

Funeral Rites and the Transformation of Religiosity

Exploring ritual and music in a complex context

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1. Introduction

In September 2004 the Dutch folksinger André Hazes, who is still very popular in the Netherlands, died at the age of 53.¹ He sang sentimental and popular Dutch songs, and had a number of hits. Four days after his death there was a memorial ceremony in the Amsterdam soccer stadium the Arena, which was attended by ten thousands of fans and was watched on television by millions of people. This ceremony took elements from various ritualised activities: a pop concert with candles and people doing the wave, a memorial service after a disaster, a sports manifestation, in particular the winning of a football match including a lap of honour, a gathering with congregational singing that is so popular in the Netherlands, and of course a funeral with, in subdued lighting, the coffin with portrait photo, speeches and music.

The farewell ceremony of André Hazes shows that in the Netherlands funeral rites are increasingly taking place outside the church and that combinations of ecclesiastical and non-ecclesiastical rites are evolving. For a long time only the Church was allowed to provide funerals. Due to changes in our culture the Church is losing ground here and other parties are coming onto the market. Undertakers and independent ritual agencies are ready to provide a personal and worthy funeral.²

Behind this development we see the so-called transformation of religiosity. In various sociological studies on religion the secularisation thesis, which assumes that reality is increasingly experienced as non-religious, is considered untenable. However, we cannot assume the return of the old religion either. There is a new form of religion which expresses itself by, among others, an increasing indi-

¹ This article is based on a paper read at the international meeting of *Universa Laus*, International Study Group for Liturgical Music: Music and rites of Christian farewell, Drongen (Belgium), August 2008.

² See among others H. EMBSEN & T. OVERTOOM: *Hoe zou jij het willen? Persoonlijke afscheid nemen van je dierbare* (Kampen 2007).

vidualisation of ideology.³ Batson calls the present religiosity ‘quest religion’ and Davie speaks of ‘believing without belonging’.⁴

The changes in our culture have a huge influence on the developments in the field of funeral rites. The Roman Catholic funeral liturgy cannot escape this influence either. This becomes evident from, among others, the choice of music which more and more reflects the musical taste of the deceased and the relatives, and less and less the ‘standard’ repertory such as the Gregorian Requiem Mass or specific funeral hymns in vernacular.

However, I am convinced that this personalisation of the funeral rite is not only ‘imposed’ by the culture in which we live, but that to a certain extent it is also called for by liturgy itself. As far as the Roman Catholic funeral liturgy is concerned, I will demonstrate this by means of the renewed book of rites from 1969 and I will explain this by means of the concepts of ‘inductive’ and ‘deductive’ liturgy. Next, I will demonstrate that the cremation rite has been able to develop freely because of its long-time rejection by the Church. Then, I will deal with the musical form of the funeral rite and show its diversity by means of several cases.

2. Does the book of rites of 1969 allow for the individual?

After the Latin edition of the book of rites for the funeral liturgy came out in 1969,⁵ various countries worked on a translation. In 1976 *De uitvaartliturgie*,⁶ the Dutch translation of the book of funeral rites, came out in the Netherlands. In 1982 a second edition came out, which differs from the first on several points. For example, a chapter on cremation and a chapter on the night vigil were added. In Flanders the first translation came out already in 1971 and in 1993 the Interdiocesan Commission for Liturgical Spiritual Care published the renewed *Orde van dienst voor de uitvaartliturgie* (Order of Service for the Funeral Liturgy).⁷

The book of rites of 1969 replaced the Tridentine book of rites of 1614,⁸ in which we find a rite for the funeral liturgy that is literally and metaphorically

³ W. VAN DE DONK & R. PLUM: ‘Begripsverkenning’, in W. VAN DE DONK et al. (ed.): *Geloven in het publieke domein. Verkenningen van een dubbele transformatie* (Amsterdam 2006) 35.

⁴ C. BATSON: ‘Religion as prosocial: agent or double agent?’, in *Journal for the scientific study of religion* 15 (1976) 29-45; G. DAVIE: ‘Believing without belonging’, in *Social compass* 37,4 (1990) 455-469.

⁵ CONGREGATIE VOOR DE EREDIENST: *Ordo exsequiarum* (Rome 1969).

⁶ NATIONALE RAAD VOOR LITURGIE: *De uitvaartliturgie (Liturgie van de sacramenten en de andere kerkelijke vieringen 8)* (Zeist 1976).

⁷ INTERDIOCESANE COMMISSIE VOOR LITURGISCHE ZIELZORG: *Orde van dienst voor de uitvaartliturgie* (Brussels 1971)

⁸ *Rituale Romanum* (Rome 1614) title VII: *De exsequiis*.

black. Both the clothing of the mourners and the liturgical colour were black. Often black drapes were hung by the entrance of the church and in the presbytery. The sombre and somewhat anxious atmosphere of the rite was even intensified by the tract *Absolve* and especially by the sequence *Dies irae* that followed.⁹

In the 1969 book of funeral rites an entirely new course was set out. I shall mention two remarkable renewals here. Firstly, the emphasis is no longer on the judgement and punishment which the deceased has to undergo for his sins, but on the memory of the Easter mystery of Christ in which the deceased shares. In the introduction we read:

In the liturgy for the funeral of her children the church confidently celebrates Christ's Easter mystery, in order that those who, through baptism, have become identical to Christ who has died and risen, like Him pass through death to life. (Introduction no. 1)

