

On-Site Study of the Process for Teaching of Catholic Mass Ceremony Music at Chongqing Benevolence Hall

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Abstract

Founded in 1900, Chongqing Yuzhong Benevolence Hall is a Catholic church with a history of more than one hundred years. It has experienced the development stages of missionary hospital, nunnery and vocational school for nurses, and in December 2001, it was transformed into Benevolence Nursing Home. Every Sunday, the Church would hold mass ceremonies in the same manner and with the same music as Catholic mass ceremonies, thus playing the role of missionary education on surrounding residents and church members. The paper will explore the process for teaching of its ceremony music, and analyze the process for teaching of the ceremony music and its particularity.

Key words: Benevolence hall; Ceremony music; Teaching

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INTRODUCTION

“The core of music education should be, or is probably music, and is the unity of music in human culture, individual and society.” Proposed by Wolfgang Mastnak, a music educationalist from Austria (Mastnak, 2008, p.28). If we apply this concept proposed by Wolfgang Mastnak in education of Catholic ceremony music, then the core

for education of ceremony music is the unity of the music in the ceremony culture, the individual Catholic believer and the Catholic ceremony. The paper will therefore explore the teaching of Catholic ceremony music by combining the study approaches of field investigation and a case study in the ceremony environment and individual believers.

1. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCESS FOR TEACHING OF CEREMONY MUSIC BY ON-SITE RECORDS

In the parish of Chongqing, many churches would allocate time to teach believers holy songs before or after the mass on each Sunday, which will be undertaken by the responsible person of the choir, or a common believer who is capable of and voluntary in undertaking the teaching. The contents to be taught will be the special mass songs that are to be used in the mass ceremony of the very day or the very period.

The author records the live condition of teaching holy songs before the ordinary Sunday mass held at Chongqing Yuzhong Benevolence Hall on January 18, 2015.

Time: 08:30 - 09:30 a.m. on January 18, 2015

Place: Chongqing Yuzhong Benevolence Hall

Teacher: Miss Chen, responsible person from choir of Church Joseph of Chongqing

Learners: Part of believers from Yuzhong District, Chongqing

Contents: *Follow Him* and *Praise God* (respectively selected from Part 13 “Trust in God” and Part 5 “Trinity in God” of *Song of Tiny Love*, the scripture of Chongqing Catholic parish)

Teaching process: At 08:30, all seats in Benevolence Hall were occupied. Some believers stayed here for the second mass ceremony to be held at nine after they finished attending the first one held at half past seven,

and some others just came for the second one. Miss Chen stood behind the public chair with the songbook of *Song of Tiny Love*, asked the believers to turn to Page 345, and then taught them the holy song sentence by sentence. Miss Chen tapped the beats with her hands without accompaniment of any instrument in the teaching process. Although most believers had songbook in their hands, they could not keep up with the pace of Miss Chen, and followed her in low voice and with poor melodic sense, like reading out the lyrics, possibly for their unfamiliarity with the melody.

The first holy song on that day was *Follow Him* in which the same melody was repeated four times because it was made up of four paragraphs of different lyrics. In the second repetition of the believers, the melody of the believers' singing could almost be judged. In the third repetition, Miss Chen tried to teach the believers in whole music sentence, and she would repeat the last several tones when the believers could not sing them clearly for the sentence was too long. There are two voice parts in this song, but Miss Chen only taught the believers the high voice part considering that they were unable to sing both of the two parts at the same time. The second song was *Praise God* which was short and made up of three sentences. Miss Chen also broke up the long sentences into short sentences of three to four words, and repeated them four times until believers could follow her pace in singing the complete sentences.

Finally, Miss Chen sang the first sentences of the two holy songs to initiate the singing and then guided the believers to sing the two songs to draw a close to this learning.

