on Sundays. Actually, when I first came it was even rarer than that. We often had Benediction on Sundays.<sup>212</sup>

**McElveen:** When did you add compline back in?

**Monk:** Let me see... I am thinking it was probably close to 1980 and we started with daily compline. I didn't bring them down but there are many supplementary books. I should have brought—it would have been 1999, the same year we finished renovating the basilica—the abbot said we have a new church so we need a new Office so we did a

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major revision of this while keeping a lot of the core of it but at that point we went to a four week cycle. We got a special indult from Rome to follow the Roman Office at lauds and vespers but for vigils, the indult was to follow what was being done at the Abbey of Montserrat in Spain. They were combining weeks one and three of the Office of Readings to make an Office of Vigils and week two and four—they were combining those together so there would be a two nocturne vigils that were more monastic in character than the Office of Readings and that was a major shift for us, I think, and that really brought us into conformity, which in the current books which you will use tonight at vespers was again a redo from a few years ago in 2011-2012—about that time. It was a huge project and we did it in almost in one year and it was expanded to 15 volumes and we went back to a two week psalm cycle because Abbot Gregory thought that as monks we need to be doing more than what a diocese priest would be expected to do so we went back to a two week cycle. In order to accomplish that, probably the biggest change for us was that we have four psalms at vespers on weekdays but still three at lauds but four at lauds on Sunday. And as in the old monastic office, we did not use the canticles—the new and old testament canticles—on a daily basis as they do in the Roman Office. Instead, we incorporate those into a third nocturne on Sundays throughout the year and on feasts and solemnities.

**McElveen:** You have a pipe organ, correct? Is it used?

**Monk:** Oh yes.

**McElveen:** Do you use any other instruments during any of the Divine Office or Mass?



**Monk:** No, not for the most part. Occasionally, it depends on student talent. We may have a trumpeter, or I have been blessed with a violinist for several years and we have occasionally either done preludes or something in the preparation of the gifts but not often. We have acquired a beautiful harp and a couple of monks are starting to look at it to learn. We would like to accompany the office of vigils. Ever since we finished the renovation of the church, we've had problems maintaining pitch. Part of the reason is that we are in a more open space—

**McElveen:** the acoustics then?

**Monk:** It is more difficult to hear each other, and it is harder to stay on pitch, so we are thinking of using the harp—I don't know how long this is going to take to happen. But we use the organ for the beginning of vigils—we use it for the invitatory and the hymn—for all of lauds, for all of vespers, Mass, and then on the weekends we use it for compline. On feast days, we will add the organ for compline. On solemnities, we use it for everything—we use it for vigils all the way through, we use it for day time prayer as well and compline. We used to do without organ during advent and lent. For probably the past six years, we have been using organ because the new Office is new challenging, and we came up with new psalm tones and it was more confusing, so we started using the organ. At the moment, the number of people we have in choir—we are getting new members, but the thing is a lot of them aren't coming with musical backgrounds.

**McElveen:** What is your choir number right now?

**Monk:** I would say we are at about an average of weekdays probably about 24 and on weekends probably as much as 32. In the community, we are about 50 but some are in the infirmary and some are out on assignment.

**McElveen:** Do you ever meet to practice and how often?

**Monk:** We practice every week. They are very brief. I try not to make it more than fifteen minutes. But occasionally, we will need longer ones. With this project, of new entrance and communion antiphons—sometimes I may need two practices a week. But the community is very good at picking them up. They know the style. They're used to it, and I try to practice as close to the date as I can.

**McElveen:** Your monastery used Gregorian chant before. How much now is composed by the monks at Conception?

**Monk:** Almost everything. We have a few things from Gethsemani Abbey [Trappists in Kentucky], from Chrysogonus Waddell. Almost everything has been ours. Just a couple of pieces from St Meinrad. We occasionally use the St Meinrad tones for variety's sake, but we of course have our own Conception Abbey tones, which has been published. We use those much more frequently. We are using those mainly for the Canticle of Mary and the Canticle of Zachary. And at Mass, we are using them for the verses of entrance and communion and the responsorial psalms. As for the Liturgy of the Hours, for the psalmody, we are using just a two-line psalm tone so that we can have antiphonal singing back and forth. Even though the music is arranged in the New Office in {sense} lines, we still alternate sides with two lines at a time. We are used to psalm tones in two parts.

**McElveen:** How many cantors do you have?

**Monk:** At the moment, let's see, about six. And then, during the school year, we'll have student cantors supplement that at Mass.

**McElveen:** How do you feel about the changes that Vatican II made and how have those affected your monastery?

**Monk:** Well I think it was a good change in that it brings—the change to the vernacular certainly opens up the word to people. We have gotten to the point in our community where nearly everything is conceptually based. We used to use a lot of hymns but now we are moving to antiphons. Occasionally, if we have a big group for graduation or something like that, we'll use a hymn and we'll use that hymn at the closing. But even the hymns we're using now—the hymns we use in worship—are all based on the Gospel of that day and I mean that's so much a part of who we are as monks is our closeness to the scriptures. I think that's the greatest thing. The greatest challenge is that it has taken so long for text to settle down—translations have changed and changed—music has had to be written and rewritten and it is really tough to come up with a stable and solid core of music when it keeps changing.

