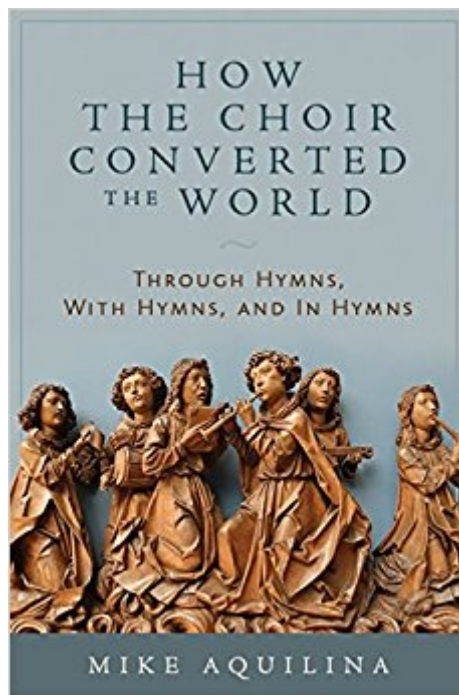




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# **How The Choir Converted The World: Through Hymns, With Hymns, And In Hymns**



## Synopsis

Music is the most effective delivery system for feelingsâ "love, joy, sadness, glory. The early Church Fathers knew that music also has power over minds, and they used that power to maximum effect, writing hymns through which the early Christians would learn, retain, and spread the Gospel message. In *How the Choir Converted the World*, best-selling author Mike Aquilina demonstrates how the earliest Christians used music to transform a world that desperately needed transforming. As Aquilina suggests, "If we did it once, we can do it again."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This is the perfect gift for your parish music directorâ "and the whole choirâ "and everyone who should be singing in the congregation. When we sing, we pray, and we evangelize too. That's one way the early Christians changed the world." â "Scott Hahn, Professor of Theology at Franciscan University of Steubenville and best-selling author of *The Creed* "Aquilina has all the qualities that a good guide should possess: he knows the terrain (taking the reader through Scripture, antiquity, and the Church Fathers), he has a discerning eye (spotting the place of music in the Church), and is an engaging wit (the reader feels like he has been brought to stand outside the Jerusalem Temple, or in Ephrem's choir, or beside Ambrose in the great cathedral at Milan). This book considers an important but overlooked element of *theologia prima*, namely, how the Church performs her theology in what is actually sung doctrine. Easily accessible, fascinating, and inspiring to believers today." â "David Fagerberg, Professor of Liturgical Studies at Notre Dame

University and author of *On Liturgical Asceticism* "From apostolic times, hymns to Jesus have instilled the truth of who he is and professed what he has marvelously done on our behalf. Mike Aquilina has written a splendid book defending why hymns and the singing of hymns resides within the very heart of Christian theology and worship. All who read this book will lift up, with greater fervor and deeper adoration, their hearts, minds, and voices in praise to Jesus." â "Thomas G. Weinandy, OFM, Cap. Author of *Jesus: Essays in Christology* "Whether you're an enthusiastic choir member or a semi-silent pew sitter, you will find Mike Aquilina's *How the Choir Converted the World* edifying, informative, and highly enjoyable. Tracing music's role in the rise of early Christianity, Aquilina shows how the Church turned to godly hymns in response to the music of immoral pagan rites, thereby winning the battle for people's minds and hearts. The lesson is clear: beauty saved the world once and beauty can save it again from a perverse and violent culture. This wise and engaging book presents us with a timely challenge to do just that." â "Russell Shaw, Author of *Catholics in America* "We all love to singâ "to raise our voice in songâ "even if not always in tune. Mike Aquilina walks us through centuries of faith, teaching, doctrine, and spirituality, explaining as we go the significance of music, the value of human song, and the unique power of voices joined in choir." â "Cardinal Donald Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington, D.C. and author of *To the Martyrs* "Using the Bible, the Church Fathers, and authoritative musicological scholarship, Mike Aquilina has fashioned a captivating narrative about the place of music in the Early Church. He has extracted from all these sources a truth that has not been emphasized enough: the Church evangelized through music. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI has said that the Church is known through Her saints and through Her art, and Aquilina concurs with this as he concludes his book with a plea for a return to beauty in the Church through the medium of beautiful song. For me this book was a page-turner and very reader-friendly; I plan to give it as a gift to several of my musical friends!" â "Susan Treacy, Professor of Music at Ave Maria University and author of *A Plain and Easy Introduction to Gregorian Chant* --Endorsements" In his typical scintillating prose, Mike Aquilina shows how music changed (and continues to change) the world. This book opened my eyes and my ears to the beauty and tradition of Catholic song. Nobody makes the early Church more relevant to today's Catholic than Aquilinaâ |nobody." â "Matthew Leonard, Speaker, author, podcaster, and Vice President and Executive Producer at the St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology

