

# Music by the Month

By Sr. Josepha Kennedy, SSJ

Missalettes may be a mixed blessing but they do provide a handy device for planning a selection of hymns that has a developmental and often thematic coherence.

The parish liturgy committee, at its monthly meeting, or a sub-committee made up of the music personnel after a Mass on the last Sunday of the month, can set out the next month's program with very little difficulty and in a very short time. The greatest advantage is that there can be a real record of the planning and the growth; this is a source of satisfaction to all concerned.

Let us suppose a parish is still in the earlier stages of participation. There's an organist and perhaps a volunteer to lead the singing at some of the Masses. There may even be a choir and director or a folk group for one Mass each weekend. Presumably all of these are

## INSIGHTS On Pastoral Liturgy

handling a Missalette at some time throughout the month. From month to month there is variation but there are also "carry-overs" in the hymns and acclamations. And often, though not always, there is a thematic clue on the cover or, at least, in the explanatory headings for the readings.

Let us say **peace** is the recurring theme, as it was in a recent month. It might be hope, or joy, or expectation, or thanksgiving! — but a little imagination and the pooling of musical resources ought to result in hymns which express or comment on or reflect in some way any of these themes. For

grace.") And God effects this transformation so that we might be able to commune with Him as Lover and beloved.

To nourish this communion of love, there is a third coming of the Lord! It is in the celebration of the Eucharist. Christ comes to the bread in a manner analogous to the Trinity's coming to us at baptism. As the indwelling Trinity changes our very being so that we become truly sons of God, so Christ changes the very substance of the bread so that it truly becomes the body of Christ.

Since these two comings of God at baptism and Eucharist ordinarily occur in our churches, these are truly holy places. When Jacob dreamed of a ladder from heaven to earth with angels trafficking over it, he said, "Truly God is in this place, how awe-inspiring it is!"

St. John Lateran is the mother church of Rome, the cathedral of the successors of Peter. There, the first adult converts to Christianity, after the persecutions had ceased, were baptized. Alongside the basilica stands the first baptistry in Christendom. It is octagonal in shape (that is why so many baptistries are octagonal). Here the Emperor Constantine, who gave the Church a legal right to exist and gave Lateran Palace to the Pope, was baptized.

At St. John Lateran also, the successors of Peter celebrated the Eucharist. All the bordering churches that sprang up in Rome around it sent part of their consecrated altar bread to be commingled in the cup at the main Mass in St. John's. In our liturgy, the priest still drops a particle of bread in the chalice to remind God's people of their union with Peter, for there is only one sacrifice, one bread, one Lord.

Regarding the Church of which Peter is the head, it is well to recall the words of Cardinal Newman:

Trust the Church of God implicitly even when your natural judgment would take a different course from hers and would induce you to question her prudence or correctness.

Recollect what a hard task she has; how she is sure to be criticized and spoken against, whatever she does; recollect how much she needs your loyal and tender devotion; recollect, too, how long is the experience gained in eighteen hundred years; and what a right she has to claim your assent to principles which have had so extended and triumphant a trial.

Thank her that she has kept the Faith safe for so many generations and do your part in helping her to transmit it to generations after you.

**peace**, some of the following come immediately to mind: "Christ is Our Peace"; "Let There Be Peace on Earth," which might be in the choir's repertoire; the verse of "Keep in Mind" which reads "In Him our salvation, in Him all our peace"; the various folk settings of "Shalom" or "Peace I leave with You."

It must not be concluded that all of these would be newly taught. If one is known at all, it could be the "constant" throughout the month, with one other as the "newly learned" that month. Variety in the memorial acclamation is also effective, as in the memorial acclamation "Keep in mind . . ." with the appropriate verse.

Every Missalette includes all the acclamations with enough carry-over from month to month to allow for planned and gradual learning by the congregation. Realistic goals should be set; musicians must remember, that even the catchiest popular tune requires several hearings before a non-musician can feel familiar with it. Once a week, with no hearings in between can hardly be considered the best teaching schedule, so patience is an absolute necessity.

Which brings us to the most basic element in a parish music program. Love for the liturgy is not enough; neither is love for music enough; we must love the congregation! Cheer them on, encourage them, praise them, smile at them! They're trying.

Americans are a self-conscious people in public and singing at worship is not ingrained in Catholics as it is in Protestants. But with planning and enthusiasm — and a word about the appropriateness of the hymns before the liturgy — we can hope for real growth from month to month as the congregation expresses its worship in song.

### CHRISTMAS SALE

Elmira — A Christmas sale is scheduled at the Doctors' Meeting Room at St. Joseph's Hospital on Nov. 6-7, sponsored by the hospital auxiliary.

Handmade gifts, from ceramics to crochets; from knitted to natted, will be on sale. There will be edible goods, as well as the ever popular flea market.

Luncheon will be served each of the two days of the sale. Doors will open at 9 a.m. and close at 8:30 p.m. on Thursday and Friday. Proceeds will go toward the auxiliary project fund for programs and equipment at the hospital.

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### WORD FOR SUNDAY



Fr. Albert Shamon

**Sunday's Readings:** (R3) Mt. 5:23-24. (R1) 1 Kgs. 8:22-23, 27-30, 27-30. (R2) Eph. 2:19-22.

What is God's place in this world? Should we seek Him in the heavens above or in the depths below, in the world to come or in the ground of our being. Is God on top of the highest mountain or in the innermost recesses of the human heart? Should we face east or should we face west?

Of course God is present everywhere. How beautifully the Psalmist described this presence:

Where can I go  
from your spirit?  
from your presence  
where can I flee?  
If I go up to the heavens,  
you are there;  
if I sink to  
the nether world, you  
are present there.  
If I take the  
wings of the dawn,  
if I settle at the  
farthest limits  
of the sea,  
Even there your hand  
shall guide me.  
(Ps. 139:7-10)

But there's the rub. To most people a God who is everywhere is nowhere!

God has to be everywhere, for God created everything and everything has nothing to depend on but God. As the current of electricity must keep running into the light bulb to keep it lit, so God must unceasingly pour existence into every being that exists. "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). This means God is not just present to things; God is present in things — the very ground of their being. He, the All-Being, makes all things be!

This presence is common to all creatures. But there is another presence, peculiar to man alone. "You are being built into this temple, to become a dwelling place for God" (R2). This temple is built at the baptismal font. Baptism causes the most holy Trinity to come dwell in us. A temple is a place where God dwells. **God changes everything He touches.** Thus His coming at baptism transforms our very being. (We used to call this inward transformation "sanctifying

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