

UNIT 7

A Brief History of the Organ

It Started with a Flute

Genesis 4:21

His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe.

Isaiah 30:29

You will have songs as in the night when you keep the festival. And gladness of heart as when one marches to the sound of the flute to go to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel.

Job 21:12

They sing to the timbrel and harp and rejoice at the sound of the flute.

1 Corinthians 14:7

Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp?

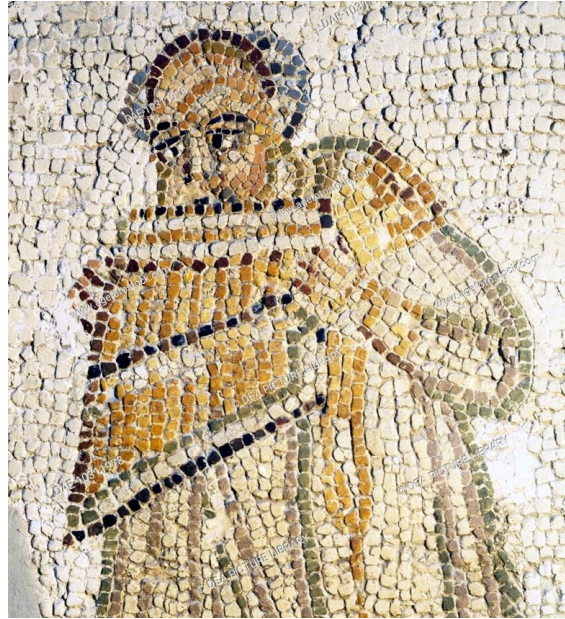


And then... there were two flutes!

An aulos (Ancient Greek: *αὐλός*) or *tibia* (Latin) was an ancient Greek wind instrument, depicted often in art and also attested by archaeology. It was usually a double-reed instrument, and its sound described as "penetrating, insisting, and intoxicating." Search *aulos* on YouTube with your Instructor and have a listen.



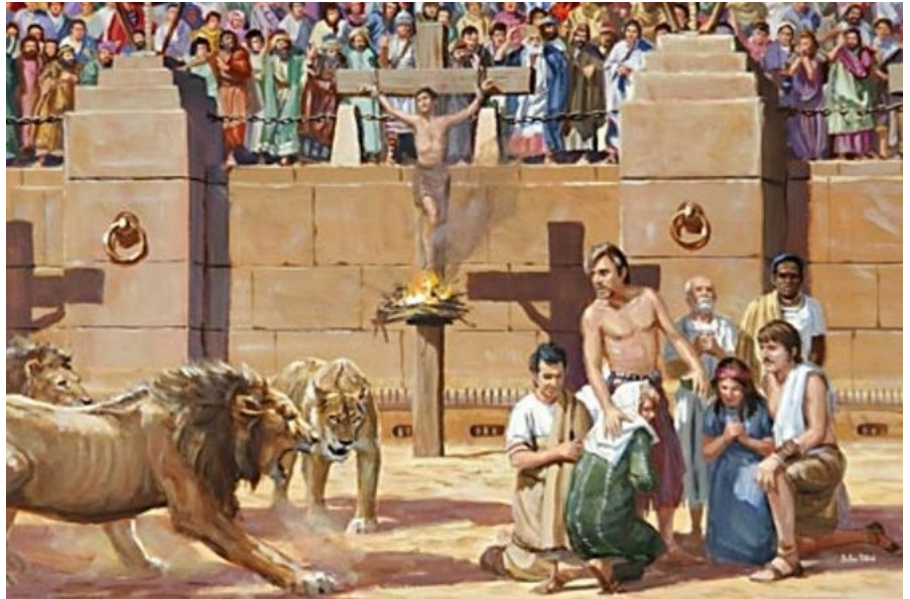
Connect a few more flutes/pipes together and the range of possibilities grows! The pan flute (below) is our modern name for this instrument. It was developed long ago in ancient Greece. According to Greek mythology, the pan flute owes its existence to a god named Pan, the patron of shepherds.



Next, it was only logical that someone would figure out how to put even more pipes on a machine that would continuously blow the pipes without the aid of human lungs. Ctesibius (285-222 BC, Alexandria, Egypt) used water pressure to create a steady wind supply to pipes sitting atop a wind chest. This machine came to be known as *hydraulis organon*. Ancient coins, mosaics, small sculptures, artwork, and archaeology attest to this machine's existence before, during, and after the time of Christ, used mostly in civic life and the theatre.