**McElveen:** So, you prefer the vernacular over the Latin?

**Monk:** Sure, for Mass.

**McElveen:** What about for the Divine Office?

**Monk:** And for the Divine Office. There are many communities that use some Latin and I think we're just so far away from that at this point that it would be difficult to turn around and pick some up.

Witness from Saint Benedict's Abbey in Illinois. Oral History. 23 July 2016.

*Appendix C3*

**McElveen:** How long have you been at this abbey?

**Monk:** It is a complex question because the abbey was founded in 1985 in Puerto Rico and I've been a monk since 1985 and then we moved in 1996 to here. We've been here just 20 years.

**McElveen:** How do you use music in your daily, monastic, and personal life? Do you use it outside of the church at all?

**Monk:** And then here, because we are a small community, a lot of times—I mean St. Benedict in the *Rule* actually says that depending on the size of the community, the liturgy should be done according to numbers so if you have a large group with nice voices and things then you should probably sing the liturgy. But we have found out that just in choir, having five people in choir, so we sing just some of it. We sing the Benedictus and the Marian canticles. I have set not exactly a rule but in a since it is a rule that we must sing at all times but for the rest of it, it just depends on the presenter and what he can and cannot sing.<sup>213</sup>

**McElveen:** So, do you have a designated cantor or cantors? Or do they just switch around?

**Monk:** Yeah it is every week, we have a different cantor and presenter both. It is rotated but we have the title of cantor but really what that means is that person begins the first

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<sup>213</sup> Appendix C3A

part of the antiphon—which is recited—and begins the first line of the psalm so that’s what it means here. Normally, it would mean that that person would sing but not in our case. I really think that the Second Vatican Council, what it attempted to do, and I think it was misinterpreted, was to go back to the sources of the early church so I hear people referring to traditional and really that’s what the Second Vatican Council attempted to go to the real tradition of the church—the early church—and so things like Gregorian music, which I like personally, but I don’t consider it to be traditional in the sense. It was not the original tradition of the church. It was done according to each country and the liturgy was that way also and then it was made uniform [about uniformity of Gregorian chant]

**McElveen:** When this monastery was in Puerto Rico, did it ever use Latin in the liturgy or was it either English or Spanish the entire time?

**Monk:** Well the only things we did in Latin was, and we still do from time to time, was the evangelical canticles. So, we did do the Benedictus in Latin—of course the Marian antiphons in Latin but I really don’t think we have ever even celebrated the Latin Mass. It’s something that I would actually like to do but we have never done it. Other things in Latin, Benedictus and the Magnificat and of course the Marian Antiphons at compline and that’s pretty much it so nothing else.

**McElveen:** What about the liturgy? Do you prefer the vernacular, or do you prefer the Latin for the whole Church?

**Monk:** No, I’d rather the language of the country that it is in.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Appendix C3B

**McElveen:** How do you feel your own monastery has adapted to the changing society with your music, lifestyles, etc.

**Monk:** One of the things about Benedictine spirituality is it has lasted for 1500 years or better. Specifically, about Benedictine monasticism is because it seeks to incarnate itself into society. It is a living document because it is based on the other most important living document—The Gospels—it is an attempt to live monastic life in community and that's what it attempts to do. And then, you have principles—guiding principles—instead of a way we have to do it. So that then, changes—so we do a vow of stability, but change is a given. We have to learn to adapt. You know, for instance, coming from Puerto Rico to here, you have to adapt to the culture. So, one of the things, we had been praying in Spanish, so we had to start praying in English. It is interesting that some people who are here, even some of our oblates, they actually enjoyed the fact that we prayed in Spanish so one of the things that we did, when we have the oblates' gathering, which is once a year, we'll sing the Benedictus in Spanish during the liturgy because that's something that the oblates missed—having some Spanish in the liturgy. So, with music, then, we have had to learn a lot more English music because our repertoire of Spanish music was very wide and then the English was very limited, so we have had to learn more and more music. So, we incorporate both: traditional hymns—quote unquote some of them are from the 18th century and they're called traditional—and contemporary music. We kind of blend a little bit of the two. We do tend to use quite a bit more contemporary music but

during certain seasons—Lent and Easter, I include a lot more traditional hymns. There are certain ones that I love that are specific to that season.<sup>215</sup>

**McElveen:** So contemporary hymns meaning when were they written?

**Monk:** This century or the late twentieth century—hymns like Shout to the Lord from Darlene Zschech and Paul Wilbur who is a little bit older than I am but he started in the 1980s so he's a Jew for Jesus, so he has some songs that have been written. I personally tend to like more music that is scripture put into music or kind of that variation. They really speak to me.

