

THE PASTOR'S (MUSICAL) POINTS

May 12, 2019

The parish has been blessed with a lot of musical talent. Those who participated in the Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil) were treated, once again, to engaging and beautiful music. I wish to express my deep appreciation to Cheryl Koller, our Music Minister, and the accompanists, cantors, trumpeters, flutists, (Am I missing anyone else?!), and choir members who gave so much of their time to help us to pray the liturgy we are privileged to share as Catholic disciples of Christ. It was another reminder of the wisdom of the Second Vatican Council's document on the Liturgy which says "The active participation of the faithful is the aim to be sought above all else." (Sacrosanctum Concilium #14)

Many of you are aware that Cheryl has been extremely generous in stepping in as our temporary music minister. And while she has been patient as we have searched, she is also anxious for a break! And we are happy to announce that we have hired a replacement.

Greg Santa Croce recently finished a Master's Degree in Sacred Music and Organ Performance from Notre Dame. He is an accomplished organist (You can go to his website if you wish to get a preview.) and pianist (Jazz was his first love.). He also directs and sings. Greg was the unanimous choice of our search committee and will be arriving in mid-June, after he has finished his studies. His first weekend playing at Mass will be June 23-24. Cheryl has graciously agreed to stay on to make for a smooth transition.

I have been praying that our purchase of a fine musical instrument (our new organ), and hiring Greg will enable us to continue to build on our excellent liturgical musical tradition. Like many of us, he is not from North Carolina (He's from Upstate New York.), so I trust that everyone will make him welcome.

I am a firm believer that a parish should strive to have the very best music. The Notre Dame Study of Pastoral Life in the United States indicated that the two most important things that people look for in searching for a parish home are good preaching and good music.

As important as those two things are – neither one is anything without the *plebs Dei* – the people of God. YOU. For the liturgy is 'people's work' (LEITOURGIA in Greek). Please do not disparage God's gift to you if you or others judge your voice to be less than Andrea Bocelli's! It is the gift that God gave you to sing His praises. And He expects you to use it. It is also extremely important that our young people see that the adults of the parish participate. When I've challenged some of them to sing, sometimes the response I get is, "Well, the adults obviously don't care – they don't sing – so why should I?" What we do – and fail to do – is noticed!

I found this piece from the diary of a priest who was working in a Leprosarium, which makes the point well. June 12, 1980: The Leprosarium on Guimaras. So it was St. Alice's Day, the feast of the 13th century mystic and leper. Since this feast is, appropriately enough, the pastoral feast of the leprosarium, much of the day's activity in the spacious compound was being directed toward the preparations for the coming feast. In one of the large barrack-wards, Sr. Marie introduced Fr. Fabian and me to some of the men who were preparing their music for the next day's celebration. There were three of them, each with his own musical instrument. The instruments themselves had been fashioned with great love, skill and ingenuity by one of the members of the trio. A musicologist would have a bit of difficulty, I admit, in classifying each of these instruments, probably settling for something generic, like 'a guitar-like string instrument.' But each of these instruments was the work of a true craftsman. What struck deepest, however, was the music itself, or rather, the musicians. I doubt that the three players had between them four whole fingers. Their hands ended mostly in knobs and stubs. What kind of music can you play with one finger, a knuckle-bone and a few stubs? Not one of the three was physically able to negotiate more than a few notes and chord-sequences. And yet, by pooling their limited resources, and by each contributing his own limited efforts, these men were playing and singing music, real music, beautiful music. It may not have been Bach or Beethoven. But I can assure you that Bach or Beethoven would have deemed themselves privileged to join these three lepers in their music-making.

If the highly gifted (or even the moderately gifted) individuals can exercise their gifts at liturgy for the sake of the community, splendid! But even more important is the willingness of the rest of us – those of us who can't sing like Katherine Battle, who can't play an instrument or read music, to join with others like ourselves, and sing our praise to God. Within such a matrix a community liturgy has every chance of flourishing. (A SOURCEBOOK ABOUT MUSIC, LTP, 1997)

So may it be for us at St. Andrew's! Thank you for all that you do to build up the Kingdom of God! Amen!

Father John