The hydraulis organon, popular with aristocratic society and the theatre, continued to be popular for several hundred years. Most likely, Jesus would have heard one of these instruments whenever he was in or near Jerusalem. However, after the birth of the Church on the Day of Pentecost, the organon did not quickly find its way into the service of the newly-created Church for at least four reasons. First, it took almost 100 years for the Church to become organized. Second, the organon was associated with secular entertainment. Third, followers of Jesus were being persecuted and had to meet secretly for 300+ years lest they be arrested, heads cut off, burned alive, or fed to lions as entertainment. Finally, because Christianity had been illegal for more than 300 years there were no large buildings where Christians



could meet openly or an organ be placed into service of the liturgy.

In 324 AD, after the persecution of Christians had been lifted by Constantine the Great, Constantine decided to pack up his kingdom in Rome, including the Church and Pope, and head east to the city of Byzantium to establish a new seat of government. Constantine then declared Byzantium to be the capital of the Roman Empire. It was renamed Constantinople in 330, dedicated to Constantine.

Meanwhile, back in Rome, those left behind said, “Hey wait a minute! You can’t do that! You can’t just pack up and leave and say that the Pope is no longer in Rome!” Thus, the rift between East and West was created and exists to this day: Roman Catholic vs. Eastern Orthodox.

By 376 AD, Rome and what was left of its empire, fell under heavy, constant invasion from Goths and other non-Roman, non-Christian peoples. The armed forces of the Western Empire became few and ineffective. By 476 AD there was negligible military, political, or financial power and Western culture was on the verge of collapse.

While the hydraulis organon thrived in the East, it disappeared in the West until around 757 AD when Constantine V, desiring to show off his successful Eastern empire, sent to Pepin the Short King of the Franks, a caravan bearing many gifts. Among those gifts was a hydraulis organon!

Fascinated by the organon sent from the East to the West, Roman Catholic monks, who had become the stabilizing force in Western culture during this period of time, building schools, hospitals, and churches, were fascinated by the hydraulis organon and began building copies of the machine with improvements, including bellows instead of water to maintain steady wind pressure! Thus, the organon slowly entered the service of the Church in the West but continued to be linked with secular entertainment in the East.

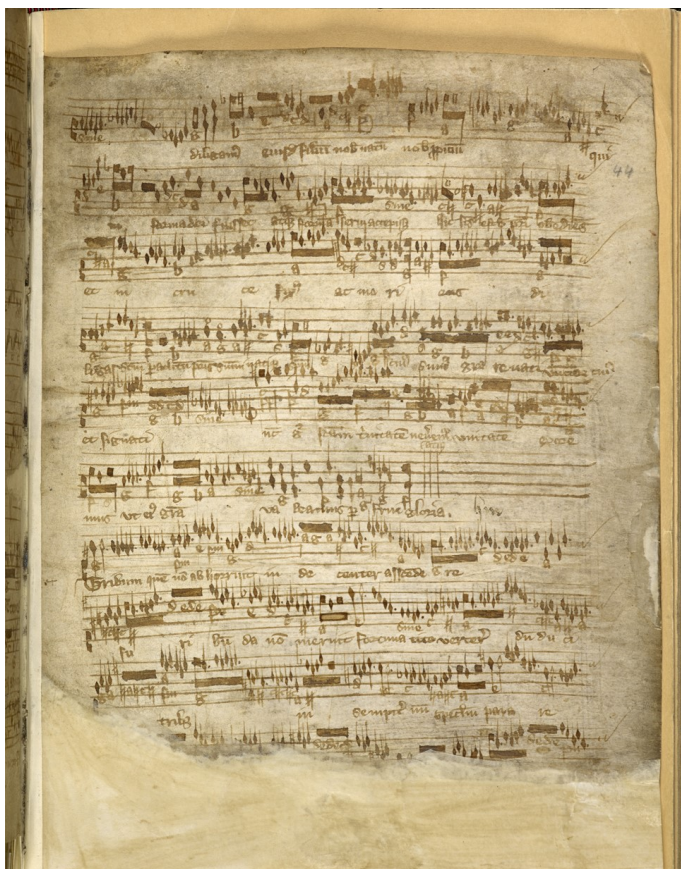
The earliest known historical document mentioning church organs was produced by Bishop Aldhelm (c. 639-709) of Malmesbury in north Wiltshire, England. His prose works include more than one mention of the “mighty voice” of the organ.