--Endorsements

Mike Aquilina is the author or co-author of over forty books, including the best-selling *The Fathers of the Church: An Introduction to the First Christian Teachers*; *The Mass of the Early Christians*; and

Angels of God: The Bible, the Church, and the Heavenly Hosts. His reviews, essays, and journalism have appeared in First Things, Touchstone, National Catholic Register, and elsewhere. Aquilina is the Executive Vice President of the St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology and along with Dr. Scott Hahn has hosted several popular television series on the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN). He and his wife Terri live in the Pittsburgh area with their six children.

I often catch myself humming or singing snatches of hymns when I'm cleaning the kitchen. This makes me laugh because I never in a million years would have thought I'd be the sort of person who sang hymns around the house. But it goes to Mike Aquilina's main point.===== "Our lives have a soundtrack, and the soundtrack has a lyric sheet. When we remember music, the words come back with it. Music is the most effective delivery system for words and ideas. And we don't need to read or study to get the message ... music is the most effective way to make a message memorable ... The [Church] Fathers knew the power that music had over our minds—power over thoughts and feelings—and they respected that power. And they used that power to maximum effect. They knew that beautiful music could change the world. It makes us remember, it moves us to virtue, it heals us, and it makes us one. The Fathers knew all these things—and one more important thing as well: they knew that music is a foretaste of heaven."===== Aquilina talks about the power of music in the context of Jewish and Christian history. These chapters are fascinating and don't feel at all like history lessons. He takes us effortlessly into the times when music permeated the air, both from pagan rituals and Jewish worship as well as everyday life lived in the open. We learn why the Jewish music was unique and how it meant more than just a good tune to get you in the mood to think about God. As the story continues through history we see the development of music into what we are more familiar with today. I began thinking about the music during Mass in a whole new way. In fact, I broadened my sights and began considering a lot of things in terms of the music which is often integral to them. This book is really insightful about both music in relationship to human beings and to faith. It was much more than I was expecting from a book which I feared would be more interesting to music professionals than it is to me. I'll be honest. It was not only insightful but revelatory because it made me think about music and how integral it is to us in a way that just never occurred to me. (I just never think about music at all, honestly. Certainly not like that. Talk about a whole new world.) Aquilina points out that the earliest Christians used music to tell truths which helped change a violent, ugly, pornographic culture. Our culture mirrors that early one in a lot of ways, sadly. This book helps reorient us so that we can also make and appreciate music which can tell the truth to a world desperate for beauty and truth. Note: The

typesetting and layout are beautiful. That is all too rare these days and that visual beauty is especially complementary to Mike Aquilina's message that the beauty of music helped convert the world.

I've been studying music theory for a few years, and this little book sure fills in some gaps. I had no idea that the correct form of music for worship was debatable from the beginning. Nice to read input from the early Saints. Also it's a pleasant-reading from a talented author. I hope this knowledge spreads.

I always enjoy reading Mike Aquilina's books. Very good and is a fast read with lots of information!

Lots of little known history and a great writing style with much clarity and simplicity!

Very interesting history

Really enjoyed reading it. Very informative of such an ancient treasury of art.

Great book. I especially enjoyed explanation of the "easy to remember short verses".

Excellent insight into the history of how choir (psalms and hymns) converted, and continue to convert, the world. Written in Mr. Aquilina's knowledgeable, easy-to-read and fascinating prose.

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