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Music

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Committee members, noted Ginny Miller, diocesan associate liturgy director.

"I think if Vatican II had never happened, we never would have been in this situation," said Miller, who serves as coordinator of diocesan music ministry. "The road changed, and we're still playing catch-up. As the rituals have been revised, we are discovering that ongoing formation of our musicians is necessary."

Quality leadership

The formation of music ministers has a huge effect on the congregation, Miller added.

"There are places that attract more people simply because they have a good music program," she said.

Duties of music directors can vary greatly from parish to parish: Fabry, one of only 10 full-time parish music directors in the diocese, coordinates four choirs and two cantor programs at Holy Name of Jesus.

On the other hand, Glenna Wickline, volunteer music director at St. Francis of Assisi Church in Catatonk, Tioga County, said that because of her limited duty — and the fact that her choir only has six members — she is unable to offer the same diversity of programs.

"We don't have enough to do it that way. It's just not practical," Wickline commented.

Barbara Pedeville, diocesan coordinator of parish personnel services, said that a part-time paid music director is a good fit for most parishes. She added that an increasing number of parishes are offering such positions to meet a greater demand for diverse liturgical music.

"Years ago it was expected that the musicians would be volunteers, and that's no longer the reality," Pedeville remarked. "More expertise has been needed, as well

as liturgical knowledge."

Along those lines, St. Bernard's Institute began offering a revised curriculum this fall in its pastoral music certification program, requiring participants to broaden their experience in both the playing and reading of music.

Under the old certification guidelines, "You could go through the whole program and not even be able to play a note," remarked Fabry, a member of the Diocesan Music Committee.

"There really is a shortage of adequately trained musical ministers," Miller said.

The search for worthy candidates is difficult, Pedeville said, because a good chunk of the necessary working hours — Sundays and holidays — are not exactly ideal.

"It's a huge challenge," Pedeville said.

In addition, Miller noted, music directors may not always be able to implement their expertise if a pastor already has a clear-cut idea of what the music program should entail.

"The model of music the pastor works out of has a significant effect on the parish," Miller said. "Sometimes that's good and sometimes it's not, and it's not always fair, but it's the reality."

Pay is another sticky wicket, Miller said. Many of the better music directors leave Catholic parishes for similar assignments in Protestant churches or teaching positions in public schools.

"You can go into the real world, and the salaries are very different," Miller said.

Pedeville acknowledged that some Protestants indeed offer higher wages for church musicians.

"They put a higher emphasis on music, and our (Catholic) emphasis is on the Eucharist, not music," she said.

Fabry, in his ninth year at Holy Name of Jesus, said he can afford to keep his position only because he resides rent-free in the rectory.

"If I couldn't have lived there, I could not have stayed there full-time," Fabry said.

Diocesan guidelines, as of earlier this calendar year, suggested a midpoint annual salary of \$21,954 for full-time (40 hours per week) music ministers with basic skills; \$28,531 with proficient skills; and \$32,526 with advanced skills. The corresponding hourly rates for part-time music ministers were \$10.55, \$13.71 and \$15.63.

However, Miller noted that music directors' wages fall below the midpoints more often than not.

"Sometimes parishes just can't afford to pay them, especially as you get outside of Rochester," Miller said.

Whether paid or unpaid, Father Funk emphasized that all music directors should strive for the best product possible.

"It doesn't depend on size at all. It does depend on the quality of the leader," Fa-



Greg Francis/Staff photographer

Amy Anderson plays the flute for Holy Name Church Adult Choir.

ther Funk said. "Good music enhances our faith, and bad music can ruin our faith."

But, Miller warned, congregation members should choose their words carefully when sharing their views on music ministry with the music directors.

"When you're a musician, it's not just something you do. It's who you are," she stated. "So when you criticize the music, you criticize the person."

Join, join, join

How can directors guarantee good music when their groups are almost exclusively volunteer, with varying levels of experience?

"The bottom line is, there's hundreds of people involved in music ministry, and they're trying the best they can with the resources they have," Miller said.

Marisa DeMario said that she keeps this reality in mind when working with her parish choir.

"You don't have to audition, you don't have to have a great voice — just make rehearsals so you can feel a part of the group," said DeMario, music director at Church of the Most Precious Blood in Rochester.

"But you also shouldn't go up there, sing the wrong notes, and not care." "Doing what's possible within the community is critical," Father Funk agreed.

Determining these limits can hinge largely on availability, DeMario noted. She said a former folk choir at Most Precious Blood was well-received, but it disbanded several years ago because members drifted off one by one and weren't replaced.

The same challenge to maintain membership exists with DeMario's current choir, she said.

"The feeling the congregation gets is that it's for older people," DeMario remarked. "But the choir is just dying for new members. We put announcements in the bulletin. I've never gotten up on the altar and spoken up, but maybe that's what I should do."

Yet Miller pointed out that, unfortunately, some parish choirs become so exclusive that newcomers — and new styles of music — are not even sought.

"I don't want to use the word 'stuck', but that's what it is. They haven't moved forward, or the same people have been there

20 years and haven't recruited new members. They've made it exclusive," Miller said.

On the other hand, Fabry said that "join, join, join" is his chief motto at Holy Name of Jesus.

"I have a gentleman I've been working on for eight years, and he finally came to choir this year," Fabry said.

Getting a feel for it

The end result of all these efforts, Miller said, is to influence congregations toward great participation in liturgical music.

"The congregation is really the primary music minister," Miller commented.

"The Mass is not a spectator sport. To me, why would you just sit there?" remarked Swift, from Holy Name of Jesus. "If you get the opportunity to participate in something as enjoyable as music, then for heaven's sake, do it."

The Diocesan Music Committee has conducted listening sessions and town meetings at several diocesan parishes since 1996. One of the largest concerns, Miller said, is that congregations still haven't grasped that they're expected to be part of the music.

"We have not found our community aware of their role, or of how integral music is to the liturgy. If we work on those two agenda items, we can really make some progress," Miller said.

Miller also pointed out that congregations will remain tight-lipped if they don't feel invited.

"You can turn people off if they feel they can't join in. I think there's a very fine line between performance, or trying to get people to join in with you," Miller said.

Once they do join in, Father Funk emphasized that parishioners' involvement should go much deeper than nonchalant recitations of hymns.

"Participation, as envisioned by Vatican II, didn't simply say we should sing or move more. We must be engaged interiorly as well as exteriorly," Father Funk said.

The gospel Mass at Rochester's Immaculate Conception Church, for example, is replete with hand-clapping and loud singing. Jacquelyn Dobson, diocesan director of black ministries, said the parish community quickly embraced the gospel choir when it formed in the late 1960s.

"There's something about black sacred music that nourishes most people," said Dobson, whose family members were among the choir's founders and who is a former member herself. "It has a real way of impacting the spirit, no matter what your cultural background."

However, Fabry has discovered instances where worshippers are not as open to new approaches. Early during his tenure at Holy Name of Jesus, he considered replacing the Albert K. Malotte version of the Lord's Prayer, with its crashing high notes at the end. He changed his mind after several parishioners protested.

"They love it. Well, it's not my role to tell them they can't do it," Fabry said.

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