

## Liturgy of the Future... Wonderful Things to Come

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In 1903, fifteen years before the diocese was a half century old, Pope Pius X succeeded Leo XIII and took for his motto "To restore all things in Christ", indicating thus the direction which the Church was to take and would continue to take throughout the 20th century and beyond.

It was to be, with his blessing and inspiration, an epoch of renewal, of a return to the source, of a tireless search for wholeness. And the first resource to be tapped for this renewal was the liturgy.

Three months after his election, Pope Pius X issued the document on Church Music at which the cynics laughed with a paraphrase of an antique head line, to the effect that Rome huddles while the world burns. It must have disappointed very many that the first public document of the great Leo's successor engaged the Church's attention on such a "marginal" business as the music of her worship.

Yet, hidden away in the preamble of this unassuming *Motu Proprio* was a sentence which,

taken seriously, was revolutionary, initiating a chain reaction which led at last to Vatican II's momentous Constitution on the Liturgy.

*This is the sentence:* "Filled as we are with a most ardent desire to see the true Christian spirit flourish in every respect and be preserved by all the faithful, we deem it necessary to provide before aught else for the sanctity and dignity of the temple, in which the faithful assemble for no other object than that of acquiring this spirit from its loftiest and indispensable fount, which is the active participation in the most holy mysteries and in the public and solemn prayer of the Church."

There it is, a truly magisterial sentence, looking bland and mild enough when it first appeared in 1903, but profoundly radical and germinal, as the evidence of our century proves it to have been. The first response to the *Motu Proprio* was not so much to this sentence as it was to implementing its provisions for the promoting of Gregorian Chant and the purifying of church music.

The Church in Rochester



Prof. Eugene Bonn

took active steps to obey its prescriptions.

The ground had already been prepared in the earlier years. Bishop McQuaid brought back with him from Rome, when he returned from Vatican Council I, a whole sheaf of new music of the Cecilian style which, especially in northern Europe was blazing the trail for a more sincere and authentic kind of church music than the operatic and theatrical styles then in

vogue among choirs. He gave it to his Cathedral choir and expected it to be used.

Before long he began to look for a new Cathedral organist and choirmaster. He found one in Professor Eugene Bonn, a Bavarian-born and European-trained musician and composer. From 1888 to 1928 in St. Andrew's Seminary, and from 1893 to 1903 in St. Bernard's Seminary, this exemplary and dedicated musician influenced a whole generation of Rochester priests.

As the organist and music-director for both St. Patrick's Cathedral and the two Seminaries during the first 35 years of the Diocese, Professor Bonn had access to all he needed to help create a vivid liturgy in the mother church. Pope Pius X's vision of the people's active participation in the Mass could never materialize without competent choirs. Bishop McQuaid knew this, and so the example of the Cathedral was to set the pace for the other parishes.

Indeed it did. A fine tradition was established, which served the Rochester Diocese well over many of its earlier decades. The

Cathedral became a mecca for many who came from far and near to nourish themselves on great church music.

This was especially true after St. Bernard's Seminary was founded in 1893, and its students could assist both with ceremonies and music at the Cathedral's major functions.

In 1903, the same year as the *Motu Proprio* on music was published, Father John Petter was appointed to take Professor Bonn's place at St. Bernard's Seminary. The Professor would still continue as the organist and choir director of the Cathedral, and as the teacher of church music at St. Andrew's Seminary. The present writer succeeded him in St. Andrew's, in 1929.

Father Petter was active in his post for over 30 years. He received his musical training in European centers, and was in touch with some of the new currents of liturgical reform. He marched along the trail blazed by Professor Bonn, and together they often joined forces to organize a splendid, alive liturgy on the greater feasts and especially during Holy Week.