Secondly, the renewed book of rites offers the option of going along with the concrete situation, as opposed to the old book of rites that prescribed a more or less uniform and impersonal funeral liturgy. The renewed book of rites seeks to relate the liturgy to the concrete reality in which the deceased has lived. Justice may be done to the individual character of every deceased person, and the relatives who have to deal with the loss of a beloved also get attention in this new funeral rite.¹⁰ The introduction states:

When preparing and organising funeral ceremonies, pastors should not only lovingly pay attention to the deceased as a person and the circumstances of his death, but also to the sadness and Christian needs of the relatives. (Introduction no. 18)

We can say that the book of rites offers many opportunities for a culturally embedded and inductive funeral liturgy.¹¹ For example, the book of rites and the lectionary give a great many options as far as the readings and the prayers are concerned; thus the texts can be adapted to the situation.¹²

Despite these options which are offered in the book of rites, it is precisely on this point that there is much development and discussion. For the intention of the book of rites to do justice to the deceased and the relatives is not realised in

⁹ J. LAMBERTS: 'De rooms-katholieke uitvaartliturgie', in L. LEIJSSSEN et al. (ed.): *Dood en begrafenis* (Leuven 2007 = Levensrituelen; Kadoc-Studies 31) 119-135, p. 124.

¹⁰ LAMBERTS: 'De rooms-katholieke uitvaartliturgie' 128-129; T. SCHEER: 'Bladerend door het uitvaartrituaal', in *Inzet* 6,4 (1977) 10-17.

¹¹ G. LUKKEN: 'De liturgie rond een overledene. Over inductieve en adequate dodenliturgie', in *Rond de tafel* 55,1 (2000) 3-14.

¹² Also see A. BLIJLEVENS: 'Wie in de schaduw Gods mag wonen'. Over de nieuwe uitvaartliturgie volgens de romeinse ritus', in A. BLIJLEVENS, W. BOELEN & G. LUKKEN (ed.): *Op dood en leven. Deel 2: Uitvaartliturgie. Bouwstenen en modellen van vieringen uit 20 jaar werkmop Liturgie (1966-1985)* (Hilversum 1990) 185-201, p. 195-196.

the liturgy that is prescribed in this same book. Due to the strong emphasis on the Easter mystery, which in itself is a positive renewal in the funeral rite, too little attention is paid to the personal history of the deceased. This is at odds with the above mentioned ideological individualisation and the requested personalisation of the funeral rite. The liturgist Ton Scheer describes this as a serious omission in the funeral rite:

Neither does the book of rites pay attention to the life history of N. It does not offer the opportunity, at least not expressively, to commemorate his individual, family, social and religious-ecclesiastical identity. (...) Thus a great gap between the past and the present is created. This causes pastoral problems and also diminishes the commemorative character of this liturgy, as the new present of N. can only be professed on the basis of his life history. One would expect that precisely at this breaking point of life a funeral liturgy would attempt to create a bridge.¹³

In (pastoral) practice there is an individualisation, personalisation, pluralism and democratisation of the funeral rite.¹⁴ Churchgoers are more and more becoming 'clients' who take a certain service from the church and pay for it.¹⁵ This is supported by the option offered in canon 1177.2 of the Code of Canon Law which determines that everybody is free to choose the *ecclesia funerans*. On the other hand, there is the nature of the Christian funeral liturgy. Every pastor experiences the tension between the inductive and deductive approach to liturgy, between a liturgy that takes the life of this one, unique human being as point of departure and a liturgy that puts honouring God first.

3. Inductive versus deductive

Recently Thomas Quartier, a researcher at the Radboud University in Nijmegen who has made a thorough study of funeral rites, argued for a good balance between the deductive and the inductive approach.¹⁶ He quotes two pastors whom he interviewed about their views on the funeral liturgy. The first pastor is Mirjam, a pastoral worker in a town parish. She conducts around two funerals a week and tries to give every funeral a personal character. According to Mirjam, it is important that the life of the deceased is visible in the funeral. At the same time it is important to consider everybody attending the ceremony. 'In

¹³ SCHEER: 'Bladerend door het uitvaartrituale' 16.

¹⁴ G. LUKKEN: 'Het christelijk dodenritueel binnen de dynamiek van het hedendaagse rituele landschap', in L. VAN TONGEREN (red.): *Vaarnel. Verschuivingen in vormgeving en duiding van uitvaartrituelen* (Kampen 2007 = Meander 9) 33-53, p. 40-44.

¹⁵ L. VAN TONGEREN: 'Individualizing ritual: The personal dimension in funeral liturgy', in *Worship* 78 (2004) 117-138.

¹⁶ T. QUARTIER: 'Afscheidsviering of liturgie?', in *Vieren* 3,2 (2005) 3-6. The quotes come from this article.

the parish where I work, in more than half the situations I am dealing with people who are not familiar with the traditional ecclesiastical funeral. I need to take this into account, because after all it is their personal farewell,' says Mirjam.

The second pastor is Jos, who works as a deacon in a town parish. He considers it his job to make sure that funerals remain recognisable as ecclesiastical funerals. Especially at a time when many people are no longer familiar with ecclesiastical traditions, it is of great importance that the church offers them safety. It is also important for the identity of the parish to make sure that the liturgical tradition is not obscured by all sorts of personal considerations. Jos says: 'If I did not take care to maintain tradition in my parish, soon there would be little of it left.'

