

Music for Lent

by Sister Josepha Kennedy

With the approach of Lent, church musicians feel a certain sense of impending hibernation. Lent is often seen as simply the time to prepare the choir for the splendors of Easter, while using the old stand-bys — "O Sacred Head," "These Forty Days of Lent," etc. — every Sunday. And yet Lent's themes are rich with possibilities in music and, as the momentum builds, so the music should reflect that growing preoccupation with the Lord's suffering and death.

We no longer have a ceremony of burying the "Alleluia" to dramatize the changed character of the Lenten liturgies. We simply stop singing it, but that in itself is dramatic. Be sure the congregation is made aware that that marvelous, full-throated shout of joy will not be heard, because we are shamed and quiet in our repentance, earnest in our conversion. Let the cantor or the homilist explain that, and then use the subdued Gospel Acclamation, or omit the singing of the acclamation altogether.

Omitting some music might well be the most valid Lenten practice or symbol. Music almost always reflects joy and uplifted spirits; no one sings well with a lump in his throat. So a quieter singing, and less of it, will surely teach the congregation the dramatic contrast between the time of repentant conversion and the time of ecstatic exultation which is Easter.

WORD FOR SUNDAY



Fr. Albert Shamon

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mk 2:1-12. (R1) Is. 43:18-19, 21-22, 24-25. (R2) 2 Cor. 1:18-22.

The objection posed by the scribes in Sunday's Gospel is one I have often heard regarding confession: "Who can forgive sins except God alone?" Or to put it another way: "I confess my sins directly to God alone, why should I have to go to a priest?"

A sacrament we must remember, is an encounter with Jesus, but not the kind of an encounter we may experience through prayer. Nor is it an encounter made by some kind of mental telepathy or ESP (Extra-Sensory Perception) — abnormal channels of communication. Rather, it is an encounter made through man's normal channels of communication — through the medium of signs and symbols. God chose to communicate with us through the normal channels. That was why God became man — someone man could see, touch, hear, feel.

The sacraments simply continue the incarnational principle. If a person says, "I confess my sins directly to God alone," we have every right in the world to ask, "How do you know God is listening?" It is true God said that He did not will the death of the sinner but that he be converted and live. Yet how can a sinner know for sure that he has converted?

Consider King David. Now there was a holy man, a man after God's own heart. Yet he sinned grievously against God, he was guilty of adultery and murder. And you know after these horrendous crimes, David, as far as we know, suffered no pang of conscience. In fact he felt so comfortable with his

INSIGHTS On Pastoral Liturgy

The March Missalettes will include several Lenten hymns. Some thought should be given to the momentum already mentioned. Do not use "O Sacred Head" or "Were You There?" on the first Sunday of Lent; they are profoundly appropriate for the last liturgies before and during Holy Week. If your choir or congregation knows more than one setting of the acclamations using the simplest ones throughout, Lent will accentuate the sorrowful overtones of the readings and prayers. If you always use an Offertory hymn, ask the organist to play a soft voluntary instead (possibly a dissonant contemporary one or at least one in a noticeably minor mode). Lent might be the best time to introduce a Communion meditation, a sober and reflective reading against a soft instrumental or hummed background.

This Lent the church musician could well investigate the "fuguing tunes" of William Billings, our most original colonial American composer. His simple round, "When Jesus Wept" is extraordinarily effective whether performed by

sins that God had to send the prophet Nathan to him. When Nathan told David a story that perfectly described his wicked deeds, David had so salvaged his conscience that he was not even aware that Nathan was talking about him. Nathan had to speak plainly and blurt out the accusation: "You are the man!" David was big enough to confess his crimes. Once he did, he heard from Nathan that God had forgiven him (2 Sm. 12).

The point is, David needed an intermediary to realize his sinfulness. By himself alone he thought all was right between God and himself. Without confession shall we not also lose the sense of sin? And without hearing a prophetic voice saying, "I absolve you from your sins," what assurance shall we have that God has forgiven us?

There is another reason why we ought to tell our sins to a priest and not directly to God: sin is not just a private affair between God and me. Sin is social. Like a pebble dropped into a pool, every sin causes ripples that touch the whole Church. David sinned once again against God (this ought to give us courage). He sinned by taking a census of his fighting men. It was an act tantamount to transferring his trust to military might rather than placing it in God. God's anger with David affected his people. God sent a pestilence that devastated the land (2 Sm. 24).

