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# The Sounds of Vatican II: Musical Change and Experimentation in Two U.S. Trappist Monasteries, 1965–1984

*Bradford Lee Eden\**

*The Second Vatican Council impacted the use of liturgical music within religious communities. Two U.S. Trappist monasteries, New Melleray Abbey in Dubuque, Iowa, and Gethsemani Abbey in Bardstown, Kentucky, evidenced distinctive approaches to the musical freedom resulting from the Vatican II reforms. New Melleray incorporated contemporary folk music and instruments. At Gethsemani, Father Chrysogonus Waddell pioneered the use of Gregorian notation and English psalmody. The musical changes had a profound effect on the Trappists' celebration of the Mass and the praying of the Liturgy of the Hours.*

## Introduction

While many view the Catholic Church as virtually unchanged for over 2,000 years, a fortress against the shifting ideas and trends in society and culture, the Church has showed significant vitality and openness to reform. The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), the most notable twentieth-century reform movement in the Church, called for an updating of the Church—what Pope John XXIII, the pope who called the council in 1959, described using the Italian word, *aggiornamento*, literally “to let in fresh air.” Worship, including sacred music, was among the first topics discussed at the council, leading to the approval of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy

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\*The research presented here is a revision of the author's “The Effect of Vatican II on the Music and Liturgy of the Trappist Monasteries of Gethsemani and New Melleray” (M.A. thesis, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, Indiana, 1984).

(1963).<sup>1</sup> Before the council, the use of Gregorian chant and certain pieces of polyphonic music had been normative, but the years after the council saw wide musical experimentation in parishes and religious communities. Church music that imitated 1960s folk-like trends was introduced and experimented with, along with various genres and creative compositional techniques.<sup>2</sup> In the monastic orders, including the Cistercians, Carthusians, and Trappists, the changes affected many aspects of the monk's common life. The contemplative orders, where liturgy and ritual played a primary role in the daily life and worship of its members, experienced drastic changes. Because the contemplative monk's life emphasized chanting the Mass and Divine Office (Liturgy of the Hours), some worried that the changes occurring in the post-Vatican II era had the power to upset the continuity of worship and perhaps even bring about monasticism's decline.

The contemplative order known as the Cistercians of the Strict Observance (commonly called Trappists) were challenged to implement conciliar reforms while maintaining the essentials of worship. In examining the effects of the conciliar implementation in the life and liturgy of two Trappist monasteries in the United States: Our Lady of Gethsemani in Trappist, Kentucky, near Bardstown, and Our Lady of New Melleray near Dubuque, Iowa, both the pre- and post-Vatican II environments at these monasteries will be investigated, noting both continuity and change from 1965–1984. Attention will focus on how Vatican II affected the two communities' life, worship environments, and use of music. While conducting this research at these two monasteries in the early 1980s, the author interviewed monks regarding their thoughts and opinions on how Vatican II affected the music and lifestyle of their communities. The responses are as fascinating and varied as the monks themselves.<sup>3</sup>

## Cistercians of the Strict Observance

Reform within monastic orders, common yet disruptive, has served as a source of the Church's revitalization and renewal. St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), the most significant promoter of the Cistercian reform,

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1. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963): [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); in particular, paragraphs 112–121 address the topic of sacred music.

2. See, for instance, Ken Canedo, *Keep the Fire Burning: The Folk Mass Revolution* (Portland, OR: Pastoral Press, 2009); Mark Oppenheimer, "Roman Catholics and the Folk Mass" in *Knocking on Heaven's Door: American Religion in the Age of Counterculture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 62–94.

3. For summaries of these interviews conducted at Gethsemani Abbey, October 8–11, 1983, and New Melleray Abbey, September 2–4, 1983, see Eden, "The Effect of Vatican II," 131–133.

emphasized manual labor, self-sufficiency, and lay (non-ordained) members. After Bernard's death, the order declined rapidly, in part due to the rise of the mendicants (including the Franciscans and Dominicans) in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. As the Cistercians declined, individual abbots and abbeys attempted reform, often favoring greater austerity. Abstinence from meat became a major factor in the division of Cistercians in the seventeenth century; those monasteries that demanded abstinence from meat and desired greater austerity were called the "Strict Observance" or "the Abstinentes." Those that did not abstain from meat, or thought reforms too drastic, came to be called the "Common Observance" or "the Ancients." The rise of the Cistercians of the Strict Observance was a slow process; an abbot and often a majority of the monks in a community corporately decided which "observance" to follow.<sup>4</sup> In France, by 1618 eight monasteries were "strict," by 1624, forty, and by 1660, sixty-two.<sup>5</sup> Pope Alexander VII ultimately adjudicated the power struggle in France between those of the Strict and those of the Common Observance, siding in 1666 with the Common Observance, but allowing the Strict Observance monasteries to continue.

The monastic foundation that became the Cistercian monastery of La Grande Trappe, located in Soligny-la-Trappe in northwestern France, began in 1122.<sup>6</sup> By 1626, La Grande Trappe was in ruins, with only five monks and no abbot. In 1636, the abbey received the ten-year-old Armand-Jean le Bouthillier de Rance (1626–1700), the godson of Cardinal Richelieu, as "commendatory abbot," an abbot who benefited from the revenues of the monastery but with limited jurisdiction. Rance became the rightful abbot at La Grande Trappe in 1664, immediately converting the monastery to the Strict Observance. Rance was one of two abstinence representatives to appeal to Pope Alexander VII in 1664 arguing theirs was the "true" Cistercian order. Rance's zealous anger and pompous self-confidence may have resulted in the pope's unfavorable decision to support the Common rather than the Strict Observance. Consequently, Rance separated himself and La Grande Trappe from both observances, imposing his own rule of strict penance, silence, manual labor, and seclusion from the world. This rigor attracted numerous postulants to La Grande Trappe during Rance's life-

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4. Several books by Louis Julius Lekai are excellent sources for the history of the Cistercians of the Strict Observance: *The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1977); *The Rise of the Cistercian Strict Observance in Seventeenth-century France* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1968); *The White Monks: A History of the Cistercian Order* (Okauchee, WI: Cistercian Fathers, Our Lady of Spring Bank, 1953); and *Abbot Jean Petit of Cîteaux and the Strict Observance* (Rome: Ed. Cistercienses, 1960).