The problem with both pastors is that they consider their own approach – inductive or deductive – absolute. Quartier argues for finding a balance. In a good liturgy creativity and recognisability through repetition, personal situation and ecclesiastical tradition go hand in hand. However, I would like to go one step further: I believe it is not about a *balance* between an inductive and a deductive approach, but about radically merging these two different approaches. But this requires a U-turn in our thinking. We are inclined to look from the inside out, from the Church to society. Together with Emeritus Professor of Liturgy Gerard Lukken, I would like to argue for the other way round: from the outside in.¹⁷ This approach assumes that God is present in life. From his immanence in human existence, we can arrive at his transcendence. This view is based on the creation theology, whereby creation is considered a permanent phenomenon in which man is involved. So there is no gap between immanence and transcendence, they merge seamlessly.

From this perspective, we can take another look at the character of the funeral liturgy. Is it primarily a ceremony of farewell, as we saw with pastoral worker Mirjam, or is it an act of devotion to God, as we saw with deacon Jos? We can examine this question by looking at the music that is played at a funeral. The character of the funeral liturgy is largely determined by the music that is selected. Do we hear the deceased's favourite music, either live or on CD, or do we hear the familiar 'Requiem aeternam'? The above mentioned trend of personalising the funeral rite has a great influence on the choice of music. Increasingly relatives ask for specific music, which they provide themselves on CD. This development has far-reaching consequences for the position of church musicians. Many church musicians find it difficult that, for example, pop music and CDs are finding their way into the church,¹⁸ but I believe that this development is inevitable. It requires further consideration from a positive attitude about the religious dimensions that are present in our (music) culture.

¹⁷ LUKKEN: 'Het christelijk dodenritueel' 37.

¹⁸ B. STOLWIJK: 'Muziekkeuze en gebruik van cd's in een kerkelijke uitvaart', in *Doorgeven. Bulletin voor liturgie en kerkmuziek* 18,2 (2004) 10-13; P. VAN DER WEIDE: 'Het gebruik van cd's tijdens de viering van de liturgie', in *Gregoriusblad* 128 (2004) 220-225.

4. Cremation

I would like to say a few words about cremation as part of the funeral rite. The option of cremation is given in canon 1176.3 of the Code of Canon Law. Although the church has a preference for burials, it does not prohibit cremation. This is a departure from the Ecclesiastical Code of 1917 (canon 1203), in which cremation was expressively forbidden. This prohibition of cremation did not originate from the Christian doctrine, for the burning of the body, like the natural decay of the buried body, does not stand in the way of bodily resurrection. The Church opposed cremation because it was considered an expression of a materialistic ideology connected with the denial of the immortality of the soul. The opposition of the Church to cremation was related to the context in which cremation came into vogue. Anti-church movements from the French Revolution wanted to make cremation compulsory. For example, in 1869 the International Congress of Freemasons made the issue of cremation a matter of dispute in the fight against the Church. Cremation was also propagated in Marxist circles, among others, by the foundation of the Association of Free-thinkers for Cremation in 1905.¹⁹

In the instruction *Piam et constantem* of 8 May 1963 the Congregation of the Holy Office acknowledged that cremation might also be desirable for hygienic or economic reasons. The Church no longer considered this request as an expression of hatred against the Church and its morals. I quote:

The Holy See is receiving repeated requests for a relaxation of Church discipline relative to cremation. The procedure is clearly being advocated today, not out of hatred of the Church or Christian customs, but rather for reasons of health, economics, or other reasons involving private or public order. (...) The Church therefore establishes the following.

1. All necessary measures must be taken to preserve the practice of reverently burying the faithful departed. (...)
2. It has seemed the wiser course, however, to relax the prescriptions of canon law touching on cremation (...). Accordingly, the stipulations of CIC can. 1203, par. 2 (on carrying out a person's will to be cremated) and of can. 1240, par. 1 no. 5 (on the denial of ecclesiastical burial to a person who has left such a directive) no longer have universal binding force. (...)
3. From this it follows that the sacraments or public prayers are not to be refused to those who have chosen cremation (...).
4. (...) the rites of ecclesiastical burial and the ensuing suffrages may never be carried out at the place of cremation itself, not even simply to accompany the body as it is being brought there.²⁰

¹⁹ E. EICHMANN & K. MÖRSDORF: *Lehrbuch des Kirchenrechts auf Grund des Codex Iuris Canonici*. Band II: *Sachenrecht*. (München etc., 1967 (first print: 1953)) 338-340.

²⁰ *AAS* 56 (1964) 822-823. English translation in *Documents on the Liturgy, 1963-1979. Conciliar, Papal, and Curial Texts* (Collegeville 1982) 1066-1067.

On the one hand, the instruction *Piam et constantem* abolished the prohibition of cremation. On the other hand, the Church limited its assistance in a cremation to the minimum: a preference is given to burial, the clergy is not allowed to perform ecclesiastical acts in the crematorium. In the everyday practice of the funeral liturgy we still see the consequences of this reserved attitude towards cremation. For example, as a result of this attitude the rite that takes place in the crematorium has its own order. There is a gap between the rite in the crematorium and the funeral liturgy in the church, that is not only apparent in time and space, but also in the person leading the ceremony and the choice of music. One may ask whether from a pastoral point of view it is justifiable that the Church keeps its distance at the moment that one has to say farewell to the deceased in the crematorium. However, this is often the case. Because of this, from a ritual perspective, cremation is a separate domain in which other rules apply than in the church.

