



Music as a Communicative Act of Faith: A Theological Interpretation of Liturgical Participation

Paweł Piotrowski, PhD
University of the National Education Commission, Kraków, Poland
ORCID: 0000-0003-4565-0317
Email: p_piotrowski1@o2.pl

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Abstract

This article develops a theological interpretation of liturgical music as a communicative act of faith. While sacred music has traditionally been examined from historical, aesthetic, pastoral, and liturgical perspectives, its communicative significance has received comparatively limited attention within contemporary theology. The study argues that liturgical music should not be understood merely as an artistic accompaniment to worship or as a vehicle for transmitting religious content. Rather, it functions as a communicative act through which the worshipping community responds to divine revelation, participates in the mystery celebrated, and realizes ecclesial communion.

The analysis begins by examining the theological foundations of liturgical participation, with particular attention to the concept of *participatio actuosa* as articulated by the Second Vatican Council and developed in contemporary liturgical theology. It subsequently explores the symbolic and sacramental character of liturgical signs and investigates the distinctive mode of signification proper to music. Drawing upon the works of Romano Guardini, Alexander Schmemmann, Aidan Kavanagh, Joseph Ratzinger, Karl Rahner, Jeremy Begbie, Don Saliers, and other contemporary theologians, the article proposes that music occupies a constitutive place within the communicative structure of Christian worship.

The central contribution of the study is the development of a model of musical faith communication consisting of six interrelated dimensions: Divine Revelation, Liturgical Proclamation, Musical Mediation, Communal Participation, Confession of Faith, and Ecclesial Communion. Within this framework, congregational singing is interpreted not merely as the expression of previously held beliefs but as a performative act through which faith becomes audible, embodied, and communal.

The article concludes that liturgical music functions as a privileged medium of faith communication, contributing directly to the formation of ecclesial identity and communion. By integrating insights from liturgical theology, ecclesiology, theology of revelation, and communication theory, the study offers a new perspective on the theological significance of sacred music within Christian worship.

Keywords: liturgical music; communication theology; faith communication; ecclesial communion; *participatio actuosa*; sacred music; liturgical theology; congregational singing

Introduction

The relationship between music and Christian worship has occupied a significant place in theological reflection since the earliest centuries of the Church. From the psalmody of ancient Israel and the hymnody of the early Christian communities to contemporary liturgical practice, music has consistently accompanied the Church's prayer, contributed to the formation of religious identity, and preserved the memory of faith through successive generations (Piotrowski, 2022, pp. 5-6). Yet despite its enduring presence, the theological significance of music remains a subject of ongoing discussion. While sacred music has been extensively studied from historical, liturgical, musicological, and pastoral perspectives, less attention has been devoted to its interpretation within the broader framework of communication theology.

Contemporary scholarship increasingly recognizes that Christian worship cannot be understood merely as a sequence of ritual actions or as the expression of individual religious sentiments. Rather, the liturgy constitutes a complex communicative event in which divine revelation, ecclesial tradition, symbolic action, and communal participation converge (Kavanagh, 1984; Chauvet, 1995; Schmemmann, 1986). Within this context, music appears not simply as an artistic accompaniment to worship but as one of the media through which communication occurs. The question therefore arises whether music should be understood merely as a vehicle for conveying theological content or whether it performs a more fundamental role within the communicative structure of faith.

The importance of this question becomes evident when considering the central place accorded to sacred music in the Church's liturgical tradition. The Second Vatican Council describes sacred music as a "necessary and integral part of the solemn liturgy" (Second Vatican Council, 1963). This statement implies that music belongs not to the periphery of worship but to its very structure. The Council's teaching reflects a long theological tradition in which music has been regarded as a privileged means of praising God, expressing faith, and fostering communal participation (St. Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 29; Augustine, 1991; Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II q. 91, a. 2., John Paul II, 2003).

At the same time, modern discussions of liturgical music frequently oscillate between two opposing tendencies. On the one hand, music is often evaluated primarily according to aesthetic criteria. Debates concerning style, artistic quality, performance practice, and musical taste tend to dominate both academic and pastoral discourse. On the other hand, music is sometimes reduced to a functional instrument whose value depends solely upon its capacity to support congregational participation or communicate doctrinal content. Both approaches, although valuable in certain respects, risk overlooking the deeper theological significance of music within Christian worship.

Recent contributions to the theology of music have sought to overcome this reductionism. Jeremy Begbie (2000, 2007) has demonstrated that music possesses a distinctive capacity to illuminate theological realities through its own formal and relational structures. Don Saliers (2007) has emphasized the role of music as a mode of theological practice through which communities learn to pray and worship. Likewise, scholars such as David Brown (2000), Joseph Gelineau (1964), and Erik Routley (1982) have explored the ways in which music contributes to religious understanding, communal formation, and liturgical participation.

Within liturgical theology, parallel developments have highlighted the relational and communicative dimensions of worship. Guardini (1998) understood the liturgy as an objective communal reality that transcends individual subjectivity. Schmemmann (1973, 1986) interpreted worship as participation in the Kingdom of God and as the primary manifestation of the Church's identity. Kavanagh (1984) emphasized the ecclesial character of liturgical celebration, while Chauvet (1995) drew attention to the symbolic mediation through which faith is

communicated and enacted. These approaches suggest that worship itself may be understood as a communicative event rooted in God's self-disclosure and humanity's response.

Despite these significant developments, relatively little attention has been devoted to the specific question of how music functions within this communicative framework. Existing studies frequently examine music as a liturgical sign, as an aesthetic phenomenon, or as a pastoral resource. Less frequently do they investigate the possibility that music itself may constitute a communicative act through which faith is enacted, confessed, and shared within the ecclesial community.

The present study seeks to address this gap by proposing a theological interpretation of liturgical music as a communicative act of faith. The central thesis of the article is that sacred music should not be understood merely as an artistic element of worship or as a vehicle for communicating religious ideas. Rather, it functions as a communicative practice through which the worshipping community responds to divine revelation, participates in the mystery celebrated, and realizes ecclesial communion.

This argument is grounded in three interconnected assumptions. First, Christian faith possesses an inherently communicative structure because it arises from God's self-communication and is expressed through human response (Rahner, 1978; Second Vatican Council, 1965). Second, liturgy constitutes a privileged communicative event in which revelation and faith become sacramentally present (Kavanagh, 1984; Chauvet, 1995). Third, music participates directly in this communicative process by mediating participation, confession, memory, and communion (Begbie, 2000; Saliers, 2007).

Methodologically, the study is primarily theological in character. It employs theological and liturgical analysis grounded in conciliar documents, major works of contemporary liturgical theology, and significant contributions to the theology of music. Rather than adopting a single communication theory, the study draws selectively on performative and relational concepts developed in communication theory and related disciplines, particularly those that illuminate communication as action, participation, and the formation of communal meaning. These perspectives are employed heuristically to clarify the communicative dimensions of liturgical music, while the argument itself remains fundamentally theological and interprets music within the context of Christian worship rather than through secular theories alone.