The Benedictine Order, traditionally thought to have been founded in AD 529, used an organ at high points in festival services. We know too that an organ was built for Winchester Cathedral (Benedictine Order) around AD 990.

The earliest known music written for the organ can be found in the 1325 Robertsbridge Codex. Organ music before that time apparently was improvised.



Wall plaque at the Catholic Church of St. Aldhelm, Malmesbury. The inscription says 'St. Aldhelm 639 –709, Abbot of Malmesbury and Bishop of Sherborne, Latin Poet and Ecclesiastical Writer.'



A page from the 1325 Robertsbridge Codex. A codex is any ancient manuscript in book form.

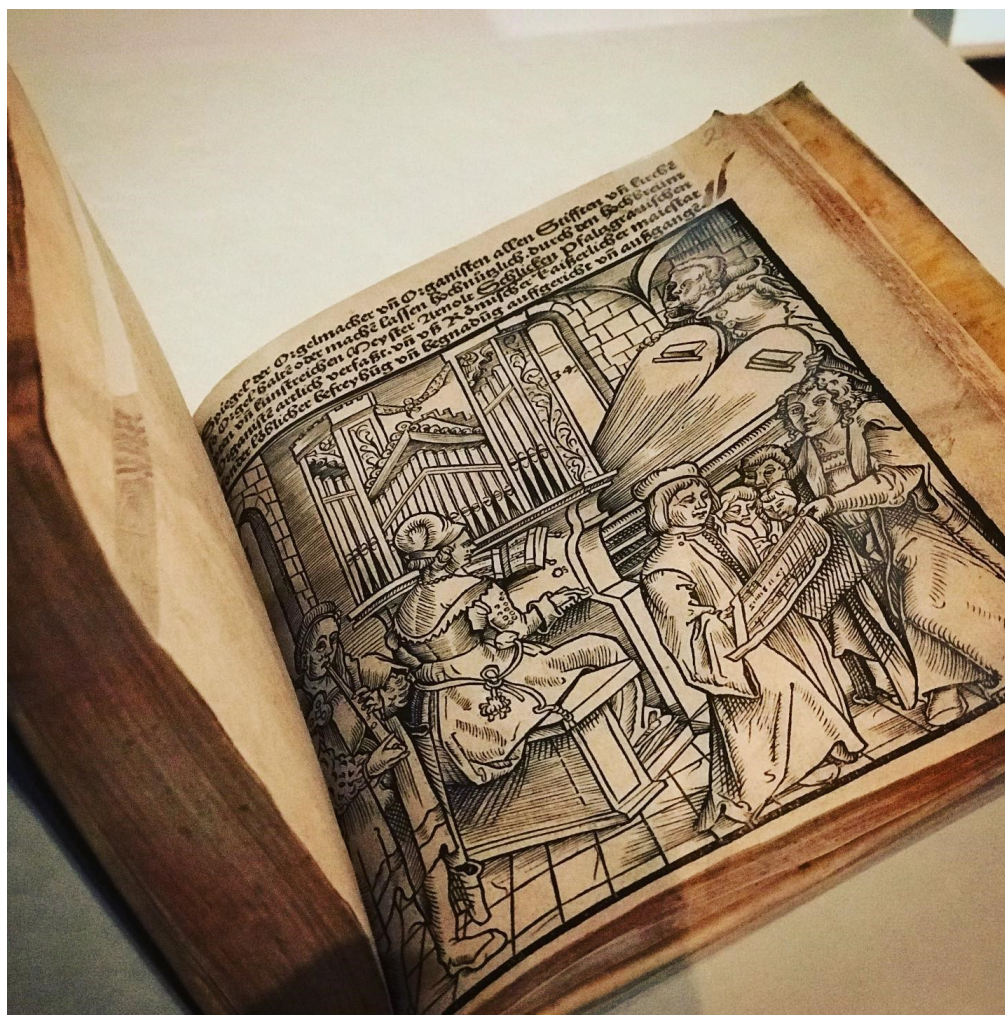
Arnolt Schlick published *Spiegel der Orgelmaker und Organisten* (Mirror of Organ Builders and Organists) in 1511 (see opposite page). His treatise had to do with how a pipe organ is built and the organists who perform on the organ.