Certainly in the Netherlands, as a rule CDs are played in the crematorium. By the way, the book of rites also offers this option: ‘Special attention should be paid to the choice of the music that is played mechanically when entering and leaving the auditorium.’²¹

In the crematorium the *participatio actuosa* of music is entirely different from that in the church. While in the church one actively takes part in the singing, in the crematorium one is expected to listen. The way music is embedded in the rite also differs significantly. In the church the music that is sung is usually chosen for its ritual function. Here we see the influence of composers and thinkers such as Joseph Gelineau²² and Bernard Huijbers.²³ In the crematorium the songs are usually related to the biography of the deceased, they express an aspect of his or her life.

It is inevitable that both domains, church and crematorium, influence each other. I suspect that the influence of the crematorium on the church will be greater than the other way round. As far as the reproduction of music is concerned, playing music from CDs is simply part of our culture. People have their favourite music on CD and are used to listening to it. If this is allowed in the crematorium, why should it not be allowed in the church?²⁴

²¹ NATIONALE RAAD VOOR LITURGIE: *De uitvaartliturgie* (Zeist 1982) 58 (remark e).

²² J. GELINEAU: *Chant et musique dans le culte chrétien. Principes, lois et applications* (Paris 1962).

²³ B. HUIJBERS: *Door podium en zaal tegelijk. Volkstaalliturgie en muzikale stijl. Zes en een half essay over muzikale functionaliteit* (Baarn 1994, 2nd suppl. ed. (first ed. 1969)). English edition: *The performing audience*.

²⁴ Also see: M. HOONDEERT: ‘Literatuurbericht uitvaartrituelen’, in *Eredienstvaardig* 24,2 (2008) 33-37.

5. The musical form of the funeral rite

Above I have already said a few things about the musical form of the funeral rite. Now I would like to examine this further. Only rarely is there no music at a funeral, in the church, the funeral parlour, or in the crematorium. The confrontation with death, the grief for a beloved and the inevitability of the farewell require a 'language' that reaches beyond words. This is why there is singing at a funeral, by a choir or the people who have come together. This is why there is music, live or reproduced.

The question of the musical form of the funeral liturgy can be approached from various points of view or perspectives. The musical form is a matter of planning and of the policy on liturgical or ritual music. This policy is – explicitly or implicitly – made on three levels.

The first level is that of the more or less official liturgical-musical policy-makers. For the Roman Catholic Church these are the national liturgical committees. The publishers who bring liturgical music for the funeral liturgy on the market have a great influence. This is where the liturgical-musical policy is concretised, even if the publications are not always the result of explicit policy decisions.

Secondly, the liturgical-musical policy is strongly determined by local factors: the established musical tradition, the education and views of the conductor and/or organist, the musical intervention by the pastor or parson, the musical facilities in the church (is there a piano or an organ, can CDs be played?). On this second level the liturgical-musical policy is sometimes a conscious choice, sometimes it has just developed that way, and sometimes it simply has not been determined or considered.

Then there is a third level on which choices are made, namely that of the relatives. They want to hear certain music because it is appropriate for the beloved who has passed away, for themselves as relatives or for the occasion of the funeral, the way it should be according to their views or experience (memories of earlier funerals might play a role in this).

The resulting musical form of a concrete funeral liturgy is determined by all parties on these three levels together. Thus – and this makes it interesting – it is not a case of one-sidedness; there is actual interplay. In other words: choices that are made on one of the levels influence what is desirable or possible on the other levels. In this interplay the third level, that of the relatives, is becoming more and more important and dominant. On this third level we see a significant change, which can be described by the above mentioned term 'personalisation' and an emphasis on emotion and experience. The German sociologist Gerhard Schulze has characterised our culture as an 'Erlebnisgesellschaft'.²⁵ We live in an 'experience culture', in which products, services and places are not assessed

²⁵ G. SCHULZE: *Die Erlebnisgesellschaft. Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart* (Frankfurt / New York 1993).

on the basis of their functional merit, but their symbolic value, identity and experience value. The key question is: 'What does this mean to me?' As far as the Church and religion are concerned, the emphasis has shifted from an ecclesiastical doctrine based on dogmas to a spirituality that is experienced subjectively.²⁶ This shift can be seen first on the level of the relatives, but inevitably, though with some delay, it is going to influence what the policy-makers and publishers have to offer: they too will focus more on the language of the *musica* that is more concerned with experience, at the expense of genres that are more concerned with text and content.

6. Cases

We will examine four cases to concretise the above. The first two cases concern music which official authorities have designated as music for the funeral rite. The third case gives an idea of the everyday practice in an actual parish. The fourth case concerns a funeral rite which is strongly determined by the musical wishes of the relatives.

Case 1: The Gregorian Requiem Mass

The classical Tridentine Requiem Mass consists of nine sections that are set to music:²⁷

1. Introit: 'Requiem'
2. Kyrie
3. Gradual: 'Requiem'
4. Tract: 'Absolve, Domine'
5. Sequence: 'Dies irae, dies illa'
6. Offertory: 'Domine Jesu Christe'
7. Sanctus
8. Agnus Dei
9. Communion: 'Lux aeterna'

In addition there are the chants for the *Absolutio* or the last farewell, namely the responsories 'Absolve' and 'Libera me, Domine' and the antiphon 'In paradisum'.

