

Insights In Liturgy

By FATHER BENEDICT EHMANN

Gregorian Chant: An Endangered Species

Gregorian Chant has all but died out in contemporary liturgies since Latin was replaced by the vernacular languages. The Chant grew out of the inflections and rhythms of the Latin texts which had the place of honor in the Western Church for over 1,700 years. Translate

these texts into other languages, and the price you pay is the virtual extinction of the Gregorian Chant.

Most of today's Catholics couldn't care less. The young ones have never heard it, or even heard about it. And all that many of the older folk may remember of it was far from a good example of it.

Still, in spite of the almost total extinction of the Chant, and even in face of the almost total

prevalence of hymns and guitars, the Holy See keeps insisting that Gregorian Chant is to retain the place of honor in our liturgies. This must seem hopelessly idealistic, even foolish, to many people, in the present state of church music and contemporary culture (or lack of it). I want to show that it is not a hopeless or crazy ideal. But first give me time to put in a defense and explain why the Church still holds the banner high for the Gregorian Chant.

It is no exaggeration (though it might seem so) to state that there has never been in the history of Western music such a harmonious integration of texts and melodies as in

Gregorian Chant. Canon Winfred Douglas, an eminent musicologist writes:

"This corpus of the strictly Gregorian music at the beginning of the seventh century is the most complete artistic treasure bequeathed to us by antiquity. It is not an undeveloped and rudimentary form of musical art, although barbaric distortions of it occasionally heard might lead one to think so. It is the world's primary treasure of wholly artistic melody. In its aesthetic importance, it is only comparable to the monumental sculpture of the age of Pericles... The perfect, the unmarred choral song of the seventh

century after Christ uplifts the mind into a perennially vital expression of worship directed to the one true God, as revealed through his eternal Son in words inspired by the Holy Spirit." (Church Music in History and Practice, pp. 28-29)

No wonder, then, that the Church is reluctant to let go of so marvelous an instrument of worship. In view of this, can it surprise anyone that eminent musicians everywhere are determined to work for the survival of this endangered species? Whatever else you may think about this, at least credit the Church for not backing a dying old nag.

Mass

A Charismatic Mass, the first for St. Jerome's parish, will be celebrated at 8 p.m. Friday, April 21, by Father Anthony Calimeri, pastor.

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TV Mass

Father Norman Tanck, CSB, will be the celebrant for the Mass for Shut-Ins at 8 a.m., Sunday, April 23, over WHEC-TV, Channel 10.



Calendar

Memorial Art Gallery 3 p.m. Sunday, April 23, three films: on Charles Burchfield and current major exhibition; Dong Kingman, Chinese-American watercolorist; a study of the art of painting, narrated by John Canaday.

SHAKER ARTS—Illustrated lecture by June Sprigg, writer and curator of collections at Hancock Shaker Community, 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 25, Memorial Art Gallery; sponsored by Harley School. Free.

AT RIT—Graduate Student Thesis Show in Bevier Gallery through April 28. Weekdays 9 a.m.-4 p.m., plus 7-9 Monday through Thursday; Saturday, 1-5, Sunday 2-5. Lecture by Susan Sontag, 4 p.m. tomorrow, Webb Auditorium.

WEAVERS' GUILD—Annual exhibition—work of 160 members—in

Sibley's Ward Gallery, fifth floor downtown store, during store hours through April 22.

PLAYHOUSE JUNIOR—The Hobbit, April 22 and 23; 2 and 7:30 p.m., at The Playhouse, South Clinton at Meigs.

GREAT MOVIES—Wednesday night series at Rochester Museum's Eisenhart Auditorium. Tonight, 7:30, All about Eve; April 26, Au Hasard Balthazar.

80th SETON—Meeting tonight at 8:30 home of Mrs. Francis Beecher, Fisher Road.

GARAGE SALE—Chiefly household goods, at St. Cecilia's, Culver Road, April 27, 28, 29, 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

RUMMAGE SALE—At St. Mary's, Scottsville, parish hall, 99 Main Street, April 21, 10-7; April 22, 10-2.

CAROUSEL—Musical performed by Cardinal

Mooney High School Drama Club at 800 Maiden Lane, 8 p.m. May 5, 6, 12, 13.

EASTMAN SCHOOL CONCERTS—PRISM V, 8 p.m. Friday, April 21; Wind Ensemble, 3:30 p.m. Sunday, April 23, Eastman Theatre. Faculty Recital, 8:30 p.m. April 24; Collegium Musicum, 8 p.m. April 25, Kilbourn Hall. All free.

APRIL SHOWERS DANCE—Sponsored by parish life committee at St. Ambrose, April 28, 9-1, in Dailey Hall. Tickets at rectory or through 288-4619.

ALTAR SOCIETY BREAKFAST—Women of Our Lady of Victory-St. Joseph's, at Holiday Inn after 9 a.m., Mass April 23.

NEXT-TO-NEW—St. Anne's school basement, 1600 Mt. Hope, Friday, April 21, 10-8; Saturday 9-1.

CHORAL CONCERT—Vivaldi's Gloria sung by choirs of Sacred Heart Cathedral and Ascension Episcopal Church, 3 p.m. Sunday, April 23, at the cathedral. Anthony Rimore director, Robert Parris organist. Public, free.

NAZARETH COLLEGE CONCERT—Orchestra, chamber choir, 8 p.m. Wednesday, April 26, Arts Center auditorium. Public, free.

FILM PROGRAM—At



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STAFF PROFILES

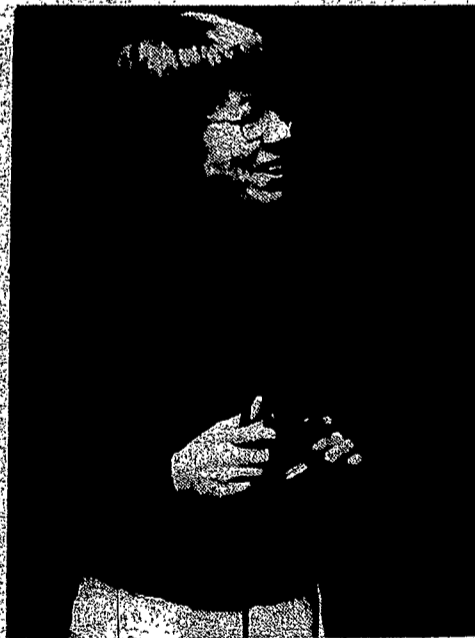


Photo Editor

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Our photo editor is Susan McKinney. She and photographer Terrance J. Brennan do their best not only to picture the events shaping our diocese and Church but also to present them in an attractive and tasteful manner.



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