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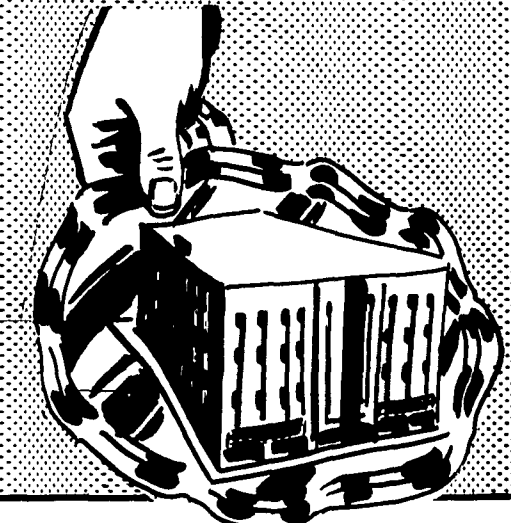
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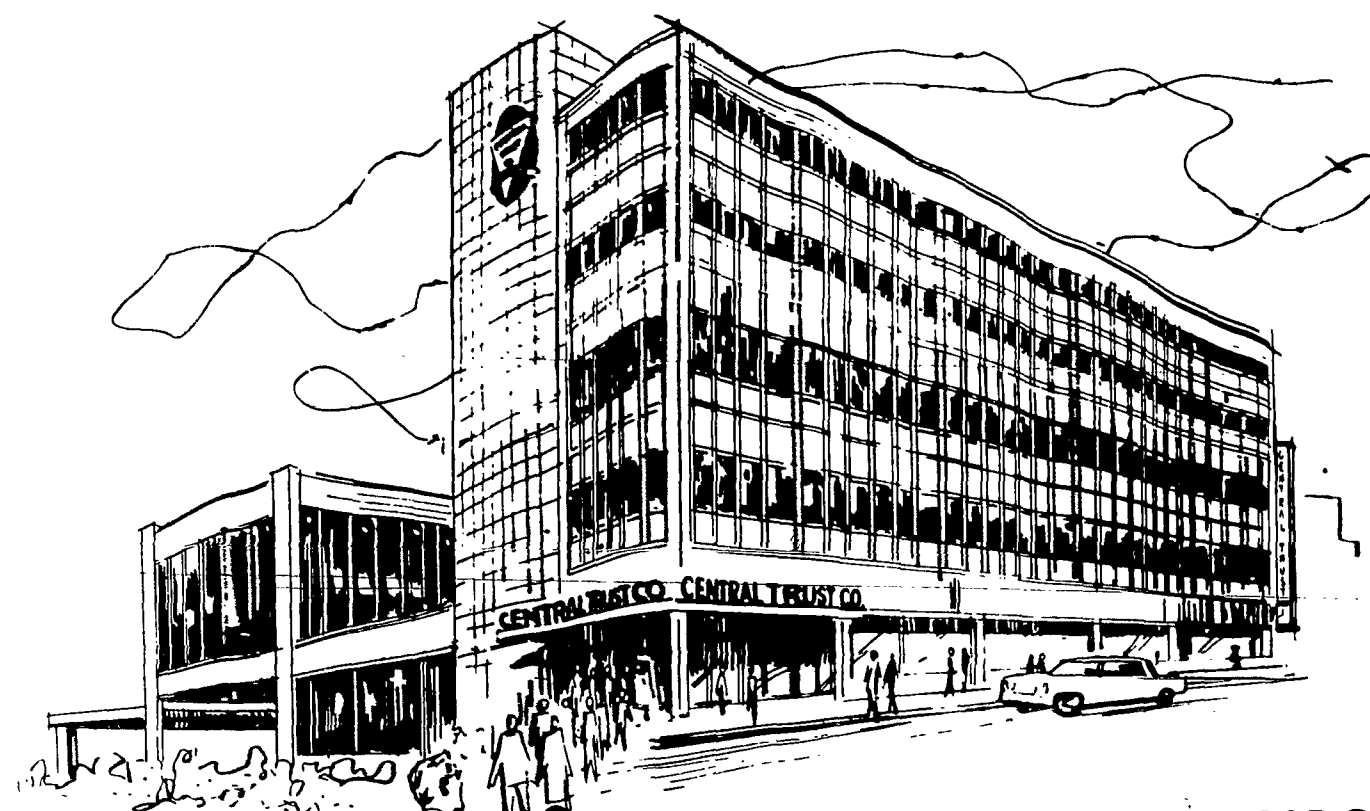
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