By the time of the Council of Trent (1545-1563), the organ and music for the organ was well developed.

In 1665, Pope Alexander VII (1665-1667) was writing regulations for choir directors and organists... these are the rules you guys!

In 1725, Pope Benedict XIII (1724-1730) finds it necessary (again!) to write rules and regulations about the use of the organ during the Mass and Masses for the Dead. Makes one wonder about the behavior of some church organists!

In more “recent” times Pope Pius X (1903-1914) wrote a motu proprio in 1903 spelling out in more detail than any pope before or since him, how the organ was to be used in the Mass. A *motu proprio* is an official order or proclamation from the Pope to the Church-at-Large or to some part of the Church.

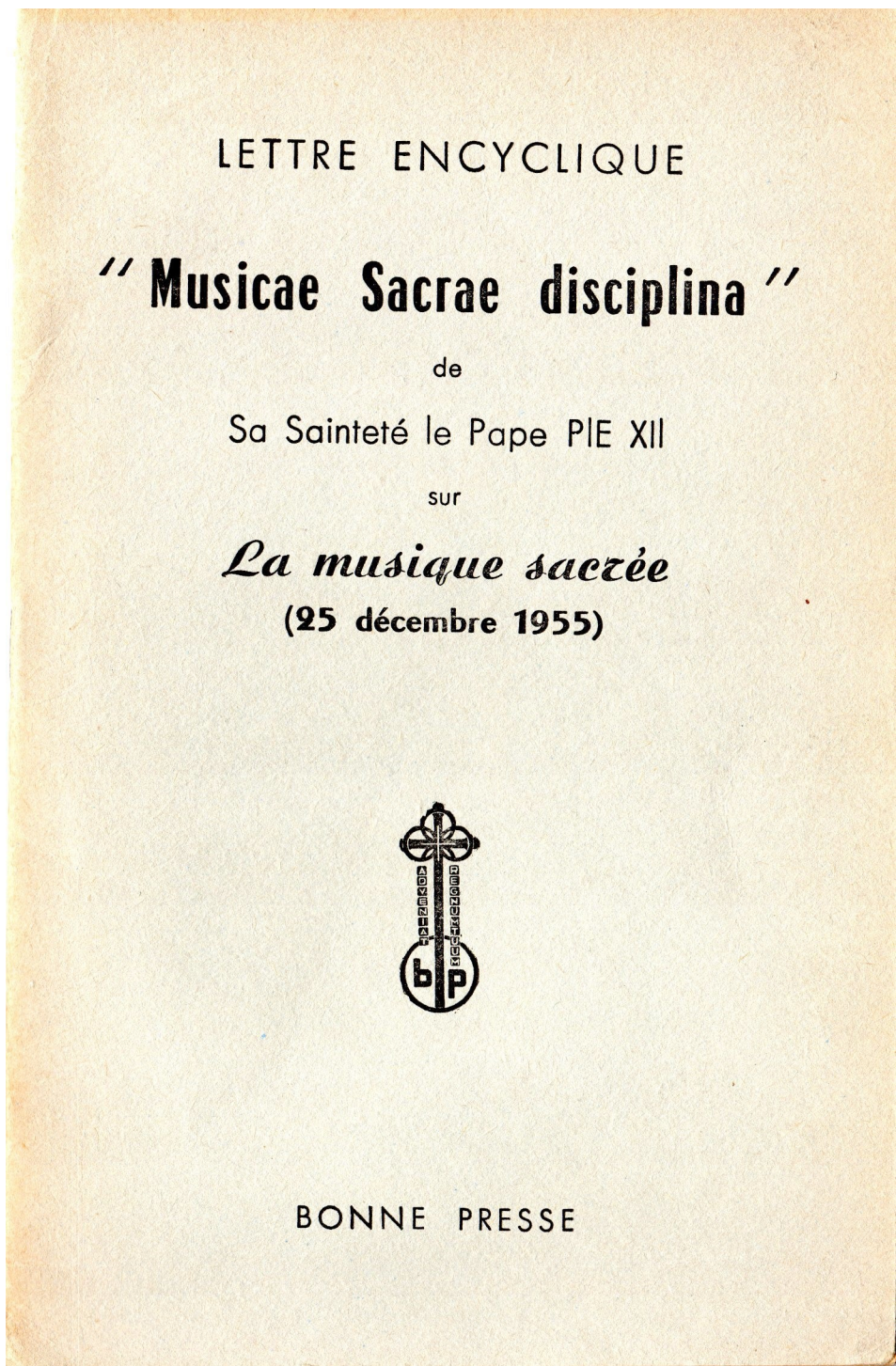


Arnolt Schlick *Spiegel der Orgelmaker und Organisten*

Pope Pius XII wrote an encyclical on sacred music in 1955 in which he stated, "Among the musical instruments that have a place in church the organ rightly holds the principal position, since it is especially fitted for the sacred chants and sacred rites. It adds a wonderful splendor and a special magnificence to the ceremonies of the Church. It moves the souls of the faithful by the grandeur and sweetness of its tones. It gives minds an almost heavenly joy and it lifts them up powerfully to God and to higher things." An *encyclical* is an open letter written to all the bishops of the Church.