Since the Second Vatican Council options are given for the Proper section.²⁸ Through these options the Easter character of the funeral liturgy is expressed

²⁶ S. HELLEMANS: 'De katholieke kerk in Nederland 1960-2020. Van volkskerk naar keuzekerk', in S. HELLEMANS et al. (ed.): *Een kerk met toekomst? De katholieke kerk in Nederland 1960-2020* (Zoetermeer 2003 = Utrechtse studies 4) 9-39, p. 23-24.

²⁷ For an overview of important settings of the Requiem Mass, see: L. LÜTTEKEN: *Messe und Motette* (Bärenreiter etc. 2002 = MGGprisma) 83-102.

more clearly and it is easier to take the individual character of the funeral of this unique, deceased person into account.²⁹ For the gradual, sung between the readings, several alternatives are given, to be chosen dependent on the Scriptures, in order to achieve a unity between the spoken and the sung Word.³⁰

So the question is: how have the renewals in the Gregorian Requiem Mass been received in the liturgical practice of the parishes? As far as I have seen, the renewals of the Requiem Mass have not found their way into practice. When the Gregorian Requiem Mass is sung, then it comprises the above-mentioned classical sections, but without the sequence 'Dies irae' and possibly with an added alleluia. Many times the Agnus Dei is still sung in the old way, in other words ending with 'dona eis requiem (sempiternam)' instead of the required 'miserere nobis / dona nobis pacem':

1. Introit: 'Requiem'
2. Kyrie
3. Gradual: 'Requiem'
4. Alleluia: 'Requiem'
5. Tract: 'Absolve, Domine'
6. Offertory: 'Domine Jesu Christe'
7. Sanctus
8. Agnus Dei ... dona eis requiem (sempiternam), or miserere nobis / dona nobis pacem
9. Communion: 'Lux aeterna'

This means that in the everyday practice of the parishes the keywords *requiem* ('rest') and *absolve* ('redeem us') still dominate. 'Ego autem ... apparebo in conspectu tuo' (I will behold thy face, psalm 16 (17); *Graduale Romanum* p. 94, one of the options for the introit) and 'Laetatus sum' (I was glad when they said unto me: Let us go into the house of the Lord, psalm 121 (122); *Graduale Romanum* p. 336, one of the options for the gradual) are hardly used or not used at all and, as far as the sung parts of the funeral rite are concerned, the Easter story has barely gained ground. Although the wish of the Council Fathers to realise a funeral rite with an explicit Easter character is praiseworthy, the question is whether the Gregorian Requiem Mass is the right means to achieve this. Can we change such ancient, ritual chants? Can the Requiem Mass open with the introit 'Ego autem' (GR 94)? Those implementing the Council's decisions have approached the Requiem Mass as a text and with this in mind they have suggested other chants. However, the Requiem Mass is not primarily text, but

²⁸ See *Graduale Romanum* (Solesmes 1974) 669.

²⁹ *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 81. See for a concise description of the renewals in the funeral liturgy since Vaticanum II: G. KLEINHEYER et al. (eds.): *Gottesdienst der Kirche. Handbuch der Liturgiewissenschaft. Sakramentliche Feiern* II (Regensburg 1984) 222-224.

³⁰ G. KOCK: 'Zingen bij het afscheid', in WERK GROEP VOOR LITURGIE HEESWIJK: *Door de dood heen. Leer- en werkboek rond avondwake en uitvaart* (Heeswijk 1999) 143-159, p. 146-149.

sound. I doubt whether modern people are looking forward to rest and that they want to pray humbly for the forgiveness of sins, nevertheless they want the traditional Requiem Mass, because, despite the fact that these ancient ritual chants have lost their meaning, they have not lost their effect. The familiar sound of music and text makes the emotionally-charged moment of the funeral rite bearable. Death that so drastically disturbs daily life is as it were tempered by the ritual singing that is as it is supposed to be. Further, it is this unintelligibility of the Requiem Mass that makes it a kind of shell, a hermeneutically open space that we ourselves can fill with meaning.³¹ There are no words that impose themselves on us, there is just sound.

Case 2: Two editions of the funeral liturgy

The second case concerns two editions by the two main Dutch publishers of liturgy and church music, namely Gooi en Sticht in Kampen and Uitgeverij Abdij van Berne in Heeswijk. In 1989 Uitgeverij Abdij van Berne published the worship book *Licht en leven* (Light and Life), and in 2001 it experienced its sixteenth edition. It is used in many parishes, most likely in situations in which a custom-made booklet is not desirable or available.

The second edition is *De uitvaartliturgie* (The Funeral Liturgy) by the Nationale Raad voor Liturgie (National Council for Liturgy), that was given the *imprimatur* in 1986; the version used here dates from 1992; it is unknown which edition this is. *De uitvaartliturgie* was compiled by the Nationale Raad voor Liturgie and published by Gooi en Sticht. Both booklets contain the same number of pages (32 pages), but they differ in size. The booklet *Licht en leven* by Uitgeverij Abdij van Berne is larger, which is one of the reasons why it includes more hymns. Regarding the hymns, I come to two conclusions, which can be characterised by the keywords: conservative and sound space.