2. ANALYSIS OF THE PROCESS FOR TEACHING OF CEREMONY MUSIC FOR ORDINARY BELIEVERS

We can conclude from the above records that the teaching of Catholic ceremony music in Chongqing is completed within the church and between two mass ceremonies, in which the teachers are also Catholic believers. The

teaching activities can therefore be regarded as a part of the Catholic ceremonies. Catholic believers hold that singing out holy songs during collective worshipping is a kind of elegant praying, by which people's enthusiasm for praising and loving the God can be aroused. "Be ye thankful, and teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Said church members of Grossan in their letter to apostles of Saint Paul¹. We can see that believers take the activities of teaching holy songs as an important component of collective praying. For them, if the holy songs can shorten their distance to the God, then learning holy songs is learning the approaches to get close to the God.

2.1 Analysis of Interview With Ordinary Church Members: The Learners

Most church members who have computers at home would download holy songs from the Internet to listen to and learn them, but they are still more willing to attend the teaching activities conducted once every week in the church, as shown by the interview with them. The reasons are summarized as follows:

a) The holy songs downloaded from the Internet may be different from the holy songs used in Chongqing parish, because there are many holy songs with the same names but different lyrics. Even the churches in Chongqing parish do not adopt the holy songs of the same version. All these factors bring about barriers in singing at the mass ceremonies. For example, the author has collected the holy song *Ascension of Jesus* in four versions with different tones and lyrics. One of the versions is of high similarity to the demonstration version provided in the album of *Voice of Angel* on Catholic Music Net, but the author finds out that it is different from the author's collected songbook used in Chongqing parish in certain melodies after she notes down music score according to the demonstration version.

Score 1, Performance version of *Ascension of Jesus* in Chongqing parish, compiled by the author according to the score on Page 115 of *Song of Tiny Love*, the scripture of Chongqing Catholic parish

¹ From the preface made by Bishop Xu Zhixuan for *Song of Tiny Love*, the scripture of Chongqing Catholic parish



耶稣带了宗徒，走到橄榄山上，走到橄榄山上。

他就冉冉上升，冉冉上升，冉冉上升。

一朵彩云从天下降，从天下降，从天下降。

他升了天堂，给我们预备地方，给我们预备地方。

你们要去传扬，你们要去传扬，你们要去传扬圣道。

传到南洋北极，传到远东秦西，传到天涯海角。

不分种族不分领域 信从圣道， 信从圣道。

Score 2 Recorded by the author according to the demonstration version on Catholic Music Net



耶稣带了宗徒，走到橄榄山上，走到橄榄山上。

他就冉冉上升，冉冉上升，冉冉上升。

一朵彩云从天下降，从天下降，从天下降。

.. 他升了天堂，给我们预备地方，给我们预备地方。

你们要去传扬，你们要去传扬，你们要去传扬圣道。

传到南洋北极，传到远东秦西，传到天涯海角。

不分种族 不分领域 信从圣道， 信从圣道。

b) Most of the church members cannot learn the holy song on their own even if they have the songbook because they do not know the score. The teaching activities held once a week in the churches are planned for the church members who have not any musical backgrounds, so teaching of score is omitted, and the holy song is taught sentence by sentence. The church members, even without any musical background, can better understand the holy songs in such a process of teaching.

c) The teaching environment in the church and the learning method of collective teaching make the church members feel that they can better understand the connotations of holy songs and achieve more effective praying by singing in front of the statues of Holy Mother, Holy Father and Holy Son. This is because they have in their mind that their singing in the sacred churches can be directly conveyed to the God, so they achieve more effective praying.

d) The holy songs learned will be immediately applied in the mass ceremony to come, and with the practice of “singing the holy songs learned on the site”, the church members may feel the sense of achievement by applying what they have just learned, so they will be more enthusiastic in learning. *Follow Him* and *Praise God* learned in the records of the teaching process mentioned above will be applied in the following mass ceremony. By the previous learning and the guiding of the choir, the church members can sing the two holy songs learned just now completely with full respect.