The article proceeds in four stages. First, it examines the theological foundations of liturgical participation and the communicative character of worship. Second, it analyses music as a liturgical sign and explores its distinctive mode of symbolic mediation. Third, it develops the central claim that music functions as a communicative act of faith and proposes a model of musical faith communication. Finally, it investigates the role of music in the formation of ecclesial communion and considers the implications of this perspective for contemporary liturgical theology.

By bringing together insights from liturgical theology, ecclesiology, theology of revelation, and theology of music, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of sacred music as an integral dimension of Christian worship. It argues that liturgical music constitutes a privileged communicative act of faith through which the Church believes, prays, communicates, and becomes what it is called to be: a communion of faith gathered in response to God's self-revelation.

Liturgical Participation in Theological Perspective

This chapter examines liturgical participation as a fundamental theological category rather than a merely practical or pastoral concept. Beginning with the teaching of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* on *participatio actuosa*, it shows that participation in worship is rooted in the believer's incorporation into the action of Christ and the communal life of the Church. The chapter then develops the ecclesial and communicative dimensions of participation, preparing the ground for a theological understanding of music as a privileged form of active, communal, and faith-filled engagement in the liturgy.

Participatio Actuosa in Sacrosanctum Concilium

The concept of participation occupies a central position in modern liturgical theology. Although concerns regarding the active involvement of the faithful had already emerged within the Liturgical Movement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it was the Second Vatican Council that provided the notion of participation with a systematic theological foundation. The Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* identifies the promotion of the "full, conscious, and active participation" (*participatio plena, conscia et actuosa*) of the faithful as one of the principal aims of liturgical renewal (Second Vatican Council, 1963).

The significance of this formulation extends far beyond questions of liturgical practice or ecclesiastical organization. The Council does not present participation merely as a pastoral strategy designed to increase the visible involvement of the faithful. Rather, participation is rooted in the theological nature of the liturgy itself. Because the liturgy is the action of Christ and His Body, the Church, believers are called not merely to observe its celebration but to enter into it as participants (Second Vatican Council, 1963).

The theological foundations of this perspective can be found in the work of Romano Guardini, one of the most influential figures of the Liturgical Movement. Guardini (1998) argues that the liturgy introduces believers into an objective order that transcends individual religious subjectivity. Worship is not a private expression of personal spirituality but participation in the prayer of the Church. The faithful therefore do not create the liturgy; they enter into a reality that precedes them and shapes them.

This insight significantly influenced subsequent liturgical theology. For Guardini, participation requires more than external activity. It demands attentiveness, receptivity, and openness to the symbolic world of worship. Genuine participation involves the whole person and seeks integration into the communal action of the Church. Such an understanding already anticipates later conciliar teaching concerning active participation.

Aidan Kavanagh (1984) develops this perspective by emphasizing the ecclesial character of liturgical participation. According to Kavanagh, worship is not primarily something performed by individuals but an event in which the Church manifests its identity as the people of God. Participation therefore signifies more than engagement in ritual actions. It involves incorporation into the ecclesial reality made present through worship.

Joseph Ratzinger (2000) further clarifies the meaning of *participatio actuosa* by criticizing interpretations that reduce participation to external activity. In his view, active participation cannot be equated with constant visible involvement or functional responsibility within the liturgy. Rather, authentic participation consists above all in entering into the action of Christ Himself. Interior engagement and spiritual receptivity are therefore as essential as external forms of participation.

This broader theological understanding has been echoed by numerous liturgical theologians. Nadolski (2006) argues that participation should be understood as a comprehensive engagement of the human person in the mystery of salvation celebrated in the liturgy. Similarly,

Świerzawski (1993) emphasizes that active participation is fundamentally rooted in the believer's relationship with Christ and the Church rather than in external liturgical functions alone.

The Council's teaching on participation thus reveals an important theological principle. Liturgy is not something that happens before the faithful but something in which they are called to share. Participation signifies entry into a communal and sacramental reality that transforms individual believers while deepening ecclesial communion. This understanding provides the foundation for examining the role of music within worship, since sacred music serves as one of the principal means through which active participation becomes possible and visible.

Participation as Ecclesial Action

The theological significance of participation becomes clearer when viewed through the lens of ecclesiology. The liturgy is not merely one activity among many within the life of the Church. According to *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, it is both the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed and the source from which all her power flows (Second Vatican Council, 1963). Participation in the liturgy therefore implies participation in the very life of the Church.

This ecclesial dimension has been extensively explored by contemporary theologians. Schmemmann (1973) argues that worship constitutes the primary manifestation of the Church as the Body of Christ. The Church is not first an institution that subsequently celebrates liturgy. Rather, it becomes visible and realizes its deepest identity through the act of worship. Participation in liturgy therefore signifies participation in the Church itself.

Kavanagh (1984) similarly maintains that liturgy is fundamentally ecclesial in nature. The gathered assembly does not simply express a pre-existing community but actively constitutes and renews ecclesial communion. Worship shapes ecclesial identity because it places believers within a shared act of praise, remembrance, and thanksgiving. Participation therefore possesses an inherently communal character.

The ecclesial significance of participation is closely related to the theological concept of *communio*. Following the Second Vatican Council, communion emerged as one of the central categories of Catholic ecclesiology (Ratzinger, 1996; Kasper, 2004). Communion refers not merely to institutional unity or social solidarity but to participation in the life of God through Christ and the Holy Spirit. The Church is fundamentally a communion established through God's self-giving and sustained through sacramental participation.

Within this framework, liturgical participation assumes a profoundly relational character. Believers participate not only in ritual actions but also in relationships. Through worship they are united with God and with one another. Participation therefore possesses both vertical and horizontal dimensions. It involves communion with God while simultaneously fostering communion among members of the Church.

This dual orientation is reflected in the very structure of liturgical celebration. Prayer, proclamation, sacramental rites, and communal responses all presuppose the presence of a gathered people responding together to God's initiative. The faithful do not worship as isolated individuals but as members of a community called into communion.

The communal nature of participation has been emphasized within Polish liturgical theology as well. Nadolski (2006) argues that liturgy continually forms ecclesial consciousness by drawing believers into a shared experience of worship. Similarly, Pawlak (2001) notes that communal participation is particularly evident in those dimensions of worship, such as congregational singing, that require collective engagement and shared expression.

Consequently, participation should be understood as ecclesial action. Through participation, believers become active members of a worshipping community. The liturgy not only expresses communion but contributes to its realization. This insight is particularly significant for understanding sacred music, which possesses a unique capacity to foster and embody communal participation.