5. Lekai, *The White Monks*, 96.

6. William Rufus Perkins, *History of the Trappist Abbey of New Melleray in Dubuque County, Iowa* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa, 1892), 10.

time; by the time of his death in 1700 over two hundred monks lived within its walls.

## The Rise of the Trappist Movement

Dom Augustine de LeStrange (1754–1827), La Grande Trappe's extraordinary abbot during the era of the French Revolution, recognized the coming storm and in early 1789 recommended self-imposed exile for the community.<sup>7</sup> In 1791, Dom Augustine, eighteen monks, and eight lay brothers left La Trappe and moved to the old Charterhouse of La Val Sainte, in Cerniat, Switzerland. Only a few months later, the revolution began; religious communities were dissolved and monks left their way of life or were subject to arrest. LeStrange and the monks from La Trappe survived the revolution, attracting new members. In 1794, Pope Pius VI recognized the unique phenomenon of La Val Sainte and raised it to an abbey, naming LeStrange's monks "The Congregation of Trappists."<sup>8</sup> Due to the overflow of monks at La Val Sainte, LeStrange began an aggressive campaign to found other Trappist monasteries, inside and outside of Europe. By the time of Napoleon's fall in 1815, at which time LeStrange and the Trappists were allowed to return to France, the Trappists had established monasteries in Canada, Belgium, England, Germany, and the United States.<sup>9</sup> Several distinct Trappist groups appeared in the early nineteenth century; Pope Gregory XVI tried to unite the three observances into two but failed. By the late nineteenth century, four Trappist congregations existed and Pope Leo XIII called them to unite. Three congregations—the Ancient Reform, New Reform, and Westmalle—all joined together as "The Reformed Cistercians of Our Lady of La Trappe," eventually becoming known as "Reformed Cistercians" or "Cistercians of the Strict Observance."<sup>10</sup>

## Foundation of Gethsemani and New Melleray Abbeys

Following the fall of Napoleon, LeStrange and his monks inhabited the ruins of La Trappe, Aiguebelle, and Melleray. Due to an increasing number

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7. The information which follows is documented in Thomas Merton, *Waters of Siloe* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949).

8. Edmond Obrecht, "Trappists," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 15 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912): <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15024a.htm>.

9. An interesting sidenote: LeStrange purchased a farm on Manhattan Island in America in 1810 as the site for one of his Trappist monasteries, but only stayed there until 1814, when they returned to La Val Sainte to prepare for their return to France. The farm site eventually became St. Patrick's Cathedral, the nearby field became Rockefeller Center, and the dirt road between the two became Fifth Avenue.

10. Obrecht, "Trappists."

of monks and a resurgence of French secularism in the 1830s, Melleray Abbey sought to establish daughterhouses elsewhere.<sup>11</sup> Melleray's prior, Father Eutropius Proust, and forty monks set out for the United States on October 26, 1848. Bishop Benedict J. Flaget of Bardstown, Kentucky, invited the Trappists to assist him in caring for the needs of his new diocese, which then included numerous Midwest states. Catholic families had immigrated to Nelson and Washington Counties in Kentucky from St. Mary's County, Maryland, providing a need for pastoral ministry. The Sisters of Loretto had an orphanage and farm nearby named Our Lady of Gethsemani, which they sold to Father Proust for the establishment of a Trappist monastery. The Trappists retained the name, and on July 21, 1850, Pope Pius IX raised Gethsemani to the rank of an abbey, the first Trappist abbey in the Americas. Eutropius Proust served as Gethsemani's first abbot until 1859 when he resigned and returned to Europe.

Until the early 1900s, most of Gethsemani Abbey's monks and lay brothers were French; Americans' acceptance of a French monastery was slow. Frederic Dunne, the first American choir monk, entered the community in 1894, and the first American lay brother, John Green Hanning (Brother Joachim), entered the community in 1889.<sup>12</sup> Brother Joachim, who had been a Texas cowboy before becoming a Trappist, was known for his anger and stubbornness. His conversion into the silent, God-fearing Brother Joachim was published in 1941.<sup>13</sup> The book brought much attention to American Trappists and their lifestyle, and was popular among World War II-era Catholics.

Gethsemani's fourth abbot, Edmond Obrecht, was responsible for much of the abbey's growth and popularity. During his thirty-five year abbacy, he established English as the vernacular among the community, built a number of buildings, established a guesthouse for laity to make retreats, and gathered a library of 40,000 volumes, then the largest U.S. monastic library. Thomas Merton (1915–1968), Gethsemani Abbey's best-known member, joined the

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11. Sources include Fred L. Holmes, *The Voice of Trappist Silence* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1941); Lekai, *The Cistercians*; Merton, *Waters of Siloe*; Perkins, *History of the Trappist Abbey of New Melleray*; *Trappist Life at the Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani* (Bardstown, KY: Gethsemani Abbey, 1946); Charles W. Whalen, *The Trappist Way* (Dubuque, IA: New Melleray Abbey, 1947); Dianne Aprile, *The Abbey of Gethsemani: Place of Peace and Paradox: 150 Years in the Life of America's Oldest Trappist Monastery* (Louisville, KY: Trout Lily Press, 1998).

