

Columnists

What has become of sacred music?

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

When I was a young priest, music was at a low premium in most Catholic churches. Many pastors would find a piano player who could play the daily requiem high Mass, with the lengthy Dies Irae ripped through to get the Mass done on time. At Sunday Mass, music was not considered of great importance. While this was not true everywhere, it was common.

Until Vatican II, congregational singing was scanty in Catholic liturgy. Most Masses were "low Masses," i.e. quiet, without active vocal participation of the congregation either in song or spoken response. Indeed, many devout souls got their novena prayers or two rosaries accomplished as they watched the priest in action, and bestirred themselves devoutly at the consecration.

Changes were coming. Vatican II changed the non-participatory part of the congregation, and the people began to share — albeit reluctantly in many places — in the celebration of the holy sacrifice. But with this came the false notion that choirs are only aids to congregational singing and that everything had to be communal, with no distinction between the action of the choir and that of the people.

This was contrary to the Vatican II Constitution on the Divine Liturgy, but the vandals ignored Vatican II when anything was presented that did not fit their plan of action. In a Rochester Times Union article of March 4, 1988, reporter Scott Cantrell wrote: "Conservatory trained musicians ... find themselves squared off against people who would rather worship to pop music than (to) Palestrina. If church finances get precarious, theirs will be the first budget cut."

Interviewed in the same article was Richard Erickson, director of music at Incarnate Word Lutheran Church on East Avenue, Rochester. He observed: "One of the problems is that many church musicians are not regarded as necessary and integral to the mission of the Church. That certainly denies the whole heritage of the Western church." It is curious that High Church Anglicans and Lutherans are often more faithful to our musical inheritance than are many of our gung-ho progressivists who have buried without honor much of our musical heritage to impose shoddy, third-rate stuff.

On the Right Side

Vatican II, anticipating some transition but not a burial of the past, stated: "The treasure of sacred music is to be preserved and fostered with great care. Choirs must be diligently promoted, so whenever the sacred action is to be anticipated with song, the whole body of the faithful may be able to contribute the active participation" (Constitution on the Liturgy #114).

It is clear that the pipe organ is numero uno in instruments, but folk musical instruments under certain conditions are acceptable (#120). Two of the best folk groups I have heard were from small parishes in Shortsville and Ovid. The guitar was played expertly and softly; the hymns were devotional. But I have heard other folk groups that seemed to have their inspiration from Michael Jackson and his band.

What happened at Old St. Mary's Church in Rochester is a sad example of our musical history. During the pastorates of Dr. Kettell and Monsignor McAniff, tradition in theology, liturgy and music were held in high honor. With the death of Monsignor McAniff, a strong communitarian spirit overwhelmed the place. The glorious music of our inheritance gave way to the burgeoning of less noble hymnody. So the choir director of 25 years, Dr. Thomas Donahue, a faculty member at the Eastman School of Music, with a choir that included five physicians and a lawyer, were gradually eliminated.

Last Advent, the group — which now sings as The Thomas Donahue Chapel Choir sang the Ceremony of Lessons and Carols at Sacred Heart Cathedral to a crowd of 800, indicating a lively appreciation of great music. Mr. Donahue also directs the choir of St. Agnes Church in Avon.

The chapel choir is available for special occasions. I note that Phil-Lioi is sometimes mentioned at St. Mary's. He is a correct musician, so there is some hope.

Take my gifts and use them

By Cindy Bassett

When I was 12, my mother decided I was old enough to accompany my uncle and cousins on their annual trip there for the Passover celebration. First I would go to my uncle's house in nearby Tiberias, and from there, we would make the long journey to Jerusalem together.

Before I left early the next morning, my mother prepared lunch for me. She made me promise that I would stop along the way to Tiberias to eat and rest.

I had only traveled about five miles when I noticed a huge crowd of people gathered by the Sea of Galilee where a boat was coming in to shore. I approached one man in the crowd and asked him "Sir, is some important person on that boat?"