Conservative

The editions date from 2001 and 1992 respectively. The most recent hymn that we come across is 'Licht dat ons aanstoot' (Light that touches us) on a melody by Antoine Oomen (in *Licht en leven*) that dates from 1978.³² Have not any hymns that are suitable for the funeral liturgy appeared since then? This is a rhetorical question: of course there have been published further appropriate hymns. Obviously the publishers do not dare to include the new repertoire. They confine themselves to older material, mainly from the 1960s and '70s.

³¹ P. POST: 'Van paasvuur tot stille tocht. Over interferentie van liturgisch en volksreligieus ritueel', in *Volkskundig bulletin* 25 (1999) 215-234, 226; IDEM: *Het wonder van Dokkeum. Verkenningen van populair religieus ritueel* (Nijmegen 2000) 109-110; H. VUJSJE: *Tot hier heeft de Heer ons geholpen. Over godsbeelden en goed gedrag* (Amsterdam / Antwerpen 2007), 195s.

³² See A. VERNOOIJ: 'Antoine Oomens 'Lied aan het licht'', in *Gregoriusblad* 115 (1991) 18-21.

There are no new hymns in the two editions mentioned here.³³ Or is there maybe some other reason: are the publishers and policy-makers primarily led by the wishes and possibilities of the parish choirs themselves? Funeral and wedding choirs often consist of elderly, retired singers who are not inclined to develop and renew their repertory. The singers prefer the familiar route; they choose familiar sounds because they have offered solace for decades, in any case to themselves. It seems that the above-mentioned second level determines the selection of hymns.

Sound space

Secondly, we can conclude that there is hardly any specific liturgical-musical repertory for the funeral liturgy. The majority of the hymns are also used in the Sunday liturgy.³⁴ Exceptions to this are the hymns 'Midden in de dood' (In the Midst of Death), 'Ik geloof dat mijn Verlosser leeft' (I know that my Redeemer lives) and 'Niemand leeft voor zichzelf' (No one lives for himself). In other words: the suppliers have not chosen for a specific repertory. On the one hand, this is understandable: as in the funeral liturgy, the doctrine of resurrection also plays a central role in the Sunday liturgy; Sunday is the day of the resurrection, week after week. In essence we are celebrating the same thing on Sunday and in the funeral liturgy. Both in the Sunday liturgy and in the funeral liturgy the Second Vatican Council has put the emphasis on the resurrection.³⁵

On the other hand, the choice of hymns shows little understanding for the specific nature of the funeral liturgy. As far as the content is concerned, the accents may be the same, but the reason why the participants have gathered for the ceremony is entirely different. The celebration on Sunday is a moment in time, a day of rest and joy. By celebrating Sunday we mark the 'the Lord's day' and we celebrate the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the funeral liturgy we place the life and death of the deceased in the same perspective, but it is about *this* dead person, about *this* moment of farewell. While the Sunday liturgy is characterised by repetition and regularity,³⁶ the funeral liturgy is – despite all its repeated elements and set *ordo* – more a one-off and unique occasion.³⁷ Even without the growing trend of personalisation, also according to

³³ Among others: H. OOSTERHUIS & A. OOMEN: *Eerste en laatste* (Baarn 1994); A. GOVAART, R. GOORHUIS et al.: *In uw licht. Gezangen voor de uitvaartliturgie* (Kampen 2001). Also see the compilation *Wieg ben in jouw eenwigheid* (Averbode 2003), in which hymns, both 'ancient' and 'new' from various sources have been brought together.

³⁴ The hymns for the Sunday liturgy can be found in the collection *Gezangen voor Liturgie* (Baarn 1996, 2nd rev. ed.) and in the weekly publications of Uitgeverij Abdij van Berne (*De zondag vieren*) and the publisher Gooi en Sticht (*Bron van christelijke geest*).

³⁵ Compare *Sacrosanctum Concilium* no. 106 to no. 81.

³⁶ G. LUKKEN: 'Rituelen in het spanningsveld van herhaling en vernieuwing', in *Tijdschrift voor geestelijk leven* 60 (2004) 377-389.

³⁷ G. LUKKEN: 'Een barmhartige kerk? Spanningsvelden in de uitvaartliturgie', in *Jaarboek voor liturgie-onderzoek* 21 (2005) 159-194. On p. 176-177 Lukken writes: 'In the 60s

the Roman Book of Rites, a funeral is about this one individual whom we are saying farewell to. The question is whether this aspect should not be reflected in the hymns in some way or other.

The fact that the funeral liturgy is a unique occasion does not only have consequences for the contents, but also for the music. The people who come together are different from those at the Sunday liturgy. At a funeral liturgy, alongside the faithful churchgoers who attend the Sunday liturgy with some regularity, there are for the most part people who have come to the church especially for this occasion. The group of people is diffuse and not equally familiar with liturgical uses and the liturgical-musical repertory. The fact that the publishers choose the same hymns for both the funeral liturgy and the Sunday liturgy indicates that they presume the people present are the same. Here the huge community concept that we recognise from the Liturgical Movement predominates and moreover, participation in the sense of joining in and singing along is the norm.³⁸ The question is whether this does justice to the congregation that is present. Will people not be 'sidelined' if they are presented with hymns in which they are expected to take part, but which they do not know because they are not a regular churchgoer or because they belong to a different (religious) tradition? The choice of hymns in the editions that are discussed here is intended for congregational singing and is especially appropriate for the ecclesiological concept of a people's church. The hymns are meant to unite those present, but can this be achieved with this repertory?