12. Choir brothers were those who entered the monastery with the intent to study and become priests; lay brothers were those who assisted in the manual labor of the monastery but who were not preparing for priesthood.

13. Father M. Raymond, *The Man Who Got Even with God* (Milwaukee, WI: Bruce Publishing, 1941).

community in 1941. Merton intended to give up his aspirations of being a writer when he became a Trappist monk, but the abbot encouraged his literary activities. When Merton's autobiography, *Seven Storey Mountain*, appeared in 1948, it resulted in a surge of interest in both Merton and the Trappist order.<sup>14</sup> From 1949 until his death, Merton authored a large and varied body of poetry and literature, ranging from the history of the Trappist order to peace and social justice to eastern religions. The post-World War II surge in monasticism occurred in concert with the popularization of Thomas Merton's writings.

The foundation of New Melleray Abbey near Dubuque, Iowa dates to another sister house of Melleray Abbey in France: Ireland's Mount Melleray. Established in 1832, Mount Melleray was by 1848 ready to establish a daughterhouse in the New World. Bishop Mathias Loras of Dubuque, Iowa, had visited Mount Melleray earlier that year, and offered the monks a place in his diocese. New Melleray Abbey was established in 1849, just one year after Gethsemani as the first monastery west of the Mississippi River. Clement Smyth, superior of New Melleray, became coadjutor bishop of Dubuque in 1857, a unique role among Trappists at that time; and the new superior, James O'Gorman, in 1859 became Vicar Apostolic of Nebraska, at that time a territory eighteen times larger than Ireland, comprising the territories of Montana, Nebraska, Wyoming, and the Dakotas. Like Gethsemani, New Melleray also had difficulties obtaining American members, but between World War I and World War II the number of monks increased. The post-war era brought even greater growth. New Melleray had 54 monks in 1941 and 135 by 1950.

## The Trappist Monastery before Vatican II

The goal of the Cistercian founders was to return to the strictest interpretation of the Rule of St. Benedict. The contemplative life and vocation, quite different from the active religious orders, called the Trappist monk to leave the world and retire into solitude. This solitude, they believed, would liberate the soul from all worldly and temporal cares to be purified and perfected by God.<sup>15</sup> The Trappist, therefore, understood his contribution to society as a matter of "being" rather than "doing," striving to become con-

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14. Thomas Merton, *Seven Storey Mountain* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1948).

15. Sources referenced in this section include *Trappist Life at the Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani*; *Cistercian Contemplatives: A Guide to Trappist Life* (New York: Marbridge Publishing, 1948); *To Be a Monk: An Essay on the Cistercian Vocation* (New Melleray Abbey, n.d.); Perkins, *History of the Trappist Abbey*; Merton, *The Waters of Siloe*; and Holmes, *The Voice of Trappist Silence*.

scious of God through prayer and contemplation.<sup>16</sup> Austerity, prayer, and—prior to Vatican II—the vow of silence were the hallmarks of his way of life. Many men who had fought in the wars of the twentieth century yearned for the quiet and serene life of the Trappist, resulting in a monastic growth spurt at mid-century.

The life of the monk had long been shrouded in mystery. A study of U.S. Trappist life in 1892 helped to quell numerous rumors about physical mortifications and secret rituals within the monastery, describing in detail the monk's life: his living quarters, his diet, and his daily routine.<sup>17</sup> The daily life of the “choir” monk included:

4 hours: Divine Office and Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary  
 2 hours: Mass (only one was obligatory)  
 2 hours: Study, spiritual reading  
 4 hours: Manual labor  
 4 hours: Private devotions, reading, minor duties  
 1 hour: Meals  
 7 hours: Sleep<sup>18</sup>

According to this account, one-third of the day was spent singing and reciting the Office and Mass, one-third spent in study and manual labor, and one-third eating and sleeping.

By the 1940s, those that monasticism intrigued could discover the Trappist way of life through the words and photographs of several view-books: *The Voice of Trappist Silence*, *The Trappist Way*, and *The Trappist Life*.<sup>19</sup> The authors attempted to show Trappists as neither escapists nor bohemians; Trappists had modern amenities like electric lighting, modern heating and plumbing, and showers; their lifestyle was focused on contemplation, manual labor, and the singing of the Divine Office and Mass. A detailed schedule of the community's activities, for instance, appeared in *The Voice of Trappist Silence*, documenting the demands of their life from 2 a.m. through 7 p.m.<sup>20</sup>

This and similar books recorded how one became a Trappist, a ten-year process. A novice could leave the Trappist order at any time during the ten years before he took the five perpetual vows of poverty, chastity, obedience,

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16. *To Be a Monk*, 4.

17. Perkins, *History of the Trappist Abbey*.

18. Holmes, *The Voice of Trappist Silence*, 30.

19. Holmes, *The Voice of Trappist Silence*; Whalen, *The Trappist Way*; *Trappist Life at the Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani*.