Worship as Communication Between God and Humanity

The theological foundations of participation ultimately rest upon the dialogical structure of revelation and faith. Christian theology understands revelation not simply as the communication of information about God but as God's self-disclosure and invitation to communion. Consequently, worship may be interpreted as a privileged form of communication between God and humanity.

The Second Vatican Council presents revelation as a process through which God addresses humanity in words and deeds and invites human beings into fellowship with Himself (Second Vatican Council, 1965). Revelation therefore possesses an inherently communicative structure. God's initiative seeks a human response, and faith emerges as that response.

Karl Rahner (1978) develops this understanding through his theology of divine self-communication. God does not merely reveal truths; He gives Himself. Revelation therefore establishes a relationship rather than merely conveying information. Human beings encounter God not as an object of knowledge but as a living presence who calls them into communion.

Hans Urs von Balthasar (1982) similarly interprets revelation in dramatic and relational terms. The history of salvation unfolds as a dialogue between divine initiative and human freedom. Faith is therefore participatory rather than merely cognitive. It involves entry into a relationship initiated by God and sustained through ongoing communication.

Within this theological framework, worship becomes a privileged locus of encounter. Schmemmann (1986) argues that liturgy is the place where the Church responds to God's self-disclosure through prayer, praise, thanksgiving, and sacramental participation. Worship therefore possesses a fundamentally dialogical structure. It is neither a human monologue addressed to God nor a passive reception of divine action. Rather, it is an event of communication in which God and humanity enter into relationship.

Chauvet (1995) further develops this perspective by emphasizing the symbolic mediation through which communication occurs in the liturgy. Human beings encounter God through words, gestures, rituals, sacramental signs, and communal practices. Communication is therefore embodied and symbolic rather than purely conceptual. Worship operates within a symbolic order that enables participation in realities transcending ordinary experience.

This communicative interpretation of worship has significant implications for understanding music. If liturgy itself possesses a dialogical structure, music cannot be regarded merely as an aesthetic accompaniment to communication already taking place through words and rituals. Rather, music participates directly in the communicative event. Through song, the faithful receive, interpret, and respond to God's self-disclosure.

Saliers (2007) argues that sacred music functions as one of the symbolic languages through which worship communicates theological meaning. Similarly, Begbie (2000) emphasizes that music possesses a distinctive capacity to mediate participation and communal engagement. Music therefore contributes not only to the beauty of worship but also to its communicative effectiveness.

The analysis developed in this chapter thus establishes the theological foundations for the study's central argument. Participation is fundamentally relational, ecclesial, and communicative. Worship constitutes a privileged event of communication between God and humanity. Within this communicative structure, music emerges as a particularly significant means through which participation becomes embodied, communal, and expressive. The following chapter therefore examines more closely the nature of music as a liturgical sign and its role within the symbolic structure of worship.

Music as a Liturgical Sign

This chapter examines sacred music within the broader theology of liturgical signs. If Christian worship is sacramental in character, then music cannot be understood merely as sound added to ritual action, but as one of the symbolic forms through which the mystery of faith is mediated and received. The following analysis considers the sacramental structure of liturgical signs, the distinctive nature of musical signification, and the theological reasons why sacred music should be interpreted not simply as an aesthetic element of worship, but as a symbolic mediation of faith.

The Sacramental Character of Liturgical Signs

The theological significance of liturgical music can only be adequately understood within the broader framework of the Church's theology of signs. Christian worship is fundamentally sacramental in character. Divine grace is communicated not through purely interior or abstract means but through visible, audible, and tangible realities that mediate the mystery of salvation. The liturgy therefore operates through a complex network of signs that enable believers to encounter and participate in God's saving action.

The foundations of this understanding may be traced to Augustine's theology of signs. In *De doctrina christiana*, Augustine (1995) distinguishes between things (*res*) and signs (*signa*), defining a sign as a reality that points beyond itself to something else. For Augustine, signs do not merely convey information; they guide human beings toward deeper realities that transcend immediate perception. This insight profoundly influenced subsequent Christian theology and laid the groundwork for sacramental thought.

Medieval theology further developed Augustine's insights. Aquinas understands the sacraments as efficacious signs that both signify and communicate grace (*Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 60). A sacramental sign is not simply symbolic in a conventional sense. It participates in the reality it signifies because God chooses to communicate His grace through material and historical realities. The sacramental principle therefore reveals a fundamental characteristic of Christian worship: divine communication occurs through embodied mediation.

Contemporary liturgical theology has extended this sacramental perspective beyond the individual sacraments to encompass the entire liturgical celebration. Guardini (1998) argues that liturgy constitutes a symbolic world through which believers enter into participation in divine realities. Similarly, Chauvet (1995) emphasizes that Christian existence is mediated through a symbolic order composed of words, gestures, rituals, and communal practices. The liturgy does not merely communicate theological concepts; it forms believers through participation in a symbolic universe.

Within this framework, liturgical signs perform an essential communicative function. They mediate God's self-disclosure while simultaneously enabling the community's response. As Kavanagh (1984) observes, worship is not simply a collection of symbolic elements but a

coherent sacramental event in which signs, actions, and participants together constitute the liturgical act. The meaning of liturgical signs therefore emerges through participation rather than detached observation.

This understanding has important implications for both liturgical theology and liturgical practice. If music belongs intrinsically to the symbolic and sacramental structure of worship, it should be interpreted as an essential mode of participation in the communicative event of the liturgy rather than as an optional aesthetic addition.

Music occupies a distinctive place within this sacramental structure. Unlike visual symbols or ritual gestures, music communicates through sound unfolding in time. Yet precisely because of its temporal, relational, and participatory character, music possesses remarkable theological potential. It mediates dimensions of worship that cannot be fully expressed through conceptual language alone.

Consequently, sacred music should not be understood as an external embellishment added to an already complete liturgical celebration. Rather, it belongs to the symbolic and sacramental structure through which the Church encounters and communicates the mystery of faith.

The Unique Nature of Musical Signification

The theological interpretation of music requires reflection upon the distinctive manner in which music signifies. Unlike verbal language, music generally does not communicate through precise conceptual propositions. A melody cannot ordinarily be translated into a single definable statement. Yet music undeniably communicates meaning and possesses the capacity to shape perception, memory, emotion, and communal identity.

This apparent paradox has generated extensive discussion within philosophy, musicology, and theology. The question is not whether music communicates but how it communicates. Musical meaning differs fundamentally from verbal meaning because it emerges through relationships of sound, rhythm, duration, expectation, and participation.

Jeremy Begbie has been particularly influential in exploring these issues from a theological perspective. In *Theology, Music and Time*, Begbie (2000) argues that music discloses aspects of reality inaccessible to purely conceptual discourse. Musical processes reveal relationships of tension and resolution, anticipation and fulfilment, diversity and unity. Such patterns provide important resources for theological reflection because they resonate with central themes of Christian faith.