That is why this approach of teaching holy songs adopted by most churches in Chongqing Catholic parish is well accepted by the massive church members. For one thing, Church members take the initiative to learn the holy songs, and for another they also make it out that learning holy songs is not just to master a skill of singing, but also expresses a deeper spiritual connotation - praying to the God. As indicated by the biographies of some European artists, researchers and philosophers, “Two basic motives trigger the progress of learning, namely the willingness to understand and comprehend things, and the willingness to undertake the things.” (Mastnak, 2008, p.64)

2.2 Analysis of the Interview With Responsible Person of the Choir at Church Joseph: The Teacher

The author interviewed Miss Chen who was responsible for the teaching of the very day after the mass ceremony came to an end. As a senior church member in Yuzhong District of Chongqing, Miss Chen has been a member of the choir of Church Joseph for more than twenty years. According to her description, the choir of Church Joseph invited specialized music teachers outside the church (vocal teacher from College of Arts, Chongqing University) to teach holy songs about a decade ago, but their teaching failed to bring about the feeling and move

required for singing in mass ceremonies out of their poor understanding of the sense of reverence in teaching holy songs. Later, Miss Chen invited others to teach her to read the score, and then assumed the responsibility of teaching holy songs. She has been engaged in this work for ten years because she demonstrates deep enthusiasm for this work.

Despite the fact that Miss Chen is not recognized as a “music educationalist” in the eyes of the non-church members for she did not receive any training on musical proficiency and complete musical education theory, she still becomes a “teacher” of Catholic ceremony music in Yuzhong District of Chongqing in the special teaching environment of religious ceremonies. With respect to such a special research on education, the author makes the following conclusions and analyses of the “teacher” based on her on-site study.

2.2.1 Music Accomplishment of “Teacher”

Born in a worker’s family, Miss Chen received no professional musical learning out of the family environment, regardless of her enthusiasm for music from childhood. The author learned from the interview that Miss Chen’s trust in God was, to a large extent, attributed to her influence by the Catholic ceremony music. (There are quite a few persons who attend the mass ceremonies to worship the God out of attraction by the Catholic ceremony music. The author also ran into in the process of the field study some non-church members who stepped into the Church because they were attracted by the music sung during the ceremony.) Miss Chen spared much effort to improve her musical accomplishment after she was influenced by Catholic ceremony music. She ever invited vocal music teachers with a particular view to teaching her vocal music, and learned the musical score and relevant theories, which are rarely seen among the church members of Catholicism in Chongqing. In addition, Miss Chen has formed her own aesthetics of music in her learning process of more than twenty years. When we came to the music style of holy songs, she held that the traditional Gregorian holy songs were most appropriate to significant mass ceremonies because such songs could best show esteem to the God.

2.2.2 Moral Trait in Teaching of “Teacher”

Miss Chen’s sense of responsibility in teaching of holy songs is originated in her faith - her adoration to the God. She firmly believes that “The music tradition of universal church forms the invaluable asset that supersedes all other artistic expressions, and particularly, the holy songs mixed with paroles become a must or component of an impressive ceremony.”² That is why Miss Chen is dedicated to the learning and teaching of holy songs. There are more than 500 holy songs in the songbook of

² Article 11, Chapter 6 on Holy Music, Sacrosanctum Concilium, Second Vatican Council

Song of Tiny Love adopted by Church Joseph, all of which Miss Chen can sing. Moreover, she is familiar with the requirements for use of ordinary mass songs and special mass songs in mass ceremonies as well as the requirements for selection of mass songs in different ten-day celebrations and various holiday celebrations.

2.2.3 Concluding Teaching Experiences in Practices

Miss Chen learns in her ten year’s teaching of holy songs that the church members get to know holy songs mainly from reading *Bible*, and most of them have not any musical background, out of which consideration, she adopts the teaching approaches that facilitate the church member’s singing and memorizing of holy songs. She therefore concludes the teaching approach that is most appropriate approach for church members to learn holy songs, namely teach them word by word and sentence by sentence. Although the segmentation in such a teaching process damages the original structure of the musical sentence, it is the most effective approach concluded in practices.