[Commentary — This encyclical was written seven years before the beginning of Vatican II (1962-65).

Following the end of Vatican II trained organists left the Catholic Church in droves in the U.S.A. as amateur garage band musicians took over with guitars, drums, bad music, and swooning in microphones. How could this happen? Vatican II took place during an out-right social upheaval in the U.S.A. with Vietnam war raging, rock-and-roll, drugs, alcohol, open sexual promiscuity, and rebellion against institutions such as parents, teachers, government, and the Church. Many priests were caught up in this cultural upheaval and did not have the moral or spiritual fortitude to stem the tide of rebellion in America. Opening processions became ridiculous parades of clowns, and even almost nude dancers with priests dressed in monster costumes (if it was Halloween). Yes, this really happened. However, slowly, the Church has been turning in a new musical



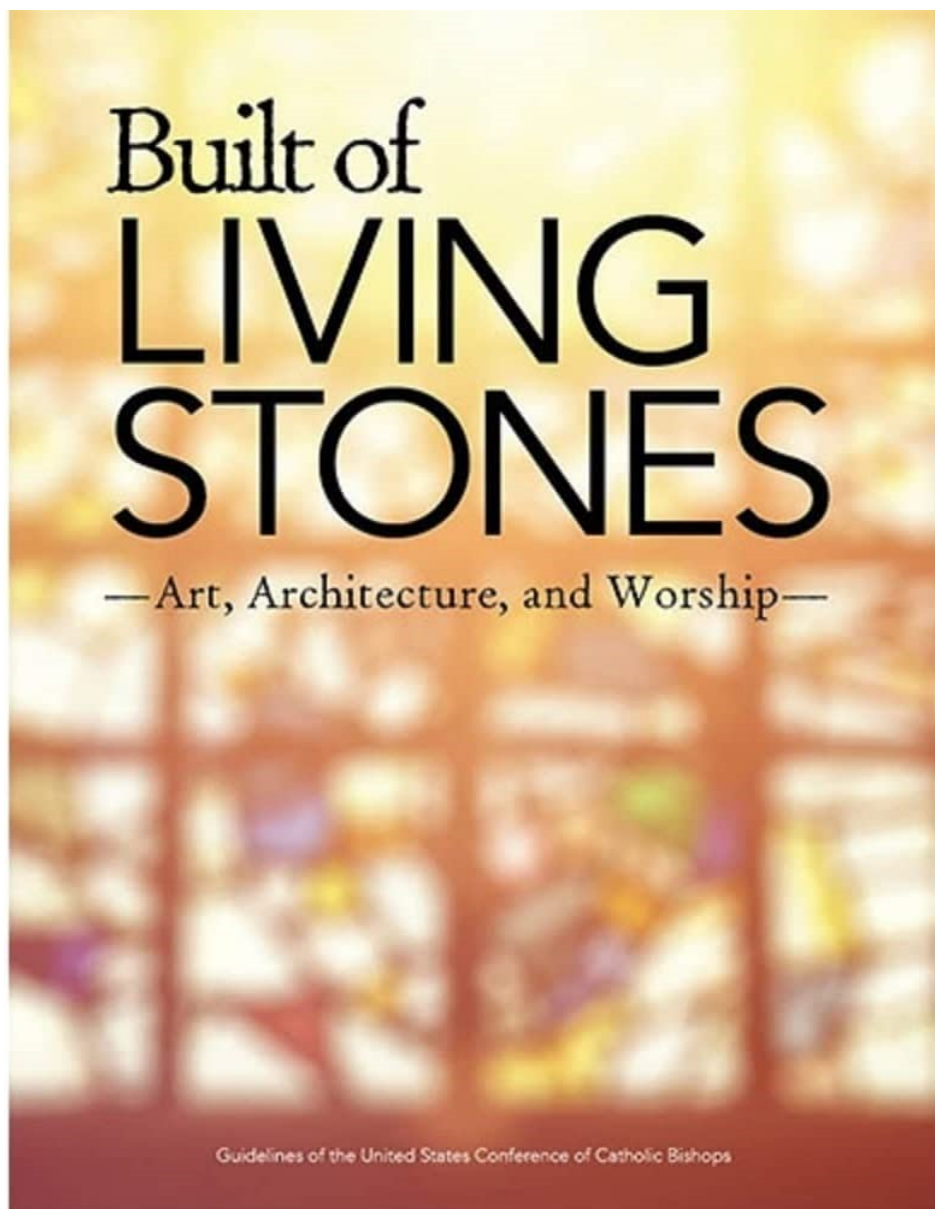
direction, reclaiming the Church's ages-old and modern high-quality liturgical music. Use of the organ and a search for trained organists is part of this reform.]