**McElveen:** Does anyone in the abbey write music?

**Monk:** Well we've been inspired. There have been some songs that we have written. Fr - -- has a few, both in English and in Spanish. Fr ---, who is the actual founder of our community, he wrote songs, all of them in Spanish.

**McElveen:** And then does your abbey use any translations from Latin chants at all?

**Monk:** Yes, the hymns that we use for the liturgy are hymns from Latin hymns. So, they show next to it in the breviary the Latin name of the hymn.

**McElveen:** Which book, that was used this morning—what abbey does that come from?

**Monk:** That is a Benedictine breviary and that was prepared by St. John's Abbey in Collegeville. Honestly, well the original book and this book too wasn't intended for religious communities—it was intended for general use—it could be used for communities though. The one that we're using now is a second edition, so they were the

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<sup>215</sup> Appendix C3C

ones who added that second week of the psalter so now we have week one and two and three and four. In the past, for both vigils, lauds, and evening prayer, the previous book only had supplemental psalms for morning prayer but now they have included what is called the first and second nocturne so specifically speaking we actually have four weeks for the nocturne which is actually vigils so there we have four weeks of psalms because it is divided into the first and second nocturne.

**McElveen:** Out of all the monasteries I have been to so far, yours is the most modernized. You've adapted the Rule quite a bit more. Since you became a monk thirty years ago, how has your monastery made changes to the Mass and the Divine Office?

**Monk:** Well, first of all, in Puerto Rico—so each monastery has the ability to create their own liturgy and follow it and so we had come to a point—in Puerto Rico we had been using the Roman breviary and the four volume Liturgy of the Hours. Then, we actually began making our own—there's another Benedictine monastery in Puerto Rico and they were using a psalter book and we bought the psalter book and that's what we used. We marked it ahead of time and then we kind of created our own liturgy and followed it, but it still had a lot of things that were based on the Roman liturgy, but the division and translation of the psalms was different. Then, when we moved here, we adopted Alton Abbey in England—we actually have an agreement between both communities, so we just borrowed their books—they have seven binders of books. In turn, they borrowed from an abbey in Germany, Münsterschwarzachn Abbey, so they adapted the liturgy from them. And then about ten or twelve years ago is when the Benedictine breviary came out, we started using that because it is an ecumenical breviary—at least it was intended as—



and it was done in conjecture with the Lutheran pastor who was actually consulted with it and so of course we are using that. But we still have the compline book from Alton Abbey—we use that—and then we have the Alton book for Midday Prayer so we have a combination of both liturgies. The Benedictine breviary is very practical because it is just one volume so it is good if you're traveling, you can just carry it around with you. We have used the Roman rite all throughout. One thing is that with the recent changes that took place within the Roman rite, we tried them here, but people didn't like it. And, I was actually glad to hear from a bishop who came and visited us from London that he didn't like the translation either—it wasn't musically—it's very dry. And so, that's what I didn't like. And some people were saying that the reason I didn't like it was because I wasn't used to it. And that's not it. And so, when he came and said that, it reaffirmed what I was already thinking. And this is from somebody who speaks English natively. My first language is Spanish so people could claim that because English is not your first language...and so, I think the other translation, yes, it is true that it is the only translation from all the languages—at least from what I know—they were truer to the Latin and the English translation was not. So this was actually that it was more accurately the Latin translation but it is choppy as a consequence...Sometimes you have to compromise the translation by getting as close to possible to the meaning while not losing the poetic ability of the language and I think that's what this translation failed at. So, as a

consequence, that's why I gave you that little sheet to follow the Mass because if I gave you the missal, you would be lost because the translation in the Missal is different.<sup>216</sup>

**McElveen:** How do you feel about the changes Vatican II made personally?

**Monk:** Well, I like it because it brought back the sense of renewal—in the good sense of the word—and now you have to explain what renewal means because to every person it means something different. And again, it's like what I said before, the renewal, you can't renew anything by just starting from scratch. You have to go back to the sources. What I feel that happened throughout the centuries, is that the more that the things throughout the centuries started to be added to the liturgy. So, during Trent and the years that followed that, that so many things were added to the Mass that it became unrecognizable so for the people who called themselves traditionalists went back to the traditional Mass, they didn't recognize it. "You're becoming too modern." Well actually, they had actually become more traditional and they had become more in tune with what was being done in the early church. Anyone who has studied liturgy can see that because you can see the Eucharistic Prayers that were written in those first centuries and kind of what we have done with them. So, I like that sense of a proper sense of tradition and I've actually said that I feel in a sense that we are more traditional in the real sense of the real tradition as opposed to clinging onto something. I am actually part of a liturgical committee and one of things that we did is that I don't think that we need to reinvent the wheel because there are some beautiful liturgies that have already been written. We don't need to go in and

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<sup>216</sup> Appendix C3D

start inventing things. It's already there—it's bringing that. One of the things we talked about in this committee is we owe it to future generations to try to stick as much as possible to that tradition because what happens is if you change some things—let's say our generation changes things, you know why those changes took place, but then as the generations come by, they don't know. So, they don't know what the original was, so again we have the same example in the history of the church. They saw the Mass at the Second Vatican Council as something closer to the early church, but it was unrecognizable because we had changed it so much that it became a different animal so to speak.