Similarly, in *Resounding Truth*, Begbie (2007) contends that music should not be viewed merely as a vehicle for theological content. Rather, musical activity itself participates in the communication of truth. Music does not simply illustrate theological ideas but contributes to theological understanding through its own distinctive mode of signification.

Don Saliers (2007) likewise emphasizes that music communicates through participation rather than explanation. Sacred music engages dimensions of human experience often inaccessible to abstract discourse. Through music, theological meaning becomes embodied in communal practice. The faithful do not merely think about faith; they encounter and experience it through musical participation.

Theological reflection on music has also benefited from the work of David Brown (2000), who argues that artistic forms frequently disclose dimensions of religious meaning that exceed the capacities of propositional language. Music, in particular, possesses the ability to communicate through suggestion, resonance, and symbolic association. Its significance often emerges through layers of meaning that cannot be reduced to explicit verbal statements. While

alternative perspectives rightly examine sacred music from aesthetic, musicological, historical, or cultural viewpoints, the present study deliberately limits its scope to theological interpretation. This methodological focus does not deny the value of those approaches but seeks to clarify the distinctive communicative and ecclesial significance of music within the liturgy.

Within the liturgy, musical signification acquires an additional dimension. Sacred music rarely functions as an autonomous artistic object. Its meaning is shaped by its integration into ritual action. Gregorian chant, hymnody, psalmody, acclamations, and liturgical responses derive their significance from their relationship to prayer, proclamation, and sacramental celebration. As Gelineau (1964) argues, liturgical music cannot be separated from the worshipping community and the ritual context within which it is performed.

This observation highlights an important distinction between aesthetic and liturgical approaches to music. In a concert setting, music may be appreciated primarily as an artistic object. Within the liturgy, however, music functions as a sign embedded within a larger communicative and sacramental event. Its purpose is not simply aesthetic contemplation but participation in worship.

The distinctive character of musical signification therefore lies precisely in its capacity to unite cognition, emotion, embodiment, memory, and communal participation. This multidimensional influence of music has also been observed in educational and therapeutic contexts, where musical activities support cognitive functioning, emotional regulation, communication, and social participation among individuals with intellectual disabilities (Piotrowski, 2026). Through these dimensions, music communicates meanings that transcend the limitations of purely conceptual discourse and becomes uniquely suited to the symbolic world of liturgical worship.

Sacred Music Beyond Aesthetic Function

One of the most persistent tendencies within modern discussions of sacred music is the reduction of music to an aesthetic phenomenon. Debates frequently focus on questions of artistic quality, stylistic preference, performance standards, or musical taste. Although such concerns are not unimportant, they risk obscuring the theological significance of music within Christian worship.

The Church's liturgical tradition consistently resists a purely aesthetic interpretation. This perspective is also reflected in contemporary Polish liturgical scholarship, which emphasizes that the inculturation of liturgical music must preserve its theological, liturgical, and ecclesial identity rather than conform uncritically to contemporary musical trends (Wiśniewski, 2021). The Second Vatican Council famously declares that sacred music is a "necessary and integral part of the solemn liturgy" (Second Vatican Council, 1963). This statement indicates that music belongs to the very structure of worship rather than functioning as an optional embellishment.

The postconciliar instruction *Musicae Sacram* reinforces this perspective by emphasizing the liturgical function of music and its role in fostering active participation among the faithful (Sacred Congregation of Rites, 1967). Music is evaluated not solely according to artistic standards but according to its capacity to serve the liturgical action and the prayer of the Church.

Joseph Ratzinger offers one of the most influential contemporary critiques of aesthetic reductionism. In *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, he argues that sacred music cannot be understood merely in terms of artistic excellence or emotional impact (Ratzinger, 2000). While beauty remains essential, liturgical music ultimately serves a theological purpose. Its significance derives from its participation in the worship of God and the sanctification of believers.

John Paul II develops a similar argument in his Chirograph for the Centenary of *Tra le Sollecitudini* (John Paul II, 2003). The Pope distinguishes sacred music from religious music in general by emphasizing its intimate connection with liturgical action. Music becomes sacred not simply because it treats religious themes but because it participates in the prayer and worship of the Church.

This theological perspective has been echoed by numerous contemporary scholars. Saliers (2007) argues that sacred music should be understood primarily as a form of theological practice rather than artistic performance. Likewise, Begbie (2000, 2023) insists that the deepest significance of music emerges not from aesthetic appreciation alone but from participation in realities disclosed through musical activity. In his more recent work, he further argues that the arts resist reductionist understandings of reality by opening participants to a richer and more expansive perception of God's presence and action in the world.

Begbie further argues that music possesses a distinctive performative force. Through processes such as tension and resolution, expectation and fulfilment, music does not merely illustrate theological ideas but actively shapes the listener's perception and participation. Within the liturgy, this performative character enables music to mediate the dynamics of faith in ways that conceptual language alone cannot achieve. Consequently, sacred music becomes not only a vehicle of theological meaning but also an event through which believers participate more deeply in the mystery being celebrated .

Polish liturgical theology has likewise emphasized the ecclesial and participatory dimensions of sacred music. Nadolski (2006) repeatedly stresses that music serves the liturgy by facilitating participation in the mystery being celebrated. Pawlak (2001) similarly argues that the value of sacred music cannot be measured solely according to artistic criteria because its primary purpose is liturgical and pastoral.

Consequently, the reduction of music to aesthetics fails to account for its full theological significance. Sacred music is not merely beautiful sound. It is a liturgical sign whose meaning emerges through its participation in worship. Its ultimate purpose is not entertainment or artistic admiration but the glorification of God and the sanctification of the faithful.

Music as a Symbolic Mediation of Faith

The preceding discussion permits a deeper understanding of music as a form of symbolic mediation. Within Christian worship, music does not simply accompany faith; it mediates faith. Through musical participation, believers encounter, express, and appropriate realities that transcend ordinary discourse.

Faith itself possesses a fundamentally symbolic structure. Christian belief is communicated not only through doctrinal formulations but also through narratives, rituals, images, gestures, and communal practices. Music belongs to this symbolic network and functions as one of the means through which the mystery of faith becomes accessible to human experience.

One of the most remarkable characteristics of music is its capacity to preserve and transmit communal memory. Sacred songs often outlive theological controversies, political changes, and cultural transformations. Through hymnody, chant, and liturgical song, communities remember God's saving acts and transmit the faith from one generation to another. Music also serves as a vehicle of cultural memory, preserving the legacy of composers and musical traditions across generations (Westermeyer, 1998; Saliers, 2007; Piotrowski, 2018, pp. 5-6).

Schmemmann (1986) emphasizes that Christian worship is fundamentally anamnetic. Recent Polish liturgical scholarship likewise emphasizes that anamnesis constitutes the fundamental

theological principle of the liturgical year, through which the saving mystery of Christ is made sacramentally present in the celebration (Brzeziński, 2022). The Church remembers not merely by recalling past events but by participating in their enduring significance. Music contributes to this process by transforming memory into lived experience. Through song, believers become participants in a tradition that transcends temporal boundaries.