As recent as 2010, the pipe organ again surfaces in the writings of the Church under the auspices of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). In *Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship*, we read, "Musical instruments, especially the pipe organ, have long added to the beauty and prayerfulness of Catholic worship. Planning sufficient space for the organ and other instruments that may be used to accompany the assembly's prayer is an important part of the building process. This includes the design of the organ casework, if such is used, or the placement of the pipes of large instruments. An acoustical specialist and musicians working together can arrive at a placement that allows the pipes to be seen and heard well without becoming a distraction or competing with the other artwork and iconography. The placement of the organ also must ensure that instrumentalists have a clear visual connection with the director of music and, if necessary, with the cantor or leader of song."

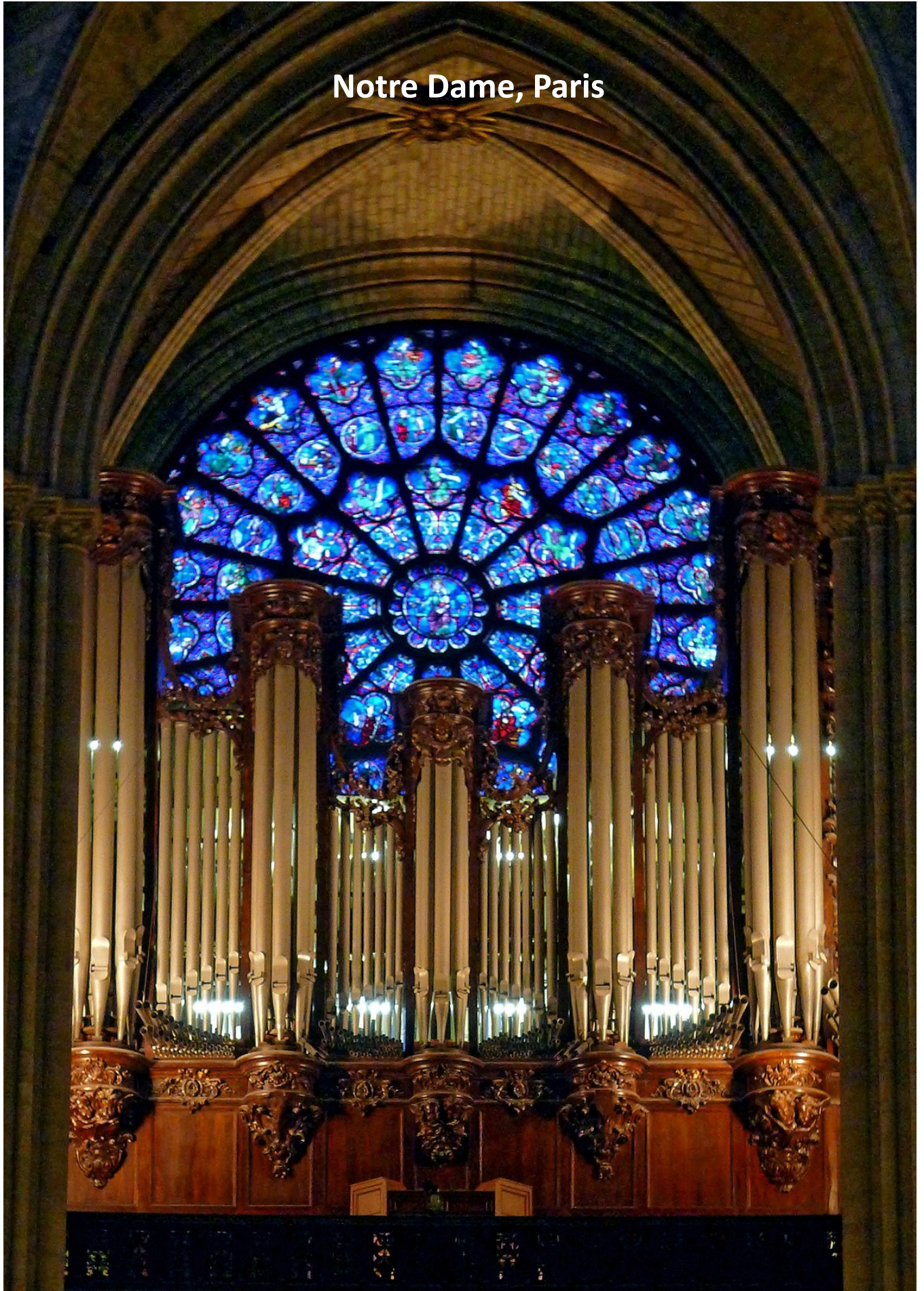
Thus, we see that the world-wide Church recognizes the value a well-planned church space where provision has been made for a pipe organ.

