

Liturgical music a necessity, not a luxury

It was one of those special experiences God gives us every now and then. It happened on Sunday afternoon at Sacred Heart Cathedral at a celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy, which gathered men and women, boys and girls who came into our church at the Easter Vigil.

We were in the middle of a sung Eucharistic Prayer, one of Marty Haugen's compositions in which the assembly participates. Singing behind me were the members of our Diocesan Festival choir. In the pews in front of me the congregation joined the song.

It was a thrilling experience to pray with everyone in that context — so much so that I really do not have words adequate to describe the fullness of the experience. I think of being wrapped in prayer, or bathed in praise or lifted up or carried beyond myself.

However one might describe it, the experience only confirmed a conviction I have had for a long time, viz. that music is an integral component of our liturgical celebrations, and very important to our life as Roman Catholic Christians.

Writers and scholars much more gifted than I am have commented on this reality. A comment about the gift of music, with which many are familiar, is St. Augustine's, "The one who sings prays twice." I think I understand his statement and from my personal experience would certainly say a resounding "Amen" to it.

As I reflect on my 20 years of personal

along
the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

experience of music in our liturgical celebrations, I would say that music helps me to:

1. Worship with more than my intellect and will. Music touches my emotions, involves my feelings and makes me conscious of my body in the worship experience. One friend recently called to my attention that while waiting for the conclusion of a piece of music I often "play the altar table" as though it were a piano and tap my foot in rhythm with the music.

2. Appreciate a deeper sense of unity with other members of the worshiping assembly. An analogy that comes to mind is that of special family parties and reunions. We sing at those, not in any self-conscious way or even by design. We just sing because it was part of who we were and it drew us together in solidarity like nothing else. Further, it linked us to those who went before us. Yes, we picked up new songs as the years passed by, but we always kept in our repertoire a healthy measure of the

songs our parents and grandparents taught us.

3. Remember that the mystery of our faith can never be totally understood or expressed. At the same time, its rhythm and imagery do help me get beyond the literal and measurable. Music helps understanding, especially that which rests in the heart and deep in the soul.

And, music helps me to express what is in my heart when I do not have words for what is there. Just as I write this, I think of this phrase from a musical piece I hear often, "Shepherd me O God beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life." That phrase and the music that carries it mean a great deal to me. When I can sing it with others I feel deeply understood and supported in my prayer.

At the conclusion of these comments, I want to thank the pastoral musicians of our diocese for the talent and commitment they bring to our liturgical life. They make a very important contribution to our local church. I want to thank our pastors, pastoral administrators and parish pastoral councils for our investment in music. You understand that music is not an extra we can or should do without. Rather it is a deeply important component of our liturgical prayer. I want to thank you who bring heart and voice to our worship. Whether you have perfect pitch or not, when you express your faith in song you strengthen mine and I am deeply grateful for that.

Peace to all.

The Monthly Prayer Request For Priests

PRAYER FOR PRIESTS

"Almighty God, I ask You to grant us worthy and fitting priests to serve and sanctify Your people. Confirm and sustain those who are already ordained." Dear Lord, I pray for all priests whom You have chosen. Keep them faithful to Your teaching and never let them be parted from You. God of mercy and holiness, hear the cry of Your people for holy priests. Fill the hearts of priests with zeal, with a never-ending love for the Mother of God, and make them ever faithful to Your Church and its head. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer Suggestions: Mass, Rosary, Fasting, Day Offering, Eucharistic Adoration, Offering Sufferings, Divine Mercy Chaplet

June, 1999

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
	Revs.	William J. Amann	Bernard F. Dollen	Thomas Bond, OCSO	William G. Darling	Bishop Matthew H. Clark
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Pope John Paul II	Inactive Priests	Tim Keating, CSSR	Frank J. Falletta	Ronald E. Gaesser	Msgr. Joseph G. Gefell	James J. Fischer, SJ
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Anthony F. Calimeri	William M. Barrett	Frederick G. Betti, SJ	Daniel W. Heirtz	William D. Lum	Msgr. Joseph A. Cirincione	Paul Walsh, CSB
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Alexander H. Bradshaw	Stephen R. Kraus	Thomas R. Statt	Benedict A. Ehmann	Matthew Swizzdor, OFM	Brian C. Cool	Winfried M. Kellner
27	28	29	30	Look for the July MPRP Calendar in the June 24th Courier.		
Robert J. Werth	Lawrence A. Gross	Vocations	Seminarians			

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