

CATHOLIC COURIER

RADIO ROSARY

After moving into the St. Joseph's Convent Infirmary, the Family Rosary for Peace has begun a new era.

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Liturgical musicians seek greater synthesis

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Among some liturgical music circles a few years ago, the following joke induced knowing chuckles and pained expressions:

An older couple was getting ready to go to Sunday Mass, and the wife was putting various items in her purse. The husband watched as she put in a rosary, her Sunday Missal, and a bottle for holy water. Then she put in a pair of ear plugs.

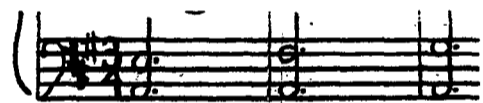


Puzzled, her husband asked, "What are those for?"

The wife smiled sweetly and said, "They're in case the folk group is playing."

At the time, the mere mention of "folk group," raised some church people's ire and fears — with visions of guitar armies replacing choirs and organs, and folk-inspired songs supplanting traditional hymns.

Indeed, in some parishes, organ music seemed to be going the way of the dinosaurs. And among parish music ministers, opposing camps formed to espouse either organ music or the new folk repertoire and to debate the merits of their respective causes.



Today, the various weekend Masses at one parish might feature an adult choir with organ music; a children's choir; a gospel group; and a contemporary music ensemble with guitars, flutes and piano. And at each liturgy at that parish, the congregation would participate actively in the singing.

But at another parish, one Mass might be accompanied by a guitar-led group playing the same songs they were playing a decade ago, and another liturgy would feature an organist of limited ability and training playing songs that few, if anyone, in the congregation is singing.

"There's extremes in the diocese," acknowledged Alison Luedicke, associate director for music in the diocesan Office of Liturgy.



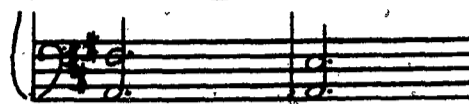
Between these extremes lie the reality of most parishes, observed William J. Greene, Ph.D., organist and choir master at Sacred Heart Cathedral. And in large part, the reality is that most parish staffs rely on the abilities of volunteer musicians, many of whom lack formal training as musicians or liturgists, he observed.

"I think it depends on the person who deals with the music," Greene said. "I think a lot of parishes are still sort of mired in the transition."

The transition in liturgical music — as in so many other liturgical practices — was made necessary by Vatican II, remarked Gordon Truitt, editor of *Pastoral Music Magazine*, a publication of the National Association of Pastoral Musicians.

"Vatican II set up as the norm a Mass with a full complement of ministers, including music ministers," Truitt said during a telephone interview with the *Catholic Courier*.

The council, Truitt said, decreed that



quickly just to get something done," he said.

"We were in the midst of renewal," recalled Marty Haugen, a leading composer of contemporary liturgical music, including such hymns as "Gather Us In" and "Canticle of the Sun."

parishes should encourage congregational singing, should preserve the treasury of hymns, and should add new works to the repertoire to take into account new styles and tastes.

"More and more later (church) documents increased the place of music in liturgy," Truitt continued. "(Music) is not really meant to be just decoration. It's a way to express the holy in the liturgy."

Furthermore, the council directed that Masses be conducted in English. But as parishes began to look for hymns with English lyrics, they ran into problems, Truitt noted.



"We didn't have a Mass repertoire in English," Truitt said.

The result, Truitt said, was an explosion of new music — and much of it was bad. "A lot of the early stuff was composed

Born and raised a Lutheran, when Haugen examined the history of that tradition's musical heritage, he saw a similar explosion of music. "Looking back at the 16th century in Germany in when the Lutheran Reformation took place," he explained, "there were in the first 50 years 10,000 hymns written. Lutherans today sing 10-12 of them."



"When you create a tradition, you write and write and write," Haugen continued, "and the Holy Spirit gradually gleans out the wheat from the chaff."

The St. Louis Jesuits — a group of Jesuit seminarians who began to write hymns in the early 1970s — marked a new phase in the contemporary liturgical music scene, Haugen said.

The group — which produced such hymns as "On Eagle's Wings," and "Here I am Lord" — began to write songs based on Scriptures and liturgical texts.

"Before," Haugen said, "you could go to a rally and hear the hymns like (Ray Repp's) 'Allelu' sung." He added that many of the early songs would have been as appropriate at "hootenannies" as in church.

Such early efforts were important because they brought with them a sense of enthusiasm to the worship, and a sense of ownership of the liturgy, he said. But after the initial enthusiasm wore off, a new focus for the music was needed — a need the Jesuits also helped fill.

"The Jesuits' hymns were written for worship," Haugen observed.

In 1991, that focus has become the norm, noted Bob Batastini, editor of G.I.A. Publications, which produced two of the congregational music books most used in parishes today: *Worship III* and *Gather*.



"I think there's a very definite focus on liturgical themes," Batastini said. "Composers today are very much writing for the lectionary, for the rites of the church."

Batastini also credited the Jesuits with introducing more musical sophistication to contemporary church composition. "You much more frequently find full notation," he said. "Really, the piano has become the lead instrument rather than the guitar. It's hard to lead a congregation with a guitar."

Worship III is, in itself, a symbol of what is happening in liturgical music today, observed Batastini, whose company produced *Worship II* in 1975. That book sold more than 750,000 copies, but then sales suddenly dropped off in the early 1980s.



The company discovered that parish staffs were becoming concerned about male-oriented language found in some of the older hymns. In addition, parishes were demanding works based more closely on the lectionary.

So G.I.A. published *Worship III* in 1986 — an unusually short period of time for a replacement volume to be produced, Batastini said.

The revised hymnal, Batastini reported, has sold 500,000 copies already. That volume of sales of the organ-based book belie rumors that organ music is on the way out in Catholic churches, he noted.

Instead, Batastini said, liturgical musicians are beginning to draw upon the whole range of available liturgical music — from "Gregorian chant to the latest song written yesterday. We're starting to take the best, and the quality music will survive."

Company officials do not anticipate needing to produce a *Worship IV* in the near future, Batastini said, because the

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