Music also mediates faith through embodiment. Theological ideas become enacted through voice, breath, hearing, rhythm, and communal participation. As Begbie (2000) notes, music engages dimensions of human existence that cannot be separated into purely intellectual or emotional categories. Faith becomes embodied within musical practice.

Moreover, music mediates faith communally. Individual believers encounter not only their own religious experience but also the faith of the community. Through shared singing, personal belief becomes ecclesial confession. Music therefore functions as a bridge between individual experience and communal identity.

These observations prepare the way for the central argument of the present study. If music participates in the sacramental structure of liturgical signs, if it possesses a distinctive mode of signification, and if it functions as a symbolic mediation of faith, then it may be interpreted not merely as a sign but as a communicative act. The following chapter develops this claim by examining how music functions as a communicative act of faith within the worshipping community.

Music as a Communicative Act of Faith

This chapter develops the theological argument that sacred music should be understood not merely as an aesthetic addition to worship, but as a genuine communicative act of faith. Building on the previous discussion of music as a medium of communal meaning, the analysis now turns to the specifically ecclesial and liturgical context in which music participates in the dialogue between God and the believing community. Within Christian worship, singing becomes a form of response to divine revelation: it expresses, embodies, and performs faith in a communal and sacramental setting.

Communication and Faith

The theological interpretation of liturgical music as a communicative act of faith must begin with the communicative structure of revelation itself. Christian faith does not originate in a human attempt to reach the divine but in God's initiative of self-disclosure. Consequently, faith is not merely a set of beliefs concerning God but a response to God's self-communication. The relationship between revelation and faith is therefore fundamentally dialogical.

This perspective finds authoritative expression in the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*. Revelation is presented not simply as the transmission of truths about God but as God's personal self-disclosure through words and deeds directed toward communion with humanity (Second Vatican Council, 1965). The goal of revelation is therefore relational rather than merely informational. God reveals Himself in order to invite human beings into participation in His life.

Karl Rahner (1978) develops this insight through his influential concept of divine self-communication. According to Rahner, revelation reaches its fulfilment not in the communication of propositions but in God's gift of Himself. Human beings encounter God not merely as an object of knowledge but as the living source and horizon of existence. Faith therefore emerges

as the acceptance of God's self-gift and participation in the relationship established by divine initiative.

A similar emphasis appears in the theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar (1982), who interprets revelation in dramatic and relational terms. For Balthasar, the history of salvation unfolds as a dialogue between God's freedom and human response. Faith is not passive reception but active participation in the drama of God's self-disclosure. Revelation and faith therefore constitute interconnected dimensions of a communicative event.

Joseph Ratzinger (2004) likewise argues that Christian faith cannot be reduced to intellectual assent to doctrinal propositions. Rather, faith is grounded in encounter with the person of Jesus Christ. To believe means to entrust oneself to a relationship rather than merely to accept a system of ideas. Such an understanding highlights the inherently communicative character of faith and underscores its personal and ecclesial dimensions.

The liturgy occupies a privileged place within this communicative structure. As Kavanagh (1984) observes, liturgy is not merely a ritual framework within which doctrine is expressed but an event in which the Church participates in God's saving action. Similarly, Schmemmann (1973) understands worship as the meeting point between God's Kingdom and the gathered community of believers. Through liturgical celebration, revelation becomes present and effective within the life of the Church.

Music belongs intrinsically to this communicative event. Sacred music is not simply an aesthetic enhancement added to worship after its essential elements have already been established. Rather, it participates in the communicative process through which the Church receives and responds to God's self-disclosure. As Saliers (2007) argues, music functions as one of the symbolic languages of worship, enabling theological meaning to become embodied within communal practice.

The communicative significance of music derives from its ability to integrate dimensions of human experience often separated within conceptual discourse. Through melody, rhythm, tempo, and vocal expression, music engages intellect, memory, imagination, affectivity, and bodily participation simultaneously. Begbie (2000) argues that music possesses a unique capacity to disclose relational dimensions of reality that resonate profoundly with Christian theology. Consequently, music occupies a privileged place within the communicative structure of faith.

Faith, therefore, is not merely communicated through music. Rather, music becomes one of the means through which faith itself is enacted. To understand how this occurs, it is necessary to examine more closely the nature of musical action.

The Musical Act as Communicative Action

The communicative significance of music becomes clearer when music is understood not merely as an object but as an activity. In contemporary musicology, Christopher Small's concept of musicking has become particularly influential. Small (1998) argues that music should be understood primarily as a human activity that establishes, expresses, and negotiates relationships. The meaning of music does not reside solely in musical works but emerges through participation in musical events.

This perspective offers important insights for liturgical theology. Sacred music is not fundamentally a performance presented to passive listeners. Rather, it is an action performed by a worshipping community. Through singing, listening, responding, and participating,

believers enter into relationships that possess theological, ecclesial, and communal significance.

The broader field of communication theory provides additional conceptual resources for understanding this phenomenon. Austin's (1962) theory of speech acts demonstrated that communication frequently performs actions rather than merely conveying information. Certain utterances do not simply describe reality; they accomplish something. Searle (1969) further developed this insight by emphasizing the performative dimension of communicative acts.

The present argument does not suggest that music functions as a speech act in the strict philosophical sense. Unlike verbal language, music generally lacks propositional content and does not communicate by means of explicit assertions. Rather, the analogy with Austin and Searle concerns the performative and relational dimensions of communication. Within the liturgy, music does not primarily convey propositions but enables participation, communal response, and the enactment of faith.

Although music differs significantly from verbal language, the underlying principle remains relevant. Communication cannot be reduced to information transfer. It also involves the establishment of relationships, the creation of shared meanings, and the performance of communal actions. Liturgical music participates in all three dimensions.

The performative nature of sacred music has been recognized by numerous theologians. Gelineau (1964) argues that liturgical music derives its significance from its integration into ritual action. Music is not an ornament added to worship but one of the means through which worship takes place. Similarly, Saliers (2007) emphasizes that sacred music functions as theological action rather than merely theological expression.

Begbie (2007) further argues that music possesses a distinctive capacity to mediate participation. Unlike purely conceptual discourse, music invites involvement rather than detached observation. Listeners become participants in a temporal process characterized by expectation, development, tension, and fulfillment. Such participation closely parallels the dynamics of liturgical worship.

This insight resonates with Habermas's concept of communicative action. Although Habermas (1984, 1987) focuses primarily on rational discourse, his broader understanding of communication as oriented toward mutual understanding remains relevant. Congregational singing establishes a shared symbolic world within which participants orient themselves toward a common reality. Music therefore facilitates a form of communal understanding that cannot be reduced to verbal communication alone.