Cardinal Newman Organ Academy is part of a 21st century movement to train young musicians to appreciate the pipe organ and understand its value

to the liturgy of the Church when played by someone who knows what they are doing. It is recognized that not all Organ Academy students will follow a church organist vocation, but instead become advocates for the pipe organ, educated leaders in their parish liturgy, and resources in their parish when it comes to the hiring of new organists and building of a new pipe organ.



Notre Dame, Paris





Cathedral of Berlin

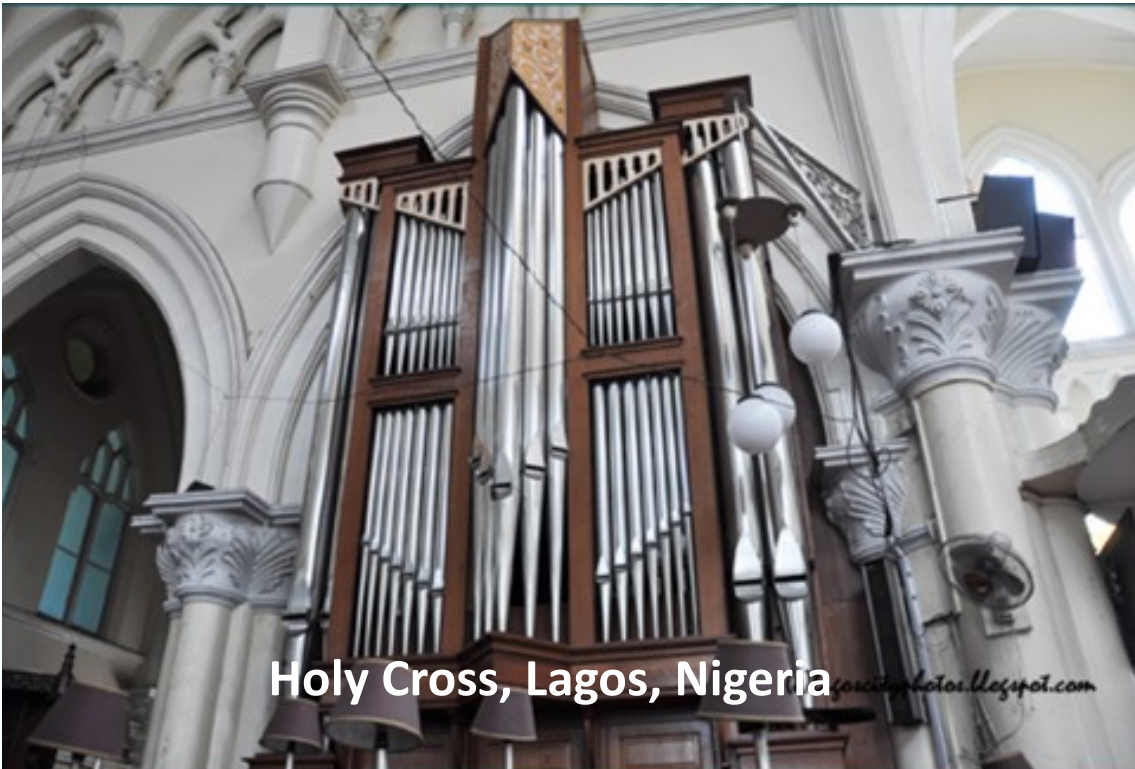
Joseph Routon



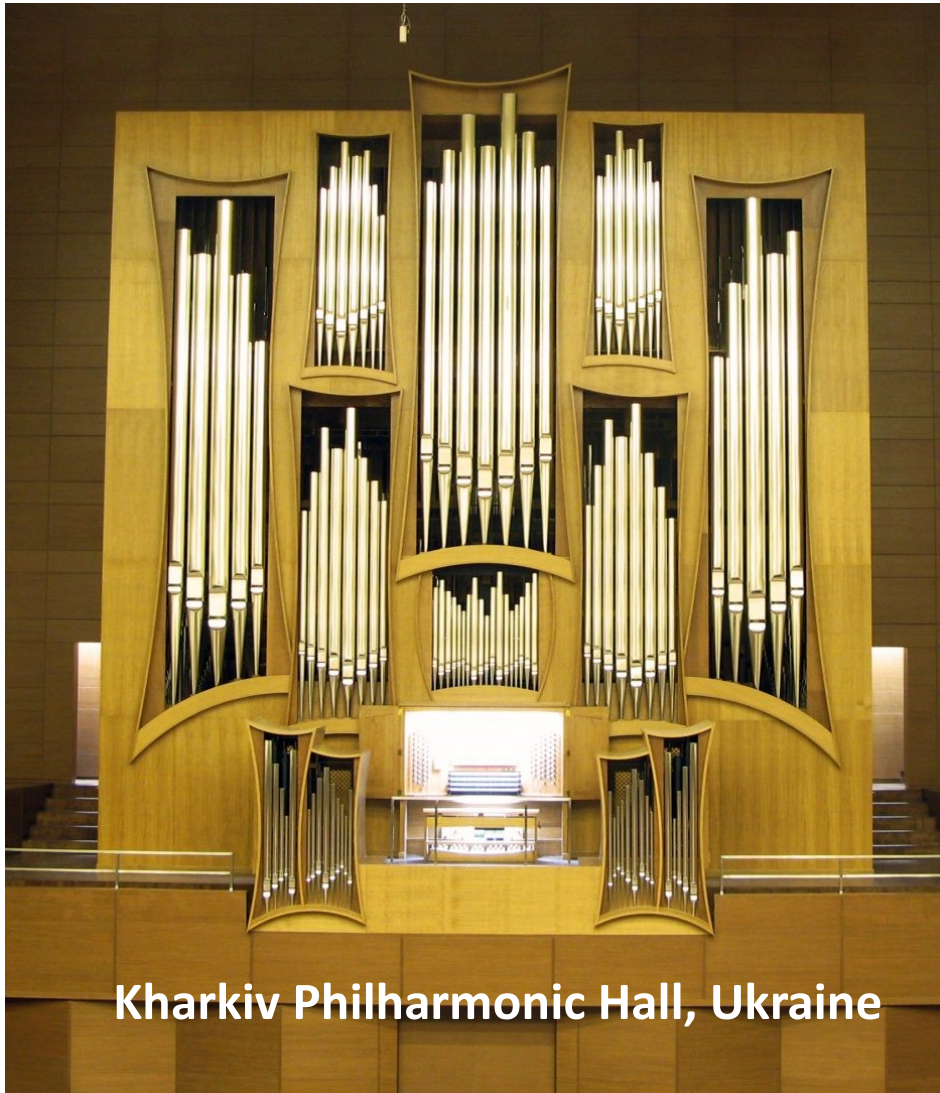
Immaculate Conception, Moscow



St Mary, Sydney Australia



Holy Cross, Lagos, Nigeria



Kharkiv Philharmonic Hall, Ukraine



St. Mary, Tokyo, Japan