20. Holmes, *The Voice of Trappist Silence*, 70.



stability, and conversion of manners. Prior to Vatican II, a Trappist monk also took a vow of silence, speaking only when reciting and singing the Divine Office and the Mass, and essentially using an internally-learned sign language to communicate with others outside of these venues. No outside newspapers or clippings were received or read; all outside communications (including letters) could be opened and read by the abbot; and only one annual visit with relatives (no longer than three days) was allowed.<sup>21</sup>

## The Liturgy and the Second Vatican Council

For centuries, the Catholic liturgy had enjoyed significant uniformity, a response not only to the Protestant Reformation, but as a symbol of the Church's unity and universality. Transcending national barriers, the liturgy fostered a feeling of dignity and distinctiveness. In the twentieth century, the Catholic Church was faced with a rapidly-changing world and an unchanging liturgy. The externals of worship had come to be regarded as more important or essential than the inner meaning, and two deficiencies threatened to stifle the impact of the Catholic liturgy: intelligibility of the language of worship and a lack of lay participation. This concern engendered the liturgical movement, which traced its inception back to 1903 and Pope Pius X's *motu proprio*, *Tra Le Sollecitudini*, focusing on the restoration of church music and active participation in the liturgy. Pope Pius XI's *Divini Cultus* (1928) and Pope Pius XII's *Mediator Dei* (1947) furthered the liturgical movement through a revival of understanding and appreciation of Gregorian chant and by suggesting that the liturgy might be able to be celebrated in the vernacular.<sup>22</sup>

The Second Vatican Council's first document, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy (1963), aptly focused on the liturgy. The document allowed for the use of the vernacular in the liturgy after consultation and local bishops' approval.<sup>23</sup> The reforms of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* were enacted through a large volume of post-conciliar decrees focused on the Mass, the Divine Office, and sacred music.<sup>24</sup> The documents provided

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21. Holmes, *The Voice of Trappist Silence*, especially 17–21, 87–93.

22. See *The Liturgy Documents: Volume Three: Foundational Documents on the Origins and Implementation of Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 2013).

23. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963): [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).

24. See Austin Flannery, *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents* (2 vols.) (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1982–1992) and International Commission on English in the Liturgy, *Documents on the Liturgy, 1963–1979: Conciliar, Papal, and Curial Texts* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1982).

greater openness to various musical genres. Many Catholics were excited by the new worship opportunities; others were insulted or lost among the popular music and guitars which crept into the liturgy during the late 1960s; some wanted to return to the celebration of the Mass according to the former rite.

## The Trappist Monastery after Vatican II

More than a decade before Vatican II, the Trappist order had taken steps toward change and renewal. Simplification of the liturgy occurred through a number of deletions, including the Little Office of Our Lady, the Office of the Dead, and the Pater Noster Office (although an antiphon to Mary became common at the beginning of all offices except Compline). Unification of the vocations of choir monk and lay brother had been ongoing, and after Vatican II, a common monastic lifestyle was adopted.<sup>25</sup> The requirement that choir monks be priests was eliminated since many choir monks did not wish to pursue theological studies. Perhaps the most significant change was the elimination of the observance of strict silence outside of prayer, although many monks continued that practice. Prohibiting the receiving of news or communication from the outside world was discontinued and the number of visits by friends and relatives was no longer controlled. The living quarters for Trappist monks changed from a large room divided into cells to separate rooms divided by walls. Finally, the 300-page rule, *Order of the Cistercians of the Strict Observance Choir Monk Regulations Book*, was replaced by the 1969 Trappist general chapter's one-and-a-half page guidelines, *Statement on Unity and Pluralism*. Each Trappist monastery, according to the new rule, whether in Africa, Europe, or the United States, had the power to develop its own monastic lifestyle in accordance with the teachings of Vatican II and its geographical location.<sup>26</sup>

Liturgical experimentation, which varied according to monastery, accompanied disciplinary changes. In 1968, the Trappists were provided the freedom to make liturgical changes through the legislation known as "*Loi Cadre*." Taken from the French for "basic framework," this indult from Rome allowed each Trappist monastery in the U.S. to develop its own liturgical schedule, as long as four principles were retained:

1. The community would gather for prayer at Vigils, a morning Office, a day Office, and an evening Office; the minor Offices and Compline could be celebrated outside of choir.

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25. Eden, "The Effect of Vatican II," 76.

26. Whalen, *The Trappist Way*.

2. Each Office should contain psalms, a reading, a hymn, and a prayer.
3. The psalter could be prayed over a two-week period rather than the prescribed single week.
4. The readings would be chosen by the superior or someone appointed by him.<sup>27</sup>

Details such as texts, music, and gestures were left up to the creativity of the individual monasteries. As Trappist Robert Morhaus related, after *Loi Cadre* “the story [of Trappist liturgical change] is written in pages of loose-leaf sheets of paper, discarded choir books, painful struggles and beautiful efforts of individual communities to develop a liturgy especially suited to monks living there.”<sup>28</sup> The freedom provided by *Loi Cadre* resulted in significant changes in the way U.S. Trappists prayed. While *Loi Cadre* was at first limited to a five-year experimentation period, its “basic framework” was well-received, allowing it to continue indefinitely.

### The Post-Vatican II Liturgy at Gethsemani Abbey

Following Vatican II and the Trappists’ 1969 general chapter, Gethsemani Abbey worked to implement a liturgy to accommodate the age, yet still represent and enhance the monks’ contemplative lifestyle. Thomas Waddell (Father Chrysogonus) (1930–2008), the chief architect of the liturgy that developed at Gethsemani Abbey, was born in the Philippines of parents of Protestant background.<sup>29</sup> Since his father served in the military, the family moved frequently. Even with the constant changes in his life, Waddell developed an interest in music and became proficient in piano and organ. Eventually he was able to study for two years with Vincent Persichetti at the Philadelphia Conservatory of Music. During this time, Waddell was introduced to Catholicism through Episcopalianism and High Anglicanism. After becoming a Catholic, Waddell decided to enter the monastic vocation, choosing to follow the contemplative life at Gethsemani. Entering the

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27. Robert Morhaus, “Monastic Liturgy in Process,” *Liturgy O.C.S.O.* 7, no. 2 (June 1973): 93–103; the text of *Loi Cadre* is found on 94. For comparison, see the similar permission granted to the Benedictines to experiment with the monastic office; “Rescript (Benedictines)” of October 17, 1967, in International Commission on English in the Liturgy, *Documents on the Liturgy, 1963–1979: Conciliar, Papal, and Curial Texts*, 1148.