"It is Jesus," he told me. "Some say he is a great prophet. Others say that he receives his great healing power from God. And there are those who believe Jesus is the Son of God!"

As the boat came to shore, Jesus' companions tried to send the crowd away. "Please do not trouble the Master now; he must rest," they said. But the people ignored them and kept trying to get closer to Jesus.

Finally, I saw Jesus climb up on the hillside and tell everyone to sit down. He taught everyone many wonderful things that day. He told the crowds not to be concerned about what they would eat or drink or about clothes to wear. "Look at the birds! They don't worry about what to eat, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And you are far more valuable to him than they are. Will all your worries add a single moment to your life?" (Matthew 6:26-27).

I listened to Jesus preach for a long time, and I saw Him perform many miracles. It was late in the afternoon when I finally remembered that I was expected at my uncle's house. If I wanted to arrive before dark, I would have to leave right away. Just as I was about to leave, I heard Jesus tell one of his companions, "These people must be very hungry now. Why

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don't you feed them?"

"But, Lord," His friend replied, "there are thousands of people here. It would cost a small fortune to feed them all." Suddenly, I knew what I must do. I went up to Jesus and told him, "I have only a couple of fish and some loaves of bread my mother gave me for lunch, but you can have them."

"Thank you," Jesus said, smiling warmly as he took the food. "That's very kind of you."

"Tell the crowds to sit down in small groups," he told his companions. Then Jesus took the food I had given him and said a prayer thanking God for it. Afterward, he gave the food to his friends to distribute to the people. When they had made their way throughout the crowd, everyone had gotten something to eat, including me!

A man named Philip later said that 5,000 people had eaten there that day. Jesus told his friends to gather up the leftover food, and there was enough to fill 12 baskets! Just before I left for my uncle's house, Philip came up to me and said, "Here, take one of these baskets of food with you. Because you gave all you had, many have benefited."

I'll never forget my trip to the temple in Jerusalem. But even before I had arrived there, I had already learned a great deal. If we give God even our smallest gifts, He will use them to perform miracles.

Scripture Reference: Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14.

Meditation for Lent: Dear Jesus, show me how to use even my smallest gifts to give you glory.

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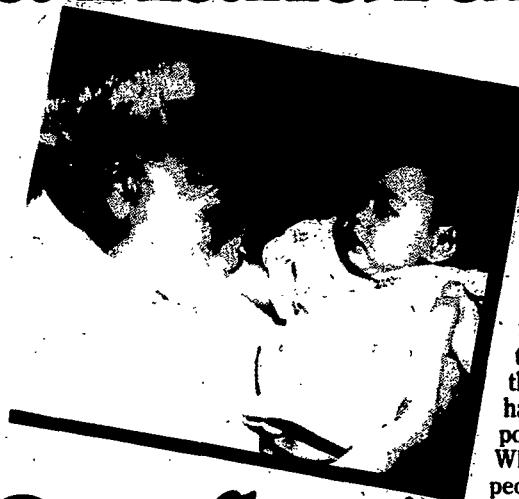
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"How Full is a Handful?"



Father Joseph taught the residents of his Indian village about the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. They took the lesson to heart.

Each day after that, before they would prepare a meal, they would remove a handful of food and set it aside in a large basket. Every Sunday they would carry that basket to Mass, giving it to those families in the area that had even less than they did — the poorest of that village's poor! When Father asked "why," his people explained that they were "giving up" something for Christ — just like He sacrificed His life for them.

Those handfuls of food were packed with more than just nutrients. Those handfuls were filled with love, the same love that led Christ to His cross.

This Lenten season won't you make a similar sacrifice? Won't you "give up" so that you can "reach out" to your brothers and sisters in the Missions? Let the spirit of love that led the Indian villagers to help their own move you to help those "doing without" in the Missions. Support the Propagation of the Faith this Lent.



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