This communicative dimension should not, however, be identified with the theological reality of ecclesial *communio*. As Ratzinger (1996) explains, *communio* is not simply the outcome of successful communication but participation in the life of Christ through the Church. Liturgical communication serves and expresses this communion, but it does not exhaust its theological meaning.

The communicative action of music operates on several levels simultaneously. First, music mediates communication between God and the worshipping community. Through musical participation, the assembly responds to divine revelation in praise, thanksgiving, lament, and petition. Second, music establishes communication within the ecclesial communion. Through singing, believers become aware of themselves as participants in a common act. This integrative dimension of sacred music has also been emphasized in recent Polish liturgical scholarship, which highlights music as a force that strengthens ecclesial unity and supports

the communal proclamation of faith (Nowak, 2022). Third, music communicates the faith of the Church by embodying theological meanings within communal practice.

Consequently, liturgical music should not be understood merely as a medium through which communication occurs. Music itself constitutes a communicative action. Through musical participation, relationships are established, meanings are enacted, and faith becomes publicly visible within the worshipping assembly.

Singing as an Act of Faith

If music functions as communicative action, then congregational singing may be understood as an act of faith. This claim represents one of the central theological arguments of the present study.

Christian theology has consistently maintained that faith involves more than intellectual assent. According to Aquinas, faith is an act of the intellect moved by the will under the influence of grace (*Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 2). Faith therefore becomes concrete through actions that embody and express the believer's relationship with God. Belief is not merely possessed; it is practiced.

Liturgical worship provides one of the primary contexts in which faith becomes enacted. Through prayer, sacramental participation, proclamation, and communal celebration, believers embody their response to God's self-revelation. Within this context, singing occupies a distinctive place because it unites confession, participation, and communal expression within a single action.

The singing of the Creed offers a particularly clear example. When the assembly sings the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, it does more than recite doctrinal propositions. It publicly confesses the faith of the Church. The act of singing transforms doctrinal content into communal witness. Faith becomes not merely an object of reflection but a shared act of confession.

The same principle applies to liturgical acclamations such as the *Amen*, *Alleluia*, *Sanctus*, and *Gloria*. These texts do not merely communicate theological ideas. They perform praise, assent, thanksgiving, and adoration. Through singing, the assembly actively participates in the realities expressed by the text.

Saliers (2007) argues that sacred music enables theological meaning to become lived experience. Music transforms doctrine into prayer and confession into participation. Likewise, Begbie (2007) maintains that music discloses truth through engagement rather than detached observation. Theological understanding emerges through participation in practices that shape perception and communal life.

Polish liturgical theologians have repeatedly emphasized this participatory dimension. Nadolski (2006) understands active participation as the fundamental principle of liturgical renewal. Music contributes significantly to this participation because it engages the whole person. Similarly, Świerzawski (1993) stresses that liturgical celebration seeks not spectators but participants. Congregational singing embodies this principle in a particularly direct manner.

Pawlak (2001) likewise observes that communal singing occupies a unique place within liturgical action because it enables the entire assembly to become actively involved in worship. Through music, participation becomes intellectual, affective, bodily, and communal simultaneously.

The communal dimension of singing further reinforces its theological significance. Christian faith is never merely private. It is received, nurtured, and expressed within the ecclesial communion. Through congregational song, individual believers encounter not only their own faith but also the faith of others. Singing therefore functions as a form of mutual witness and communal confession.

Consequently, liturgical singing should not be interpreted merely as an expression of faith. It is itself an act of faith. Through singing, believers confess, celebrate, embody, and strengthen the faith they profess.

Toward a Model of Musical Faith Communication

The preceding analysis permits the formulation of a theological model of musical faith communication.

The process begins with Divine Revelation, God's self-communication to humanity (Second Vatican Council, 1965; Rahner, 1978). Revelation initiates the communicative event and provides its theological foundation.

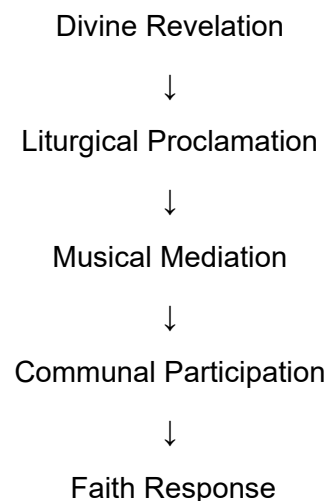
The second stage consists of Liturgical Proclamation, through which revelation becomes present within the worshipping community by means of Scripture, preaching, prayer, and sacramental celebration (Kavanagh, 1984; Schmemann, 1986).

The third stage may be described as Musical Mediation. Music receives, embodies, and intensifies the proclaimed Word. Through symbolic and affective participation, theological meaning becomes accessible to the whole person (Begbie, 2000; Saliers, 2007; Gelineau, 1964).

This mediation enables Communal Participation. The faithful respond actively through singing and listening. Participation is understood not merely as external activity but as involvement in the mystery celebrated (Nadolski, 2006; Ratzinger, 2000). Participation gives rise to a liturgical response to God's self-disclosure. Depending on the liturgical context, this response may take the form of confession of faith, praise, thanksgiving, lament, supplication, repentance, or contemplative silence expressed through music.

The process culminates in Ecclesial Communion, the ultimate goal of Christian worship. Through shared participation in song, the Church experiences and manifests itself as a community united in Christ (Schmemann, 1973; Ratzinger, 1996; Kasper, 2004).

The model may therefore be represented as follows:





Ecclesial Communion

This model demonstrates that liturgical music should not be understood merely as ornamentation, emotional enhancement, or artistic accompaniment. Rather, it constitutes a communicative act through which faith becomes audible, embodied, communal, and ecclesially effective.

Music may therefore be understood as a privileged medium through which the Church responds to God's self-communication and realizes its identity as a communion of faith.

Music and the Formation of Ecclesial Communion

This chapter examines the ecclesial consequences of understanding liturgical music as a communicative act of faith. If sacred music participates in the dialogue between God and the worshipping community, it also contributes to the formation of communion within the Church. The analysis therefore turns from the communicative function of music to its communal and ecclesial significance, showing how congregational singing strengthens shared identity, preserves ecclesial memory, and enables the Church to experience itself as a worshipping communion united in Christ.

The Communal Dimension of Liturgical Singing

The communicative interpretation of liturgical music developed in the previous chapter naturally leads to the question of ecclesial communion. If music functions as a communicative act of faith, its significance cannot be confined to the individual spiritual experience of believers. Communication, by its very nature, establishes and sustains relationships. Consequently, the theological significance of liturgical music must be examined in relation to the formation of ecclesial communion within the Church.