28. Robert Morhaus, “Monastic Liturgy in Process,” *Liturgy O.C.S.O.* 7, no. 2 (June 1973): 95.

29. Most of the information regarding Father Chrysogonus comes from interviews the author conducted at Gethsemani Abbey, October 8–11, 1983. See also Chrysogonus Waddell and E. Rozanne Elder, *Praise No Less Than Charity: Studies in Honor of M. Chrysogonus Waddell, Monk of Gethsemani Abbey: Contributions from colleagues, confrères, and friends on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of his monastic profession* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2002).



**Father Chrysogonus Waddell (1930–2008) (Courtesy of the Abbey of Gethsemani).**

monastery in 1950 at the age of twenty, Waddell chose to become a choir monk and was first exposed to Gregorian chant. As one of many novices who entered Gethsemani after World War II, Waddell (now Brother Chrysogonus) had the unique opportunity to study under Thomas Merton, at this time master of novices. Because of his interest in Catholic liturgy, Father Chrysogonus was sent to the College of San Anselmo in Rome for higher studies from 1962–1965, experiencing the unfolding of Vatican II firsthand. He became choirmaster at Gethsemani, and was chosen to serve on the Trappists' International Liturgy Committee.<sup>30</sup>

As choirmaster at Gethsemani, Chrysogonus was directly involved in the intricacies and problems in developing a new liturgy to express the renewed life within the Church yet retain the ideals of the contemplative life. He acknowledged that his fellow Trappists were slow to embrace radical liturgical change: "My community has never been particularly prone to jump the gun when it comes to the implementation of directives touching on the liturgy." With time, however, he wrote, liturgical change was implemented at Gethsemani "with a reasonable degree of peace, and even with a fair amount of understanding about the whys and wherefores of the change."<sup>31</sup> Chrysogonus experimented briefly in the jazz and folk idioms, composing some Communion hymns for

30. Much of this work is detailed in *Liturgy O.C.S.O.*, described in fn 32.

31. Chrysogonus Waddell, "A Local Compline Project," *Liturgy O.C.S.C.* 10, no. 2 (June 1976): 89.

guitar and organ, and even making a trip to Philadelphia to visit his former teacher Persichetti to discuss possible solutions. A setting for Holy Thursday was composed for the ceremonial washing of feet with a blues melody used for the refrain. Father Chrysogonus abandoned this style of music, though well-received by most of the community, because of its highly popular and hence transitory nature, and because of its apparent lack of textual emphasis which became the focus of Chrysogonus's compositional technique.

After proper consideration of his community's needs and tastes concerning liturgical music, Father Chrysogonus developed English psalmody that incorporated aspects of Gregorian chant while emphasizing the stress and syntax of the English language. As he composed through the liturgical year, he introduced chants to his community as they were finished, and sent copies to other U.S. Trappist monasteries to accept, incorporate, or reject. Many American Trappist monasteries, including New Melleray and several of Gethsemani's daughterhouses, utilized all or part of Father Chrysogonus's developing liturgy. Eventually Father Chrysogonus composed an entire cycle of chants for the liturgical year, producing an antiphony and gradual for his community.<sup>32</sup> As an expert in Cistercian chant history and medieval liturgical documents, Father Chrysogonus used not only the many medieval manuscripts available in Gethsemani's library, but made frequent trips to Europe to visit libraries and research centers to find and examine documents concerning Cistercian liturgy and its development.

Dr. Willi Apel, esteemed medieval musicologist, mentioned more than once the contributions of "the monk of Gethsemani" in the research of medieval chant and chant history. A frequent speaker at the International Medieval Congress held yearly at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan, where Gethsemani's medieval manuscripts are now housed, Father Chrysogonus frequently published in *Cistercian Publications*, and from 1966-1999 was editor of *Liturgy O.C.S.O.*, a quarterly magazine edited, printed, and distributed from Gethsemani. By his death at age seventy-eight, he had written five books and over 175 articles.<sup>33</sup>

The chief function of music for the contemplative order, according to Father Chrysogonus, was to help each monk make deeper contact with the

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32. Some of the details of Father Chrysogonus's compositional technique, as well as issues related to post-Vatican II Trappist liturgical experimentation, can be found in *Liturgy O.C.S.O.*, a journal edited by Father Chrysogonus, now available online through Western Michigan University at <http://digitalcollections-wmich.cdmhost.com/cdm/search/collection/p15032coll3>.

33. A partial list of his writings appears as "Bibliography: Waddell, Chrysogonus" in CISTOPEDIA/Encyclopædia Cisterciensis: <http://www.cistopedia.org/index.php?id=7560>.