Case 3: Funerals in the parish of Tongelre (Eindhoven)

I received information about 83 funerals that took place in the parish of Tongelre (a district of the city of Eindhoven, the Netherlands) in the period September 2004 to February 2008.³⁹ As a rule these are ceremonies with a small choir, accompanied by an organist. In 8 out of the 83 ceremonies not only the choir and congregation sang, but there was also music played on CD. In 17 out of the 83 ceremonies there was no choir and all of the music came from a CD.

The repertory of the choir is limited, the same hymns keep returning. The ceremony usually begins with the Gregorian introit ('Requiem') and ends with 'In paradisum'. At the last farewell (indicated as 'absoute'), the order of service

the funeral rite in the Catholic Church was drastically changed (...) Characteristic for the new Christian funeral rite is that the medieval layer with its fear of death and judgement (among others the well-known *Dies irae*) has disappeared and that the resurrection from the death once again became the main theme. (...) It is also characteristic that the new rite became more varied: again and again it is emphasised that it is about these people and this deceased person.'

³⁸ P. POST: 'Een ideaal bevraagd: Actuele kritische notities bij het adagium van bewuste actieve deelname van de gemeenschap in de liturgie', in *Tijdschrift voor liturgie* 88 (2004) 2-14.

³⁹ See www.parochietongelre.dse.nl.

usually mentions: ‘Niemand leeft voor zichzelf’,⁴⁰ or ‘organ playing’. Then there are the set acclamations: Kyrie for the penitential rite, ‘For the Lord is my Shepherd’ (refrain from Psalm 22 (23) by J. Gelineau) for the communion prayer, and the acclamation for the invocation (‘Lord, our God, we pray: have mercy upon us’). The top five of chosen hymns is as follows:

Title of hymn	Number of times sung
‘Licht dat ons aanstoot’ (Light that touches us; text H. Oosterhuis; music A. Oomen)	50
‘Als gij naar de woorden luistert’ (When You Listen to the Words; text H. Jongerius; music English Hymnal)	28
‘Blijf mij nabij’ (Abide with Me; text: W. Barnard et al.; music W. Monk)	17
Psalm 126 ‘Als God ons thuisbrengt’ (When God Brings Us Home; text H. Oosterhuis et al.; music B. Huijbers)	16
‘Zo vriendelijk en veilig als het licht’ (As Friendly and Safe as the Light; text H. Oosterhuis; music B. Huijbers)	13

The choir also has a few choral pieces on its repertory such as the ‘Ave Maria’ by J. Haagh, ‘Lead me Lord’ by S. Wesley and ‘Ich bete an der Macht der Liebe’ by D. Bortnianski.

What does this case teach us? Examining the 83 ceremonies, I conclude that the choir in the parish of Tongelre has developed its own Requiem Mass primarily in the Dutch language that as a rule is as follows:

1. Entry: Gregorian introit ‘Requiem’
2. Rite of light: ‘Licht dat ons aanstoot’, or ‘Zo vriendelijk en veilig als het licht’
3. Kyrie
4. Hymn: ‘Als gij naar de woorden luistert’
5. Offertory hymn: ‘Als God ons thuisbrengt’
6. Acclamation in the communion prayer: ‘Want mijn herder is de Heer’
7. Communion hymn: choral piece
8. Taking of the small memorial cross to the chapel of remembrance: ‘Ave Maria’
9. Invocation with acclamation: ‘Heer, onze God, wij bidden U: verhoor ons’
10. Absoute: ‘Niemand leeft voor zichzelf’; or organ playing
11. Exit: ‘In paradisum’

This ‘Requiem Mass’ is specific to this parish, despite the fact that it consists of hymns that we come across in other parishes as well. New, familiar sounds have

⁴⁰ Text: H. Oosterhuis; music: Fl. van der Putt. This song features at least 12 x, but most likely it was sung more often.

been created which for the relatives in the parish of Tongelre are inextricably linked to saying farewell, grief and consolation.

Case 4: ‘Gracias a la vida’ – ‘profane’ music at a funeral

The fourth case concerns the funeral of Mrs W., who died of cancer at the age of 52.⁴¹ Like her husband who is a parson, the deceased was closely connected to the Protestant Church. The funeral liturgy featured two ‘profane’ songs which the deceased had chosen herself; we will focus here on one of these two songs.

In her diary, which she kept from the moment she heard that she was ill, she wrote a month before she died: ‘Music for the funeral: ‘Gracias a la vida’ has just been sung on TV and again I found it so beautiful, for after all life has given me so much.’ From a conversation with the husband two and a half years after the funeral we record the following: the song ‘Gracias a la vida’ can be described as an homage to life. It is sung by somebody who has had a prosperous life. The song more or less describes this life, but it mainly expresses gratitude. A quote from the conversation:

It is looking back in wonder at what life has been, at its richness and its beauty. My wife and I have had a very prosperous life together. Of course her death was premature and something very dramatic and very sad, so in order to prevent being undone by it and to prevent her life from becoming one with the drama of the end, I think she chose this. (...) It is a song that helps you a tiny bit not to become one with your grief. Somebody is being laid to rest, it is all over and you stand there alone with your children (...), a moment of deep, deep loneliness. This song also helped a tiny bit to express and convey this gratitude.

For the deceased and her husband the song ‘Gracias a la vida’ had a special meaning as they lived in Chile for ten years and therefore knew the culture this song belongs to very well. Therefore in the funeral liturgy the song represented a specific part of their life together.