The communal dimension of Christian worship occupies a central place within contemporary liturgical theology. The Second Vatican Council repeatedly emphasizes that the liturgy is the action of the whole People of God and the privileged manifestation of the Church's life (Second Vatican Council, 1963). Worship is therefore not merely a collection of parallel devotional acts performed by individual believers but a common participation in the saving mystery of Christ. As Guardini (1998) observes, the liturgy transcends individual subjectivity and introduces believers into the objective prayer of the Church. Similarly, Kavanagh (1984) argues that liturgy is fundamentally an ecclesial event through which the Church continually becomes what it is called to be.

Within this ecclesial framework, music occupies a distinctive place. Unlike many other liturgical actions, congregational singing enables simultaneous participation by the entire assembly. Music therefore possesses a uniquely communal character. It allows individual voices to become part of a larger act of praise, thanksgiving, supplication, and confession. This characteristic explains why sacred music has consistently occupied a central position in Christian worship from the earliest centuries of the Church (Gelineau, 1964; Westermeyer, 1998).

The communal significance of singing has long been recognized within Christian tradition. Augustine's reflections on psalmody reveal an awareness that sacred song possesses a

remarkable capacity to unite believers in a common act of worship (Augustine, 1991). The believer does not sing alone but joins a community whose praise transcends individual experience. This intuition remains central to contemporary theological reflection. Schmemmann (1973) argues that Christian worship always involves participation in a reality larger than the individual self. Through liturgical song, the faithful become conscious of their membership in the ecclesial body.

Recent theological work has further explored this participatory dimension. Saliers (2007) describes liturgical music as a form of communal theological practice through which the Church learns to pray, remember, and confess together. Music functions not merely as an accompaniment to worship but as one of the means through which worship becomes a shared experience. Likewise, Begbie (2000) emphasizes that musical participation discloses relational dimensions of human existence that resonate deeply with Christian understandings of communion and community.

This relational aspect of music is particularly important in contemporary contexts often marked by individualism and fragmentation. Congregational singing creates a shared symbolic space in which participants become attentive to one another while directing their worship toward God. Through common rhythm, melody, and text, individual voices are integrated into a unified act without losing their distinctiveness. Music therefore provides an experiential anticipation of ecclesial communion itself.

The communal significance of liturgical music may consequently be understood as more than a sociological phenomenon. Although music undoubtedly contributes to social cohesion, its deepest significance lies in its participation in the ecclesial reality constituted through worship. Through singing, believers do not simply gather together; they become a worshipping community.

Shared Musical Experience and Ecclesial Identity

The formation of ecclesial communion requires more than momentary participation in common rituals. It also depends upon the development of a shared identity rooted in memory, tradition, and faith. Throughout Christian history, music has played a crucial role in this process.

Sacred music functions as a repository of ecclesial memory. Hymns, chants, psalms, and liturgical songs preserve theological insights, biblical narratives, and spiritual traditions in forms that can be remembered, repeated, and transmitted across generations. Long before the widespread availability of theological education, many believers encountered the substance of Christian doctrine primarily through participation in the Church's musical life (Westermeyer, 1998; Gelineau, 1964).

The importance of memory within Christian worship has been emphasized particularly by Schmemmann (1986), who interprets liturgy as an act of anamnesis through which the Church remembers God's saving acts and participates in their continuing significance. Music contributes powerfully to this process because of its ability to unite memory and participation. Through repeated singing, theological truths become not merely objects of intellectual reflection but elements of lived communal experience.

This mnemonic function has significant implications for ecclesial identity. Music shapes how communities remember, interpret, and transmit their faith. As Saliers (2007) notes, sacred song often carries theological meaning more effectively than abstract conceptual discourse because it integrates cognition, affectivity, and participation. What is sung regularly becomes embedded within the consciousness of the community.

The relationship between music and identity has also been emphasized within Polish liturgical scholarship. Nadolski (2006) stresses that active participation in worship contributes to the formation of ecclesial consciousness. Similarly, Pawlak (2001) argues that congregational singing functions as a school of faith through which believers gradually appropriate the language, symbols, and values of Christian tradition. Music therefore contributes not only to liturgical participation but also to the formation of Christian identity.

At the same time, ecclesial identity is never static. The Church continually receives and reinterprets its tradition within changing cultural contexts. Music plays an important role in this dynamic process because it allows continuity and renewal to coexist. Traditional forms preserve memory, while new compositions enable communities to articulate faith within contemporary circumstances. The vitality of ecclesial identity depends in part upon this creative interaction between inheritance and adaptation.

Music thus communicates more than theological content. It communicates belonging. Through shared musical participation, believers learn who they are, what they believe, and to whom they belong. Ecclesial identity is not merely taught through music but enacted within it.

Music as a Medium of Communion

The preceding analysis suggests that liturgical music contributes both to communal participation and to the formation of ecclesial identity. These observations permit a broader theological conclusion: music may be understood as a medium of communion.

The concept of *communio* has become one of the defining themes of contemporary ecclesiology. Following the Second Vatican Council, theologians increasingly describe the Church as a communion rooted in participation in the life of the Triune God (Ratzinger, 1996; Kasper, 2004). Communion signifies more than institutional unity or social cohesion. It refers to a relational reality grounded in God's self-communication and realized through participation in Christ.

Within this framework, music emerges as one of the privileged means through which communion becomes tangible and experiential. Through singing, believers participate simultaneously in a common act directed toward God and in a shared experience of belonging to one another. Liturgical music therefore mediates both vertical communion with God and horizontal communion among members of the ecclesial community.

The symbolic structure of music further illuminates this theological reality. Musical harmony provides a compelling image of unity in diversity. Distinct voices remain different while contributing to a coherent whole. Unity emerges not through uniformity but through ordered participation. Begbie (2000) has argued that such musical relationships offer fruitful resources for theological reflection because they reveal how diversity and unity may coexist without contradiction.

This insight resonates strongly with contemporary ecclesiology. The Church is not a homogeneous collective but a communion of distinct persons united through participation in Christ. Music provides an experiential analogue of this reality. Through shared singing, believers encounter a form of unity that respects difference while overcoming isolation.

The pastoral significance of this observation is considerable. Contemporary societies are increasingly characterized by fragmentation, mobility, and weakened communal bonds. In such contexts, congregational singing offers a countercultural experience of belonging. The liturgical assembly becomes a place where persons encounter one another not primarily through social status, education, or cultural background but through shared participation in worship.

John Paul II (2003) emphasized that sacred music contributes to the spiritual unity of the faithful and assists the Church in fulfilling its mission of worship and evangelization. Benedict XVI (2007) similarly highlights the intimate relationship between liturgical beauty, participation, and ecclesial communion. These perspectives suggest that music should not be regarded as a peripheral aspect of worship but as a significant contributor to the Church's communal life.

The communicative model proposed in the previous chapter finds its fulfillment at precisely this point. Revelation seeks communion; proclamation serves communion; music mediates communion; participation deepens communion; confession manifests communion. The entire communicative process culminates in the realization of the Church as a worshipping community gathered before God.