Gethsemani Abbey Church, Bardstown, Kentucky; left, Trappists in the church, circa 1945; right, contemporary church depicting renovation completed in 1967 (Images courtesy of Abbey of Gethsemani and Father Patrick Anderson, respectively).

sacred text. This implied that music would spring directly from the text; inevitably free rhythm would have to prevail over metrical music. Gregorian notation served this purpose perfectly, as opposed to the obvious strictness in rhythm imposed by the bar-lines of modern notation. Chrysogonus made clear in his writings that both his community's needs and the inherent musical possibilities were reasons for his choice of Gregorian notation as his mode of composition:

In theory, I should think that the standard modern notation in general use would be the most practical form of notation. It's the form of notation familiar to most people who read music; and it is flexible enough to translate with reasonable accuracy the musical phenomena it is meant to portray. But in the concrete, Gregorian notation serves the purposes of my own particular community much better, in most instances, than modern notation. The vast bulk of the music we sing (and we sing a great deal) is in free rhythm; and the general idiom has a fair degree of continuity with that of the traditional Gregorian repertory; so that from the standpoint of "pictography," chant notation seems better suited than modern notation to translate into graphic signs the musical phenomenon. It is an embarrassing fact, too, that very few of us are really familiar

with modern notation; and newcomers to Gethsemani seem to have little difficulty in getting familiar with the older notation! In general, anything composed in modern metrical form (most of our hymns, for instance) appears on a five-line staff. But for the type of music we sing, and because of the particular historical situation of this particular community, chant notation seems to work best—at least for the time being.<sup>34</sup>

In another article, Father Chrysogonus tried to dispel attempts to label him and his work as conservative modernism:

The question of music notation was problematic. I have a horror of adaptation of Gregorian chant as a general principle; and I knew that, were I to opt for Gregorian over modern notation, I would be branded by many as a composer of Gregorian melodies in English. On the other hand, many of the brethren were already comfortable with Gregorian notation, and only two or three were really familiar with modern notation. Further, Gregorian notation was usually adequate as a means of expressing the sort of music I was shaping up. I decided that for our hymns (most of which are metrical) and for music composed according to a metrical pattern, we would use modern notation. Chant notation was to be only a provisional measure; but even newcomers seem to prefer it as being easier and more “pictographic” than modern notation, so that a temporary expedient has become a quasi-permanent solution. Under no conditions would I recommend this solution as suitable for the average parish or for monasteries which depend on music publishers for large portions of the local repertory. But for us, in our particular circumstances, it works.<sup>35</sup>

Gethsemani’s preference for Gregorian notation was in keeping with the Trappist ideals of simplicity, sparseness, and poverty. The musical adaptation also aligned with Vatican II which like previous liturgical documents, gave pride of place to Gregorian chant.<sup>36</sup> Finally, Father Chrysogonus wanted to provide as little distraction as possible in his community’s shift toward English in the liturgy, and felt that control over the variety and the amount of musical embellishments was important. Though Gethsemani lacked a formal committee or voting process to decide on post-Vatican II liturgical music, as choir-master, Father Chrysogonus was attentive to the needs and interests of the monks, and frequent discourse and discussion with his brother monks during this transitional period assisted him in his compositions and musical choices.

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34. Chrysogonus Waddell, “A Local Compline Project,” *Liturgy O.C.S.C.* 10, no. 2 (June 1976): 103-104.

35. Chrysogonus Waddell, “Liturgy of the Hours at Gethsemani,” in *Simple gifts*, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: The Liturgical Conference, 1974), 114.

36. Eden, “The Effect of Vatican II,” 89.

Ad Magnificat.

Añã.  
j. T.



AGNIFI-CÁVIT Sanctum su - um Dó - minus,  
et dedit il - li sci - énti - am Sanctó - rum, ut  
consumma-rén-tur in bonum ó - pe - ra e - jus,  
et pax De - i super e - um in æ - té - rnum.  
E u o u a e.

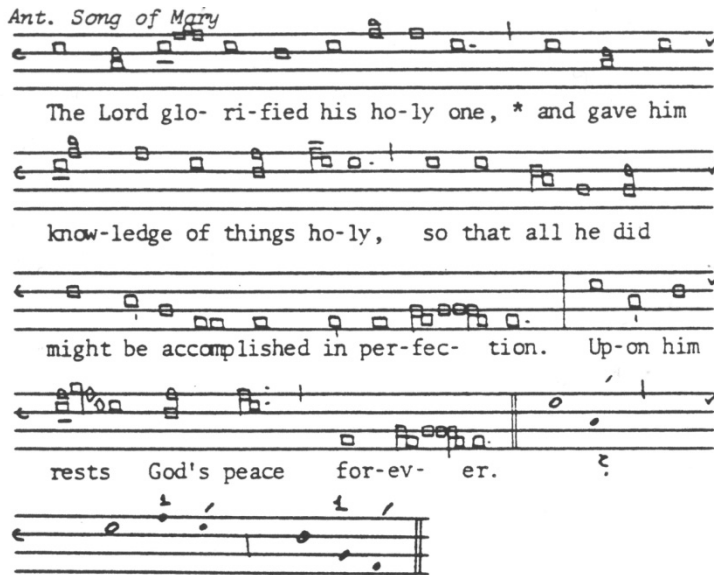
*Antiphonarii Cisterciensis, Magnificat, Vespers I, Feast of St. Bernard (Images courtesy of the author unless noted).*

While providing a full account of Father Chrysogonus's English chant compositions is beyond the scope of this article, a few musical examples are necessary. The Latin Magnificat for the Feast of St. Bernard, a special feast for all Cistercians, was composed for Gethsemani's first vespers celebration. The Latin version is in the Dorian mode with the text consisting of fifty syllables. The ninety musical intervals place emphasis on the major second; the piece is rather melismatic (meaning many notes to one word) with conjunct motion.