Read the seventh and eighth chapters of Joshua and see the disastrous effects the sin of one man, Achan, had on the armies of the Lord.

But we need not multiply examples. Recall the sin of the first man and woman. The effects of that one sin were cosmic. Chapters three to eleven of Genesis show the ripple effect of that one sin: false religions (symbolized in the serpent story), violence (Cain, Lamech), immorality (the sons of God took wives), and war (nations no longer spoke the same language, symbolized by the Babel story).

The sacrament of reconciliation is God's way to stem this tide of sin inundating the world. Healing through confession. That is the testimony even of the Psalmist: "Lord, heal my soul; for I have sinned against you" (Response).

children or an adult choir. There is a stark and sturdy religious feeling in Billings' music which is appropriate both to Lent and to our Bicentennial Celebration.

So for Lent — all the Missalette choices, yes, all the traditional and loved Lenten hymns, yes. But think much on the choices and try, by the choices and by a lessening of the amount of music itself, to create the feeling of sorrowful repentance and subdued security in conversion.

O'Connor Heads Catholic Vets

The Monroe County Chapter of Catholic War Veterans met for their 30th annual convention Jan. 30 at St. Jerome's Church in East Rochester. Officers elected for 1976 are James O'Connor, commander; Samuel Colantoni, first vice commander; Trevor Durrant, second vice commander; Arthur Buckley, third vice commander; Norbert Frumusa, treasurer; Edward Kraft, judge advocate; Michael Tedone, welfare officer; Michael Terrigno, historian; John Dutko, medical officer.

Ralph Edwards was nominated as the 1975 Catholic War Veteran. Chosen as the 1975 Catholic layman of the year was Raymond O. Shaheen. A communion breakfast in his honor will be held in the Spring.

The New York Department Commander of Catholic War Veterans, Marco J. Giovanelli, spoke at the banquet at Barry's Party House on Jan. 31.

Parish Sets Renewal Week

Father Alan Tammany, OFM, of the Emmanuel Charismatic Prayer Community in Albany, will be at St. Lawrence parish, 1000 N. Greece Road, from Feb. 28 through March 5. He will give the homily at all the weekend Masses, celebrate the Saturday evening Mass at 5:30, and the 10:15 on Sunday morning, and then conduct a Week of Renewal.

Renewal sessions are scheduled for 7:30 p.m., March 1-5. Everyone is invited. Father Tammany will be joined by Joseph Dean, an Emmanuel Community teacher. Further information may be obtained by calling the religious education office, 225-7320, weekdays.

TESTIMONIAL

The Knights of St. John will honor three members of Rochester Regiment at a testimonial dinner Saturday evening, Feb. 28, in the Party House on Behan Road. The honored guests will be Capt. William Higgins of Commandery 39 and Knights Anton Rauner of Commandery 40 and Leonard Mayer of Commandery 43. Lester C. Burke is chairman.

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St. Thomas Apostle Slates 'Mission Day'

One cannot turn a corner in St. Thomas the Apostle School without being greeted by the "Town Crier" silhouetted in red, white and blue on walls and doors announcing "Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Mission Day '76" to be held in the school "public hall" on Friday, Feb. 20.

The spirit of the children again proves contagious as plans go forth for St. Thomas' annual Mission Day — a day set aside each year for games, a fishpond, candy, stuffed animals, balloons, hats, mod pins, popcorn, a white elephant sale and a special pizza-and-pop lunch prepared by the eighth grade girls who serve as cafeteria staff for the day.

"Ye Olde Sweete Shoppe", traditionally stocked with homemade goodies by mothers and students is a favorite gathering place throughout the day.

Eighth grade students also are in charge of set-up and running booths with parent supervisors. All proceeds of Mission Day go directly to home and foreign mission work.

As an added attraction this year, Sister Doris Hamilton, RSM, will visit the school on Thursday, Feb. 19, to meet with the children at a slide presentation assembly. Sister Doris has just returned from the Sisters of Mercy's mission in Chile.

Mission Day activities are being coordinated by Sister Roberta Rodenhouse, RSM, principal, and Home-School Association parents, Mr. and Mrs. Michael Conley.

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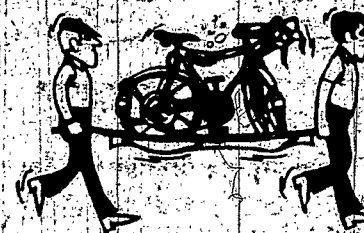
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