In the funeral liturgy ‘Gracias a la vida’ was placed in a Christian context, consisting of readings from the Scriptures, prayers and rituals. Because of this the song, which is in essence profane, was given a new meaning (in any case for the husband). To him, ‘Gracias a la vida’ meant thanking God for the gift of life.

⁴¹ The case is derived from the thesis by MIRELLA KLOMP: *Waarheen leidt de weg? Zogenaamd ‘wereldlijke’ muziek in de uitvaartliturgie: een onderzoek naar betekenisgeving* (Amsterdam 2005, unpublished). Also see: M. KLOMP: De sound van de uitvaartdienst. Over zinvol gebruik van zogenaamd ‘wereldlijke’ muziek in de uitvaartliturgie’, in VAN TONGEREN: *Vaarwel* 75-92; IDEM: ‘Waarheen leidt de weg? Het gebruik van zogenaamd ‘wereldlijke’ muziek in de uitvaartliturgie’, in *Praktische Theologie* 33 (2006) 474-493.

Using a (profane) song in a Christian funeral rite is an ‘act of connection’.⁴² In a new context new meanings are created or hidden meanings are brought to the surface. A profane song can get a theological meaning, but the opposite may happen too: the Christian funeral rite can be made profane by the use of a profane song. This ‘act of connection’ may lead to an unwanted tension between the Christian vocabulary and the contents of the profane song. A good example is the song ‘Pappa’ (Daddy) by the (Dutch) artist Stef Bos. This song is often used in both Christian and non-Christian funeral rites; children ask for it when their father has died, wishing to express their own child-parent relationship through this song.⁴³ However, one of the verses clashes with the resurrection mystery that is celebrated at the funeral liturgy: ‘And you believe in God / so you will go to heaven. / And I don’t believe in anything, / so after death, after death, we will never meet again.’

In the song ‘Gracias a la vida’ such a clash does not take place on a textual level. The song gets a place in the liturgy as a whole, in which the churchgoers stand *coram Deo*, in the sight of God. The song becomes part of the *gloria Dei* and is given a new meaning. However, a song is more than just its text. A song also conveys a certain culture, in this case the situation in Latin-America, in which this song expressed opposition against dictatorial regimes. Thirdly, apart from its text and the culture or the environment in which the song was created, there is the *sound* of a song. ‘Gracias a la vida’ is a song to listen to: the musical parameters and the fact that it is played from CD prevent the churchgoers from actively participating with their own voice. Playing music from CD creates distance, because the performance does not take place here and now. If active participation in the sense of ‘singing along’ is a criterion for liturgical music, then ‘Gracias a la vida’ cannot become a liturgical song. However, if we speak of *participatio actiosa*, this does not only refer to ‘singing along’, but also to engagement, agreeing with, being involved in the content of the song and the act of singing.⁴⁴ We are familiar with this form of participation in liturgical music from the time when the choir sang the liturgical music (a polyphonic Mass and the Gregorian Proper) and the churchgoers listened. I have the impression that this form of participation, which I call ‘active listening’, increasingly occurs in funeral rites.

⁴² J. HAUSREITHER: *Semiotik des liturgischen Gesanges. Ein Beitrag zur Entwicklung einer integralen Untersuchungsmethode der Liturgiewissenschaft* (Leuven 2004 = Liturgia condenda 16) 8.

⁴³ J. KOOPMANS: ‘Het ‘meer’ in de uitvaartmuziek’, in *Vieren* 3,2 (2005) 8-11; K. SCHUURMANS: ‘Van psalm tot smartlap?’ Over het gebruik van ‘profane’ teksten, liederen en muziek in afscheidsvieringen’, in *Doorgeven. Bulletin voor liturgie en kerkmuziek* 15,1 (2001) 4-11.

⁴⁴ See also: M. HOONDERT: *Muziek als rituele praktijk. Gelineau berlezen* (Tilburg 2007 = inaugural lecture University of Tilburg) 30-34.

7. Some conclusions

Due to the individualisation of religiosity and the scope people are more or less offered in the book of rites for the funeral liturgy (1969), the way in which we select the music has drastically changed. While we used to hear the Gregorian Requiem Mass, or a setting of the Latin Requiem text by composers such as Perosi, Refice, Witt and others at the funeral liturgy, now relatives choose – partly due to the rituals they come across in the crematorium – among others, their favourite classical compositions, pop songs and sentimental songs, live or on CD. There has been little research into the meaning given to music at funeral rites from a theological and ritual perspective. This empirical shortage makes it difficult to say whether the music chosen for the funeral rite offers consolation and perspective, whether it contributes to the rite as a whole or is included as an independent unit, or whether it unites those present with what is taking place at that moment or alienates them. Incorporating music in a funeral rite is an ‘act of connection’ that should be examined at the level of the text, the musical parameters and the culture to which it belongs.

One trend can already be recognised: there is a growing demand for songs to listen to, both pop music and classical repertory, live or on CD. People are looking for music that offers them the possibility of engagement and involvement, without having to sing actively. I would like to argue that the musical language of the songs in the funeral liturgy should not solely focus on active participation, but also on consolation and comfort. The criterion for the choice of songs in the funeral liturgy is not only their liturgical functionality (‘the right song in the right place’), but also the consoling nature of the musical language.

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