In his original translation, Father Chrysogonus used the Mixolydian mode (if one plays all the white keys on the piano from g to G, that is, the medieval Mixolydian scale). He set sixty-four musical intervals to forty syllables, emphasizing the perfect prime and major second musical intervals (see below p. 92).

When Father Chrysogonus revised the antiphonary in the late 1970s, he had found a better translation of the text and decided to compose a new melody. Though the forty syllables remain, the number of musical intervals changed to fifty-two, making the music more neumatic (meaning a few notes to one word) than melismatic. Emphasis is still on conjunct motion. The leap of a fifth on "glorified" brings about an entirely different effect than the other two versions (see below p. 93).





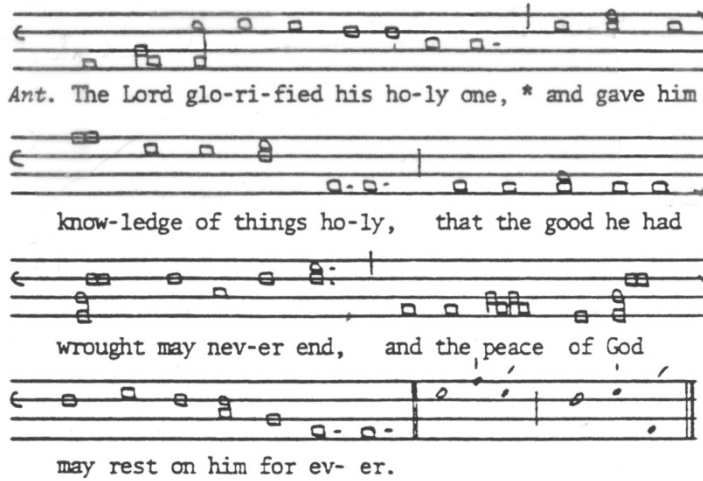
Father Chrysogonus, "Song of Mary," *Gethsemani Antiphonary* (1968), Vespers I, Feast of St. Bernard.

These examples provide only a small glimpse of the extent of the musical production and ingenuity Father Chrysogonus brought to Gethsemani's liturgy.<sup>37</sup> His influence on the liturgy was near total. Unlike other monasteries which utilized Protestant hymns or popular folk-music, Chrysogonus' compositions were nearly exclusively used for Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours at Gethsemani.

Outside of Gethsemani, his English psalmody and Gregorian notation style was adopted in various degrees and in various revisions by other Trappist and non-Trappist monasteries in the United States, effectively influencing the monastic liturgy throughout the country. His liturgical contributions remain in use at Gethsemani Abbey and numerous other monasteries. Many of the Gethsemani monks interviewed in the mid-1980s indicated great respect and esteem for Father Chrysogonus' work, especially his accomplishment in transferring the mood and flexibility of Gregorian chant into English psalmody. One novice indicated that, except for the use of the vernacular, he felt that the post-Vatican II music at Gethsemani very much resembled the centuries-old recitation of the Divine Office. A senior monk (who had

37. For many more musical examples and explanations on Father Chrysogonus's music, as well as an appendix explaining the essence of Father Chrysogonus's compositional technique, see Eden, "The Effect of Vatican II," 91-121, 142-144.

## SONG OF MARY



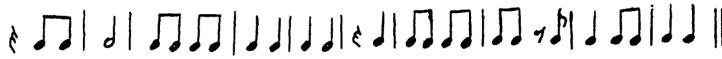
Father Chrysogonus, "Song of Mary," *Gethsemani Antiphony* (1981),  
 Vespers I, Feast of St. Bernard.

known Thomas Merton well) felt that Father Chrysogonus's music was a tribute to both historical and modern development in the post-Vatican II Church. The abbot at that time, Timothy Kelly, also indicated that Father Chrysogonus's engagement with both medieval Cistercian chant and modern liturgical Trappist music were intimately connected, enabling him to successfully bridge the two.<sup>38</sup>

### The Post-Vatican II Liturgy at New Melleray Abbey

While Father Chrysogonus composed liturgical music for the reformed Vatican II liturgy at Gethsemani Abbey, New Melleray immediately switched to English when the vernacular was approved for the liturgy (1965), embracing the folk-like, guitar-accompanied tunes popular at the time. Excited by the new freedom in music, New Melleray monks sang everything they could in the music of the 1960s. No one person was responsible for this immediate change; it was a community decision. As Father Chrysogonus' English litanies became available after 1968, New Melleray incorporated some but not all into their liturgy. The chief instrument of the era at New Melleray was the acoustic guitar. As an accompaniment to the Mass and the Office of Compline, the guitar stood out in the community as a novel monastic experiment.

38. Gethsemani Abbey monks, interviews with the author, October 8–11, 1983; transcript summaries of interviews not included in the author's thesis (in possession of author).



## Psalm 4

1 When I call, answer me, O God of justice;  
 2 O men, how long will your hearts be closed,  
 3 It is the Lord who grants favours to those whom he loves;  
 4 Fear him; do not sin: ponder on your bed and be still;  
 5 "What can bring us happiness?" many say.  
 6 You have put into my heart a greater joy  
 7 I will lie down in peace and sleep comes at once  
 8 Give praise to the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit,

1 from anguish you released me; have mercy and hear me!  
 2 will you love what is futile and seek what is false?  
 3 the Lord hears me when ever I call him.  
 4 make justice your sacrifice and trust in the Lord.  
 5 Lift up the light of your face on us, O Lord.  
 6 than they have from a hindrance of corn and new wine.  
 7 for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety.  
 both now and for ages unending. A - men.

