

on the MOVE

Story by
Mike Latona

Photos by
John Powell

Prayerful, priestly music



Father Doug Della Pietra talks to members of the youth group from St. Lawrence Parish in Greece, during a break in his concert April 30 at St. Charles Church in Greece.

Although Father Doug Della Pietra took accordion lessons for 13 years, that instrument was conspicuously absent during his one-man concert April 30. And for good reason. "Church music didn't sound that great on the accordion," Father Della Pietra explained to the gathering of more than 250 people — including Bishop Matthew H. Clark — in Greece's St. Charles Borromeo Church. His listeners found that what did sound great was Father Della Pietra's eight-song concert, which revealed his considerable piano, guitar, vocal and song-writing skills. They gave him a standing ovation at the end of his 90-minute solo performance.

The concert had been in the making since last summer. It featured six guitar numbers ("The Spirit's Breath," "The Tender One, The Gentle One," "My

Beloved One," "Agapao," "The Table," and "My Home") as well as two piano pieces ("The Dance of the Angels" and "The Rendezvous"). Father Della Pietra, parochial vicar at St. Charles Borromeo, wrote each of the songs based on his reflections and personal experiences. Song writing "feels like it flows out of my own prayer. I don't feel I've written any of the songs before speaking with God about them," said

the song was conceived and the message he wished to convey. In introducing his final piece, "My Home," he noted that, even for people who move around frequently, "There's something in each of us that seeks a home." He encouraged the audience to "find a home in your heart." He said the audience's enthusiastic response took him pleasantly by surprise, considering that his songs were generally soft and reflective in nature. "It wasn't a rock concert. I wasn't out there to have people clap," he said. "It was to invite them to their own relationship with God."

Although the concert was attended by people of all ages, Father Della Pietra said that much of his music resonates especially strongly with teens.

"I love the youth," he said. "I feel a real connection. A lot of my songs are related to issues, concerns, questions, hopes and dreams of the youth."

At 31, Father Della Pietra, who was ordained in 1996, is one of the youngest priests in the Rochester Diocese. He regularly staffs diocesan teen retreats, and apparently has a strong connection with the youths in his own parish as well.

"He's not only a priest, he's a friend to everybody," said St. Charles parishioner Jenny DeVaeger, 13. "He really understands what kids these days are going through."

Jenny said she felt Father Della Pietra's music "came from the heart." She and fellow parishioner Carolyn Fisher said they were aware of the priest's musical talents but had no idea they were so vast.

"I couldn't believe he made up the songs and the words," said Carolyn, 12. "I was really inspired by how he played."

During intermission, Father Della Pietra went out of his way to greet a throng of youth-group members from neighboring St. Lawrence Parish in Greece. "I wanted to let them know I appreciated their presence," he said.

Ami Bianchi of St. Lawrence said she found the concert extremely moving.

"It was very deep. I liked the words to his songs," said Ami, 17. "I found myself praying."

Laura Carmody, 17, also of St. Lawrence, said she was affected by Father Della Pietra's lyrics as well.

"I began to reflect on similar situations in my own life," Laura said.



Father Della Pietra accompanies himself on the guitar during his concert.

Ami recalled that she had been on a diocesan retreat in 1998 where Father Della Pietra played the guitar and sang. Meanwhile, Laura said she had been eager to attend his April 30 concert because she wanted to "experience the reflection music, take a moment out of my busy life."

Though there was no admission charge for the concert, donations were accepted on behalf of the Borromeo Prayer Center located at St. Charles. Based on the positive feedback, Father Della Pietra said he'd like to do more concerts. He also hopes to cut a CD later this year, and is currently composing a trilogy related to the story of The Prodigal Son.

"We all have a diversity of gifts. This is one of my loves and one of my gifts," he concluded.

COMING NEXT WEEK:
Celebrating teens
(throughout our whole issue!)

Handwritten lyrics and musical notation for the song "My Home".

My Home
I'm not coming here, I'll go home
My heart is full of love and mercy
I'm not coming here, I'll go home
Where is my home? Lord?
The longing of my heart
Lies in familiar places
Are you at the light, shining in the dark? (Refrain)
You're the "Home" I'm seeking
It's not the house I'm seeking, it's the place where
Home is where the heart is
I find my grace, my peace, on my Guest (Refrain)
Father, You are my Home
Holy Spirit, You are my Home
Dwelling on my heart
Where did the love go?
It's gone as much as the wind
There's a quiet silence
There is peace, joy, and freedom within (Refrain)

Musical notation: A A C C E E B A, A A C C E E B A, C B A A B B C A, C B A A B B C A, A B B A A.

Father Della Pietra, who is self-taught on both guitar and piano. Before playing each number, Father Della Pietra gave a brief history of how

Father Della Pietra, who is self-taught on both guitar and piano. Before playing each number, Father Della Pietra gave a brief history of how

In Fa gr 0 017470 075019 00000000