Music therefore functions not merely as a support for ecclesial communion but as one of the means through which communion is experienced, expressed, and renewed. Through singing, the Church hears itself believing, praying, and praising. Faith becomes audible, participation becomes communal, and communion becomes tangible. Liturgical music thus emerges as a privileged communicative act through which the Church realizes and manifests its identity as *communio*.

Conclusion

This final section summarizes the main findings of the study and clarifies its contribution to liturgical theology, communication theory, and the theology of sacred music. The argument developed throughout the article has sought to show that liturgical music should not be understood merely as an aesthetic or pastoral element of worship, but as a communicative act through which faith is received, embodied, confessed, and shared within ecclesial communion. The purpose of this study was to develop a theological interpretation of liturgical music as a communicative act of faith. While contemporary discussions of sacred music frequently focus on aesthetic, historical, pastoral, or performative dimensions, this article has argued that such approaches remain incomplete unless they are situated within the broader theological context of revelation, participation, and ecclesial communion.

The analysis began by examining the concept of liturgical participation as articulated in the Second Vatican Council and subsequently developed within contemporary liturgical theology. It was shown that *participatio actiosa* should not be understood merely as external activity but as active involvement in the saving action of Christ made present in the liturgy. Participation is fundamentally relational and ecclesial, drawing believers into communion with God and with one another. The study then explored the theological significance of liturgical signs and demonstrated that music occupies a distinctive place within the symbolic structure of worship. Sacred music cannot be adequately interpreted as a decorative addition to liturgical action. Rather, it functions as a symbolic mediation through which the Church receives, expresses, and appropriates the mystery of faith.

Building upon these foundations, the article proposed that faith itself possesses a communicative structure rooted in God's self-revelation and humanity's response. Revelation initiates communication, while faith constitutes a personal and communal response to divine self-disclosure. Within this communicative framework, music emerges not merely as a medium for conveying religious content but as a participatory act through which faith becomes audible, embodied, and communal.

The analysis further demonstrated that liturgical singing functions as a performative act of faith. Congregational song does not simply describe beliefs already possessed by the faithful; it

constitutes one of the ways in which those beliefs are enacted, confessed, and strengthened within the life of the Church. Singing therefore belongs to the sphere of lived faith rather than merely its verbal or artistic expression.

Finally, the study argued that music contributes directly to the formation of ecclesial communion. Through shared musical participation, believers experience themselves as members of a worshipping community united in faith. Music strengthens communal identity, preserves ecclesial memory, and facilitates participation in the life of the Church. In this sense, music serves not only as a medium of communication but also as a medium of communion.

Theoretical Contribution

The principal contribution of this article lies in the proposal of a theological model of musical faith communication. While previous scholarship has examined the liturgical, aesthetic, and pastoral dimensions of sacred music, relatively little attention has been devoted to its interpretation within a broader communicative framework grounded in the theology of revelation and faith.

The model developed in this study conceptualizes liturgical music as part of a communicative process extending from divine revelation to ecclesial communion. Within this process, revelation initiates communication, liturgical proclamation mediates God's Word, music facilitates communal participation, singing enables the confession of faith, and ecclesial communion emerges as the fulfilment of the communicative event. This perspective allows music to be understood neither as a purely aesthetic phenomenon nor as a simple instrument of religious instruction. Instead, music appears as a communicative practice through which the Church participates in the ongoing dialogue between God and humanity. The proposed model therefore establishes a conceptual bridge between liturgical theology, communication theory, and the theology of sacred music. The central thesis of the article may consequently be summarized as follows: liturgical music is a communicative act of faith in which the worshipping community responds to divine revelation through symbolically mediated sound, thereby participating in ecclesial communion and making faith publicly audible.

Implications for Liturgical Theology and Practice

The findings of this study have several implications for contemporary liturgical theology. First, they suggest that the significance of sacred music should be evaluated not solely according to aesthetic criteria but also according to its capacity to facilitate participation in the communicative event of worship. Musical excellence remains important, yet it should be understood in relation to the theological purpose of liturgical celebration.

Second, the communicative interpretation of music highlights the active role of the assembly in worship. Congregational singing should not be regarded merely as a means of enhancing participation but as participation itself. Through singing, the faithful engage in a performative act of faith that contributes directly to the realization of ecclesial communion.

Third, the proposed framework offers a renewed theological justification for the central place of music within Christian worship. Rather than functioning as an optional enhancement of liturgical celebration, music belongs to the communicative structure through which the Church receives and responds to God's self-communication. This understanding may help overcome persistent tendencies either to aestheticize or to marginalize liturgical music.

The study also carries implications for pastoral practice. Liturgical musicians, choir directors, cantors, and clergy may benefit from viewing music not merely as performance but as ministry

within a communicative event of faith. Such a perspective encourages a deeper integration of musical practice with the theological aims of worship and ecclesial formation.

Directions for Future Research

The present study has primarily developed a theoretical framework for understanding liturgical music as a communicative act of faith. Future research may extend this framework in several directions.

One promising area concerns empirical investigations of communal singing and its role in shaping ecclesial identity. While this article has argued conceptually that music contributes to the formation of communion, further interdisciplinary research could examine how congregational singing influences religious belonging, participation, and communal cohesion in specific ecclesial contexts. A second area involves comparative studies of different Christian traditions. The communicative functions of music may be explored within Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Protestant, and Pentecostal liturgical settings, thereby illuminating both shared theological principles and distinctive ecclesial practices. A third direction concerns the relationship between liturgical music and contemporary communication theory. Further dialogue between theology and communication studies may yield new insights into the ways symbolic practices mediate faith, identity, and communal participation within religious communities.

Finally, future studies may investigate the role of music within digital and hybrid forms of worship that have emerged in recent years. Such developments raise important questions regarding participation, embodiment, and communion in technologically mediated liturgical environments. The theological significance of these questions confirms the continuing relevance of music for contemporary Christian worship. As this study has sought to demonstrate, liturgical music constitutes a privileged communicative act of faith. Through musical participation, the Church receives, embodies, confesses, and shares faith within its worshipping communion.

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About the Author

Paweł Piotrowski, PhD is a theologian, researcher, musician, organist, composer, arranger, and music educator. He holds a PhD in Theology from the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Kraków, Poland. His academic interests include the theology of communication, liturgical theology, religious communication, media ethics, sacred music, and the relationship between faith, culture, and communication. He is the author of numerous scholarly publications in theology and communication studies. Alongside his academic work, he has been actively involved in liturgical music for many years. During his university studies (1985–1991), he served as an organist at the Wawel Cathedral in Kraków. Paweł Piotrowski is the author of more than twenty books on music, including publications on organ harmonization, liturgical music, and piano repertoire. He has also prepared eight volumes of organ harmonizations of liturgical hymns. His artistic and scholarly work focuses on the intersections of music, liturgy, communication, and culture.

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