Psalm 4 rhythmic signature and Joseph Gelineau's Psalm 4 from the New Melleray Abbey Office of Compline.

As an example of New Melleray's eclectic post-Vatican II musical style, the Mass became the primary recipient of experimentation, with nearly all of the music in the popular, folk-like idiom. The entrance hymn often had Lutheran or Methodist origins since Protestant hymns were the most-readily available for use. The Gloria consisted of five rotated pieces, three of which were in the folk idiom with the other two by Father Chrysogonus. Any psalms used in the Mass were either in the rhythmic psalmody of the French-born composer Joseph Gelineau or the simple psalm harmonies of Father Lucien Diess, C.S.Sp. The communion hymn was often one of Father Chrysogonus's series of antiphons and verses based on biblical texts, which the New Melleray monks set for guitar. The recessional hymn was again usually a Protestant hymn.<sup>39</sup>

Examples of the musical compositions utilized at New Melleray help to distinguish the abbey's approach from Gethsemani. An example of Gelineau's rhythmic psalmody can be seen in New Melleray's Office of Compline (see above). Gelineau's psalmody is based on the power of the accents of the

39. Interview with Brother Kevin Knox, cantor of New Melleray Abbey, Dubuque, Iowa, August 21, 1983.

"Oh be glad my soul," New Melleray Hymnal

COM A-8  
Mary

OH, BE GLAD MY SOUL, REJOICE

Based on Lk 1,46-51  
St. Joseph's Abbey, 1967

GENEVA 42 77.77.D.  
AINSI QUE LA BICHE RÉE  
Genevan Psalter, 1551, alt.

1-3 Oh, be glad, my soul re-joice In the great-ness  
1-3 of the Lord; Oh, my spir-it, leap for joy In my  
1-3 savior and my God! 1. He has dealt so gra-  
2. Blest for-ev-er shall  
3. Ev-er sure is his  
1- clous-ly, Looked on me so ten-der-ly; How  
2- I be, From this day, e-ter-nal-ly; This  
3-mer-cy, Ev-er-more so shall it be; These  
1- sub-lime what he has done, He, the Lord,  
2- his spo-ken word has done, He, the Lord,  
3- the deeds his arm has done, He, the Lord,  
1- the Might-y One!  
2- the Might-y One!  
3- the Might-y One! A - men.

A polyphonic hymn used in the New Melleray Abbey liturgy.

syllable to create its own rhythmic impetus. For instance, notice the rhythm which the first line of Psalm 4 creates from the syllables of the words. The darkened syllables emphasize the downbeats of each measure. The Office of Compline utilized this psalm and psalm 90 with the Gelineau rhythmic psalmody rather than Father Chrysogonus's psalm settings.

New Melleray's hymnal contained various hymn styles. Many of Father Chrysogonus's edited hymns were represented, along with some two-part hymns in modern notation. A greater volume of nineteenth-century hymns was found in the New Melleray hymnal than in Gethsemani's, including the "Thee" and "Thou" type of hymns which Father Chrysogonus tended to



**New Melleray Abbey Church, Dubuque, Iowa; top, Trappists in the church, circa 1945; bottom, contemporary church depicting renovation completed in 1976 (Images in public domain).**

avoid. The hymn in F major on p. 95 was one of the few polyphonic (many-voiced) compositions used at New Melleray. The majority of movement between the voices is parallel, with similar motion frequently found as well. The use of the third and sixth intervals predominates.

The use of Gelineau's and Diess's psalmody, along with a number of nineteenth-century hymns and even Latin chant, distinguished the New

Melleray post-Vatican II liturgy from that of Gethsemani's exclusive use of Father Chrysogonus's English chant style. New Melleray utilized the original 1968 English psalmody composed by Father Chrysogonus, but did not incorporate any of his later revisions into their liturgy.

Interviews with New Melleray's monks in 1983 revealed diverse responses and acceptance of the post-Vatican II liturgical changes experienced in the monastery.<sup>40</sup> Among Trappists who entered New Melleray shortly after World War II's end, many embraced both the quiet, reflective Latin liturgy of their early years in the monastery and the English-language liturgy with modern hymns and musical compositions. One choir monk who arrived at New Melleray in 1948 admitted "missing" Gregorian chant, but greatly appreciated the use of the vernacular language in the prayers of the Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours. Another laybrother at New Melleray who had served in the Air Force as a cook in World War II and entered the monastery in 1950, regretted the loss of a rules-based monastic order, which he found comforting and useful. For him, the shifting liturgical life of the monastery created unease.

## Conclusion

Though both Gethsemani and New Melleray abbeys utilized the English psalmody of Father Chrysogonus in their liturgies, Gethsemani used it almost exclusively, while New Melleray incorporated the psalmody into their praying of the Liturgy of the Hours while giving the Mass a more popular folk-like style. Each monastery developed a liturgy fitting the traditions and needs of its community. Surprisingly, Gethsemani's monks in the early 1980s were fairly young, yet preferred the musical tradition closest to medieval chant, while New Melleray's older community preferred a more popular approach, often with guitar accompaniment. The achievements of Father Chrysogonus Waddell within Trappist liturgy and music are substantial. His work in developing a viable and working liturgy in the English language yet in the Gregorian musical tradition was itself a major accomplishment. Since the liturgy is the lifeblood of any monastery, both Gethsemani and New Melleray developed a post-Vatican II liturgy supporting, encouraging, and embodying the monks' particular community.

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40. New Melleray monks, interviews with the author, September 2–4, 1983; see Eden, "The Effect of Vatican II," 131–133.