**McElveen:** So, is there anything from the Second Vatican Council that you particularly disagreed with? Or currently disagree with?

**Monk:** I don't think so. I think what happened was that it was misinterpreted. To give, for instance, it said that habits need to be adapted to the times and to the temperature. It's in the Rule of St Benedict—he wrote it there. So, it didn't mean what was interpreted—let's take our habits off. That's not what it meant. It meant to adapt it. Musically speaking, we've incorporated recorded music so for instance from the videos I listen to, some of those videos we actually present them during communion for meditation. They normally tend to be soft music or meditation music, but we've incorporated that. We didn't have that because we didn't have the technology before to do that and now we have a wireless speaker so I actually control from here or within the church and then I can project from my phone—I have a different phone that I use for the media—I project it to the TV and that's how we project the music on there. So, in that sense, that's how we

have adapted modern things for the benefit of the liturgy. I think that when we hear the opinion of people, they prefer live music but unfortunately we don't have anyone that is a musician from the monastic community because with Fr. ---- being away on Sundays and also Fr --- also rotates around—he's a bishop for the diocenship of Quincy. But whenever he's around, he presents the Mass and I play for the English Mass. I don't know that there's anything necessarily that we would change. The only thing that I would say is applying the Rule for the habit, for instance.<sup>217</sup>

**McElveen:** Do you ever get together as a community and practice for Mass or the Liturgy of the Hours?

**Monk:** We do, sometimes. Not as often as I think the community members would like.

**McElveen:** What are some short-term goals that you have with the music?

**Monk:** Yeah I don't know if we have thought about any short term goals or even long term goals other than just using—the Daughters of Saint Paul—they say that use the media that is available for evangelizing so I think that's something that should be adopted by everybody...I see music as being very powerful—again, I'm biased because I'm touched by music and I'm always singing something in mind...In the future, yeah, if we had the musicians to have a music ministry here, then that would fulfill my dream. When we were in Puerto Rico, we used to visit a parish that had a choir of about forty to fifty youth that was wonderful, and you wanted to participate in those liturgies just to hear

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<sup>217</sup> C3E

them sing and the other thing was to sing along with them. Some of the songs that they would sing we actually use in our Spanish Mass here.

Witness from St. Benedict's Abbey in Kansas. Oral History. 29 July 2016.

*Appendix C4*

**McElveen:** How soon after Vatican II did this monastery switch to the vernacular?

**Monk:** We did it gradually as did most places because it meant replacing...you should see the books that we have with all the Latin music. There were two book this size—one was called the Graduale and the other was called the Antiphonale. The Graduale contained all of the music you would need for the Mass for the entire year. The Antiphonale contained all the music you would need for vespers for the entire year. With Vatican II, that was set aside but you couldn't replace all of this immediately, you see, and so as far as the Mass went, the first things to be introduced would be hymns in English and these would—we had already been singing some in English but certainly not enough so we had to learn new hymns, new hymns were being composed, and all that. As far as replacing the psalms as we did tonight that was much more gradual, you see. And at the time, one of the abbots, I think it was Abbot Brendan asked me if I would begin composing some music, psalm tones especially—what we sang tonight was four psalm tones. I wrote one for Sunday Vespers and it was fairly successful and then I started expanding from that point on. This is probably 1966 or 1967 and then there was another monk responsible for putting together our choir books, you know the green one. Do you know how many volumes there are?<sup>218</sup>

**McElveen:** No.

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<sup>218</sup> C4A

**Monk:** Fourteen. We're in Ordinary time right now—thirty-four Sundays of Ordinary time—and that comprises most of the church year and then when we get into the Fall—November and December—that begins Advent and getting ready for Christmas. There were books for Advent, books for Christmas, books for Lent, you see and this Father Emeric Fletcher was his name, an organizer of the first order and a brilliant man and he was also a musician and he played the organ and composed some but he was largely responsible for the organization of putting those books together. And that was kind of gradual too—introducing it—the first books to be created were the ones for Ordinary time.

**McElveen:** So, you still do the Marian Antiphons in Latin?

**Monk:** Correct.

**McElveen:** I was expecting the Salve, Regina tonight but you did a different one, [all of my monasteries so far had done the Salve, Regina at compline]

**Monk:** We alternate. The Salve, Regina—to do that seven nights a week, it gets a little exhausting because it is so much longer—beautiful melody but I like contrast or alter with the other one and the monks have welcomed that. There are four of them actually.

**McElveen:** And do you do any other chants in Latin?

**Monk:** No. We have practically totally abandoned the Latin. Some people were hoping that we would hang on to some of it, but I don't see the point. Some monasteries are hanging on to dear life.