2.3 Analysis on Application of Teaching Contents to Ceremonies

Follow Him is the “prayer” applied after receiving the communion wafer and the Santa Sangre in mass ceremonies, describing the holy mystery that Jesus devoted his whole life to “Salvation” of human being. The lyrics are sourced from Chapter Four of *Matthew of New Testament*:

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. (Line 23, Chapter 4, *Matthew of New Testament*)

And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them. (Line 24, Chapter 4, *Matthew of New Testamen*)

And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan. (Line 24, Chapter 4, *Matthew of New Testament*)

Praise God belongs to “Divine Praises” which refer to a series of praise prayers started with “Praise God”. This song also starts with “Praise God” in each sentence:

“Praise the God in modulated singing to pay tribute to my Lord, the high king.

Praise the God for its impressiveness that is endless.

Let me sing aloud to adore and praise the God. The heaven, the earth, the sun, the moon, and the stars, all follow me with the adoration and praise.”

“Divine Praises” are usually sung after holding of Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and sending the communion wafer back to the Tabernacle to make “mind

preparation” for elimination of blasphemy and profanity (Glazier & Hellwig, 2012, p.1055).

The author recorded the mass ceremony and the mass songs in the form of table after the teaching finished on that very day, from which we can have a clear view of the application of teaching contents in ceremony procedures:

Table 1
Application of Teaching Contents to Mass Ceremonies of the Very Day

	Procedures	Mass songs
	Introitus	<i>Come in for Joyful Gathering</i>
	Greeting words	None
Liturgy at the beginning	Actus Paenitentialis	None
	<i>Kyrie</i>	<i>Miserere</i>
	Gloria	<i>Gloria</i>
	Collect	None
	Reading the <i>Bible</i>	<i>Acclamatio Ante Lectionem Evangelii</i>
Liturgy of the word	Credo	<i>Credo</i>
	Oratio fidelium	None
	Liturgy of preparation	<i>Prayer Over the Gifts</i>
	Oratio super oblata	None
	Preface	<i>Sanctus</i>
	Prex Eucharistica	<i>Mystery</i>
	Lord’s Prayer	<i>Lord’s Prayer All Nations</i>
Liturgy of the eucharist	Sign of peace	<i>Agnus Dei</i>
	Receiving the communion wafer and the santa sangre	<i>Lord, I Am Not Worthy Follow Him My Lord! Send Me on an Errand For We Love Communio Jesus Guides You Praise God</i>
Liturgy at the end		None

The holy songs highlighted in the table were those taught on that very day and applied in the “receiving the communion wafer and the Santa Sangre” procedure of the ceremony.

CONCLUSION

After the Second Vatican Council, one of the basic premises for Catholic churches to accept Christian tribute is that all people showing tribute, including all believers, are important participants. However, there are very few particular tasks to

be performed in our ceremonies, some of which even require particular skills and trainings, such as preaching and leading in the reading of prayers. The music, especially the singing, is one of few ceremony activities that have worshipers as active participants in the whole process. (Ibid., p.1015)

The objects for Catholic ceremony music education constitute a special music learner group whose singing shocks the author in every mass ceremony she attends. They all regard holy songs as part of their own faith although the author knows from the interview that few of them have received professional musical learning.

The church members' aesthetic preference for holy songs comes directly from their faith in Jesus Christ. Taking music as the carrier that carries forward the doctrine, they sing holy songs for the purpose of praying in front of the God. Without any need to bear in mind great number of mass ceremony music compositions, they just sing the holy songs with the guiding of the choir in the process of the ceremony, so the teaching contents designed for them are effective in a short term and easy to apply. The holy songs they learn are usually used in the very day or the nearest important holidays. Compared with professional music education, teachers and teaching

approaches are irregular and secular, because their aim is not to cultivate music professionals, but to serve the mass ceremonies. Such a teaching process is more likely to be a part of mass ceremony that unifies "teaching — music — ceremony" as one.

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