**McElveen:** I have heard that there is a newer one in Oklahoma called Clear Creek where they do almost all Latin still.

**Monk:** The first abbey in the United States to really begin seriously introducing English chant was Saint Meinrad and we still use some of their psalm tone. Columba Kelly was the name of the composer and he was assisted by another monk.

**McElveen:** How many of your English hymns that you use are translated from Latin hymns directly?

**Monk:** Not very many. We have a representative number, but a bulk of the number were composed originally. The hymns that you will find here—this little hymnal which comes from England—made an attempt to take the Latin and translate it with some success. We are buying a new hymnal which is kind of an expanded version of this one—Worship II—that comes from England and we have ordered sixty copies of it and it will primarily be used by the monks not by outsiders—if we have some guests sure—but it’s not meant for the college students, it will be primarily for the monks. It will be in addition to these. It seems to me that someone years ago said, “How many different hymns do you sing?” And it seems to me that out of these four hymnals that we use on a regular basis, I came up with a couple hundred. And I think that’s the key to keeping the interest of the monks. Years ago, early on, I spent some time at this one monastery—in fact it was around Chicago—and I was what was called a visitater—I was an outsider coming in to hear the complaints of the monks. And then at the end of this week, the three or four visitaters would compare notes and we’d have a meeting with the monks and we’d say these are the good things about the monastery and here are the bad things about the monastery and I had several monks come to me, knowing that I was a musician, complaining that their choirmaster insisted upon their using only their music and no one else’s music, you see. It



was okay music, but boy did it get boring. I was there a week and I could see what the monks were talking about.<sup>219</sup>

**McElveen:** Have you written any hymns?

**Monk:** A couple.

**McElveen:** How often are those used?

**Monk:** When it's appropriate. They take their turn. I think I've done maybe half a dozen of the canticle type things but psalm tones, I have composed about fifty. We have a total of--I'd say close to ninety psalm tones. I don't think any other monastery can make that claim. Our psalm tones—I jotted down just the initials of composers and I came up with six or seven composers of the psalm tones we use.

**McElveen:** So, you've already said that you prefer the English vernacular over the Latin. Why do you feel that you prefer the English chants over the Latin chants and the language of the liturgy?

**Monk:** Well, it's, you know when you're praying in your own language and you're singing which is an additional thing, that versus singing in a foreign tongue—Latin to boot—of course you can study it. I mean I had nine years of Latin when I entered the monastery and I still was somewhat puzzled by the Latin. So, when there was talk about replacing the Latin with the English, I applauded it. I think there are very few people at that time who could pray in Latin and fully understand it. Plus, we have gotten some nice poetic versions of the psalms and text that are very inspiring.

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<sup>219</sup> C4B

**McElveen:** You are finally over the transition period of switching to the vernacular.

**Monk:** Exactly. There is a nun in Colorado—she’s a poetess—we’re using some of the text—poetic text that have been set to music and they’re really nice. We’ve just started doing that and the monks remark afterwards about how lovely it was. There’s no comparison, no comparison, as far as I concerned between trying to worship in the Latin and trying to worship in English. You don’t have that language barrier.

**McElveen:** Well, you’re the only monk that I have interviewed who was a monk before the Second Vatican Council who actually remembers living through the Latin chant. Most of the monks I’ve talked to have agreed and a few priests who really feel like they want to switch back to Latin.

**Monk:** Do they give an explanation?

**McElveen:** They do, they think that having the Latin chants in liturgy added a mystical aspect to the church and “Inside” you know what’s going on but with you, you went through it and even after 9 years of Latin, you still didn’t know what you were meaning while you were chanting in Latin.

**Monk:** Exactly. I was a member of the schola—I used to have a good singing voice—and the choirmaster, the man I replaced, had a beautiful singing voice. Have you ever heard of the Robert Shaw Chorale? It was a famous chorale and he sang in the chorale. We would lead the singing of the chant in Latin and we would have to practice ahead of time each day. That’s another time with singing hymns in English, the melody is familiar and all you have to do is read the words.

**McElveen:** How often does the choir practice together?

**Monk:** It depends since we are using this over and over again and they become familiar with it. I try to vary it. We have so much there but on special occasions—if we have a profession, we’re having a profession of Br. --- and I usually ask the monk who is being professed or being ordained if they have some requests for what to sing at your Mass and if they happen to choose something unfamiliar, and sometimes I have even offered to compose a melody for the text the individual selects that there’s no music to it. And then, we practice maybe the night before or the morning of. The music is usually not difficult. We try to incorporate the congregation as much as possible. We don’t go off singing—and of course our numbers—the number of monks who can sing in our choir in our community has really dropped. For example, during a big feast like Easter or something like that, I will be fortunate to have six monks to form my schola but they all have fine voices and again, if we do something new or different—if you’re singing an item that is only used at Christmas time or only at Easter time, we have to actually practice it because it’s not the familiar and we have to refamiliarize it.

**McElveen:** Do you remember how many monks were here when you became a monk?

**Monk:** Roughly, I’ll say about 125. Living in the monastery were probably about seventy. The others were out on parishes as pastors. We had monks in five different states—Nebraska, Oklahoma, Iowa, etc.—we even had a couple monks stationed out in California as chaplains. And then, the community founded a number of parishes here in town and going west—probably sixty or seventy miles—now all of those parishes would have had two monks in them but today they’re lucky to have one. Atchison has three parishes—St. Benedict’s St. Joseph’s, and Sacred Heart. There are two priests that live

down here at the rectory across the street from the church and they're responsible for the three churches here in town plus a mission church—St. Patrick's it's called—it's out in the country about fifty miles and a Mass is set there on Sunday morning for the small congregation that might be twenty-five people who show up.

**McElveen:** So, numbers have definitely dwindled. So, kind of a little bit off the music, how do you feel the Second Vatican Council has affected the way you live by the Rule of St. Benedict?

**Monk:** Well it, it relaxed, I think there was a certain—before Vatican II—there was a certain reliance by the superiors of every one abiding by the same rules—we've got these rules so let's observe them and if you didn't you were breaking lines and you would be looked down upon as in the reading tonight—you'd be punished, as in corporal punishment. I think Vatican II, there was a lightening up of all this. The obligation was still there but if you didn't fulfill it, it wasn't the end of the world. That's part of it. You still have the rules and regulations, but they aren't so strict. I think that there was a recognition that Vatican II acknowledged that monks are human, and they have weaknesses and they fall, and sin and your job is to get up and try again. I think Vatican instilled that attitude very strongly and I think it was healthy. A whole new healthy attitude. Vatican II was described as opening the windows and letting fresh air in.<sup>220</sup>

**McElveen:** I know Vatican II told monasteries to return to your roots and I know that can be interpreted in many different ways. How do you believe that should be interpreted?

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<sup>220</sup> C4C

**Monk:** Yes, that's a good idea. Return to your roots and see what your founders said about the various aspects of your life. St. Benedict in the Rule prescribes that prayer is not to be long and dragged out. I think we had brought an end to that where we had started piling on prayers.

**McElveen:** Was that how it was here before Vatican II?

**Monk:** Yes. There was a humaneness after Vatican II that recognized people's weaknesses and all that. When I came, here was the schedule of prayers: we got up at 4:30 and we prayed at 5 for an hour in Latin, and then was a period of time when the priests who were living at the monastery would offer Mass and they would go in seniority and before the church was built, there were chapels in every available empty room and the church remedied that by freeing thirty-two chapels in the basement. Oftentimes, every young monk, like myself at that time, would serve at least one Mass but sometimes two and I can remember even serving—each Mass would take fifteen to twenty minutes—three Masses. This is after this hour of prayer in Latin and serve Mass in Latin—three of them—and then you would go back upstairs, and you would pray another maybe twenty minutes. Finally, we would go to breakfast. After breakfast, there would be what was known as a community Mass and most of the monks gathered there. So, that would get you up to about 9 o'clock. St. Benedict prescribes that monks should meet again at mid-morning prayers, noon, mid-afternoon, early evening, etc. He had seven times of prayer and we have cut back to three. Most of the monasteries have four but some have five. But in the hands of Fr. ---, this liturgist, he was the master designer of all this. He thought that our community would accept and adjust to that horarium and they took to it like ducks to

a pond. They love it. And what he designed back—this took place, the books we now use, were created in 1976—and then it took about four years to create these other books. So, by 1980, we had all of these books we've started using. I have not heard one complaint from any of the monks. Many of them—of course some have left or died—the current members right now, I have never heard complaints about the length or the quality. They are quite happy with what we have.<sup>221</sup>

**McElveen:** How many weeks is your psalm cycle?

**Monk:** We have two cycles—one is a four-week, and another is a two week. And, I can't tell you—I know the vespers that we did tonight—that's on a two-week cycle but I'm not sure about morning prayer and vigils or mid-day prayer. That might be on a four-week cycle. So, two and four.

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<sup>221</sup> C4D

*Appendix C5*

**McElveen:** So, I spoke with Br. --- and he mentioned that you were trying to convert to Gregorian chant notation. What is your process on that?

**Monk:** Well, the version of the Divine Office that we're using now was done probably about 1978 or 1979ish under the previous choirmaster and he kind of composed in and identified in a mix of metrical music and some chant like pieces. But our current abbot in recent years, because of the probably ongoing liturgical revision and clarification within the Catholic church, the abbot has asked that we return to a simpler, chant-like form of music and also a return to the use of Gregorian chant notation because the community is just a little more adept at reading that than we are modern notation.<sup>222</sup>

**McElveen:** So, with the Gregorian chant notation, will you be using Gregorian chant from actual Gregorian chant converted to the English vernacular?

**Monk:** The answer to that is yes and no. We are going to preserve some of what the previous choirmaster did that was newly composed that was done free rhythm kind of chant-like so we will just convert the notation of that from modern notation into Gregorian notation. And then, what we don't keep or what needs to be replaced, we have a number of other sources of music and antiphons for that that come from other monasteries. A good deal of that is based on the original Latin chant melodies but my mentor at St. Meinrad's in Indiana, Fr. Columba Kelly, he spent his career after getting

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<sup>222</sup> C5A

his doctorate in sacred music in Rome in the 1950s, when we were still singing in Latin, he spent his career after Vatican II, finding suitable ways to adapt the Gregorian chant melodies—the original melodies—to the English text. The difficulty with just replacing the Latin with the English in the melody is the Latin, because it's free rhythm and the rhythm is based on the accent of the text, you can't take an English word and put it in place of a Latin one because the accent is not the same and the stress is not the same so some of the melodies that were put that way by other people just came out sounding really awkward so he developed a way of looking at each original chant melody as a melodic line and then figuring out how and why the rearrangement of notes or sometimes the elimination of notes in the original that he could adapt the chant to a more suitable English version. But he's only one of the sources. Some of his and some from another monk from St. Meinrad who was also trained by him has done some work in this area and the monks at Conception Abbey. What we're doing with their books, their books are all modern notation—they use the note heads without stems—but I have their permission from whatever we use from there to convert it into the actual chant notation.<sup>223</sup>

**McElveen:** How much Latin does your monastery still use?

**Monk:** It's a pretty small but we have some things from the Latin that we have preserved. You heard us sing the Marian Antiphon for example at the end of the evening office in Latin. We will continue to do that. There's also a set of antiphons that happen before Christmas called the O antiphons that we still sing in Latin and along with the

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<sup>223</sup> C5B



Benedictus and the Magnificat during those days. Then there are a few other things here and there that we probably will use the Latin.

**McElveen:** My research is specifically on the vernacular, but I am interested in monasteries that have decided to convert back to Latin or specifically a monastery that has formed after the vernacular. Have you visited Clear Creek Abbey?

**Monk:** No.

**McElveen:** What's your opinion of their only using Latin?

**Monk:** You know every community, every religious community, every monastery is in some sense different because we're all in some sense independent of each other so we have the permission of the Vatican to adapt our liturgical practice in some ways to our local traditions and Clear Creek comes from a history from their founding house in France where they didn't convert to the vernacular after Vatican II. They got the permission from Rome to stay with the Latin and Clear Creek is simply continuing that tradition. There are still many Benedictine monasteries in Europe that still do part of their Office in Latin even if they have converted to the vernacular. For instance, our International House of Studies in Rome, they do the Office together in Italian, I believe, except for Vespers they still use Latin. I don't have—my concern is that we do well in what it is that we decide to do that suits our own local community. Therefore, Clear Creek and everyone else's are free to do whatever they think is best.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> C5C

**McElveen:** If for some reason a new abbot wanted to change back to Latin, would you agree to it?

**Monk:** Of course! I don't foresee that any abbot would do that without consulting with the community first and if that's what we decide to do then I wouldn't have a problem with that. I come from a background of being in school in my early years in the transition after Vatican II and so singing in children's choir when I was growing up, we did the Latin chant and I had four years of Latin instruction in high school. I'm not a Latin scholar but I'm fairly conversant with it and of course I have been studying Gregorian chant for years and years and years. On a practical side, it would make my job as choirmaster a little bit more difficult because for part of the community—especially the younger part, younger than I am—we'd have to go back and do some pretty intense instruction for them to be able to be comfortable with the pronunciations. Even the little Latin we do I occasionally cringe. We use the Italian based pronunciation which is a typical church Latin pronunciation.... Latin is still the official language. Everything official that is produced is first produced in Latin before it is translated into any other languages.

**McElveen:** What are some short-term or long-term goals of your community for liturgical music?

**Monk:** Well, the rate at which the revision that our Office is going...that's a pretty long term goal these days but I think what we're trying to do—we're doing this in phases so I'm producing provisional copies of things and I'm going to use it for a while and make sure that we are satisfied with both the music and the texts and the arrangement and all

that. So, the long-term goal is ultimately solidifying the whole thing and then having hardbound books printed so we have something more permanent.

**McElveen:** Do you ever rehearse with your community?

**Monk:** Not very often. We used to—when I was first choirmaster—we would likely have one music rehearsal a month but in more recent years we have kind of, you know, maybe two or three times a year depending on what it is that's new. Now I anticipate as we get closer to the implementation of the new Office that we're going to have to have more frequent rehearsals but part of the difficulty in recent years that we've been heavily involved with the struggles with our school that is now closed so there was often a lot of meeting time that was taken up by school business.

**McElveen:** [regarding the school closing] How has that changed membership at church during Sunday Mass?

**Monk:** It has decreased but not hugely. I would say even during the school year our Sunday Mass had maybe sixty people or so and now we're probably on a good day forty. The people who have been sort of the faithful ones still come to church here. And I think the ones that come here regularly I think is because of the chant style that we do. They find it more singable and sort of reverent and prayer form.

**McElveen:** The solemn vespers yesterday—those were gorgeous. They were minor and that was really cool. That was probably my favorite vespers I have ever gone to and I've been to a lot of monasteries.

**Monk:** The one thing I don't like about our current Sunday vespers and I have to blame myself is at the time that we did a revision with the current office, I replaced the hymn

tune with a metrical hymn and through the years I have grown very tired of that one. Since it's for Ordinary time, we sing it quite a lot and I like the words—the first day of creation—that's a lovely text but I've grown very tired of the hymn tune and it's just a little out of keeping with the flow of the chant....As people sometimes—even in previous days in the monastery—we'd have people who would complain about the lack of variety but it's the same problem. You can do different hymns every Sunday—and we used to—we used to use another hymnal on Sundays than we do now. We would pick hymns that fit the Sunday readings and all that and sometimes we were just doing something different every Sunday but the congregation didn't always sing along especially if it was a really unfamiliar piece of music and the monks even struggle with that if it's not that familiar they don't sing. So the repetition—which you know the whole history of the Roman liturgy back from the beginning, is that texts were assigned so on this particular Sunday or on this particular day texts were assigned and then as time went on there were melodies written down to go with those texts so every Easter Sunday you sing the same things you sang last Easter Sunday. That is the musical tradition of the church and there's a practical wisdom in that people get familiar with it enough when they hear it, like anything that's familiar to us, it brings up the kinds of associations that are appropriate to the particular occasion. We don't get tired of singing Happy Birthday even though it's kind of a dippy piece of music—it's still the association with celebrating someone's advancement of years and all that—there's a familiarity and a comfort with that that helps us get in the spirit of the occasion.

**McElveen:** How many settings of the Mass Ordinary do you do?

**Monk:** Right at the moment, for daily use, about 5 different settings. And then, one of those settings is in Latin and then there's another traditional Gregorian chant setting of the Ordinary that we use on big occasions like Christmas or Easter or something like that.

**McElveen:** Who wrote the settings?

**Monk:** I don't know if you noticed the book, we used most days—Lumen Criste Missal—and it's by Adam Bartlet who put that together and he's currently serving as the music director in someplace in Colorado—I think Denver. He was interested in kind of restoring the tradition of singing chant-based melodies for entrance, offertory, communion, and ordinaries. So, most of the ordinaries that we use are out of that book. He composed a couple—well one is the chants that are in the Revised Roman Missal, so they are English versions of the Latin—a couple of them he composed were ones that Father Columba Kelly composed that were printed in that book. And then we do another setting that's called a Mass for Christian Unity. It was actually written right after Vatican II—it was one of the very first vernacular settings of the Ordinary and then it fell into disuse after the revised translation came out in 1969 but with his more recent version of the missal, someone revised it and it has been republished so we used to sing parts of it years and years ago and I sang it all of it when I was in grade school and high school until 1969. So it was, in a sense, bringing back something that was more or less by the people but is the only metrical setting that we do. I have composed a bit—not extensively because it takes a great deal of time for me to do that. Before—I'd say my earlier years as choirmaster back in the '80s and early '90s—I did compose some hymns and some responsorials and refrains between the readings. We don't use any of those anymore for

the most part. I do have one of my hymns published in the Benedictine Book of Song Tunes that the Liturgical Press put out a number of years ago has one of my pieces in there. The last thing I composed really was a four-part sort of motet piece that was done for the centennial celebration of this campus. In 2015, we celebrated the centennial.

**McElveen:** Has anyone else in the community currently composed anything?

**Monk:** No. We just don't have people—now Fr. ---- who was the previous choirmaster composed a great deal of music and he had a penchant for things that were more or less based on contemporary idioms so there's things that sound like Broadway show tunes and stuff that now that we have been singing them for a number of years we are ready to let them loose. They didn't wear well.

**McElveen:** How do you think the community has benefited from changing to the vernacular? I know you were not a monk at the time—

**Monk:** You know I came here to the community in the mid-1970s, so they had already been singing in the vernacular for a number of years by that point. I don't know where the cut off was. The Vatican Document on the Sacred Document came out in '64 but how soon they came out and started singing English I don't know. I would guess—because I think people's experience was more common—I would guess that it has just made people feel more comfortable in praying the psalms or chanting the psalms simply because we are more familiar with the language. Doing it in Latin—unless you've had some good Latin training and I would struggle. I could look at the psalm in Latin and more or less have an idea what it says but being able to translate word for word and line by line would be a little bit of a struggle. I think, you know when Latin was a more commonly known

language but even in the Middle Ages people by and large knew how to read, it was still up to the professionals to do the chanting at the liturgy. It was always the choir or in the monastery it would be the monks who were also priests because they would have had the most education. There's always been a sort of dependence on the professionals, if you will, same thing with the polyphony. The reason that some of those cathedrals in Europe and Saint Mark's in Venice and all that—the reason they could pull off all the things they did was they had the resources and the people who were trained for all that.

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